





# The Model Tenancy Act: Can it serve the intended purpose?

India had covered a substantial ideological ground from the days of the Central Rent Control Act (RCA), 1948 to the current Model Tenancy Act as approved by the Union cabinet on 2 June 2021. The emphasis has now clearly shifted from regressive rent control measures to a framework for encouraging tenancy.

This article proposes, on the one hand, inclusion of certain provisions to further improve the efficacy of the Model Act, and, on the hand, measures promoting ease of living to citizens.

On the basic premise of the RCA, 1948, several states enacted their Acts purportedly to prevent exploitation of tenants by landlords. All such avatars in the form of state acts were also highly skewed in favour of tenants. The RCA supported the concept of 'fair rent' as 8 to 10% of the market value of the property fixed

by the appropriate authority. The rentals thus once fixed were not reviewed.

Under the RCA, the landlord could not regain peaceful possession of their property without sufficient reason or cause. The grounds and procedures for eviction differed from state to state. In some states, the landlord has to approach a civil court for evicting tenant with the plea that the rented premises are required for his own use. In other states, the landlord cannot even secure a court order of eviction despite his own requirements as the tenant agreed to pay the revised rents.

The paltry rentals under RCA resulted in complete withdrawal of landlords to take up any maintenance of their properties. This resulted into deterioration of asset quality. Due to apprehension of occupation of property by tenants, RCA also discouraged development of a rental

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market. With the benefit of hindsight, RCA could be considered as one of the main reasons for locking up substantial residential spaces otherwise fit to be given on rent. Keeping in view the lop-sided nature of the law, many states have since either scrapped or modified the RCA.

What is the rationale now for the government to come up with the Model Act? The Model Act serves multiple objectives addressing housing shortage in the country. First, to bridge the confidence deficit between landlords and tenants; second, to create a

formal market for rental housing; third, to give a fillip to private players to enter into rental housing as a business model; fourth, to encourage release of about 1 crore vacant houses for rental purpose; and, fifth, to establish a fair mechanism to protect tenants' as well as the owners' economic interests. As institutional arrangements, the Model Act proposes separate district authorities, courts and tribunals in every district to provide a mechanism for speedy dispute resolution.

The Model Tenancy Act mandates filling written agree-



**DR SHAILENDRA JOSHI,**  
Advisor of Telangana govt and former chief secretary of Telangana

ments stating rent and duration of tenancy, along with other terms and conditions fixed by mutual consent between owner and tenant for all new tenancy with the concerned district authority. It also provides three months' notice to tenants to accept the hike to rentals or look for alternative accommodation. The provisions of the Model

Act maintain a fine balance between the interests of landowners by way of securing the market price for their properties, while ensuring that tenants get enough time to make an alternative arrangement in their best interests. The Act also puts a cap of two months' rentals as security deposits for residential properties making sure that tenants are not forced to shell out hefty sums at the start of the tenancy.

According to the Model Act, if the tenant fails to vacate the premises let out on rent as per the tenancy agreement, he or she will be liable to pay the landlord twice the monthly rent for the first two months and then four times till the latter continues to occupy the said premises. Similarly, if the landlord fails to make balance refund, he shall be liable to pay simple interest, along with the outstanding deposit, to the tenant at such rate as may be pre-

scribed. In case of any dispute between the owner and tenant, they should first approach the district authority concerned. If any party is not satisfied with the order of the district authority, they can approach rent court and tribunal.

The Model Tenancy Act is billed as a major policy reform. States and UTs need to exercise their choices while enacting their pieces of legislation on the basis of the Model Tenancy Act. The Model Act, from various angles, is a progressive piece of policy framework providing a level playing field to tenants as well as owners. A model agreement as an Annexure would have been of tremendous value. There is also a need to further simplify the Model Tenancy Act. Instead of mandatory registration of agreement between the landlord and tenant, online/offline filing of the agreement with duly paid fee

based on agreement value with the district authority should suffice. In addition to new tenancy, it should also cover existing tenancies in both urban and rural areas throughout the district-based on mutual consent. As a part of the larger philosophy of ease of living, citizen need not visit any public office.

Despite exclusion of the jurisdiction of civil courts in such matters, the consequences of their intervention on the basis of past experiences, need to be clearly spelt out. There should also be specific provisions on the special courts and appellate tribunals for not adhering to the stipulated time frame in passing orders.

To enforce the orders of related institutions, a dedicated implementation mechanism needs to be spelt out. To conclude, these proposed steps will ensure effective implementation of the Model Tenancy Act.

## Prices of essential items skyrocketing

*Continued from page 1*

The cost of salt increased by Rs 200 in a year, while onion prices shot up by Rs 700.

The wholesale prices of green gram, tur/arhar dal, urad dal, masoor dal, milk, groundnut oil (packed), mustard oil (packed), vanaspathi (packed), soy oil (packed), sunflower oil (packed), palm oil (packed), tea loose, salt pack (iodised) and onion have increased.

## Congress leader Jitin Prasada joins BJP

*Continued from page 1*

Goyal heaped praised on him, lauding him as a leader of stature whose induction will boost the BJP. It will also help him in serving the society, the minister added.

The 47-year-old Prasada, a former Union minister, comes from a well known Brahmin family of Uttar Pradesh and was serving as the Congress leader in-charge of West Bengal before joining the BJP.

His father Jitendra Prasada was a noted Congress leader. With the Congress in dire straits in Uttar Pradesh and he himself losing the Lok Sabha polls twice in a row, Prasada's decision to join the BJP may help him politically at a time when the saffron party is working overtime to boost its ranks in preparation for the assembly polls.

It will also help the BJP keep Brahmins, a section of whom are said to be unhappy with the party in Uttar Pradesh, in good humour in the politically important state of India, party sources said.

Speculation was rife even during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections of Prasada joining the BJP, but it is believed that the Congress leadership had then managed to persuade him against quitting the party.

# TS govt agrees to procure jowar from farmers at MSP

**ML MELLY MAITREYI**  
■ HYDERABAD

Thanks to the intervention of the Telangana High Court, the State government, which is close to wrapping up paddy procurement, has given its commitment to procure jowar crop, much to the relief of farmers growing it.

But the good news for the farmers came only after they had protested and approached the court, according to Rythu Swarajya Vedika, which has been agitating against the controversial farm laws enacted by the Centre.

Thousands of farmers in Adilabad district, having harvested about 4.5 lakh quintals of jowar, had been appealing to

the government to procure their crop at the minimum support price for the last one month.

While the MSP of jowar is fixed at Rs.2,620, private traders offered the farmers Rs.900 to Rs.1,200 per quintal. Farmers in Kamareddy too faced a similar predicament and they resorted to dharna in the first week of June.

Some people's representatives from Adilabad met Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao more than a month ago and also the Governor on the issue.

Many jowar farmers in Boath and Nereddigonda in Adilabad resorted to distress sale of their crop at Rs.900 to Rs.1,200 a quintal, though some held on their harvest in the hope that

the government would purchase the crop at MSP.

The ecologically sustainable crop has been procured by the government for the last two years. But this year there was reluctance on the part of the government, farmers said.

With no response from the government and left to the dictates of private players, Rythu Swarajya Vedika members filed a public interest litigation (PIL) petition in the High Court on June 1 challenging the inaction of the government.

When the petition came up for hearing in the High Court on Wednesday, the government was questioned over the inordinate delay in procuring jowar and the court said no

further delay could be accepted, according to Rythu Swarajya Vedika representatives.

Finally the State conveyed to the court that a GO would be issued in two days for purchase of jowar. For compliance, the case is posted for next hearing on June 14, RSV members said.

Attributing the success to the united protests by the farmers, RSV said that the incident was an example how the three farm laws enacted by the Centre would push farmers into the hands of unregulated market forces without a safety net. The intervention of the Telangana High Court saved the day for the jowar farmers, they said.

## YS Sharmila...

*Continued from page 1*

Eatela has emerged as a strong leader among the BCs in the state.

Sharmila, having remained silent all along, invited him to join the party at the last minute. She extended the invitation to Eatela at a meeting with her party leaders in the Lotus Pond.

She said that she would have no objection if Eatela wants to join her party.

She said that Eatela was preferring BJP as he was afraid of the cases foisted on him by the ruling TRS.

She felt that it was common for TRS to foist cases on those who quit the party. She reiterated that she would welcome Eatela if he willingly joined her party.

No discussion took place in the party about Eatela's future, she said.

## HC seeks blueprint...

*Continued from page 1*

The court gave a deadline of two weeks for finalization of the maximum prices for treatment charges in private hospitals.

The state government said that 8 RT PCR labs were working and the rest of the RTPCR labs would be made operational upon receipt of approval from the ICMR.

When the High Court questioned whether a Disaster Management Committee had been set up, the DPH said that the file related to the committee had been sent to the Chief Secretary and that the GO would be released in a week.

When the HC sought to know the reaction of the hospitals whose licence to treat Covid had been revoked, the Director of Public Health said that nearly 65 lakh collected in

excess by private hospitals had been refunded to patients.

The DPH said that they received 223 complaints alleging collection of high charges, of which 135 hospitals were issued show-cause notices.

In his affidavit, Dr Srinivasa Rao submitted to the High Court on the corona conditions in state. An average of one lakh tests had been conducted daily from May 29, while 66,79,098 vaccines were administered.

The DPH said that the in-patients in hospitals were declining and that 36.50 per cent beds in government hospitals and 16.35 per cent in private hospitals were occupied.

The High Court directed the government to file counter-affidavits with full details.

The High Court adjourned the next hearing to June 23.

# The US socialite who gave it all up to become a Carmelite nun

A nun who took a vow of silence and solitude died Saturday at the age of 92 in the monastery where she spent the last three decades of her life. But before she became Sister Mary Joseph of the Trinity, she was socialite Ann Russell Miller of San Francisco - and her remarkable life has now been documented in a series of tweets by her son Mark Miller.

Until she gave it all up to become a nun, Ann Russell Miller was a wealthy San Francisco socialite who hosted charity events, attended the opera, went on cruises and spent her time getting glamorous at the Elizabeth Arden salon, according to newspaper accounts of her life. Wife to Richard Kendall Miller, an executive with Pacific Gas and Electric, and mother to 10 children, she had "a million and one friends, she smoked, she drank and she played cards".

"By age 27 she had five

kids," said her youngest son, Mark Miller, in his tweets. "And then she went on to have five more - a basketball team of each sex. Planned Parenthood she called it."

"She became an Open-Water Diver. She drove so fast and recklessly that people got out of her car with a sore foot from slamming on the imaginary brake. She gave up smoking, alcohol and caffeine on the same day and somehow managed not to commit homicide as a result," he wrote.

Ann and her family lived in a nine-bedroom mansion overlooking the San Francisco Bay. She was known to whisk her friends away on exotic holidays -- skiing trips, Mediterranean yachts and archaeological digs.

In 1984, her husband Richard died of cancer. "Their spiritual lives were the center of their marriage," reads her death notice. Five years after her husband's death, Ann gave up her wealth and her connec-

tions, and left her family behind to become a nun. She joined the Sisters of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Des Plaines, Illinois - the Carmelite monastery where she would spend the rest of her life.

Before she boarded the plane from San Francisco to begin her new life as Sister Mary Joseph, Ann had a grand going-away party which was attended by over 800 people.

"I have only seen her twice in the last 33 years since she joined the convent," her son wrote. "Partly because the Carmelites are a contemplative order. They don't teach school, or work in hospitals, or even leave the building in which they live. They pray."

When Ann's family did visit her, they were separated by a double metal grille, unable to touch or hold each other.

Sister Mary Joseph is survived by her 28 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren, whom she has never seen.

## Delta variant can infect despite vaccination: AIIMS study

*Continued from page 1*

Of these 63 people, 53 had been given at least one dose of Covaxin and the rest at least one dose of Covishield. Thirty-six had received both doses of one of these vaccines.

76.9 per cent of infections by the 'delta' variant were recorded in people who had received a single dose, and 60 per cent in people who had received both doses.

## Meet Grace, the healthcare...

*Continued from page 1*

Awakening Health intends to mass-produce a beta version of Grace by August, said David Lake, chief executive of the joint venture between Hanson Robotics and Singularity Studio, and there are plans to fully deploy her next year in locations including Hong Kong, mainland China, Japan and Korea.

The cost of making the robots, now akin to luxury car pricing, will decrease once the company is manufacturing tens or hundreds of thousands of units, Hanson added.

Grace's launch comes as the global impact of the coronavirus has made the need for humanoid robots urgent, said Kim Min-Sun, a communication professor at the University of Hawaii.

Stuck at home during COVID-19 lockdowns, many people have had their mental states affected with negative thoughts.





"If they can get help through the deployment of these social robots in intimate settings, certainly it will have a positive impact on society," she said.

## Centre's free vax policy...

*Continued from page 1*

The images of BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi have been dented. Keeping all this in view, the new vax policy was unveiled. The vocal BJP leaders now believe that, given the new vax policy of the central government, the images of BJP and Modi will improve. At the same time, it will blunt the criticism of the opposition parties on Centre's handling the pandemic. Practically speaking, the situation is different, particularly in the non-BJP-ruled states. All these days the BJP leaders have been criticising the state governments on the tackling of

the Covid pandemic. Now that the central government has taken full responsibility of purchasing and supplying vaccines to state governments, the BJP leaders in the non-BJP ruled states have lost the opportunity of criticising the state governments. Moreover, the ruling parties will miss no chance to criticise the central government if there is any failure in purchasing or supplying the vaccines to the states. For example, on Tuesday when IT Minister KT Rama Rao was interacting with citizens on Twitter (@Ask KTR), one person asked: "Where is my vaccine?" KTR replied, saying 'Ask Prime Minister'.

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# With the rise of online learning, textbooks get smarter in T'gana

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

As students and teachers adapt to online learning, the School Education Department has introduced Quick Response (QR) codes in all high school State-syllabus textbooks for academic year 2021-22.

The QR codes printed on textbooks by the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) would help students navigate content related to their subjects.

The move aims to encourage learning from home using online resources available in Diksha, a first-of-its-kind mobile application launched by the Union Minister of Education (MoE) in the state in May 2019.

Conducting classroom teaching appears to be remote under the prevailing pandemic situation. Therefore, the government has been advising students to scan the QR Code with their mobile so that they would be able to get access to audio and video lessons for the



academic year 2021-22. The state government of Telangana got the QR Code printed in all text books, progressing from the earlier pilot project, so that the students would be able to understand the lessons better.

"All the new textbooks are printed with a QR code. By scanning the code, students can access all the digital content available on the subject via the Diksha app/website, which is linked with T-SAT network and other digital learning resources," said A Devasena,

Director of School Education. The initiative will help over 30 lakh high school-goers in the state.

SCERT has printed QR codes on textbooks, which would help students in Telangana navigate digital content related to their subjects on the Diksha app or website.

In fact, 41 per cent of the 1.42-crore textbooks for students of classes I to X have reached the district head quarters in Telangana. The officials of government textbook printing press have issued orders to

the district authorities to take steps to send them to mandals. Efforts are under way to send the books to school points by June-end.

Textbooks for students of classes VI to 10 will have QR Code printed on them. Upon scanning the code with smart phone, the students will be able to access audio and video files and photos.

During 2020-21, 35 lakh text books have been printed. But, only 17 lakh have been sold. Many students did not buy books as there was no classroom teaching. This leaves 18 lakh books with authorities. The printers sought permission of the education department to sell the balance of books in the current academic year. However, the education department addressed a letter to the state government for a decision.

While QR codes offer simplified access to online learning, the SCERT has curated digital content to engage students with interactive edutainment and promote a cul-

ture of self-learning. Information is drawn from several resources and is available in various languages, including, English, Telugu, Hindi, Urdu, Marathi and Kannada.

Additionally, PDF files of all state-syllabus textbooks (Class I to XII) published by the education department are available on the website and application. Karnataka, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu governments have been experimenting with the app since 2019. Maharashtra has already coded all its textbooks in eight languages.

While QR codes offer simplified access to online learning, the SCERT has curated digital content to engage students with interactive edutainment and promote a culture of self-learning among them.

Karnataka, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu governments have been experimenting with the Diksha app since 2019. The Maharashtra government has already coded all its textbooks in at least eight languages.

## Covid lockdown leaves kids with autism in lurch, wrecks routines

**Parents with autistic kids advised not to skip therapy**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Covid pandemic and lockdown are affecting children with autism as fear of contracting the virus is making parents skip therapy.

Experts say delaying therapy due to Covid fear and restrictions is adding to the problems of children.

Parents with autistic children are refusing the therapy because they are afraid their kid might get infected through every conceivable way if they take them down to the center.

According to Sreeja Reddy Saripalli, founder and chief strategist, Pinnacle Blooms Network, the problem is persisting since the first phase of Covid hit the country in March last year.

"Adults themselves have cut down on their interaction with outside world over the past 14 months which means, even children, who are in desperate need of help, are held back from reaching out to social workers," she said.

Since much of the brain development happens when



the baby is between 12 and 60 months, she said delaying therapy will add to the problems.

"Babies are born with 25 per cent of their brain. As baby reaches their one year mark, it increases by 50 per cent. By the time the child is 48 to 60 months, which is, four to five years old, the brain is fully developed. The development of the brain, which collects signals from the five senses and delivers them to the baby, must take place before the baby is 12 to 60 months old. Otherwise the motor and executive functions that the child should be capable of doing on their own will most certainly

be impaired," said Sreeja Reddy. She believes that missing crucial months will render kid dependent and unable to navigate through life without parent's aid. It is of utmost importance that parents get them the therapy they require to build their motor and executive functions.

She said since controlling Covid symptoms in the second phase has become much easier due to growing awareness about the virus and an array of instructions on how to avoid getting infected, parents must ensure that their child does not miss even a single day of therapy.

## Hyderabad denizens welcome Centre's decision to procure vaccines for States

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The residents of Hyderabad have welcomed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's decision to provide 75 per cent of the Covid vaccine doses to the state governments free of cost.

Ratna Rani, Deputy Project Officer, Musheerabad Vaccination Centre said, "There is a shortage of vaccines and states are unable to procure by themselves. The Central government's move will help state governments in speeding up the vaccination drive."

A vaccine recipient said the central government's decision will ramp up the Covid vaccination drive.

"Prime Minister fixing the service charges of private hospitals to Rs 150 will help many people to get vaccinated as these hospitals cannot charge an extra price," another beneficiary said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday



announced that the Centre will provide free Covid vaccine to all citizens above 18 years of age from June 21 and it will handle the 25 per cent vaccination that was with states till now under the liberalised plan announced earlier.

In a televised address to the nation, the Prime Minister said the Centre will procure 75 per cent of the total production of the vaccine doses and provide them free to the states. No state government would be spending

anything on the vaccines.

The liberalised vaccination policy had come into effect from May 1 in which all people above 18 years were made eligible for vaccination. The policy entailed the Centre getting 50 per cent vaccine supply and 50 per cent to be procured under 'other than Government of India channel'.

Many Chief Ministers had over the past few days urged the Centre to procure vaccines and supply to them due to procurement constraints faced by them.

The PM had said that both the Centre and states will start working on new guidelines in two weeks. "A decision has been taken that 25 per cent of vaccination work that was with states, that responsibility will also be taken by the Centre. It will be implemented in the coming two weeks. Both the governments will work as per new guidelines in the coming two weeks," he said.

## Virus vaccination drive in Mahesh Babu's ancestral village complete

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A seven-day vaccination drive in Telugu star Mahesh Babu's ancestral village Burripalem in Andhra Pradesh was successfully completed, his wife and producer Namrata Shirodkar said on Wednesday.

Last month, Babu announced he will vaccinate people of Burripalem, the birthplace of his father, actor-filmmaker Krishna. The 45-year-old actor had adopted the village in 2015.

Shirodkar, a former actor known for films like "Pukar" and "Vaastav: The Reality", shared pictures from the vaccination camp, held in collaboration with Andhra Hospitals, on Instagram.

"Successfully completed the 7-day vaccination drive in Burripalem!! Can't be happier to have got our village vaccinated. Thank you Mahesh Babu, for always being as solid as a rock, @andhrashospitals @mbofficialteam for your relentless support and most importantly, a big thank you to all our villagers who came forward to take it," she wrote.

Shirodkar, 40, said vaccination is the "need of the hour" and requested her fans to get vaccinated soon.

She ended the caption with the hashtag, "Burripalem Gets Vaccinated."

## Mayor inspects desilting works

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Greater Hyderabad Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi inspected ongoing sanitation and desilting works in Amberpet Constituency along with the MLA Kaleru Venkatesh and GHMC officials on Wednesday.

The Mayor who had noticed that nala desalting works were not in progress in Gohnaka, immediately directed the officials to complete the works within seven days.

After inspecting box drain works in Bapuji Nagar, the Mayor observed garbage being dumped directly into the drainage from the houses. She directed the officials to ensure the entire drain lines in the area to be cleaned as there might have drain overflow concerns due to the storm water, drain and garbage together blocking the pipelines.

Later, the Mayor visited Bathukamma Kunta and solved the swatch auto parking issue as the residents



brought it to her notice.

After inspecting the open drain near the Fever Hospital in Sivananda Nagar, the Mayor directed the EE and AE and the medical officer to immediately remove the garbage by proceeding the nala desalting work to a depth of 3 feet. She also reviewed Chikkada Palli Nala and assured completion of sanitation works shortly. The Mayor distributed masks under the auspices of former corporator Padmavati along with MLA and local corporator.

## TS records 1,813 fresh cases

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana has reported 1813 new Covid infections and 17 fatalities on Wednesday pushing the cumulative number of deaths to 3,426 and the total number of positive cases to 5,96,813. The number of active cases in the State as on Wednesday evening stood at 24,301.

Between Tuesday and Wednesday, authorities conducted 1,29,896 Covid rapid tests of which test results of 1,420 samples were awaited. On Wednesday, 1,801 individuals recovered with a recovery rate of 95.35 per cent. So far, a total of 1,62,57,268 Covid-19 tests have been conducted in the State out of which 5,96,813 have tested

positive and 5,69,086 persons have recovered.

The Covid positive cases reported from the districts included six cases from Adilabad, 84 from Bhadradi Kothagudem, 179 from areas under GHMC, 38 from Jagtial, 22 from Jangaon, 39 from Jayashankar Bhupalpally, 24 from Jogulamba Gadwal and six from Kamareddy.

## Hyderabad Zoo loses two inmates

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Rani, the 83-year-old female elephant, and Ayyappa, a 21-year-old male leopard, passed away at the Nehru Zoological Park here. The zoo authorities attributed the deaths to senility.

One of the oldest elephants in captivity in the country, Rani joined the zoo in October 1963, and over the decades has been popular with citizens leading the annual Bonalu and Muharrum processions. For some time, she was suffering from old age related complications and was under regular treatment and supervision of



the zoo veterinary staff.

Supportive medicine and special supplements were being provided to Rani, who due to arthritis was not able to lie down and rest like other elephants. The zoo staff created an

earthen mound in the enclosure to facilitate the pachyderm to lean and rest. Rani was adopted by Upasana Kamineni Konidela, vice-chairperson, Apollo Foundation & Apollo Life in July last year for a peri-

od of one year.

The zoo authorities said that Rani took food till its last day and passed away without any major physical suffering on June 8. A post-mortem revealed indicated old age related multiple organ failure as the cause of the death. The normal life expectancy of an Asiatic elephant in captivity is little beyond 70 years.

The male leopard Ayyappa, born in June 2000, was received here from the SV Zoo Park Tirupati. The feline died on Wednesday due to old age and multiple organ failure, zoo authorities said.

## Shankarpally emerging real estate hotspot in Hyd

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Demand for plotted developments and villas have witnessed a rise in the western parts of Hyderabad after the pandemic. The rise has been particularly noticed in upcoming urban locations such as Shankarpally where infrastructure development has been on an upward trend.

Shankarpally which shares proximity to other peripheral developed regions such as Kokapet, Gachibowli and other financial districts is emerging as a residential hub. Along with presence of business districts, offices of multinational

companies operate in these localities. Robust physical and social infrastructure in the form of educational institutes, entertainment hub and shopping zones have also boosted the prospect of this region.

Shankarpally corridor is considered as the 'Green Zone' of the city and ranks high on the livability index due to its low noise pollution and good air quality index (AQI) as its adjoining markets have development restrictions on real estate development due to GO - 111 and conservation zoning.

Today there is an increased demand and preference for dwellings that are high on



greenery density and low on concrete. Shankarpally offers such kind of livable environment. The demand for residences primarily arises from

the locals and young professionals who have settled in this growing city and are looking for large living space in the post pandemic environment.

Commenting on the reason behind the trend, Veera Babu, Managing Director, Cushman & Wakefield - Hyderabad in a recently released report on emerging locations in Hyderabad stated, "Affordability, connectivity and proximity to economic corridors are key influencing factors towards the growth of Mokila - Shankarpally strip. They are strategically located between the ORR-RRR infrastructure projects and offer a good value proposition for investors as well as end users in the long-term investment perspective."

PrashinJhobalia, VP Marketing Strategy, House of

Hiranandani said that "Shankarpally, an emerging residential hub conforms to all the attributes required for a flourishing self-sustainable micro-market. The locality enjoys an upper hand in livability quotient when compared to other nearby localities due to presence of green and open spaces. These dynamics point towards an upward trend in the price appreciation just as the other micro markets of Hyderabad like Kokapet and Gachibowli that have experienced rising trends after infrastructural development and entry of international corporate giants."



## Metro, RTC to run till 6 pm from today

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In view of the extension of the lockdown by the State government, the timings of the Hyderabad Metro Rail service and Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC) have been rescheduled.

Accordingly, the Hyderabad Metro Rail will start its first train from respective terminal stations at 7 am while the last train will start at 5pm and end at the respective terminating stations by 6 pm.

For everyone's safety, passengers were also advised to strictly follow the Covid-19 safety guidelines including social distancing, wearing of face masks, regular hand sanitisation and thermal screening, among others.

Passengers are requested to cooperate with security personnel and staff of Hyderabad

Metro Rail in their efforts towards keeping their journey safe." KVB Reddy, MD & CEO, L&T Metro Rail (Hyderabad) Limited, appealed.

Meanwhile, The Telangana State Road Transport Corporation Executive Director (operations) Yadagiri has announced that the transport undertaking will run its bus services from 6 am to 6 pm as the State Cabinet at its meeting held on Tuesday decided to relax lockdown from 6 am to 6 pm from June 10 onwards.

He said that the TSRTC is running its fleet of 3,900 buses up to 2 pm and clarified that the buses would be run till 6 pm from June 10 onwards.

He also said that the bus pass counters would function from 6 am to 5 pm under the limits of Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC).



DIAGNOSTIC CENTRES

# Another milestone in Telangana's health history: Agriculture Minister Niranjana

PNS ■ GADWAL

Launching diagnostic centres across the state was yet another milestone in the health sector of Telangana and Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao brought a revolutionary change in the medical and health, Minister for Agriculture Singireddy Niranjana Reddy said on Wednesday.

Participating as a chief guest at the inauguration of Telangana Diagnostic Centre at the government hospital in

Gadwal district headquarters on Wednesday, Minister Niranjana Reddy said visionary Chief Minister KCR has given people a boon as now onwards they don't need to rush to cities for disease diagnosis. People could have 57 types of tests in the district in one place. It was part of its aim to provide the best medical facilities to the people of the state. When the poor people were facing hardships to have corona and other tests, the government felt that lab tests were also playing a prime role in

human health, not alone doctors and medicines. Accordingly, it launched 19 diagnostic centres in the district headquarters in the state today. Chief Minister KCR gave utmost priority to health and people could have all tests done in Gadwal without going to cities.

The Minister said the state Cabinet which met on Tuesday decided to set up special food processing zones across the state using the food materials produced by the farmers in respective districts. The food

processing plants would be set up in the agriculture field itself in Telangana state based on the requirement. The lands have been finalised in 14 districts at the meeting and food processing zones would also be established in Gadwal district provided if the farmers came forward to give the advance position of the lands at Kondapur in Ketidoddi mandal.

Local legislator Bandla Krishnamohan inaugurated the diagnostic centre, while Minister Niranjana Reddy par-

ticipated as a chief guest.

The MLA said the decision of Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao to establish diagnostic centres was a historical one and the state has moved ahead in the health sector. Nagarkurnool Parliament Member Pothuganti Ramulu took a first lab test at the diagnostic centre here.

MLC Surabhi Vanidevi, Zilla Parishad Chairperson Saritha, legislator Dr V M Abraham, district Collector Sruthi Ojha and others were present.



## New ration cards to all eligible people: Minister

PNS ■ MAHABUBNAGAR

Minister for Excise, Sports, Cultural and Tourism Dr V Srinivas Gowd on Wednesday said as decided by the State Cabinet all eligible people would get ration cards in Mahabubnagar district.

Launching the free ration rice scheme to the poor people through the state government in the pretext of corona pandemic on Wednesday at the Zilla Parishad meeting hall here, the Minister said every ration card-holders would be given 15 kg of rice free of cost for two months. He said Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao was implementing many welfare schemes and development programmes for the people unlike any other chief ministers in the past.

Srinivas Gowd said the district used to produce 4,000 metric tonnes of paddy per annum, but now it went up to two lakh metric tonnes and growth was achieved in all sectors after the Telangana government was formed. The corona patients were provided with free medical treatment and free meals through government hospitals, he added.

Mahabubnagar legislator Manne Srinivas Reddy said the state government was taking special initiative for the

growth in the health, agriculture and education sectors.

District Collector S Venkat Rao, Revenue Additional Collector K Seetharama Rao, RDO Padmasri, DSO Vanajatha and others were present.

Later, inaugurating the Telangana diagnostic centre at the government general hospital here on Wednesday, Srinivas Gowd said many tests would be conducted for heart, kidney, breast cancer, sugar diseases and lipid profile and directed the health officials to take steps to release test result as soon as possible in the digital format. Stating that the number of doctors, nurses and other staff was increased in the Mahabubnagar government hospital, he said 500 beds and an oxygen plant were arranged. About 150 house surgeons were rendering services at the hospital and there was a scope for 300 doctors to extend their services here. People were coming to Mahabubnagar for treatment not only from other districts and also from Hyderabad, he said. The Minister said the Chief Minister was convening a meeting on the Palamuru-Rangareddy lift irrigation scheme in the next week and canals would be built by calling tenders and all canals would be filled with waters.



## Collector lauds services of Red Cross Society

PNS ■ NAGARKURNOOL

District Collector L Sarman on Wednesday launched oxygen concentrators arranged by Red Cross Society at Nagarkurnool Collector office. Red Cross Society Chairman and Medical and Health Officer Dr K Sundaral and others were present on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, Collector Sarman lauded the services rendered by the volunteers of Red Cross Society as they were at the forefront during the natural calamities, critical and emergency



conditions. He said the Telangana state unit of Red Cross Society has donated two oxygen concentrators to the district and people who were in need could contact Red Cross Society secretary.

The Collector called upon the young people and youth associations to come forward to hold blood donation camps

as there was a severe crisis for blood in the blood banks. The people were facing hardships due to the unavailability of blood during emergencies. The youth association should take initiative through Red Cross Society to donate blood.

District Medical and Health Officer and Red Cross Society Chairman Dr K Sudhakar Lal said people who required oxygen concentrators or blood could contact its secretary Ramesh Reddy (94415 91656). Similarly, people who were interested to donate blood also could contact him, he said.

## Complete Chinna Kaleswaram project works: MLA

PNS ■ MANTHANI

Former minister and Manthani MLA D Sridhar Babu has alleged that the state government was doing injustice by shifting the Godavari river without supplying water for drinking and irrigation purposes to the people and the farmers of the area. While touring Mahadevpur and Kataram mandals on Wednesday, he said 70 per cent of the Chinna Kaleswaram project, which was started during the Congress regime in 2008 was completed. But the TRS government deliberately hindered the progress of the project which would cater to the irrigation needs to 45,000 acres. He made it clear that he would not keep silent if the government continued to take water and sand from this region. He demanded that the government should complete the Chinna Kaleswaram project on war-footing.



## Comrade Sobharoy tortured, killed by cops: Maoists

PNS ■ JAYASHANKAR BHUPALAPALLY

The police have brutally killed Maoist south sub-zonal communication in-charge and DVC comrade Sobharoy alias Gaddam Madhukar, who went to Warangal for medical treatment, by torturing him in the custody without providing proper medical care, Maoist Party south sub-zonal bureau and Dandakarnyam official spokesperson Samatha has alleged. In a statement released by the Maoists Party on Tuesday, Samatha appealed to the human rights' unions and progressive democratic intellectuals, Left parties, revolutionary people and media that the killing of Sobharoy should be condemned by treating it as an 'act of cruelty'. The SEB police declared the arrest of Sobharoy on June 1 through newspapers and said that he was admitted to the hospital for



better medical treatment. But, they killed him by torturing him without extending any medical assistance from June 1 to 5. Only after June 6, they announced he died while undergoing treatment. It was the most conspiring second murder by the police after the killing of platoon commander comrade Gangal on May 27, Samatha alleged.

Announcing that they were paying rich tributes to

Comrade Sobharoy on behalf of the Maoist party, Samatha said they would continue the idles of Sobharoy till the end. The Maoist party statement further said Comrade Sobharoy was born in 1999 at Kondapalli village in Bejuri mandal of Komarambheem Asifabad district in a poor family and he had joined as Sirpur Dalam member at the tender age of 16. Later, he shifted to Dandakarunya and

served at the weapons-making wing. He was discharging duties as in-charge of the south sub-zone communication wing by the time he was martyred. Samatha lauded his services saying that he served for 22 long years of his uninterrupted revolutionary life.

The Maoist press note criticised that under the direction of the Brahmin Hindutva fascist BJP government of Modi, the Chhattisgarh and

Telangana anti-people governments of Bhupesh Bagale and KCR were stepping up activities to eliminate Maoist party, PALGA and Janathana and people's unions by resorting to attacks in an unprecedented manner in the name of Samadhan Prahar since the last November. Samatha lashed out that the police and military and commando teams had intensified combing and suppressive attacks with a conspiracy and deception. The police were making false propaganda that the Maoists were inflicted with coronavirus, falling sick with poisoned food and many of them dying owing to lack of medical facilities. The Maoist party urged the general public and democratic people to oppose the deceptive conspiracies of the governments as part of their psychological warfare to suppress the revolutionary movement, the statement said.



## Aim to provide best medical care at Govt hospitals: Harish Rao

PNS ■ SANGAREDDY

Stating that now corporate medical services were made available in the government hospitals, Minister for Finance Tanneeru Harish Rao said on Wednesday that the aim of the state government was to strengthen the government hospitals to provide the best medical care to the people with sophisticated medical equipment.

Inaugurating the Telangana Diagnostic Centre and RT-PCR Centre at Sangareddy Government Hospital here on Wednesday, he said as per the directives of the Chief Minister, Telangana Diagnostic Centre was established and people could avail 57 types of lab tests here. The government launched diagnostic centres in 19 district headquarters in the state and each was established at a cost of Rs 2.5 crore, he said and added that 16 more centres would soon come up. Free lab tests would be conducted at the diagnostic centres for kidney, liver, thyroid, heart diseases and 90 other diseases. The blood samples would be collected from 25 PHCs and UHCs in Sangareddy district and they would be tested here without a single pie expenditure to the people. The test result would be given in the form of SMS within 24 hours to the cell numbers of the patients.

Harish Rao said four tests would be conducted free of cost for corona tests in the district hospital in one or two days. The government has sanctioned a medical college to be established at Rs 550 crore and a nursing college at Rs 50 crore in the district with 150 seats and 100 seats respectively. A 36-acre land was identified on the

## 'TAKE TOUGHER MEASURES TO COMBAT COVID'

PNS ■ SANGAREDDY

Minister for Finance T Harish Rao directed the medical and health and police authorities to take stringent measures to combat corona in the district. Addressing a review meeting to discuss steps to containing corona, paddy procurement and works related to Sangameswara lift irrigation project at the Collectorate on Wednesday, he advised the health officials to increase the number of tests where more Covid cases were being reported and distribute Covid kits to those who have symptoms of the corona found during the door-to-door survey. The police should not allow mass programmes and underscored the need to avoid people wandering without wearing masks and implement the lockdown regulations strictly. He asked the police to concentrate more on the areas where Covid was prevalent. Earlier, DM&HO said the number of positive cases was reduced by 3 per cent in the district. The Minister also inquired about the vaccination process, medicines and beds availability. He asked the health officials to conduct the door-to-door survey in Jogipet,

Sangareddy, Patancheru, Sadasivpet and Zaheerabad municipalities and increase the number of tests and follow tougher measures to execute lockdown. He said about 28,000 people have been identified as a high-risk group and so far 12,000 people were given inoculation and ordered the officials to complete cent per cent vaccination. He asked the officials to get ready Kohir PHC and Narayankhed MCH hospitals for the inauguration. Reviewing the paddy procurement, Harish Rao said paddy was cultivated in one crore acres in the state and 3 crore metric tonnes of paddy was procured till now. In Sangareddy, 99 per cent of paddy purchase has been completed and directed Additional Collector Veera Reddy to complete the remaining paddy in 1-2 days. He congratulated the officials for pushing Sangareddy ahead in the paddy procurement compared to other districts. Stating that the Chief Minister gave a green signal to buy jowar in the district, the Minister said although it was causing a burden of Rs 270 crore on it with the purchase of jowar, the government initiated it for the welfare of the jowar farmers.

premises of the government hospital for constructing medical college and efforts were on to identify land for nursing college, he said.

The Minister said the state Cabinet approved 1200 posts for medical college and 108 posts for nursing college. A modern hospital would be built in the district hospital with 650-beds at a cost of Rs 250 crore and radiology services would also be made available to the people of Sangareddy. He further said

a new CT scan machine was sanctioned with Rs 2.50 crore for the government hospital and it would be operational shortly. MPs Kotha Prabhakar Reddy and BB Patil, MLAs, Chanti Kranthi Kiran, Bhupal Reddy and Manik Rao, ZP chairperson Manjuri, district Collector Hanumantha Rao, SP Chandrasekhar Reddy, Additional Collectors Rajarshi Shah and Veera Reddy and others were present on the occasion.

## SU prof gets patent for testing anti-diabetic drug

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR

Assistant Professor in the Department of Pharmacology of University of College of Pharmaceutical Sciences Satavahana University Palle Kranthi Raju and his team bagged the Indian patent for a method of screening anti-diabetic drugs using the chick embryo method.

Instead of using the animals for pre-clinical studies and later on human beings for clinical trials to invent the new drugs, Kranthi Raju and his team used the chick embryo (hatching eggs) system for conducting tests about their drugs.

By using the chick embryo method for the drug trials, they could reduce the expenditure and save the precious lives of the animals, Kranthi Raju said.



Satavahana University Vice-Chancellor S Mallesh congratulated Kranthi for his innovation and bringing reputation to the budding university by securing the patent. Assuring all assistance for his further research on various issues, he hoped that he would secure more patents and bring laurels to the university. Registrar T Bharathi, Principal Tirupathi, Assistant Registrar Y Kishore and others were present.

## 'Identify suitable land for sand quarries'

PNS ■ JAYASHANKAR BHUPALAPALLY

Jayashankar Bhupalapally district Joint Collector Swarnalatha has directed the mining and geology officials to submit the details of private patta lands with sand dunes to establish sand quarries.

Speaking at the district-level sand committee meeting at the Collector's office here on Wednesday, JC Swarnalatha said the private patta lands have been filled with sand dunes in Mahadevpur and Palimela mandals on the banks of the Godavari river due to the rains. These lands with sand dunes could be used for sand quarries. She asked the officials to inspect these lands to set up quarries. The officials of revenue, mining, Panchayat Raj, agriculture and other concerned departments should conduct a survey on the lands



if the pattadars are ready to give and submit a report. She also asked the officials to submit the details of societies that have applied for running the sand quarries. The officials should ensure that the transportation of sand was being done only from the permitted quarries in government-approved quantities. They

should supervise properly to avoid illegal transportation of sand more than allowed quantities. Mining AD Ravinder, TSMDC PO Ravikumar, Mahadevpur and Palimela tehsildars Srinivas and Saibabu, environment engineer Sravan Kumar, mandal agriculture officer Prabhavati and others were present.



# Shiv Sena says it values personal ties irrespective of political stand

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Shiv Sena on Wednesday said it has always valued personal relations irrespective of political affiliations and Tuesday's one-on-meeting between Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and Prime Minister Narendra Modi was part of personal relations as well as protocol.

The personal meeting between Thackeray, who heads the Shiv Sena, and the prime minister had set political circles abuzz against the backdrop of the Sena severing ties with its oldest ally BJP after the Maharashtra Assembly elections in October 2019 and forming Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government with the NCP and Congress.

After his one-on-one meeting with the prime minister,



Thackeray on Tuesday said there was nothing wrong in having such interaction, adding sarkily that he had not gone to meet Pakistani leader Nawaz Sharif.

"The Chief Minister's Delhi visit was not for political reasons. Those who see politics in it....let them be happy with

their thinking. There will be a lot of speculations over this meeting. We only hope that Maharashtra's pending issues with the Centre get resolved soon," the Sena mouthpiece Saamana said in the editorial.

Thackeray had led a delegation of his cabinet colleagues

comprising his deputy Ajit Pawar, a senior NCP leader, and Congress' Ashok Chavan to meet Modi and discuss issues pertaining to the state.

During the 90-minute interaction, Thackeray also had a one-on-one meeting with the prime minister.

Taking a dig at the BJP leadership in Maharashtra, the editorial said they should try to understand the "nature of the Modi-Thackeray relationship" in the context of the meeting.

The editorial said the meeting between PM, Thackeray, Ajit Pawar and Chavan lasted for over an hour.

"We do not doubt that the mood was good and the meeting took place in a friendly and cordial atmosphere," it said.

Without naming any state, the Sena said the meeting between Modi and Thackeray was important given that there is no stand-off between the Centre and Maharashtra which is seen elsewhere.

"The present chief minister of Maharashtra is of the firm opinion that the state should get its rightful share," the editorial said.

## Allotment of water body: NGT issues notice to TN

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal has imposed a stay on allotment of a water body "Pudukulam Kanmoi" in Madurai to certain journalists and sought response from the Tamil Nadu government on the issue.

A bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel said the water body cannot be dismantled and has to be maintained as such under the applicable statute (TN Protection of Tanks and eviction of encroachments Act, 2017) and binding judgements of the Supreme Court.

"We issue notice to the State of Tamil Nadu through Chief Secretary, who may coordinate with the concerned Departments and file a response within one month by e-mail.

## Hospital official apologises over controversial 'no Malayalam' circular

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The nursing superintendent of GB Pant Hospital here has apologised for issuing a controversial circular that barred nursing staff from speaking in Malayalam on duty, saying he had "no intention to disrespect any Indian language, region, or religion".

The hospital had withdrawn the circular, which asked the nursing staff to converse only in Hindi and English, on Sunday, saying it was issued "without any instruction or knowledge of the hospital administration and the Delhi government".

In a letter to the medical director of the hospital on Monday, the nursing superintendent explained the reasons behind issuing the circular and said it was issued in "a positive sense and there was no bad intention against Malayalam-speaking staff".



"In fact, the circular was misinterpreted and I didn't even get a chance to explain the same," he said.

The official said he had acted on the basis of complaints received on May 31, June 1 and June 2.

"The gist of the complaint was that most of the staff communicates in regional language due to which other staff members as well as attendants of the patients feel helpless. It was requested to sort out the matter... Complainant clearly mentioned Malayalam language," the letter by the nursing superintendent read.

Earlier, too, patients and attendants had complained verbally to seniors about some staff members using their regional language, he said.

The patients would assume they had some serious health issues and that's why languages are changed to hide their condition. Hence, the circular was issued to "avoid any confusion due to language barrier", the nursing superintendent said.

"Even then, if feelings of any staff were hurt, I regret and offer an apology for the same," he said.

On Monday, the Delhi Health Department had issued a memo to Govind Ballabh Pant Institute of Post Graduate Medical Education & Research (GIPMER) in connection with the controversial circular.

A source said the health department had asked the hospital to "explain why such an order was issued".



## 'Procure as many vax doses as possible to keep kids safe'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre should move proactively to procure COVID-19 vaccines for children as many countries have started working on it, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said on Wednesday.

The ruling AAP dispensation led by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has voiced concern over safety of children while citing opinion of experts that children may be affected in a possible third wave of COVID-19.

Sharing a newspaper report, Sisodia tweeted, "The world has started working on vaccine for children under age 12. Centre Govt should proactively do the needful to procure as many vaccines as possible to keep our children safe."

Currently, people aged 18 years and above are being vaccinated in India. The screening of children in the age group of 2-18 for trial of Covaxin vaccine has started started at the AIIMS Patna and New Delhi to see if the vaccine is suitable for them.

## Carry out 'surgical strike' on coronavirus: HC to Centre

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday said the Centre's approach against coronavirus, which is the society's biggest enemy at present, should be "like a surgical strike" instead of standing at the borders waiting for the virus to come out.

A division bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice G S Kulkarni said the Union government's new 'near to home' vaccination programme was like waiting for the virus carrier to come to the Centre.

"Coronavirus is our biggest enemy. We need to strike it down. The enemy is residing in certain areas and in some people who are unable to come out. Your (government) approach should be like a surgical strike. You are standing at the borders waiting for the virus carrier to come to you. You are not entering the enemy territory," Chief Justice Datta said.

The bench said the government was taking decisions for the welfare of the public at large, but they were delayed which has resulted in the loss of several lives.

The court was hearing a



public interest litigation filed by two advocates - Dhruvi Kapadia and Kunal Tiwari - seeking a direction to the government to start a door-to-door vaccination programme for senior citizens above the age of 75, specially-abled persons and those who are wheelchair-bound or bed-ridden.

The Union government on Tuesday told the court that currently door-to-door vaccination was not possible, but it has decided to start "near to home" vaccination centres.

On Wednesday, the HC pointed out examples of the door-to-door vaccination programmes started by Kerala, Jammu and Kashmir, Bihar and Odisha and also a few municipal corporations like Vasai-Virar in Maharashtra.

"Why should the same not be encouraged in other states

across the country? The central government cannot clip the wings of those state governments and civic bodies who wish to do it (door-to-door vaccination) but are waiting for the Centre's nod," the court said.

It further asked why only Maharashtra and the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) were waiting for the Centre's nod to start door-to-door vaccination when other states in the north, south and east have started it already without any nod.

"Why is only the west waiting?" Chief Justice Datta asked.

The bench noted that even the BMC had failed to live up to the court's expectations by saying it was willing to start door-to-door vaccination only if the Union government permits.

## Explain how people given vax without IDs: HC to Govt, Centre

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday asked the Maharashtra and Union governments what steps they had taken to inform citizens about the Centre's SOPs on COVID-19 vaccination for people who do not possess one of the seven identity cards prescribed for the purpose.

A bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and G S Kulkarni also asked the Union government to inform the court of the steps taken to cover under its vaccination drive the people who were mentally ill and without a legal guardian and hence, not in a position to give an informed consent for receiving the vaccine.

The bench was hearing a

bunch of Public Interest Litigations (PILs) on ensuring greater access of the anti-COVID-19 vaccines to citizens, improved functioning of the CoWIN portal and other issues.

The petitioners informed the bench that the government had prescribed a list of seven recognised identity cards, including the Aadhaar and the PAN cards, for citizens to register for vaccination on the CoWIN portal.

While the Union government had issued detailed standard operating procedures (SOPs) for people who do not possess any of these seven IDs, the responsibility of identifying such persons and ensuring they were vaccinated was given to officials at the state and district levels.



## 'Decision on free vax appropriate but late'

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party supremo Mayawati on Wednesday welcomed the Centre's announcement on free vaccines to all above 18 years of age, but called it a "delayed decision".

She asked the central government to stay away from politics and focus on vaccinating the public against coronavirus.

"After the second wave of coronavirus proved to be very lethal, the Centre's decision of 'free' vaccination for all from June 21 is a late but appropriate step. The BSP has been demanding it from the beginning. Now this work needs to be done with great diligence," Mayawati said in a tweet in Hindi.

She said intensive vaccination is the only solution to the COVID-19 pandemic.



"Denial and negligence from this is unjustified and can be fatal. Stay away from politics, accusations, taking credit and work promptly towards vaccinating people. Now without wasting time, it is necessary to pay attention to this by rising above party politics," the BSP chief tweeted.

Addressing the nation on Monday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced that the central government will provide free vaccines to states for all above 18 years starting June 21.

## Bahraich: Stone idol found in field, admin informs Archaeology Dept

PNS ■ BAHRAICH (UP)

A stone idol depicting a man riding a horse was found in an agriculture field here on Wednesday morning, after which people gathered there to see it and the authorities informed the Archaeology Department to carry out the necessary investigation.

The idol was found buried by Sabir Ali while he was carrying

out digging work in the field at Bhadwani village in Mahsi tehsil, according to an official.

Villagers gathered there to see it as soon as the news about it spread in the area. Mahsi SDM S N Tripathi said Sabir Ali immediately informed the administration about it. The idol has been brought to the district treasury and the Archaeology Department has been informed for investigation, the SDM said.

## 'Only in India we are liberal with health concerns', says SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

"Only in India we are liberal with the health concerns," the Supreme Court observed while refusing to entertain pre-arrest bail pleas of two Madhya Pradesh-based businessmen who are accused in a food adulteration case.

A vacation bench comprising Justices Indira Banerjee and M R Shah was hearing the anticipatory bail applications of Prawar Goyal and Vineet Goyal of Neemuch district in Madhya Pradesh. Hearing appeals against dismissal of their pre-arrest bail pleas by the Madhya

Pradesh High Court at Indore, the bench was told by lawyer Puneet Jain that penal provisions relating to offence of food adulteration are bailable ones and hence, they deserved anticipatory bail. "Only in India we are liberal with health concerns," Justice Shah said, adding,

"Mr Jain, answer this. Will you eat this adulterated wheat?"

As the bench was disinclined to consider the anticipatory bail plea, the lawyer decided to withdraw the same. "On the prayer of Christ Jain, the Special Leave Petition is dismissed as withdrawn," the bench noted in

its order on Tuesday. Besides the offence of cheating, the accused have been booked under section 272 (adulteration of food or drink intended for sale) and 273 (sale of noxious food or drink) of the IPC which provides for maximum jail term of six months or maximum fine of Rs

1,000 or both.

As per the FIR lodged by the Food Safety department, the businessmen have been accused of using of "non-edible golden offset colour" for polishing wheat at the premises of Darshil Agro Industries situated in Village Kanawati at Neemuch.

## 'Can save logistic fuel worth Rs 311L cr during 2020-50'

The new analysis by NITI Aayog and RMI highlights India's potential to save 10 gigatonnes of cumulative CO2 over the next 3 decades

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

- **INDIA HAS THE POTENTIAL TO:**
- **Reduce its logistics cost by 4% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP)**
- **Achieve 10 gigatonnes of cumulative CO2 emissions savings between 2020 and 2050**
- **Reduce Nitrogen Oxide (NOx) and Particulate Matter (PM) emissions by 35% and 28%, respectively until 2050**

NITI Aayog, RMI and RMI India's new report, titled 'Fast Tracking Freight in India: A Roadmap for Clean and Cost-Effective Goods Transport', presents key opportunities for India to reduce its logistics costs.

Due to the rising demand for goods and services, freight transport demand is expected to grow rapidly in the future. While freight transport is essential to economic development, it is plagued by high logistics costs and contributes to rising CO2 (carbon dioxide) emissions, and air pollution in cities.

"Freight transportation is a critical backbone of India's growing economy, and now more than ever, it's important to make this transport system more cost-effective, efficient, and cleaner. Efficient freight transport will also play an essential role in realising the benefits of existing government initiatives such as Make

in India, Aatmanirbhar Bharat, and Digital India," said Sudhendu J. Sinha, Adviser, Transport and Electric Mobility, NITI Aayog.

As India's freight activity grows five-fold by 2050 and about 400 million citizens move to cities, a whole system transformation can help uplift the freight sector.

"This transformation will be defined by tapping into opportunities such as efficient rail-based transport, the optimisation of logistics and supply chains, and shifts to electric and other clean-fuel vehi-

cles. These solutions can help India save ₹311 lakh crore cumulatively over the next three decades," said Clay Stranger, Managing Director, RMI.

The report outlines solutions for the freight sector related to policy, technology, market, business models and infrastructure development. The recommendations include increasing rail network's capacity, promoting intermodal transport, improving warehousing and trucking practices, policy measures and pilot projects for clean technology adop-



tion, and stricter fuel economy standards.

When successfully

deployed at scale, the proposed solutions can help India establish itself as a

leader in logistics innovation and efficiency in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

## U'khand ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in Niti Aayog's SDG India Index 2020-21

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Chief Minister Tirath Singh Rawat on Wednesday congratulated teachers and education department officials in Uttarakhand for the state being ranked fourth in Niti Aayog's SDG India Index 2020-21

Rawat said rise to the fourth position carries a message for teachers and officials of the state education department to continue their efforts with the same dedication and catapult the state to the top position in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) list in the coming years.

"Uttarakhand is lucky to have been ranked fourth by Niti Ayog in the list of SDGs prepared on the basis of its performance on 17 parameters. It had ranked 19th in the list in 2015-16 and now it has climbed to the fourth position," he said.

A total of 500 teachers from across the state joined the programme virtually, an official release here said.

The chief minister also launched a website of 'Atal Utkrishi Vidyalaya' on the occasion. Rawat said all steps are being taken by the state government to provide quality education to children.

A total of 190 schools are being set up in the state under the Atal Utkrishi Vidyalaya scheme, two in each block to make quality education available to all, he said.







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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Good intent

The Election Commission of India is pushing the Government over the next batch of electoral reforms

The Election Commission, trolled by the non-BJP parties during the last round of Assembly elections for reasons ranging from impartiality towards the Opposition and alleged kowtowing before the BJP Government, took the lead this time in inquiring with the Government about the next tranche of electoral reforms. The Commission wrote to the Union Law Ministry to get back on the nearly 40 reform proposals pending with it. The Commission identified five main reforms it urgently wants implemented: Allowing voters turning 18 to register themselves with the Commission; punishment for candidates furnishing false information in their affidavits; paid news to be made an electoral offence; ban on advertising in print media during the silence period; linking Aadhaar number to electoral rolls to avoid duplication of voter ID cards. Reforms are currently of three levels in terms of ease of implementation. The Commission is already implementing the

elementary level, comprising digitising the election process and enabling remote voting for NRIs and migrant workers. The five reforms listed above come in the intermediate level because they first need amendments to laws and they are not really politically controversial. Some reforms implemented over a decade ago made the electoral process a bit more credible, including candidates' affidavits on criminal antecedents and assets, criminalisation of politics, limitations on exit and opinion polls, prohibition on surrogate advertisements, compulsory maintenance of poll accounts by parties. However, feet are being dragged on a crucial



reform: Restricting the number of seats a candidate can contest from.

It is the final level of reforms that are contentious and which form the real core of electoral reforms India urgently needs. One is overall transparency of the Commission's actions. The run-up to every Assembly election sees various interpretations of Commission's actions, particularly the Opposition's charge of alleged leniency shown to ruling party bigwigs. The second issue is electoral bonds. At present any Indian citizen can buy electoral bonds and donate it to a political party of choice, but anonymously. While anonymity is intended to prevent political victimisation of the donor, the Commission in 2017 did not favour the donor's identity being kept secret as that may allow shell companies and foreign entities to fund and influence Indian elections. Hate speech and communal polarisation have of late become the biggest negative factors in Indian elections, their impact worse than caste considerations. The Commission has been found wanting in issuing exemplary punishment to the wrongdoers. Another issue is the demand for taking the collegium route, like the judiciary, for appointment of commissioners and elevating the senior-most as the chief. Last but not the least is Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "one nation one election" proposal as well as a single voters' list for the Lok Sabha, Assembly and panchayat elections to cut down costs. Clearly, the latter reforms will hold a candle to the Commission's sincerity of purpose subject, of course, to the Union Government being eager to clear the proposals.

### PICTALK



Commuters make their way during heavy rain, near Oberoi Mall at Goregaon, in Mumbai

PTI

## Better tomorrow?

Crushed, the tourism industry is hoping that the run of bad luck would soon be over

The travel and tourism industry, along with associated arms like the hospitality and aviation sectors, has been in the doldrums for at least two seasons in a row. Depression has set in, hope has touched nadir, jobs have been lost and revenue — both for individual players and the Governments, alike — is shying away from the invested entrepreneurs like Vijay Mallya from the Indian law-enforcement agencies. But the Centre and State Governments' ongoing inoculation drive, as it gathers momentum, has injected a sense of optimism and enthusiasm among the stakeholders. From Kashmir to Uttarakhand to Himachal Pradesh to Goa and Kerala, basically almost all the States where the economy thrives on travel, tourism and hospitality, it's the same story of despair. But Wednesday brought with it a sliver of hope and positivity when Culture and Tourism Minister Prahlad Patel fanned the embers of their dying hope. He said in unequivocal terms that the ongoing vaccination drive is going to drive the revival of the tourism sector. Giving the entrepreneurs in the above-mentioned sectors another reason to smile, he added that the Government is working on a uniform policy and setting up protocols for travellers getting vaccinated against COVID-19.



Speaking to a conglomerate of well-known companies operating in the related fields, he lauded their efforts in coming together to "promote the interests of the smallest and often under-represented operators". Meanwhile, in Goa, the tourism stakeholders were trying to decipher Chief Minister Pramod Sawant's statement that re-opening of tourism would be considered after its entire population is vaccinated with at least one dose. Similarly, in Kerala, the tourism sector is in peril as the State has lost three consecutive seasons for the first time. The two consecutive floods in 2018 and 2019, and now the COVID-19 pandemic have flattened the tourism sector. The tour operators are clueless as to when they will see a return to the good old days. In Kashmir, too, the sector has been hit two successive years. In March this year, tourist arrivals had picked up to 1,25,000 from about 19,000 in January before the second wave of COVID-19 hit home. Here's hoping that the lives and livelihood of all of them, as well as of their families, get back on track as early as possible.

# Likud oxygen for Israel's polity

Irrespective of whether Netanyahu stays or goes, it can't be denied that his Likud party has changed the contours of Israeli politics forever



PRIYADARSHI DUTTA

With four inconclusive elections to the Knesset in the last two years, Israel's politics is badly fragmented. While Likud is still the leading party in the 24th Knesset, its 30-seat performance is the poorest in recent times. Many attribute it to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's brashness, arrogance and corrupt policies. He might have to stand trial for four distinct charges of corruption and sleaze against him. Politics in Israel has always been fissiparous. Parliamentary groupings (alliances) are common for cobbling up a majority in the 120-member legislature. On most occasions, the Knesset failed to complete its four-year term and a new Government was sworn in sooner than the Knesset dissolved. Israel witnessed 34 Governments during the previous 23 Knessets.

Whether Israelis have practised democracy to the hilt, or to a fault, is a matter of opinion. They organised the first general elections to the Knesset on January 25, 1949 — less than a year after declaring independence on May 14, 1948. Israel's declaration of independence was accompanied by its battle for survival against the Arab Army's attack aimed at annihilating the new State. Despite many Arabs of Palestine fleeing, a portion stayed back. Almost 30,000 Arabs voted in the first general elections (1949) and nearly 70,000 in the second (1951). Israel, based on universal adult suffrage, was the first country in the world to enfranchise Arab women.

Democracy in Israel might be seen as an American influence, its stalwart ally. However, it is largely forgotten that a Communist USSR was the first country to recognise an independent Israel *de jure* and supply it with arms and ammunition (through Czechoslovakia), which helped Israel survive the Arab attack. Previously, on May 14, 1947, (exactly a year before Israel's declaration of independence) it was the USSR's permanent representative at the UN Andrei Gromyko who had proposed in the UN the plan to partition the mandated territory of Palestine between the

Arabs and Jews; thus leading to creation of sovereign Israel. It is another thing that the USSR, which turned anti-Israel and pro-Arab by 1950, tried to erase these aspects from the public discourse.

The birth and survival of Israel is popularly presented through the prism of Jewish-Arab discord. It is generally overlooked that pro-Zionist Jews were themselves affected by tumultuous ideological disputes. One of the best-kept secrets is how this dispute led an independent Israel to practise apartheid against a section of its own Jewish citizens for the first 30 years. The struggle has its origins in the ideological conflict between David Ben-Gurion (1886-1973), a committed Socialist, and Zeev Jabotinsky (1860-1940), who espoused Revisionist Zionism and created Jewish self-defence units for the first time in two millennia. Both were from the former Russian Empire. This split the Jewish underground active defence into mainstream Haganah and fringe Irgun and Lehi. The more militant Irgun and Lehi, following Jabotinsky's footsteps, believed in fighting the British as well as Arabs, while fighting the former was not on the agenda of Haganah.



**BEN-GURION ACTED VINDICTIVELY AGAINST THE JEWISH FAMILIES WHICH HAD SERVED IN IRGUN AND LEHI. THOUGH THEIR CITIZENSHIP COULD NOT BE CANCELLED AS PER ISRAEL'S LAW OF RETURN (1950), THEY WERE PRACTICALLY OSTRACISED**

In this power struggle, Ben-Gurion apparently emerged victorious. Not only he became the first Prime Minister of Israel, but his Mapai (Labour) Party ruled Israel for a quarter century, ending with his protégé Golda Meir's exit in June 1974. Despite its splintered politics, the Social-Democratic nature of Israel made Mapai an extremely powerful agency to control the economy, education, labour market, media and Army.

Ben-Gurion acted vindictively against the Jewish families which had served in Irgun and Lehi. Though their citizenship could not be cancelled as per Israel's Law of Return (1950), they were practically ostracised. While Irgun and Lehi were demonised as terrorist organisations in history books, their former fighters like Yitzhak Shamir (who later became the PM) could not get even a simple clerk's job and Israel Eldad was removed from professorship after Ben-Gurion's personal intervention. The graves of former fighters were not marked with Israel Defence Force symbols.

These families, restricted to a few colonies in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, stayed close to each other sharing pride and pain. Their only notable representa-

tive in Knesset was Menachim Begin, a disciple of Jabotinsky. They named their children, born mostly in 1940s, after fallen fighters and heroes and brought them in the family tradition of pride, pathos and patriotism. It was from these families that emerged a whole generation of politicians including Ehud Olmert, Yair Shamir, Uzi Landau, Ruby Rivlin and, later, Tzipi Livni and Benjamin Netanyahu who would transform the scenario in Israel.

Shortly after Israel's pyrrhic victory in Yom Kippur War, 1973, an 87-year old David Ben-Gurion died, Golda Meir resigned and Menachim Begin, along with Major General Ariel Sharon (Retd), formed the Likud (Consolidation) party, with Revisionist Zionism as its creed. This party has produced, apart from Begin, other Prime Ministers like Yitzhak Shamir, Ariel Sharon, Ehud Olmert and Benjamin Netanyahu. In one generation, led by Menachem Begin, children (often called Princes) from ostracised fighters' families had turned the politics of Israel around.

(The writer is an author and independent researcher based in New Delhi. The views expressed are personal.)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### REGIONAL PARTIES IN VIRTUAL SPACE

Sir —Apropos of the exclusive report 'Regional parties gain Twitter ground' (June 9, 2021), it needs no clairvoyance to say that this doesn't bode well for the ruling party. Social media, including Twitter, can be said to have influenced a large section of the middle class in general and the youth in particular at the hustings during the past two general elections. If the ruling party is losing its toehold on Twitter, it certainly has reasons to worry.

Gradually, this may lead to an erosion of the party's support base and the core constituency of voters. Surprisingly, COVID-19 has served on a platter an unanticipated opportunity to politically challenge the ruling party using all the political weapons. The ruling party will have to do some serious homework to get out of this conundrum.

Bichu Muttathara | Pune

### TESTING TIMES OF DEMONETISATION

Sir — It was indeed a trying time for various banks in India, including the currency chests, during the demonetisation period and the bank staff struggled just like in the recent COVID-19 times. There were serpentine queues and the staff worked late hours to cater to the needs of their clients during the tough time.

The period from November 8 to December 31, 2016, was a crucial period for unearthing black money and even housewives were found having bundles of ₹500 and ₹1000 in their kitty unaccounted for. The clever people got it exchanged right during the intervening period and some of them cleared their loan dues with these demonetised notes. As part of the exercise, the Government gave the people an opportunity to exchange junked currency notes or deposit these in their bank accounts.

Now, the RBI has asked the banks to preserve the CCTV recordings of their branches and currency chests in an effort to assist the enforcement agencies to take action against people involved in illegal activities during the demonetisation peri-

## Keep staying in battle mode



There is a slight sense of relief that the ferocious second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has proved costly in terms of the lives lost, is receding. There are no words to describe what the pandemic has done to us. Our lives are being shaped by the effects, losses and the memories it has engendered. Despite the decline in the number of daily new cases and casualties, there is no room for complacency. It is crucial that we don't let the pandemic catch us off guard one more time. It is of utmost importance for us to understand that the virus is still very much in circulation with its tendency to gain

entry into human hosts. It is a fine detail of the pandemic that the virus (SARS-CoV-2) is mutating and it is in its nature to do so to increase its chances of survival. When the causative agent of a pandemic disease mutates into new forms, we find ourselves in a race against them. The level of protection provided by vaccines to various new variants varies.

It is true we are creatures of habit. But we cannot carry on merrily without realising the danger of not changing the usual behaviour. COVID-19 leaves us with no option but to adopt pandemic-appropriate behaviour. The war against COVID-19 needs to be fought on multiple fronts. Ramping up testing, carrying out more genome sequencing and quickening the pace of vaccination, besides improving healthcare facilities, are of critical importance. We must be conscious that the pandemic is not going away anytime soon and it could erupt in more waves, and act accordingly. It is usual to have peaks and troughs in the course of a pandemic, so we cannot avoid fighting a long battle against it.

G David Milton | Tamil Nadu

od. On the basis of various inputs, the investigative agencies also started probing matters relating to illegal accumulation of new currency notes. This is another step in the right direction.

Jayanthi Subramaniam | Navi Mumbai

### NOT EASY FOR THE TMC OUTSIDE BENGAL

Sir — This has reference to your editorial 'Wide angle' (June 9). The young nephew of Didi, who recently took over as the TMC's general secretary, is reported to have said that if they decide to go to other States, they will do so not to win a few seats or increase their vote share but to win power in that State by taking the BJP head on. It is the best joke of the year. Politicians tend to speak tall but when it comes to execution, they just fall short.

Will the TMC spread its wings to Uttar Pradesh or Punjab, which go to polls in 2022, participate and win these elections?

The TMC has a considerable Muslim vote bank in West Bengal. Bangladeshi infiltrators and other minorities who have settled in the State for decades together have been given ration cards and voter IDs. But that may not work in other States.

The TMC cannot dream of winning a few seats in other States, leave alone clinching power there. It is a daydream. Similar was the AAP's thought after it won the Delhi elections the first time. Eyeing an all-India canvas, it failed to get more than a few seats in Punjab. Didi is not a figure to fit into the shoes of a national leader.

On the other hand, the BJP has made inroads in West Bengal in the recently held elections. Whether the TMC provides good governance in the coming days to retain power in 2026 remains to be seen.

Sravana Ramachandran | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## SOUND BITE

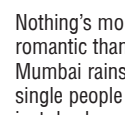
Will the UP Government bring out the reality of Agra medical mock drill and punish the guilty?



Congress general secretary — Priyanka Gandhi Vadra



History! El Salvador President — Nayib Bukele



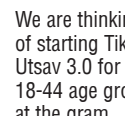
Nothing's more romantic than Mumbai rains, but single people can just daydream. Who is meant for me please show up na!

Actor — Kangana Ranaut



I do not count the number of goals. All of this is past. Ten years later, we will sit together, have a chat and then count.

Indian footballer — Sunil Chhetri



We are thinking of starting Tika Utsav 3.0 for the 18-44 age group at the gram panchayat level.

Goa Chief Minister — Pramod Sawant



FIRST COLUMN

WHEN DOCTORS BECOME PATIENTS

It's an Indian medical conundrum: How long will the doctors tolerate violence against themselves?



N SOUMIK

Seneca, the great Roman philosopher and statesman once said on the importance of doctors: "People pay the doctor for their troubles, but for his kindness, they still remain in his debt. " We are fighting against an invisible and an infinitesimal enemy in size, the coronavirus, which brought mankind to its knees, and it is our bounden duty to give every possible aid to the phalanx of our front warriors - the doctors and healthcare workers. Doctors have been revered in India as the proxies of god since ancient times. But attitudes have changed with time and doctors are subjected to hardships by the very people they strive to save.

Of late heinous instances of doctors and healthcare workers being assaulted and mistreated are being reported across the nation. It is a shame that during such a critical phase of pandemic, when the whole medical system is on trial, people are not recognizing these gods in white coats.

In the last fortnight, there have been at least four to five cases reported of violence against healthcare workers, including vandalism in hospitals. A video infamously went viral on social media platforms in which a junior doctor at a Covid-19 care centre in Assam, Dr Seuj Kumar Senapati, was mer-



cilessly beaten with utensils and crockery items by a mob which was the outraged over the death of a Covid-19 patient.

The mob, not only assaulted the doctor, but also rendered heavy damage to the care centre. There have been 28 arrests made by the police so far, including the main accused. The National Human Rights Commission has been strictly scrutinizing the case and has demanded an action taken report from the Director-General of Police within four weeks. Assam, having the fifth highest literacy rate in our country, simply cannot live down this shame.

A similar case is from Karnataka where a senior pediatrician, Dr Deepak was seriously assaulted following the death of a six-year-old boy due to complexities after a dengue attack. A relative of his and three others attacked the doctor while he was returning home riding on his bicycle after finishing his duty.

The doctors do have every right to protest such violence. In the Assam incident, the doctors even boycotted OPD services and the IMA, Assam chapter threatened to boycott Covid-19 services if doctors' safety is not ensured. In several towns and cities, doctors and healthcare workers are wearing black badges to express solidarity with the victims. Its psychology that when in pain anger is a bosom friend.

How long will the doctors tolerate violence against them? As it is they are under tremendous pressure, working long, stressed hours. The safety equipment they wear is anyway cumbersome - they have to wear two masks, PPE kits, double gloves and a face shield for stretches of up to 12 hours. There is no guarantee of timely, hot meals or the much-needed rest. And the unrelenting queues of patients.

The IMA has released this data; Last year, 748 doctors across India succumbed to Covid-19 in the first wave and 642 in the second wave. They must receive praise We for facing the virus storm to keep people safe. In the very least they should not be de-motivated by bouts of violence that helps no one and only hampers medical care to other patients

(The author is a student of BA (Economics) in BJB College, Bhubaneswar, Odisha. The views expressed are personal.)

G7 plans end of tax paradise for MNCs

It will end a lucrative business model of the MNCs that park most of their profits in tax havens, bringing curtains down on the golden era of the havens themselves



GOVIND BHATTACHARJEE

The June 4-5 agreement between the G7 Finance Ministers (FM)s from the USA, Britain, Germany, Canada, France, Italy and Japan to plug the cross-border tax loopholes used by the giant multinational companies (MNCs) to evade taxes has immense potential to reform and revolutionise the global tax system. The reform blueprint is based on two pillars: first, to distribute the profits equitably among countries where these are generated, enabling them to tax such profits, and second, adoption of a minimum corporate tax rate of at least 15 percent globally.

By forcing the MNCs irrespective of their nature of business to pay taxes where they operate, it can bring to an end the decades-long "race to the bottom" in which some countries compete with each to attract corporate giants with ultra-low tax rates and exemptions, depriving the governments of other countries where the MNCs reap most of their profits of billions of dollars in taxes - money badly needed by them now to prop up their pandemic-ravaged economies. It will also bring to an end a very lucrative business model of these MNCs that park most of their profits in tax havens, bring to an end the golden era of the havens themselves. The tech giants which operate remotely through digital medium like Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple etc. would also start feeling the pinch.

Rich nations like G7 as well as emerging economies have equally struggled in vain for decades to make the MNCs operating within their jurisdictions to pay taxes to them. But using a tax avoidance strategy called Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS), MNCs have been artificially 'shifting' their profits year after year from higher-tax jurisdictions to tax-havens where they pay little or no tax, thus 'eroding' the 'tax-bases' of the former. Countries like Ireland, Luxembourg, Cyprus, Caribbean countries like British Virgin Islands, Bahamas or Cayman Islands, and Central American countries like Panama have used their tax rate arbitrage to attract the MNCs- about 40 percent of MNCs' overseas profits are estimated to be shifted to low-tax countries in this way.

The tax losses are stupendous - estimated to be \$50 billion for the USA and over \$10 billion for India. A global minimum tax rate of 15 per cent would preclude countries from undercutting each other, yielding an estimated \$50 billion-\$80 billion in extra tax annually from the MNCs. Governments would still have the sovereign power to set their own corporate tax rates but not below the floor rate and if the MNCs still continue to shift their profits to a country with a lower tax rate, their home governments can 'top-up' their taxes to the minimum rate to eliminate the benefits from shifting of profits.

The US tax rate was cut down to 21 per cent from 35 per cent by then President Donald Trump in 2017, which his successor Joe Biden now proposes to increase to 28 per cent. The average OECD corporate tax rate in 2020 was 21.5 per cent, with 18 out of 37 members charging higher rates. Only three countries charge rates lower than 15 per cent: Ireland (12.5 per cent), Hungary (eight per cent) and Switzerland (8.5 per cent).

The average tax rate for Asian countries is around 23 per cent; while China and South Korea charge 25 per cent, Singapore charges only 17 per cent rate. In 2019, India also sharply reduced its corporate tax rates to 22 per cent for domestic



THERE ARE SEVERAL ZERO-TAX TERRITORIES, MOSTLY SMALL ECONOMIES LIKE BERMUDA, BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS OR CAYMAN ISLANDS, IN WHICH EVEN THE CRUMBS THROWN BY THE MNCs BY WAY OF INVESTMENT ON SUBSIDIARIES AND OPPORTUNITY FOR EMPLOYMENT THAT THEY CREATE, HOWSOEVER LIMITED, COULD BE A BONANZA. CORPORATE AND FINANCIAL SERVICES ACCOUNT FOR MORE THAN 50 PER CENT OF GOVERNMENT REVENUE IN MANY OF THESE SMALL ECONOMIES

The author is a former Director General, Comptroller & Auditor General of India. The views expressed are personal.



companies (15 per cent for new manufacturing companies) without any deductions, aligning its corporate tax rate to global standards.

However, there are several zero-tax territories, mostly small economies like Bermuda, British Virgin Islands or Cayman Islands, in which even the crumbs thrown by the MNCs by way investment on subsidiaries and opportunity for employment that they create howsoever limited could be a bonanza. Corporate and financial services account for more than 50 per cent of government revenue in many of these small economies. Over many past decades, the low-tax or tax-less countries have thus enticed investments with lax rules that favour the MNCs and serve as conduits for them to avoid tax in other countries.

The Economist reported an IMF study in 2019 which found that such "phantom" investments by MNCs had pushed Luxembourg's stock of foreign-direct investment to \$4 trillion, "an improbable one-tenth of the global total". Many small countries like Ireland, Cyprus, Hong Kong and Singapore have also benefited in this manner.

To book profits in low tax regimes, MNCs have all the leverage and wherewithal to relocate their subsidiaries and headquarters in any country across the globe - they can relocate their production units anywhere by arm-twisting the smaller countries to agree to their terms. By choosing a suitable trans-

fer pricing mechanism, they can always transfer profits to their subsidiaries located within such jurisdictions to avoid paying taxes in countries where they generate most of their revenues by selling their products while booking profits in the tax havens. It would be in the interest of these countries to have their taxing rights over these companies in their own jurisdictions.

As the communique from the G7 had stated, "We commit to reaching an equitable solution on the allocation of taxing rights, with market countries awarded taxing rights on at least 20 per cent of profit exceeding a 10 per cent margin for the largest and most profitable multinational enterprises." The principle is that MNCs must pay taxes equitably in every market where they generate their profits, thereby apportioning their global profits to countries where their customers and users are located.

The business model of MNCs that rely on the tax havens would collapse like a pack of cards, as would the economy of tax havens themselves - especially of those that lack other significant sources of revenue - once the G7 proposals are translated into an international treaty, contours of which may be finalised in the broader G-20 meeting at Venice in July, which, in addition to the G-7 countries includes emerging economies like China, India, Brazil, Russia, South Africa, Indonesia and others. An agreement

would usher in nothing short of a tax-revolution that would nudge the other countries also to fall in line. MNCs and tax havens would be the losers - indeed it might signal the ultimate end of the tax havens' business model, while large economies that give the MNCs most of their profits which are now being siphoned off to the tax havens would stand to gain the most. Countries like Ireland whose economy has boomed with the influx of billions of dollars in investment from the MNCs would be deeply unhappy and unlikely to give in, as would be the tax havens themselves.

To tax the digital transactions of global digital giants like Apple, Google etc. that carry out their activities remotely from another country, India had imposed a six per cent Equalisation Levy in 2016 on incomes accruing to foreign e-commerce companies from India in certain business to business transactions above a threshold. Several other countries had followed suit. This, however, hardly compensated for the revenue loss. Once the new tax regime comes into force, it will bring to an end such digital taxes as they will become redundant. India which is one of the largest and fastest expanding global internet markets has much to gain from the new tax regime, but must follow up with further reforms of its tax system and reduction of factor costs to attract international investment and industries.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

WE WELCOME FORMER UNION MINISTER JITIN PRASADA INTO THE BJP. HIS JOINING WOULD FURTHER STRENGTHEN THE PARTY.

— UTTAR PRADESH CHIEF MINISTER YOGI ADITYANATH



IN THE CONGRESS, HE BECAME AN MP AND A MINISTER. THE CONGRESS HAS GIVEN HIM SO MUCH BUT WHAT HAS HE DONE IN RETURN?

— UPCC PRESIDENT AJAY KUMAR LALLU

Environment is forever, not diamonds

The permission to mine for diamonds in a 364-hectare area in MP will lead to felling of 225,000 trees, besides adversely impacting the groundwater table

Even as India celebrated the World Environment Day recently, the environment itself had little to cheer for. The fact that the ambitious pledges taken to protect the environment are only a symbolic exercise has been made evident by the ongoing controversy involving the Madhya Pradesh government granting diamond mining rights to Aditya Birla Group (ESSEL Mining) to mine for diamonds in the Buxwaha forest area of Chhatrapur.

The grant of permission for mining a 364-hectare area will lead to felling of approximately 225,000 trees besides clearing the forest area which comprises rare plant species and also adversely impact ground water table. In addition to this the indigenous communities also



KOTA SRIRAJ

The author is an environmental journalist. The views expressed are personal.

stand to be adversely impacted as about 8,000 local forest dwellers will get displaced.

The rights to mine the Bunder diamond block estimated to contain 34 million carats of rough diamonds was won by Essel Mining in 2019. The project with an outlay of Rs. 2500 crore investment is supposed to eventually become the largest diamond mine project in Asia. However, so far, the project could not make much headway due to ecological concerns pertaining to air and water pollution. These concerns combined with stiff resistance from the local population has kept the project in a suspended state. There is a need for urgent measures to ensure that the work does not begin in the area unless a renewed environmen-

tal impact assessment report is commissioned that has the inputs of local environmental experts and the opinion of the local communities as well.

Even as opinion builds up against the diamond mining project, an environment activist from Jabalpur Dr.PJ. Najpande has moved the National Green Tribunal against the project. Conservation committees too have been formed for the districts of Sagar, Damoh and Chatterpur as these districts stand to be the most affected by the diamond mining projects. The committees are preparing the grounds for registering demand for a proper tree audit and a public hearing on the matter with the presence of all affected stake holders. These efforts however are from either



the local communities or environmental conservationists, but sincere and impactful interventions form the government are yet to be seen.

In India, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh are the three states that produce the most diamonds in the country with Madhya Pradesh accounting for over 90

per cent of the produce which is an average 39,000 carats per year. Given these figures it is easy to understand why there is so much pressure on Madhya Pradesh as far as diamond mining goes.

The Bunder mining block falls in the Bundelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh, which is a traditionally water-stressed region. The project pre-feasibility report clearly states the project is water-intensive as it requires an estimated 5.9 million cubic meters per day which is a tall order for a water-challenged region. Unfortunately, this is yet to ring alarm bells for the government even though the Central Ground Water Authority has declared the region to be in a semi critical area water resources wise.

The ecological biodiversity of Madhya Pradesh has already borne the brunt of projects such as the river interlinking project linking the Ken and Betwa rivers which is threatening 2.3 million trees. On the other hand, the Bundelkhand Expressway project has resulted in the felling of over 1,90,000 trees. The diamond mining project promises to deliver yet another blow to the environment from which the state may not really recover this time.

In this mad drive for development and prosperity the environment is not the only collateral damage; the people especially at the grass root level who labour at these diamond mines in Madhya Pradesh are the worst affected. The labourers at the mines, especially in the

Panna district, already suffer from malnutrition, chronic poverty and migration related problems such as housing and unemployment.

The exploitation of earth's natural resources is not only causing the abuse of the environment but is also resulting in immeasurable suffering to the people who are directly impacted by these activities. The government cannot be a mute spectator to this devastation and take ages to respond even as natural resources, environment get exploited while the social fabric is tattered. The alacrity in government actions alone will establish genuineness of its concern and commitment for the environment and Buxwaha forests in Madhya Pradesh are earnestly waiting for the same.



# Sensex tumbles 334 pts; Nifty drops below 15,650

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark Sensex tanked 334 points on Wednesday, tracking heavy losses in index heavyweights Reliance Industries, ICICI Bank and L&T amid a weak trend in global markets.

The 30-share BSE index ended 333.93 points or 0.64 per cent lower at 51,941.64. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty slumped 104.75 points or 0.67 per cent to 15,635.35.

L&T was the top loser in the Sensex pack, shedding around 2 per cent, followed by Reliance Industries, Bajaj Finserv, IndusInd Bank, SBI, Maruti, Axis Bank and Bajaj Auto.

On the other hand, PowerGrid, NTPC, Titan, HCL Tech and Asian Paints were among the gainers.

"Domestic equities fell sharply as selling pressure in financials, auto and RIL dragged indices down," said



Binod Modi, Head - Strategy at Reliance Securities.

This was the steepest correction after May 12, he said, adding that all key sectoral indices witnessed selling pressure as investors preferred to book some amount of profit ahead of crucial CPI data in the

US.

Further, Asian markets also traded weak today mainly reacting on higher-than-expected jump in China's producer price index at 9 per cent for May.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Seoul, Tokyo and Hong

Kong closed in the red, while Shanghai ended with gains.

Equities in Europe were also trading on a negative note in mid-session deals.

International oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 0.36 per cent higher at USD 72.48 per barrel.

## Rupee falls for 2nd day, settles 8 ps down at 72.9

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The rupee declined by 8 paise to end at 72.97 against the US currency on Wednesday in its second straight day of losses amid a lacklustre trend in domestic equities.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened on a negative note at 72.90 per dollar as against its previous close of 72.89. It hovered in the range of 72.88 to 73.02 per dollar during the day before ending at 72.97.

The local unit traded in a narrow range amid lack of any major data on Wednesday in the domestic and the international markets, traders said.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.09 per cent to 89.99.

# Exports up 52.39 per cent to USD 7.71 bn during June 1-7

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's exports grew by 52.39 per cent to USD 7.71 billion during the first week of this month on account of healthy growth in shipments in sectors including engineering, gems and jewellery and petroleum products, according to preliminary data of the commerce ministry.

Imports too rose by about 83 per cent to USD 9.1 billion during June 1-7.

Exports of engineering, gems and jewellery and petroleum products increased by 59.7 per cent to USD 741.18 million, 96.38 per cent to USD 297.82 million and 69.53 per cent to USD 530.62 million respectively, the data showed.

However, exports of iron ore, oil seeds and spices recorded negative growth during June 1-7.

Imports of petroleum and crude oil jumped by 135 per cent to USD 1.09 billion. Imports of electronic goods and pearls, precious and semi-precious stones increased by



45.85 per cent to USD 324.77 million and 111 per cent to USD 294 million respectively.

Exports to the US, UAE and Bangladesh rose by about 60 per cent to USD 500 million, 57.86 per cent to USD 173 million and 212 per cent to USD 166.3 million respectively.

Similarly, imports from China, the US, and UAE grew

by 90.94 per cent to USD 809.53 million, 89.45 per cent to USD 410.65 million and 164.55 per cent to about USD 400 million respectively.

India's exports grew by 57.86 per cent to USD 32.21 billion in May, driven by healthy growth in sectors such as engineering, and petroleum products.

## Aus: WTO should punish Chinese economic coercion

■ AUSTRALIA

The World Trade Organization should penalize "bad behaviour when it occurs," Australia's prime minister said Wednesday ahead of a Group of Seven leaders' meeting in Britain where he hopes to garner support in a trade dispute with China.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said Australia would be "working with others to buttress the role of the World Trade Organization and to modernise its rulebook where necessary." "In my discussions with many leaders, I've taken great encouragement from the support shown for Australia's preparedness to withstand economic coercion in recent times," Morrison said in a speech delivered in the Australian west coast city of Perth before leaving for the G7



meeting in Cornwall.

The Australian government announced in December it would ask the WTO to intervene in its dispute with China over barley and expects other nations to become involved in the case. China effectively ended imports of Australian barley in May 2020 by putting tariffs of more than 80 per cent on the crop, accusing Australia of breaching WTO rules by subsidizing barley production and selling the grain in China at below production cost.

## PHDCCI suggests strategy to stop possibility of third wave of infections

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Industry chamber PHDCCI on Wednesday suggested the government a five-pronged strategy including immediate imposition of lockdown in a district, where the number of active cases are more than 500, to stop the possibility of a third wave of coronavirus in the country.

Its suggestions include a target to vaccinate at least half of the population in the next 3-4 months, ensure adoption of strict rules such as wearing masks, maintaining social distancing, among others, and adopting strict norms and compliances for micro-containment zones.

## India loses 5-7% of GDP due to corrosion: Zinc Association

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India loses around 5-7 per cent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) every year due to corrosion, International Zinc Association (IZA) said on Wednesday.

The association also stressed upon the need for immediate and appropriate measures by authorities to control further damage.

Speaking during a webinar on emerging, sustainable construction technologies like Continuous Galvanized Rebar (CGR), IZA Director (India) Rahul Sharma said, "India loses as much as 5-7 per cent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) every year on the account of corrosion. These are staggering figures that require immediate and appropriate measures by authorities to



control further damage." Continuous Galvanized Rebars are value-added rebars for higher life and low maintenance of infrastructure to provide significant cost savings compared to other corrosion resistant rebar systems. These offers on-site formability of the finished product, superior cor-

rosion resistance in concrete at a price cheaper than other corrosion resistant rebar. This technology provides significant cost savings compared to other corrosion resistant rebar systems together with the advantage of preventing corrosion, thereby enhancing the lifetime of the underlying steel.

## Rockwell ties up with DRL for freezers to store Sputnik V vax

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Rockwell Industries, a cold chain appliance manufacturer on Wednesday announced its strategic partnership with Dr Reddy's Labs, to provide its World Health Organisation - Performance, Quality and Safety certified Covid-19 vaccine freezer to store Sputnik V vaccine in India.

According to a release by Rockwell, the vaccine freezer plays a very critical role in the safety of vaccines and its potency as Russias Sputnik V vaccine, made available in India through Dr Reddy's, requires a temperature range of minus -18 degrees celsius, to keep the vaccine stable and potent.

Managing Director of Rockwell Industries, Ashok Gupta said, "Our technology ensures that Sputnik V's storage management at vaccine centres meets the stringent refrigeration standards set forth by Sputnik V manufacturers." In addition, Rockwell will provide end to end logistics and after sales service support for the vaccine freezers across India.



On May 14, Dr Reddy's announced a limited pilot soft launch of the Sputnik V vaccine in India, ahead of the commercial launch later in June.

Many hospitals such as AIG Hospitals, Apollo, Omega and Care Hospitals are already using Rockwell's Vaccine Freezers for vaccine storage and many more hospitals and institutions are approaching us for the same.

"We have a capacity to man-

ufacture about 1,000 machines per day. We are in the process of exporting our Vaccine Freezers to various developed countries including an initial pilot deal with Japan," Prateek Gupta, Director Rockwell Industries said.

According to recent data from WHO, due to lack of temperature control or continuous cold chain during vaccine transportation, 5-20 per cent of vaccines lose their potency, the release added.



## Uber to hire 250 engineers in India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ride-hailing platform Uber on Wednesday said it is recruiting close to 250 engineers for its teams in Bengaluru and Hyderabad as it continues to expand the scope of operations for its engineering and product work in the country.

The current round of hiring will strengthen the company's rider and driver growth, delivery, eats, digital payments, risk and compliance, marketplace, customer obsession, infrastructure, adtech, data, safety and finance technology teams, a statement said.

These roles are currently split between the company's Hyderabad and Bengaluru tech centres, it added.

"Uber's expansion plans are in line with its vision to make mobility and delivery more accessible, and to become the backbone of transportation in over 10,000 cities across the globe," it said. Uber Senior Director Manikandan said the teams work on important global mandates, and pioneer various industry-first innovations. By the end of the year, the cumulative headcount at these centres is expected to touch 1,000 people. "In order to serve more people across the globe, we're expanding our teams and are looking for bright engineering minds so we can collectively solve mobility and delivery challenges across all our global markets," he added.

## Equity mutual funds see Rs 10,000 cr inflow in May

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Equity mutual funds witnessed a net inflow of over Rs 10,000 crore in May, making it the third consecutive monthly infusion.

This was way higher than Rs 3,437 crore net inflow seen in April and Rs 9,115 crore in March, data from the Association of Mutual Funds in India showed on Wednesday.

Prior to this, equity schemes had consistently witnessed outflow for eight straight months from July 2020 to February 2021.

On the other hand, investors pulled out Rs 44,512 crore from debt mutual funds last month after infusing over Rs 1 lakh crore in April.

Overall, the mutual fund industry witnessed an outflow of Rs 38,602 across all segments during the period under review, compared to an inflow of Rs 92,906 crore in April.

As per the data, inflow from equity and equity-linked open ended schemes was at Rs 10,083 crore in May.

## MONEY MATTERS

### Petronet shelves USD 2.5 billion Tellurian deal

An initial non-binding agreement for Petronet LNG Ltd to invest USD 2.5 billion in US energy upstart Tellurian's LNG project in Louisiana in return for gas supplies for 40 years has lapsed, the CEO of the Indian firm said on Wednesday.



The deal, which was signed during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Houston in September 2019, was billed as one of the largest foreign investments in the US to ship shale gas abroad. Petronet, India's largest gas importer, has opened talks with suppliers such as Qatar for sourcing natural gas in its liquid form (LNG) to meet the growing energy needs of the country, its Managing Director & CEO A K Singh told reporters on a call. The firm's long-term deal to import 7.5 million tonnes per annum of liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Qatar ends in March 2028, and the company has time till December 2023, to decide on extending it, he said. Petronet had on September 21, 2019, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for purchase of up to 5 million tonnes per annum of LNG from Tellurian Inc's proposed Driftwood LNG terminal for 40 years.

### Gold declines Rs 92, silver tumbles Rs 414

Gold dipped Rs 92 to Rs 48,424 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday, according to HDFC Securities. In the previous trade, the precious metal had closed at Rs 48,516 per 10 grams. Silver also went lower by Rs 414 to Rs 70,181 per kg, from Rs 70,595 per kg in the previous trade.



In the international market, gold was trading marginally higher at USD 1,893 per ounce and silver was flat at USD 27.65 per ounce. HDFC Securities Senior Analyst (Commodities) Tapan Patel said, "Gold prices are trading in a narrow range with dollar fluctuations as traders and investors are awaiting for fresh triggers from US inflation data." Motilal Oswal Financial Services Vice-President (Commodities Research) Navneet Damani said, "Gold price continues to trade in a range, as investors are holding back from making large bets ahead of the US inflation data and the ECB (European Central Bank) policy meeting later this week."

### Expect I-T portal to stabilise this week, says Infosys

A day after Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman flagged technical glitches on the income tax department's new e-filing website, IT major Infosys said it expects the system to stabilise in the course of this week. On Tuesday, Sitharaman had asked Infosys and its Chairman Nandan Nilekani to fix technical glitches being encountered on the income tax department's new e-filing website, after users flooded her Twitter timeline with complaints. "Our teams are making progress to address the technical issues. We expect the system to stabilize in the course of this week," Infosys said in a tweet on Wednesday. Infosys was in 2019 awarded a contract to develop the next-generation income tax filing system to reduce processing time for returns from 63 days to one day and expedite refunds. The portal went live on Monday evening. While Sitharaman took to Twitter to announce the launch of the new portal on Tuesday morning, her timeline was soon flooded with user complaints.



### Prestige group's bookings at record Rs 5,461 crore

Realty firm Prestige Estates Projects Ltd's sales bookings rose by 20 per cent year-on-year to a record of Rs 5,460.8 crore in the last fiscal year on better demand for its properties despite the COVID pandemic. According to an investors presentation, the Bengaluru-based firm has achieved a record sales of Rs 5,460.8 crore during 2020-21 financial year. In volume terms, sales bookings increased by 25 per cent to 8.16 million sq ft. The average sales realisation was at Rs 6,689 per sq ft in FY21. Prestige group collected record Rs 5,075.2 crore from customers against sales bookings, up 9 per cent from 2019-20 financial year. During the last fiscal, Prestige group had launched 11.85 million sq ft in FY21. Prestige Group Chairman Irfan Razack said: "Despite the challenging environment, Prestige has recorded highest ever sales and collections during the fiscal year. The record sales were backed by the great response to our newly launched projects as well as ready to move in inventory."







## THE ATTITUDE OF gratitude in dire times

RACHEL DAMMALA

Our frontline workers deserve nothing less than awards, appreciation, and respect for their untiring services and risky jobs. Yet, we get to see stories every day about their jobs becoming not just thankless, but ones that have been taken for granted.

A group of people in the city decided to rise to the occasion to do their bit to stand, support, and cheer up our Covid warriors who are working day-in and day-out to help people battle the pandemic. Calling their work the Joy Project, youngsters of Hyderabad set out to care for those who care for us.

Jyosha Reddy, an MBA graduate from Hyderabad was inspired by her friend Juhi Goyal and her friends in Chennai did to express their gratitude to the frontline workers: kids from their organisation wrote letters to Covid warriors thanking them for the work. This gesture touched the health workers in Chennai that made Jyosha want to repli-



cate a similar idea here in Hyderabad. "We saw the kind of impact a small letter from a young kid made on a doctor who spent his entire day at the Covid ward. After hearing news about a few cases of people assaulting healthworkers who were literally putting their lives at risk to treat people, it hurt not just the community of medical professionals but all of us citizens too. At a time like this, I thought we could all gather

to show them our love, support, and wishes," Jyosha shares.

The initiative started with just kids sending in their pictures and videos thanking the health workers, but then it shifted to a larger audience of adults from all corners of the city and walks of life, expressing their gratitude and support to the frontline workers. "We thought asking for

tact and chances of contracting the virus, so we asked children from across the city, from all kinds of backgrounds to send their videos, pictures, artwork, expressing gratitude to these warriors. Later, we realised we could go big and had influencers and celebrities like Heba Patel, @thefashionpsychic, and other such people show their support and urge their followers to send their token of love for frontline workers," Jyosha tells us.

People from the Joy Project believe that in a time like this, where doctors could be on the verge of losing their morale upon hearing various incidents about people of their profession being harassed, they need to know that such a group is minuscule and a large majority of people are grateful for their services always. "It's not just doctors, it's everybody who's involved — it's a chain of people. Right from the people who take your distress calls at whatever part of the day or night, to the ambulance driver who gets to the

hospital in time, to the nurses and ward workers to the doctors who attend to you, they all deserve a 'thank you'. Not to forget the delivery executives who deliver food and happiness to homes in such hard times, the police personnel and literally everybody out there who are doing their job so we could stay indoors, safe," says Juhi Goyal.

"Apart from this, we're also looking to inculcate and encourage the attitude of gratitude in children, right from their formative years. And when they see the smile that it brings to the frontline workers after a tiresome, hectic day at work, it'll only push them to do and be more," adds Jyosha.

It won't take much, founders of Project Joy tell us: "It's okay if you can't make a video or artwork or anything. Stick a small note outside your home to the ones ensuring groceries and food reach you, you have no idea about the kind of impact and joy it brings to people."

So Hyderabad, let's do this, do whatever you can, and let them know humanity showed up when the frontline workers needed them the most."



hand-

written letters to be sent would only mean more con-

## Cancellation of Class XII board exams: Bane or boon



exams, the government should have postponed them. Of this, the opinion is stronger among the younger set of respondents. In the 18-25 age group, 50.8 percent echoed this sentiment while

only 46.2 percent in the 56-plus age group said that the exams should have been postponed.

Notably, while several states like Rajasthan, Goa, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, and

Uttarakhand have cancelled Class XII board exams, Chhattisgarh is holding offline exams. Others, including Karnataka and Odisha, are yet to announce a final decision on the matter.

A large number of respondents said that while career is important for the students, health risks should be avoided keeping in view of the spread of the deadly virus in the country, saying that conducting offline exams can prove fatal.

Notably, 60 percent of those surveyed said that the government should opt for alternate mechanisms like digital mediums to conduct various exams. A whopping majority of the respondents — 76.4 percent — said the government should think of using digital mediums to conduct various competitive exams like IIT/JEE, NEET, and for admissions to universities and colleges in a fair manner to prevent loss of a career year of the students.

However, over 60 percent of the respondents expressed concern about the digital divide in the country, saying that those not having access to digital platforms, especially in the rural areas, will be in a disadvantageous position. It's high time the government worked on improving the digital infrastructure in the rural areas of the country to face such challenges in the future.

## Gleaning the benefits of yoga to fight Covid



K RAMYA SREE

With the Coronavirus pandemic looming over everyone, it's time to roll out your yoga mat and discover the combination of physical and mental exercises that, for thousands of years, have hooked yoga practitioners around the globe for a healthier tomorrow.

The beauty of yoga is that you don't have to be a yogi or yogini to reap the benefits. Whether young or old, overweight or fit, yoga has the power to calm the mind and strengthen the body. Subodh Tiwari, CEO, Kaivalyadham, who aspires to promote Yoga as a holistic science for health, healing, and self-development and to contribute towards the social development of the nation, tells us how yoga can help Covid recovered patient, yoga therapy, traditions, and more.

**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEW:**  
**How can yoga help a Covid-recovered patient?**

A Covid-19 recovered patient may have several after-effects like compromised lung capacity, neurological issues, severe fatigue, issues with joints, and impact on other bodily systems which were perhaps not in the best of health pre-Covid-19 infection. Since Yoga is a holistic science, a majority of yogic practices would benefit an individual in multiple conditions. The practice of yoga asanas has shown a good impact on the muscular and neurological systems.

Practices of Pranayama are beneficial for enhancing the entire respiratory system and also dealing with some neuro-transmitters such as "gaba", which produces a feeling of well-

being. Practices of Cleansing essentially detoxifies oneself. Thus, Yoga therapy helps the patient at a physical, mental, and emotional level.

At Kaivalyadham, we introduced a course called 'Prabalatwam'. This two-week program is specially designed for individuals who have recovered from Covid-19 and are looking to bounce back to their fighting fit health status, the program aims to improve lung capacity, provide total body detoxification, discover the best efficiency and effectiveness in work and personal life and above all, help in accessing peace and harmony within.

**What is 'yoga meets science'?**

The source of knowledge of Yoga is in its various traditional texts, such as Patanjali Yoga Sutra, Yoga Vashistha, Hathapradipika which have been written between 2500 BC to 1100 AD. These texts lay down the fundamental principles of Yoga and also the techniques of the practice. Swami Kuvalyananda the founder of Kaivalyadham, undertook scientific research to re-search these principles and prove the efficacy in the scientific terminology.

Therefore, the source is tradition and the language is science, and thus we say "Where Yoga traction and science meet". For example, the importance of Uddiyana bandh has been laid out in traditional texts, however, Swamiji's scientific publication in 1924 on Uddiyana bandh generating a negative pressure in the viscera and impacting pale static

movement gave the scientific understanding of the importance.

Kaivalyadham is the first institute in the world that started scientific research in Yoga and even today leads the way with path-breaking research on the impact of Yoga in cancer, genetics, diabetes, and other non-communicable diseases.

**How can we use yoga as a therapy?**

The application of Yoga as a therapeutic tool is Yoga therapy. Yoga works at four dimensions, for therapy. The Psychophysiological - this is the root of the problem, the physiological — this is the manifestation of the condition, with cleaning practices — to detoxify and finally rejuvenate and through right diet and nutrition. These dimensions of Yoga will help deal with different health conditions which individuals may have and can also work alongside other therapies like Ayurveda, Naturopathy, and Allopathy, etc. But Yoga as therapy must be practiced under a qualified and certified professional.

**Why do we need to take Yoga to the grass-root level and start with schools?**

Yoga needs to be inculcated as a lifestyle. This is best done at the school level. In the US when the dental issues had become large, the authorities decided to implement brushing of teeth in the schools as part of the routine. This became a habit. Therefore, if we start teaching Yoga at the school level, it would become a habit for individuals. It would be providing a tool for the holistic living of each citizen.

**Can you share some basic yoga positions for beginners?**

I always say, do limited practices, but do it well. Laying down and getting both the knees towards the forehead (Pawanmuktasana), raising both the legs until 90 degrees (Ardhahalasana), Cobra Pose (Bhujangasana), Stretching while sitting (parvatasana), and stretching while standing (Tadasana) are some of the basic practices for an average individual for well-being.





# SNAPCHAT MAKES learning languages fun

Snapshot has combined learning with fun through 'learn language' lenses created by Nepal-based lens creator Atit Kharel. The lenses help Snapchatters understand the basics of six Indian languages — Hindi, Marathi, Bengali, Punjabi, Telugu and Kannada. They combine augmented reality and machine learning to recognise over 1000 objects and translate their name to the language one is learning, in real-time, Snapchat said in a statement.

The new feature was launched to reinforce the company's localisation efforts in India to build locally and culturally relevant experiences, it said.

A member of the Snap Lens Network, Atit Kharel is a digital creator who created the 'learn language' lenses following his own passion for the multilingual Indian culture. He comments: "I have always been fascinated by the cultural diversity in India and the range of languages spoken here. The idea behind these lenses was to make learning Indian languages fun and easy — especially for new learners. Augmented reality can be really entertaining and can make learning more interactive and accessible."

The lenses are available on Snapchat by searching 'Learn Bengali', 'Learn Telugu', 'Learn Kannada', 'Learn Hindi', 'Learn Marathi', 'Learn Punjabi' or by scanning the Snapcode or searching for Atit Kharel's official profile, said Snapchat.

How to use these Lenses: Snapchatters have to point



their cameras at an object to scan it, and the Lenses will simultaneously display, along with a phonetic transcription of the word to help with pronunciation.

In an effort to engage youth, Snapchat has previously released localised lenses, filters and stickers.

Reflecting on this time of great change brought about by new discoveries and breakthroughs happening continuously in nearly every field of human endeavour, economics enthusiast and acclaimed author of *The Economic Reactor* Rajiv Bahl has come up with a new book on work in an ever-changing world.

Titled *Re-imagining Jobs in a Fast-Changing World*, the 2021 book is published by Rupa Publications. It proposes a Universal Supplementary Income Scheme to create over a hundred million jobs in India. A seasoned entrepreneur, Rajiv is also known in the startup ecosystem as the Founder of Fun Foods, an internationally popular brand later acquired by a multinational food major.

No matter where we look, we see rapid change either already upon us, or being imminent.

Says the author: "Never before in the history of our species have we encountered such rapid change. It is important that we understand the magnitude of the coming changes and where we are headed as a civilization and also how we may cope with the changed circumstances that the rapid changes will usher in upon us."

The book's first part looks closely at the changes that are being wrought in eight distinct spheres of human activity that the author thinks will have the largest impact upon the way we live our lives. The eight areas are: Artificial intelligence, energy, manufacturing, the sharing economy, transport and connectivity, water purification and desalination, agriculture and meat production, and health and well-being.

In addition, the author has summed up the changes coming to the construction industry, automated clothes manufacturing and automated home cooking solutions.

At the end of each chapter, which studies one of these areas, the book analyses the likely consequences of the developments in that field. It examines both the desirable and worrisome consequences. The consequences are similar across all fields. The desirable consequences are that all goods, including energy, manufac-

# Author Rajiv Bahl's new literary take on jobs post-pandemic

tured goods of all sorts, clean water, agricultural produce, meat production and health delivery will become cheaper, of better quality and less damaging to the environment. The one worrisome consequence that runs through all fields is that jobs will become scarcer.

"We are already beginning to see the loss of jobs. The virus from Wuhan has speeded up the process. Many jobs that were until recently being done by humans, are now being done by machines and Artificial Intelligence. Businesses are discovering that they can make do with fewer employees. This process will speed up further until the loss of jobs will become the central issue before all countries and governments. If not handled properly the dearth of jobs could lead to a breakdown of law and order or even anarchy."

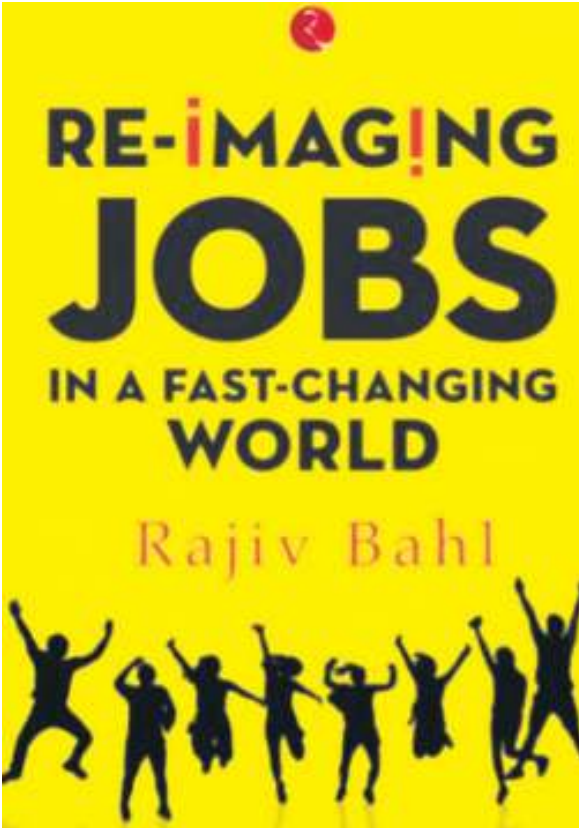


"We are not entirely helpless against the advancing tide of automated human-less jobs. There are many jobs that intelligent machines will not be able to do for at least one of three reasons. The first reason is that some jobs that require human interactions will be difficult to automate. It is difficult to imagine a robotic nurse imparting the same level of comfort and confi-

dence that an experienced human nurse can. The list of jobs that machines cannot do for technological reasons will grow progressively shorter as technology improves but will never vanish. The second reason is that while it may be possible to automate some tasks, it will not be financially viable to try and automate them. Street foods and gourmet foods are examples. The third reason is that while it may be possible to automate a certain task, there would be no takers for it. For example computer programs are already the best chess players in the world, but no one is interested to watch two computer programs slug it out in a match that will last all of a few nano-seconds," says Bahl.

While the logic of the book applies to every country, the second part of the book, which addresses job creation, is India specific. Like every country India has some attributes that will make the process of meaningful job creation easier and some that will make it harder.

The book proposes a modest Universal Supplementary Income (USI) scheme, which will not only alleviate immediate hardship but also kick start the process of job creation. There are some steps that India can take to hasten the process which have been identified.



# SECRETS OF WAR-ROOM

The importance of data-driven insights in strategic and operational decision-making remains crucial in mounting the fight against the novel coronavirus. A centralised war-room or command centre has proven to be crucial at the time of any crisis as it helps to streamline the capacity and efficiency of the response team while providing real-time data visualisation of key performance metrics across the healthcare network.

As India grapples with the second wave of Covid-19, several districts and cities have set up war-rooms, which are addressing the various concerns of the citizens related to the pandemic. A war-room generally features large dashboards, geographic information system (GIS)-mapped data for facilities connected and patients and monitors, which help healthcare administrators to review the performance of cities or districts at the central level and it remains a single point of all data, IT, and coordination for a city or district-level overview.

Also, the capability of a war-room solution needs to have predictability and forecasting models. In fact, predictive analytics has a crucial role to play in making informed decisions in a war room. In the case of India, while the country had devel-



## A centralised war-room or command centre has proven to be crucial at the time of any crisis, says Ashvini Danigond

oped the Aarogya Setu App in order to help with the contact-tracing of individuals suffering from Covid-19, it leaves scope for improvement for technical details like identifying something like a hotspot for that matter.

### Need for strong early alert frameworks

In fighting the spread of the novel coronavirus, data and science form the most critical elements of decision-

making. However, the void of reliable real-time information has been a global challenge during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Building a system for defence against the pandemic, especially in the case of new strains or mutants, requires an outermost perimeter that serves the purpose of an early alert system. Deploying earan ly alert system would also require cooperation from an empowered task force (ETF) comprising virologists, scientists, and epidemiologists.

### Enabling effective contact tracing

The ministry of health in Singapore considers data from multiple formats and sources to track the movement of a possibly infected individual and determine their contagion footprint. Such real-time data feeds, including multimedia data streams, are then combined

with a tracking mechanism developed by a technical agency of the government. A contact-tracing smartphone app also helps to identify individuals that have been within two metres of a patient for at least 30 minutes for follow-up action by contact tracers.

Such highly developed digital capabilities of the nation given a shot in the arm to the capabilities of the administration.

### Adoption of privacy-preserving technologies

A major concern looming is the lack of reliable, real-time threat information sharing, contact tracing, and community prevalence data during this pandemic has meant people and public health authorities have been mostly relying on backward-looking reporting of confirmed cases, which has hampered the fight against Covid-19 severely.

Robust protections are required, both for the physical security of the information processing network as well as the privacy of individuals from overreach by commercial entities and administrators. These information networks can be made considerably less vulnerable by building resiliency and redundancy and highly distributed processing capabilities. India needs to remain prepared to effectively ward off a health crisis considering that this is not going to be a one-off situation.

(The writer is Executive Director & CEO, Manorama Infosolutions Pvt Ltd.)

## FUN

### ARCHIE



### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### GARFIELD



### NANCY



### GINGER MEGGS



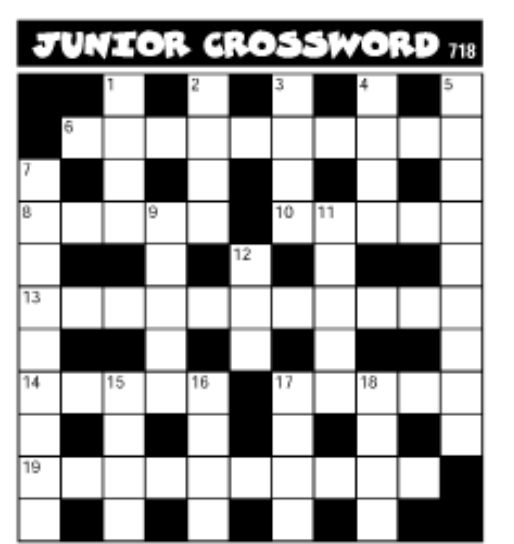
### REALITY CHECK



### SPEED BUMP



### CROSSWORD



#### ACROSS

- A traffic circle where roads cross
- A pointing thing that indicates direction
- Snapshot
- A greeting (4,7)
- Salty water from the eyes
- Rubber covers on wheels
- Getting better after illness

#### DOWN

- Bitter-tasting
- Cold winter crystals
- Moist
- A song for one singer
- The most powerful
- Female children

- A command
- Bees make this
- A fishing pole
- A curved support under a bridge
- Rescue
- Grow weary
- Wear this on a finger







# AVIKA: CONFIDENCE HAS TO COME FROM WORK ETHIC, KNOWLEDGE

Television star-turned Tollywood actress Avika Gor recently said the positioning that beauty creams have created over a period of time is that fairness is equivalent to beauty, and that she does not agree with it.

Avika, who is known for her work in *Uyyala Jampala*, *Cinema Choopistha Maava* and shows such as *Balika Vadhu*, *Sasural Simar Ka*, did not accept endorsement deals from three fairness cream brands. She says society cannot idolise one colour.

"The positioning that beauty creams have created over a period of time is that fairness

is equivalent to beauty and success and that it gives us confidence. Such a thought is not true at all. Our confidence has to come from our work ethic and knowledge," Avika said.

She added: "We as a society cannot idolise one colour and make all the others feel lesser than. There has to be some change in this trend. I'm blessed to be in a position to not have to worry about losing out on money when it's serving the large need of the society of equality. So, I just couldn't do it." The *Uyyala Jampala* actress' latest work includes a music video *Dil Ko Mere*, which was dropped on May 17.

# 'WORKING WITH SAMANTHA WAS EFFORTLESS'



Actor Shahab Ali, who plays the main antagonist opposite Manoj Bajpayee in *Amazon Prime's* web series *The Family Man* directed by Raj & DK has been in the news for his magnificent performance!

Shahab who is seen playing the role of Sajid in the show spoke about his character, "Sajid is a lone wolf. He doesn't like to take orders from anyone and he loves to do things his way. He is a bomb specialist and an ISIS trained terrorist. He is a stubborn, dark and vengeful person. He is sharp and calculative but at the same time, very aggressive, whenever need be. In season two, he is much more fierce and evil. His ener-

gy is a notch higher from the previous season."

Shahab, who has completed his three years in acting training from National School of Drama, New Delhi says it was a dream come true when he got to know that he will be the main antagonist opposite Manoj Bajpayee! Shahab added, "I used to idolise him during my training days. The experience of working with him has been a true gift and I had truly enjoyed every second spent in his presence. The experience was much greater than what I had expected. We developed a great bond after the first season. Sharing screen space with him in the show was the icing on the cake! In season two, we had some great moments together. The best

thing about acting with Manoj sir is that he improvises and plays around in the scene and yet stays in the boundary of the scene and the character. So, there is always an element of surprise without any fear of going off track. And as a co-actor, this approach gave me great material to explore Sajid as well, especially in our scenes together."

Shahab, who also shared screen space with actress Samantha Akkineni, says he was very intrigued about the relationship of Sajid and Raji in the series. "Their graph is so intricate and beautiful. Samantha, as an actor, is extremely professional and focused and that's why we had some really magical moments on screen. It was very smooth and effortless with her. She responds to improvisations and is emotionally charged up. It was a great privilege to share screen with her too. This experience will surely help me in future," tells Shahab.

Speaking about Shahab's performance, director duo Raj and DK commented, "Shahab is a natural and has had a fantastic formal training which makes him a complete package. He is a director's actor and grasps his character with ease. His scenes with Manoj Bajpayee and Samantha have come out really well, so it's always interesting to put him with other actors and see him emote and respond to improvisations."

Previously, Shahab was seen in *Kedarnath*, he also played the iconic role of

Salim in Broadway Style Musical show *Mughal-E-Azam* directed by Feroz Abbas Khan and played the lead Role of Zangoor in India's first Broadway Style Bollywood Musical Show *Zangoor* — *The Gypsy Prince* at *Kingdom of Dreams*!



# Nani 'cooking' something for frontline workers

Over the years, Nani has managed to gain more and more fan base across the Telugu states by striking a balance between the movies with mass appeal and those experimental in nature. The *Gentleman* star's constant desire for reinvention has helped set him apart from his peers and he has made him one of the most coveted performers down South. Currently, Nani has a number of movies in his kitty that are in different production stages. Amid

the Coronavirus pandemic, we've seen videos of health workers shaking their leg in the hospitals and quarantine centers to cheer patients up. Now Nani has decided to do something special for our frontline workers.

Nani, who is popular for his natural performance took to his Twitter, share a pic and said, "For our Frontline Workers. Something special Coming soon. Nani #For Our heroes." Any guesses on Nani's 'something special' for our frontline workers?

In the photograph, Nani is seen

observing 'something' that was shot on the camera.

On the work front, Nani will be seen playing the lead role in *Shyam Singha Roy* which has Sai Pallavi and Krithi Shetty in the female lead roles and another film *Tuck Jagadish* which was to release in April but was postponed due to the rise in Covid cases.



# Ravi Teja turning Chantabbayi?



Mega Star Chiranjeevi's titles are in great demand as they generate powerful vibes. According to the latest reports are coming that Mass Raja Raviteja is eyeing Mega star Chiranjeevi's

superhit title.

Rumours have it that Ravi Teja is turning *Chantabbayi*. Ravi Teja is on a high scoring a hit with *Krack*. He is currently starring in *Khiladi* and apart from it lined up three more films. He is starring in the direction of Trinatha Rao Nakkina.

Inside talk is the makers are planning to name the film as *Chantabbayi*, after Mega Star Chiranjeevi's classic *Chantabbayi* as the film is out and out hilarious entertainer. Ravi Teja will be seen as a detective in the film. Ram Charan earlier planned to do films naming *Khaidi* and *Gang Leader* but he couldn't but Nani's film was named as *Gang Leader* and Karti's film was named as *Khaidi*. While Nani's *Gang Leader* left without a trace and Nani faced trolls from mega fans, Karthi emerged successful scoring a hit as *Khaidi*. It has to be seen what Ravi Teja will do as *Chantabbayi*.

# MALAYALAM ACTRESS TO PLAY LEAD IN SHEKAR



When senior actor Dr Rajasekhara announced his film *Shekar* on his birthday back in February, fans were elated. They were eager to see their favourite star back on screen after a long break. The film, which was to go on floors last year, couldn't finish shooting due to the Covid-induced lockdown. When things looked like they could go back to normal, the announcement was made, but the second wave thwarted several plans.

Now according to the latest update, the makers of the film have roped in Malayalam actress Anu Sithara to play the female lead in *Shekar*. The actress, who debuted as a child artiste with *Pittas Bomb* in 2013, is well known for her films like Omar Lulu's *Happy Wedding*, which releases in 2016. The actress is currently working on films like *Momo*, (in Dubai), *Vathil* and *Duniyavinte Thathattu*, which are all in different production stages.

It is known that the film *Shekar*, which is touted to be an edge-of-the-seat thriller, is the official Telugu remake of the Malayalam drama *Joseph*. The film is being directed by Lalith, and is produced by Dr Rajasekhara's daughters Shivani, Shivathmika, along with MLV Satyanarayana.

Dr Rajasekhara also has another film *Arjuna* lined up for release, in which he plays a dual role. This film too, was supposed to be released in the month of March but has been postponed as cases of Covid started to rise due to the second wave.



▶ shortpasses

**WOLVES APPOINT LAGE AS BOSS**  
**WOLVERHAMPTON:** Wolves on Wednesday announced the appointment of former Benfica boss Bruno Lage as the new manager of the club. Lage replaces Nuno Espirito Santo, who left Molineux at the end of the season.

**VENUTO JOINS OZ COACHING STAFF**  
**SYDNEY:** Former Australia batsman Michael Di Venuto has returned to Australian team as assistant coach for the limited-overs tours of the Windies & Bangladesh in July and August.

**GIDEY BREAKS 10,000 METERS WR**  
**HENGLO:** Letesenbet Gidey clocked 29 minutes 01.3 seconds to break the women's 10,000 m world record by five seconds during the Ethiopian athletics trials on Tuesday night.

**SPAIN SETS UP 'PARALLEL' TEAM**  
**MADRID:** Spain have set up a 'parallel' squad of 17 reserves for Euro 2020 who may have to play if the Covid-19 infections among its players spread, team management said.

**TOP OZ PLAYERS MAY WITHDRAW**  
**SYDNEY:** Seven top Australian players could pull out of the national team's white-ball series in the West Indies next month after having spent considerable periods in various cricketing bubbles over the past few months.

**DONG WILL COMPETE AT TOKYO**  
**SHANGHAI:** Legendary trampolinist Dong Dong will compete at the Tokyo Olympics, Chinese media said on Wednesday, making a record fourth appearance at the Games.

**ARLOTT RECEIVES MAIDEN CALL-UP**  
**BRISTOL:** Pacer Emily Arlott on Wednesday earned a maiden call-up to the England women's squad for the one-off Test against India starting here on June 16.

**AFI ANNOUNCES IGP 4 ON JUNE 21**  
**NEW DELHI:** Athletics Federation of India on Wednesday announced that it will host the Indian Grand Prix 4 on June 21 in Patiala which will give Hima Das one more domestic event in their bid to qualify for Tokyo Olympics.

**ESL 6 REBELS ACCEPT \$31M FINE**  
**LONDON:** The six Premier League clubs that tried to join a European Super League have accepted a collective fine of 22 million pounds (\$31 million).

# Sakkari ends Swiatek win streak

## World No 18 will face unseeded Krejcikova for a place in Saturday's final

AP ■ PARIS

Maria Sakkari ended defending champion Iga Swiatek's 11-match and 22-set winning streaks at the French Open on Wednesday and reached the semi-finals of a major tournament for the first time.

The 17th-seeded Sakkari used strong and steady baseline play to eliminate Swiatek 6-4, 6-4 at Court Philippe Chatrier in the quarterfinals and ensure that the clay-court tournament will end with a new Grand Slam champion.

"I couldn't have done it without my team and their support and I just want to thank them and we still have a long way to go, of course," Sakkari said, "but we made a huge step today."

All four women remaining in the field are making their Slam semifinal debuts. This is only the second time in the professional era that's been the case at any major tournament, according to the WTA; there also was a quartet of first-time semifinalists at the 1978 Australian Open.

On Thursday, Sakkari plays unseeded Barbora Krejcikova, and No 31 Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova faces unseeded Tamara Zidansek.

Krejcikova advanced earlier on Wednesday by beating 17-year-old Coco Gauff 7-6 (6), 6-3.

Sakkari, who is from Greece, and Krejcikova, who is from the Czech Republic, are both 25. Each has won only one tour-level title. Neither had been past the fourth round at a major until now.

And both dealt with early deficits on Wednesday.

Swiatek, a 20-year-old from Poland who has looked untouchable



Women's semifinals  
Live from 6:30pm IST  
STAR SPORTS NETWORK

on clay, jumped out to a 2-0 lead, but then Sakkari took over, collecting eight of 10 games. When Sakkari smacked a backhand winner down the line to close a 15-stroke point that claimed the first set, she leaned over and punched the air with her right fist.

That ended Swiatek's set streak at Roland Garros, which dated to the beginning of last year's tournament, when she dropped only 28 games in all. She'd only lost 20 games this year through four matches.

But Sakkari, who beat 2020 French Open runner-up Sofia Kenin

in straight sets in her previous match, used clean strokes — accumulating 26 winners, nine more than her opponent — and a strategy of serving to Swiatek's forehand to gain control.

Down 2-0 in the second set, Swiatek took a medical timeout and left the court with a trainer, returning with her upper right leg taped. During the break, Sakkari tried to stay warm by hopping and skipping side-to-side behind the baseline and did not lose a beat when play resumed.

In the day's first quarterfinal, Gauff led 3-0 at the outset, then 5-3, and held a total of five set points in the opener, but failed to convert any. Krejcikova grabbed that set by taking the last four points of the tiebreaker and reeled off 15 consecutive points during one stretch en route to a 5-0 edge in the second set.

Closing out the most important victory of her singles career was not easy, though: Krejcikova needed six match points to do it, raising her arms overhead when she finally won when Gauff sent a forehand wide.

Krejcikova has won two Grand Slam doubles titles with Katerina Siniakova — and they're into the semifinals in Paris — but is playing in only her fifth major tournament in singles.

"Everybody, they just put a label on me like, 'Yeah, you play doubles. You are a doubles specialist.' But I never thought I just want to be a doubles specialist," Krejcikova said.

"So I was just working hard all the time. I just wanted to play singles. It was really, like, frustrating that I just wasn't able to get there," she said. "But I always felt ... sooner or later, I'm just going to get there."

## Tsitsipas, Nadal in semis



Rafael Nadal consoles Diego Schwartzman after their quarterfinal match

AFP ■ PARIS

Rafael Nadal dropped a set for the first time at this year's French Open but ultimately advanced to the semifinals for a record-extending 14th time.

The 13-time Roland Garros champion faced a stiff challenge from gritty 10th-seeded Diego Schwartzman and prevailed 6-3, 4-6, 6-4, 6-0 on Court Philippe Chatrier on Wednesday.

Nadal was down 4-3 in the third set but won nine games in a

row to seal the match.

Nadal will be up against either top-ranked Novak Djokovic or Matteo Berrettini in the semifinals.

On Tuesday night, Stefanos Tsitsipas defeated Daniil Medvedev in straight sets to stay on track for a first Grand Slam final at the French Open.

Greek fifth seed Tsitsipas qualified for his third successive major semi-final, winning 6-3, 7-6 (7/3), 7-5 to avenge his defeat by second-ranked Medvedev at the Australian Open and set up a showdown with Alexander Zverev.

"I was playing against one of the best guys on the tour and I had to keep up with the intensity and elevate my game," said Tsitsipas.

"I thought I was playing good and not giving him space to do things and I think my performance was close to one of my best this week. I love being in Paris, it brings back good memories and I'm happy to keep going."

Tsitsipas had won just one of seven previous matches with Medvedev, but the former arrived at Roland Garros favoured to reach the final after titles in Monte Carlo and Lyon, with Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal in the opposite half of the draw.

## Dahiya to fight for Gold at Poland Open

PTI ■ WARSAW

Olympic-bound Indian wrestler Ravi Dahiya put himself in line for his second title of 2021 season on Wednesday by reaching the 61kg final of Poland Open, the last Ranking Series event before the Tokyo Games.

All his opponents targeted Ravi's left leg again and again but the reigning Asian champion and 2019 World Championship Bronze medalist grappler's superior stamina pulled him through in his bouts.

Competing in only his second competition of the season, Ravi began with an easy 10-1 win against Uzbekistan's Gulomjon Abdullaev but struggled against Kazakhstan's Adlan Askarov before prevailing 13-8.

He sealed his spot in the semifinals with a 9-5 win over American Nathan Khalid Tomasello, who like Ravi, usually, competes in 57kg.

Ravi then reached the final with a 7-4 win over Iran's Reza Ahmadi Atragharchi.

He will now fight for Gold against Abdullaev, whom he trounced easily in his opening bout.

The most challenging bout for Ravi turned out to be his sec-



ond round duel against Askarov. It was all about stamina and power as the Indian effected a dramatic turnaround after trailing 0-8 to win against the Kazakh.

Askarov, the Asian Championship Silver medalist, stunned Ravi with a flurry of double-leg attacks as the Indian was struggling to negotiate with the Kazakh wrestler's fast moves. Even as Ravi got himself positioned for counter attacks, he could not execute them.

It was a strange sight to see Ravi struggling and his defence falling apart. He was just one move and two points away from an embarrassing defeat by technical superiority.

However, his rival lost steam in the second period and Ravi took advantage of that to pull off take-down moves one after another to log 13 straight points.

## Buttler, Morgan under investigation for alleged racist remarks against Indians

**London:** England's white-ball skipper Eoin Morgan and wicketkeeper batsman Jos Buttler are under investigation by the country's cricket board after their alleged racist tweets, mocking Indians, surfaced on the social media.

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has promised "relevant and appropriate action", saying each case will be considered on an individual basis.

The posts, in which Buttler and Morgan used the word 'sir' to mock the Indians, started doing the rounds on social media after the ECB suspended pacer Ollie Robinson for some of his offensive tweets dating back to 2012-13.

"Screenshots have also been shared of a message by Buttler in which he says 'I always reply

sir no1 else like me like you like me' and, separately, Morgan includes Buttler in a message which says, 'Sir you're my favourite batsman'," according to a report in the *telegraph.co.uk*.

"Although there are questions over the precise context of the tweets, they were written at a time when Buttler and Morgan were established England players and have caused offence on social media," the report added. The ECB said the matter will be dealt in an appropriate manner.

A homophobic tweet dating back to 2010 from veteran pacer James Anderson has also emerged. "For me it's 10-11 years ago, I've certainly changed as a person. And I think that's the difficulty, things do change, you do make mistakes," Anderson told the British media.

## Williamson out of 2nd Eng Test but 'will be back' for WTC final

PTI ■ BIRMINGHAM

New Zealand captain Kane Williamson was on Wednesday ruled out of the second Test against England to give much-needed rest to his 'irritated' left elbow ahead of the World Test Championship final against India.

Left-handed batsman Tom Latham will don the captaincy hat in Williamson's absence in the second Test beginning here on June 10.

While Latham will lead the Kiwis only for the third time, Will Young will replace Williamson in the playing eleven.

According to a statement issued by New Zealand Cricket, Williamson has been managing the elbow injury "since first missing matches in March".

New Zealand coach Gary Stead said that the injury has been troubling the 30-year-old batsman for quite some time.

"It's not an easy decision for Kane to have to miss a Test, but we think it's the right one," he said.

"He's had an injection in his elbow to relieve the irritation he's been experiencing when he bats and a period of



rest and rehabilitation will help maximise his recovery.

"The decision has been made very much with the ICC World Test Championship Final at Southampton in mind and we are confident he will be ready for that match starting on June 18," he added.

Latham assured Williamson will be back for the WTC final.

"I am sure he will be back. From our point of view, it is a precautionary thing. We would love for him to be available for this game but we have also got

the eye on the (WTC) final in a week's time.

"So it is about Kane giving himself the best opportunity to be fully fit and available for that game. The decision was made for him to rest this one and get that right for the final," said Latham in the pre-match interaction ahead of the second Test against England.

Latham also said that New Zealand will be resting their pacers on a case-by-case basis rather than resting all of them. Senior pacer Trent Boult is set to play the game after missing the first one, considering the WTC final in the following week.

"His coming back into the side is a massive boost for us. The way he can swing the ball, his leadership as well. He has been in this part of the world and knows how to perform," said Latham.

On resting the likes of Neil Wagner, Tim Southee and Kyle Jamieson, Latham added: "While we have an eye on that final, this is such an important game for us to put a performance that we can be proud of. We will take a call on the 11 or 12 after training but it (resting pacers) is more of a case by case situation."

## IOA in search of new kit sponsor

**New Delhi:** After dropping Chinese sportswear company Li Ning as India's Olympic kit sponsor, Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju on Wednesday said the country's athletes will not wear branded apparel in the upcoming Tokyo Games even as the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) claimed that the search is on for a new partner.

Rijiju's statement came hours after IOA president Narinder Batra told PTI that the National Olympic Committee (NOC) was hoping to find a new kit sponsor for the contingent by the end of this month after cutting ties with Li Ning on Tuesday.

"Indian athletes, coaches and support staff, won't be wearing any branded apparel at Tokyo Olympics. Only 'INDIA' will be written in the kits of our athletes," Rijiju tweeted.

However, Batra said search is on for a new sponsor within the limited available time.

PTI

## Benzema injured in France's win

AFP ■ PARIS

Karim Benzema was forced to leave the pitch with a dead leg on Tuesday as world champions France beat Bulgaria 3-0 in their final friendly one week before beginning their Euro 2020 campaign.

Benzema was taken off in the 39th minute at the Stade De France in what is France's last match before they take on Germany in their opening Group F match of the European Championship against Germany on June 15.

France also face reigning European champions Portugal and Hungary, who will play two of their group matches in front of big crowds at the Puskas Arena in Budapest.

The 33-year-old Benzema had been recalled with great fanfare to the national team following a near six-year exile, but his replacement Olivier Giroud showed why Les Bleus are considered among the favourites for



trophy with a late brace which took his France total to 46.

Giroud, 34, is now just five goals behind France's all-time top scorer Thierry Henry but will likely be sidelined when Benzema returns.

"When people call on me, the most important thing is to do the job," Giroud told broadcaster M6. "I had good service from my teammates. They know where I'm going to be in the box so I just tried to finish well."

## Neymar helps Brazil maintain perfect record

AFP ■ ASUNCION

Neymar scored one goal and created the other as Brazil maintained their perfect start to World Cup qualifying with a 2-0 win over Paraguay on Tuesday.

Substitute Lucas Paqueta sealed the win deep into injury time as Brazil opened up a six point lead at the top of South America's single qualifying group after a sixth win out of six.

Paraguay's first defeat saw them drop out of the automatic qualification places.

Brazil got off to a quick start with less than four minutes on the clock.

Gabriel Jesus, recalled to the starting line-up, crossed from the right and although Richardson missed his attempted volley, Neymar was unmarked at the back post to bobble the ball past goalkeeper Antony Silva.

Paraguay did not crumble, though, and center-back Omar Alderete forced an incredible save out of goalkeeper Ederson with a blockbuster drive from 30



yards.

Brazil had chances to kill the game off on the counter but Neymar screwed an effort wide and Gomez did brilliantly to block Richardson's shot.

But in injury time, Neymar played in Paqueta on the right to send a precise left-foot finish just inside the far post.

ARGENTINA BLOW LEAD

Miguel Borja scored four minutes into stoppage time to

rescue a 2-2 draw for Colombia in a World Cup qualifier against Argentina in Barranquilla.

Argentina were off to a flying start, helped by woeful home defending, to move 2-0 up inside eight minutes through goals by Cristian Romero and Leandro Paredes.

But Colombia's substitutes turned the game around in the second half as Luis Nuriel netted from the spot and then Borja snatched a point at the death.

## Selecao players won't boycott Copa America

**Sao Paulo:** Brazil's national footballers on Tuesday said they are against hosting the troubled Copa America, but will not boycott the tourney.

The championship is being organized on Brazilian soil in a last-minute, pandemic-defying rush after organizers withdrew it from Argentina over a Covid-19 surge.

"We are against organizing the Copa America, but we will never say no to the Brazilian

national team," the players said in a joint statement.

"We have a mission to accomplish in the historic green and yellow jersey of the five-time world champions," they said, five days from the opening match of the South American football championships.

Brazil's players were reportedly unhappy over their country's late decision to host the tournament.

AFP

