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Sena treated as slaves in BJP govt

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Pradhan: Cong-ruled states must cut tax on fuel

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Raashi Khanna to play a psycho killer?

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In brief

Maha updates Covid numbers with delayed data to 1.08L deaths

Over the past few days, Maharashtra has been revising its Covid death numbers to reflect data that came in with some lapse of time. This exercise over the past 12 days has resulted in the state's overall pandemic-related mortality zooming by over 8,800 to 1.08 lakh now. This massive data reconciliation exercise since June 1 has seen deaths being reported with a delay from Pune, Thane, Nagpur, Nashik, Aurangabad, Ahmednagar, and Yavatmal. Of these, the first three alone reported 1,368, 1,167, and 503 updates, a government statement said.

Delhi's unlocking: All shops, restaurants to reopen

Shops, malls and restaurants in Delhi will open from tomorrow as Covid numbers in the national capital drop to a three-month low. Shops will be open seven days a week instead of the current odd-even system. Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, however, said this will be on trial basis for a week and strict action will be taken if the Covid numbers rise. Shop timings will remain the same, from 10 am to 8 pm, Kejriwal said. Restaurants -- which were open only for takeaways and home deliveries -- can now have diners but with only 50 per cent of seating capacity.

Milkha Singh's wife Nirmal dies due to Covid

Former Indian women volleyball team captain Nirmal Kaur, who is the wife of sprint legend Milkha Singh, died at a Mohali hospital due to complications related to COVID-19 infection she had contracted last month. She was 85 and is survived by his husband, one son and three daughters. "We are deeply saddened to inform you that Mrs Nirmal Milkha Singh passed away after a valiant battle against COVID at 4 PM today," a statement from the spokesperson of the Milkha family said. "A back bone of the Milkha Family, she was 85 years old. It is tragic that the Flying Sikh Milkha Singh ji could not attend the cremation which was conducted this evening itself as he is still in the ICU (of PGIMER in Chandigarh) himself."

Christian Eriksen 'stable' after collapse, sends 'greetings to teammates'

Denmark midfielder Christian Eriksen remained in hospital but is in a "stable" condition after collapsing in his country's Euro 2020 game against Finland on Saturday, the Danish Football Union (DBU) said Sunday. "This morning we have spoken to Christian Eriksen, who has sent his greetings to his teammates. His condition is stable, and he continues to be hospitalized for further examination," the football body said in a post to Twitter. DBU also said that the team and staff had "received crisis assistance and will continue to be there for each other after yesterday's incident."

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:

Jyeshtha & Shukla Paksha

Panchangam

Tithi : Chaturthi: 10:33 pm

Nakshatram : Pushya: 08:36 pm

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

Rahukalam : 07:23 am – 09:00 am

Yamagandam : 10:38 am – 12:16 pm

Variyam : NIL

Gulika : 01:54 pm – 03:31 pm

Good Time : (to start any important work)

Amritakalam : 01:47 pm – 03:29 pm

Abhijit Muhurtham : 11:50 am – 12:42 pm

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Mostly cloudy

Temp: 30/23

Humidity: 73%

Sunrise: 05:41 am

Sunset: 06:50 pm

Current Weather Conditions

Updated JUNE 13, 2021 5:00 PM

Facilitating legitimate travel for Indian students a top priority: US diplomat

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The US mission in India is "actively working" to accommodate as many student visa applicants as possible in July and August, and facilitating their legitimate travel remained a top priority for it, a senior American diplomat said on Sunday.

Don Heflin, the Minister Counselor for Consular Affairs at the US embassy, also said that the US-bound students will not require any proof of COVID-19 vaccination to enter the country. They will need a negative report of their COVID-19 test taken within 72 hours prior to their departure.

There has been growing anxiety among a sizeable number of Indian students aspiring to fly to the US for higher studies in view of certain restrictions in getting visa appointments due to the coronavirus pandemic. The embassy will start giving visa interview slots for Indian students from Monday.



"We recognise the stress and anxiety this has caused to students and their families, and we are actively working to accommodate as many student visa applicants as possible in July and August. Facilitating legitimate student travel to the United States remains a top priority for the

US Mission to India," Heflin told PTI in an interview.

The official was asked about the rising uncertainty among the Indian students wanting to travel to the US, which had imposed fresh travel restrictions in May.

"Students returning to academic

programmes that resume on or after August 1 may travel to the United States up to 30 days before the programme resumes. There is no National Interest Exception required in this situation," he said.

"We recommend continuing students discuss their specific resumption plans with their respective universities to develop a travel timeline," Heflin said.

The National Interest Exceptions (NIE) allow travel to the US for persons whose entry is considered of national interest.

"We intend to start an intensive two months of interviewing student visa applicants on July 1. We will plan to open as many appointments as we can safely accommodate, based on local pandemic conditions across India," Heflin said.

"Student visa applicants do not need an expedited appointment to schedule their visa interview.

3

No clarity on Covid vaccine procurement: Pvt hospitals

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Several private hospitals across the country said they have no clarity on procuring COVID-19 vaccines under the new policy announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and that it has led to the vaccination being put on hold at their centres.

The hospitals have sought a proper mechanism and a single-window system to be put in place for procurement of vaccine doses. They also claimed that they had approached the vaccine manufacturers -- Bharat Biotech and Serum Institute of India (SII) -- and also state governments, but to no avail.

Meanwhile, in a recent communication to the Union health ministry, Prakash Kumar Singh, director, Government and Regulatory Affairs at SII, is learnt to have written, As per your direction, we are not accepting any further orders/payment from any private hospital in the country. We await

your further direction with regard to roadmap for future supplies to private hospitals.

Elaborating the problems faced by private hospitals, S C L Gupta, medical director, Batra Hospital said, "The problem is that there is no clarity on how we will be procuring the vaccines. When we ask the state government officials, they say wait till June 21 stating that the policy is not yet clear.

The central government also has asked us to wait. We have approached the companies too, but they are also not clear on the methodology of procurement," he said.



3

63.25L farmers to get Rs 7,509 cr Rythu Bandhu

K VENKATESHWARLU ■ HYDERABAD

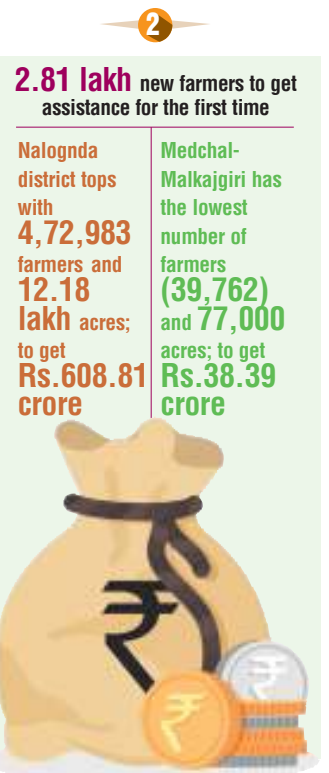
Agriculture Minister Singireddy Niranjan Reddy has said that 63.25 lakh farmers in the state will get Rythu Bandhu assistance this Vanakalam, including 2.81 lakh newly identified farmers with 66,311 acres of additional land included for the investment support scheme.

He said that the Chief Commissioner of Land Administration had handed over the final list of eligible farmers to the Agriculture Department. The government needs Rs 7,508.78 crore for 150.18 lakh acres, with farmers numbering 63,25,695.

In a statement issued on Sunday, the Minister asked the newly identified farmers who are eligible for Rythu Bandhu to meet the local AEOs and AOs and handed over photocopies of their pattadar pass book, Aadhaar card, and bank account details. He asked anxious farmers, whose bank account IFSC codes have changed following the merger of banks, not to worry. Local officials of the Agriculture Department would clear their doubts if any, he said.

The Minister said that Nalgonda district had the highest number of farmers -- 4,72,983 with 12.18 lakh acres -- and they would get

Rs.608.81 crore under the Rythu Bandhu scheme. However, Medchal Malkajigiri district had the lowest number of farmers (39,762 with 77,000 acres) and they would get Rs.38.39 crore.



Lord Balaji temple in Jammu in 18 months: L-G Sinha

PNS ■ JAMMU

Describing the 'Bhoomi Pujan' ceremony of Sri Venkateswara Swamy temple here as a "historic and proud day" for Jammu and Kashmir, Lt Governor Manoj Sinha on Sunday said the temple is expected to be constructed in 18 months in two phases at a cost of Rs 33.22 crore.

Sinha said the construction of the temple would open up opportunities across sectors and would certainly change the economy of the region.

In a series of tweets, the office of the Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor said the much-awaited 'Bhoomi Pujan' ceremony of Sri Venkateswara Swamy Temple by Tirumala Tirupati

Devasthanams (TTD) was held at Majeen here.

Take part in Bhoomi Pujan and unveiled the plaque to mark the laying of foundation stone in presence of Union MoS Dr Jitendra Singh, Union MoS G Kishan Reddy, Chairman TTD Board and other dignitaries, Sinha said.

He expressed sincere gratitude towards TTD Board and the Union

government for fulfilling the long pending wish of people of J&K and north India for establishing the temple of Lord Balaji on the land of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi.

"It is a historic and proud day for J&K. Lord Balaji's divine blessing is a state of inner celebration. Ved Pathshala in the second phase will strengthen the foundation of Indian culture, the Lt Governor said.

After Nathwani, now Adani to Rajya Sabha from YSRCP

Amit Shah proposed to YS Jagan in the recent discussions

SNCN ACHARYULU ■ HYDERABAD

The bonds between Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy and Bharatiya Janata party brass are strengthening.

According to sources, Jagan has accepted in principle a request made by Union Home Minister Amit Shah to send Gautam Adani, one of the richest industrialists in the country, to the Rajya Sabha with YSR Congress giving the berth in the next biennial elections.

It may be recalled that, at the behest of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Shah, in the previous



Rajya Sabha elections YSR Congress party gave ticket to Parimal Nathwani, senior group president of Reliance Industries owned by Mukhesh Ambani.

Jagan, during his recent trip to Delhi, held lengthy discussions

with Shah. According to sources, during the discussions Shah proposed Rajya Sabha ticket to Adani from YSR Congress. Like Mukesh Ambani, Adani is close to the BJP leadership.

Four Rajya Sabha members from Andhra Pradesh are retiring on 21st June 2022. They are BJP members Y Sujana Chowdary, Suresh Prabhu and TG Venkatesh as well as YSR Congress member Vijayasai Reddy. Going by the parties' relative strength in the Andhra Pradesh Assembly, all the four Rajya Sabha seats will go to YSR Congress.

2

Roll back fuel price hike: Left parties

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Left parties in a joint statement on Sunday demanded the rollback of hike in petroleum products and urged the government to control prices of essential commodities and drugs.

The joint statement has been signed by Sitaram Yechury, General Secretary, Communist Party of India (Marxist); D Raja, General Secretary, Communist Party of India; Debabrata Biswas, General Secretary, All India Forward Bloc; Manoj Bhattacharya, General Secretary, Revolutionary Socialist Party and Dipankar Bhattacharya, General Secretary, Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation.

Alleging that the government, instead of helping people to combat the ravages of the Covid health catastrophe, hiked the prices of petroleum products by at least 21 times after the announcement of results of the recent assembly elections on May 2, the parties said that this is leading to a "cascading inflationary spiral with the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) rising to an 11-year high." "The prices of food articles have risen by nearly 5 per cent in April.

All eyes are on Huzurabad

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Following the resignation of former health minister Eatela Rajendar as MLA; all eyes are now on the Huzurabad Assembly seat. Usually, after the vacation of any Assembly or Lok Sabha seat is notified, bye-election should be conducted within six months. However, in view of the raging Covid-19 pandemic, it is not clear when a bye election would be conducted for the Huzurabad Assembly seat by the Election Commission in time.

The Election Commission has already postponed the MLC elections in the Telugu states. However, Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS)



president K Chandrasekhara Rao has directed Finance Minister T Harish Rao and others to concentrate on the Huzurabad Assembly segment with immediate effect.

Post resignation, Eatela has made it clear that he is ready to face the

Huzurabad bye-election. By accepting the resignation of Eatela promptly and notifying the vacancy to the Election Commission, the Telangana Assembly secretariat has indicated the state government's (TRS) readiness to conduct the Huzurabad bye-election.

The outcome of the Huzurabad Assembly by-poll is crucial in the present circumstances. Should the TRS win the bye-election; its grumbling leaders will keep quiet. If the TRS loses the bye-election, the TRS leadership will stop making harsh decisions and will take decisions carefully in the future.

2

Congress needs widespread reforms: Kapil Sibal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress must bring widespread reforms across all levels of the organisation to show it is no longer in a state of inertia and to present itself as a viable political alternative to the BJP, party veteran Kapil Sibal said on Sunday.

Sibal, who was among the G-23 leaders whose letter to Congress President Sonia Gandhi last year demanding a meaningful overhaul of the party had triggered a storm, hoped the organisational polls, recently postponed in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, will happen sooner than later.

In an exclusive interview to PTI, the former union minister acknowledged that at present there is no strong political alternative to the BJP but said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has lost the moral authority to rule and the Congress can present an alternative due to the current mood in the country.

He also noted that while forming committees to review election losses is good, it will have no impact unless remedies suggested are implemented.

Noting that the party's alliances with the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) in



Assam and Indian Secular Front (ISF) in West Bengal were not thought through, Sibal said the Congress has failed to drive home

the point that minority and majority communalism are equally dangerous for the country.

He cited this as one of the rea-

sons for the poor performance of the party in recent assembly polls.

Amid defections of young leaders Jyotiraditya Scindia and now Jitin Prasada to the BJP, the former minister said there is an urgent need to strike a balance between experience and youth.

He has earlier said that from aaya ram, gaya ram politics, it has come to "prasada politics" now and asked whether Jitin will get the 'prasada' from the BJP, suggesting that leaders were moving out of the party to serve their political interests.

2

Monday Mirchi

'Long, long-standing' babus edgy amid reshuffle talk

Murmurs of reshuffle in the administration can make even stoic babus edgy. Such is the power structure in the Secretariat, whether centralized or scattered for administrative convenience like in TS. After almost one and a half years, Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao is going to reshuffle babudom. According to sources in the Chief Minister's Office, 'long, long-standing' IAS officers will be moved to other departments. In babudom, 'long standing' in itself signifies working in one place continually at least for about three years. Now, IAS circles are anxiously waiting to know whether only long-standing officers will be moved or even 'long, long-standing' officers will also be disturbed. Some IAS officers have been working in the department for about five years. They have, their peers say, become fixtures. Ministers are changing but IAS officers are continuing in the same department. Some district collectors are fed up with the corona pandemic and want to move to some other posts. Some collectors have conveyed their wishes to higher authorities. Some IAS officers want to move from their present place to some 'good' (you know what it means!). If the Chief Minister makes a major reshuffle, there will be not be another rejig till the next elections; except for one or two officers, and that too, should there be a necessity. District collectors in particular are hoping against hope.

When hunks are at helm, it pays to hunker down

The public in Prakasam district are presently witnessing a rare situation of having to hunker down as two handsome hunks, and that too fitness freaks, are occupying high positions. Prakasam Superintendent of Police Siddharth Kaushal is known for his looks and fit body. Now, Praveen Kumar, who has taken over as the new Collector of Prakasam district, may give a tough competition to Kaushal as Praveen is also known to be a fitness freak in bureaucratic circles. Praveen's colleagues always wonder how he maintains such a fit body and does his workouts, despite his hectic work schedule every single day. Incidentally, both are north Indians. Now they may share a same gym as well.

Thriving T-Hub and underperforming CIOs, CEOs

There are government organizations in which a committed workforce, driven by able superiors and motivated by commanding taskmasters, makes the CEO redundant. Led by Jayesh Ranjan, the IT

Department has a lot of foreign returnees who have taken up befitting roles in government and are doing exceptional work, except perhaps for the Chief Innovation Officer and T-Hub CEO. The Government has taken a step back to think about who would be the right person to head Telangana's startup initiative. Existing CEO Ravi Narayan has announced that he is moving out. Noticeably, the government has not extended his contract. Whatever merit T-Hub has today is largely due to constant promotion and motivation by Jayesh Ranjan and his political boss and IT Minister KT Rama Rao. T-Hub has virtually been reduced to a building as both the past and present CEOs have not been of much use for this initiative requiring a hands-on approach. The performance of T-Hub has been so bad of late that the latest Annual Report of the IT Department shows that the relatively smaller We-Hub touched 4,500 women entrepreneurs, while T-Hub supported 2,000 startups. Ravi, who is now Chief Innovation Officer of the state, couldn't live up to the minimum expectation of the past CIO. It would be interesting to watch how the state would pick the next leader as it is going to unveil T-Hub2 building, largest incubator in Asia, towards the end of this year.

Bouquets for Ministers, brickbats to govt servants

Wanna grievance fixed? Post it on social media platforms and tag the Minister concerned. Response guaranteed. This channel celebrates Ministers' responsiveness and paints babus in poor light as it appears as if officials act only if nudged their political bosses at public fora. The Telangana government created 33 districts ostensibly to make administration easily accessible to people. Definitely small is beautiful when it comes to paying attention to the public, delivering services, and addressing public grievances. The whole idea was that the District Collector, overseeing a relatively smaller geographical area, would ensure proper implementation of programmes and obtain feedback in real time. Alas! People still rely on MLAs and Ministers for getting things done, be it sourcing medicines, oxygen concentrators or correction of errors in pattadar passbooks for uploading particulars in Dharani portal. Social media platforms have become virtual offices for grievance redressal, often replacing the official mechanism.

Sensing the public mood, Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao has announced that he would make 'surprise' inspections of villages and municipalities in various parts of the state. Heads may roll if X or Y is caught napping at their workplace. KCR is known for making spot decisions!

- Yours truly

'Project O₂ for India' initiated to meet rising oxygen demand amid pandemic

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The office of the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government on Sunday said 'Project O₂ for India' has been initiated to ensure supply of critical raw materials such as zeolites, setting up of small oxygen plants, and manufacturing of compressors.

The second wave of Covid saw an increase in demand for medical oxygen in different parts of the country, it said in a statement.

While meeting the current demand, manufacturing medical oxygen also became important to ensure the country has adequate

supply in the future.

'Project O₂ for India' of the Office of Principal Scientific Adviser is to enable stakeholders working to augment the country's ability to meet this rise in demand for medical oxygen.

"Under Project O₂ for India, a National Consortium of Oxygen is enabling the national level supply of critical raw materials such as zeolites, setting up of small oxygen plants, manufacturing compressors, final products, i.e., oxygen plants, concentrators, and ventilators," according to the statement.

The consortium is not only looking forward to

providing immediate to short-term relief but also working to strengthen the manufacturing ecosystem for long-term preparedness.

A committee of experts has been evaluating critical equipment such as oxygen plants, concentrators, and ventilators from a pool of India-based manufacturers, start-ups, and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

The manufacturing and supply consortium includes Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL); Tata Consulting Engineers (TCE); C-CAMP, Bengaluru; IIT Kanpur; IIT Delhi; IIT Bombay, IIT Hyderabad; IISER, Bhopal; Venture Center, Pune; and

more than 40 MSMEs, it said.

The consortium has started to secure CSR/philanthropic grants from organisations like USAID, Edwards Life sciences Foundation, Climate Works Foundation, etc, it said.

Hope Foundation, American Indian Foundation, Walmart, Hitachi, BNP Paribas, and eInfoChips are procuring oxygen concentrators and VPSA/PSA plants as part of their CSR efforts to aid the consortium's work.

NMDC Ltd has agreed to fund the procurement of raw materials like zeolite for the manufacturers in the consortium, it added.

After Nathwani, now Adani to...

Continued from page 1

Recently the Andhra Pradesh government gave the Gangavaram port to the Adani group of companies. Jagan is of the considered view that if the country's richest industrialists are given Rajya Sabha tickets, the image of the party will improve. At the same time, the industrialists will invest huge money in the state. Mukhesh Ambani and Adani are internationally famous industrialists.

A close associate of Jagan said: "I do not know whether Union home Minister Amit Shah has proposed Adani's name for Rajya Sabha or not, but if Shah requests us to send Adani to Rajya Sabha, YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, who is also an industrialist, will definitely accept it".

All eyes are on Huzurabad

Continued from page 1

The Huzurabad bye-election is likely to be a straight fight between TRS and BJP or a triangular fight, should Congress leader Kaushik Reddy step in. There are speculations that Kaushik Reddy may join TRS, though he has scotched the talk. But in politics anything can happen even in the last minute. If Kaushik Reddy does not join TRS, the fight will turn triangular.

In the 2018 Assembly elections, Eatela, as TRS candidate, got 1.04 lakh votes and the Congress candidate Kaushik Reddy got more than 61,000 votes. The BJP candidate, Puppala Raghu, got only 1,683 votes. At 2,867, NOTA votes outnumbered the votes polled by the BJP candidate.

Financially speaking, TRS and BJP are very strong and Kaushik Reddy of the Congress is also financially strong. If it is going to be a triangular fight, voters of Huzurabad should be considered lucky.

Congress needs widespread...

Continued from page 1

At present, there is definitely a void in terms of a strong political alternative. It is exactly in this context, that I had given suggestions for some reforms in my party so that the country has a strong and credible opposition.

"But what comes out of it is not something for me to foretell. But I am sure, a time will come when the people of this country will decide what is good for them, Sibal told PTI.

The veteran added that India needs a resurgent Congress and the party needs to rope in the right people to drive its poll strategy so that it can build upon the failures of the government.

Victory of non-BJP parties in recent assembly elections has shown the chinks in the BJP's armour in terms of its vulnerability to losing when faced with a stronger opposition, he said.

India needs a resurgent Congress. But for that, the party needs to show that it is active, present, aware and is in the mood to engage meaningfully. "For this to happen, we will need to have widespread reforms at the organisational

hierarchy both at the central and state levels to show that the party is still a force to reckon with and is no longer in a state of inertia, he said.

Exuding hope in the grand old party's resurgence at a time of newly emerging political equations across India, Sibal said that despite a poor showing of the Congress electorally, the current mood in the country provides an opportunity for it to emerge as a viable alternative, owing to the party's pan-India presence. The Modi government's inept handling of the pandemic and the resultant anguish among people across the country needs to be channelised.

"The Congress has to take it upon itself to provide an alternative roadmap in the nation's interest and I am sure, we will emerge victorious in this enterprise, he said just two days after strategist Prashant Kishor met NCP chief Sharad Pawar in Mumbai, triggering speculation of a potential third front. Asked if the Congress had learnt its lessons from the Antony committee report after the 2014 Lok Sabha debacle, Sibal said the party had not been able to

stress that all forms of communalism were dangerous.

The Antony committee set up by Congress chief Sonia Gandhi soon after the 2014 Lok Sabha elections had rightly pointed out that fighting the polls on secularism versus communalism plank hurt the Congress that was identified as pro-minority, resulting in substantial electoral gains for the BJP.

"More importantly the Congress also failed to drive home the point that minority and majority communalism were equally dangerous for the country. In my view, the decision to ally with All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) in Assam and Indian Secular Front (ISF) in Bengal was not thought through, said Sibal.

When pointed out that he had sought urgent party elections in the letter to Sonia Gandhi and if he agreed with the postponement of the exercise, Sibal said, On January 22, the CWC had met to discuss the schedule for electing the new party chief in May. It was deferred by a month owing to the Assembly polls.

63.25L farmers to get Rs 7,508 cr...

Continued from page 1

Seven districts would get Rythu Bandhu amounts ranging between Rs.300-400 crore; 11 districts Rs.200-300 crore and 10 districts would get Rs.100-200 crore. Warangal Urban and Mulugu and Medchal districts would get below Rs. 100 crore.

The Minister said that farmers would get Rythu Bandhu amounts from June 15 to 25. Farmers would be getting the Rythu Bandhu amounts successfully for the 7th time, he pointed out. The government had been releasing Rythu Bandhu amounts for the third time under financial stress due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The state government had released Rs.14,656.02 crore for the Vanakalam and Yasangi seasons last year. The government had allocated Rs.14,800 crore in the Budget for the Vanakalam and Yasangi seasons, Niranjan Reddy added.

Roll back fuel price hike: Left parties

Continued from page 1

Primary commodities saw a rise of 10.16 per cent and manufactured products have risen by 9.01 per cent. By the time these commodities reach the retail markets, the consumers are charged much more.

"This is happening while the economy is witnessing a deep recession, galloping unemployment, collapsing purchasing power and rising levels of hunger.

Clearly, unscrupulous

Unscrupulous black-marketing and hoarding is taking place under state patronage

black-marketing and hoarding is taking place under state patronage. The Modi government must strictly crackdown on such black-marketing especially of essential drugs, vital for people's

survival," the statement said.

The parties demanded that the government must immediately give direct cash transfers of Rs 7,500 per month for six months to all families not falling in the income tax paying bracket.

The statement further said the provisions announced by PM Modi regarding extension of PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) till Diwali of 5 kg foodgrains is "completely inadequate and does not cover the most needy."

With rapidly changing geopolitical equations globally, precious metals, including gold and silver, remained firm. Covid-19 pandemic has certainly impacted small and medium investors and their buying activities.

Consequently, New York gold closed at US \$ 1,877.80 (per ounce), while silver remained steady and closed at \$ 27.92 (per ounce). Platinum and palladium closed at \$ 1,144 (per ounce) and \$ 2,704 (per ounce) respectively.

Other economic parameters remained moderate. Brent closed at US \$ 72.69 (per barrel) while Crude MCX oil was quoted at Rs.5,208 (per barrel). Gold MCX stood at Rs.48,880 (per

10 gms), MCX Silver closed at Rs.72,216 (per kg) and Copper MCX closed at Rs.748.25 (per kg). Sensex and Nifty 50 closed at 52,474.76 and 15,799.35 points. Leading foreign currencies' exchange closing rates were: US \$: Rs.73.23, British Pound: Rs.103.31, Euro: Rs.88.68, Singapore \$: Rs.55.24, Swiss Franc: Rs.81.52, Australian \$: Rs.56.45, Saudi Riyal: Rs.19.53, New Zealand dollar: Rs.52.20, Kuwaiti Dinar: Rs.243.60, Omani Rial: Rs.190.22 and UAE Dirham: Rs.19.94, Japanese Yen: Rs.0.67 and Hong Kong dol-

lar: Rs.9.44.

In local markets, standard gold (24 carats) declined by Rs.170 and closed at Rs.49,900 (per 10 gms). Ornamental gold too followed suit and was quoted in the range of Rs.45,650 - 45,750 on the closing day. Silver (0.999) further appreciated by Rs.1,000 and closed at Rs.77,300 (per kg). Amidst the prevalent market uncertainty due to Covid-19 pandemic conditions, all major markets have suffered heavily. However, following the gradual easing of lockdown restrictions, an air of optimism has buoyed up the market mood.

COMMODITIES

The sentiment in principal wholesale commodity markets in the twin cities turned moderate due to welcome rain showers of the current monsoon season. Rythu Bazaars and the various commodity markets located in Begum Bazar, Kishangunj, Mukthiyargunj, Risala Abdullah, Mir Alam Mandi, Dilsukhnagar, Kukatpally, Bowenpally and General Bazar registered moderate trading.

During the week, common pulses such as tuar dal, masoor dal, moong dal and urad dal and commodities like chillies and garlic remained unchanged at their respective last week's closing levels, while staple food

grains and common edible recorded a negligible decline.

Common vegetables such as cabbage, cauliflower, ribbed gourd, snake gourd, lady's finger, cucumber, potatoes, onions, French beans and leafy vegetables flared up still further in the range of 8% to 14%. Tomatoes continued to rule at lower levels. Mango growers have suffered huge losses due to pre-monsoon and cyclonic winds that have devastated mango crop on a large scale.

The NECC wholesale price of egg in Hyderabad appreciated by Rs.2 and closed at Rs.510 (per 100). The highest price of Rs.575 was recorded at Kolkata, while Ludhiana recorded the lowest price of Rs.499.

New tenancy law in offing: pros and cons

■ HC UPADHYAY

Recently the Union cabinet approved the draft Model Tenancy Act, 2020 (MTA) prepared by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. The MTA has the objective of balancing the interests and rights of landlords and tenants and in intended to create an efficient and transparent system for dealing with all aspects of renting, residential and commercial (except industrial) premises.

The government expects that State tenancy laws based on the MTA will benefit both landlords and tenants. The draft bill also aims at speedy disposal of tenancy disputes.

Among the salient features of the bill, the important ones are: compulsory registration of written agreement between the landlord and the tenant with the designated authority, limit of security deposit payable by the tenant

to a maximum of 2 months' rent in case of residential premises and 6 months' in case of non-residential premises, prohibition of withholding essential supplies or services on the premises occupied by the tenant and exemplary fines for not honouring the terms of the rental agreement.

Touted as a substitute to the country's archaic laws and an engine to the target of 'Housing for all by 2022', the new bill despite it's having balancing features may not really be of much help to provide succor to helpless tenants. In fact, the gap between the availability of homes and shelter-seekers is very wide which ultimately creates 'the seller's market'. The only viable alternative is to encourage housing activity by the public sector. After all,

even the private housing sector heavily leans over the public money to complete housing ventures.

It is unfortunate that since Independence, despite making tall claims about poverty elimination by providing food, clothing and shelter to people, successive governments have done precious little. In the 50s and 60s, the housing problem which was confined only to the big cities like Mumbai, New Delhi, Kolkata and Chennai percolated down to even the smaller cities and towns. With the rapid industrialization and growth of trade, the employment avenues have definitely increased manifold. Most of the employment opportunities are available in the big cities and towns which results in large scale migration of

people from rural areas to urban areas.

In other words, the housing problem has its roots in non-availability of ample houses and giving tons of money to private developers to address this problem is certainly not a proper solution. In a situation like haves and have-nots it is always the haves who will have the upper hand. It is one thing to provide a sound mechanism to regulate the rental activity and for the dispute redressal, but the million-dollar question is: how efficiently the Model Tenancy Law would be enforced by the respective governments. As it is, most of the states have the authority to search for the vacant houses and allot the same to public servants. But, the ground realities are hopelessly disappointing.

Indeed, the gospel truth is all laws are good; but only their implementation is

defective.

Italian marine's case comes closer to the end

Considering the fact that the Republic of Italy has deposited a sum of Rs.10cr towards compensation, the Supreme Court is likely to pass appropriate orders on the application filed by the central government to quash the criminal proceedings pending in India against Italian marine Massi Milano Latorre and Salvatore Gironi in connection with the sea-firing incident near Kerala coast, resulting in the death of two Indian fishermen in 2012.

A division bench of Justice Indira Benerjee and Justice M.R Shah adjourned the matter to June 15 for orders.

The Italian marine's case had generated much dust and din, particularly because of its political contours. The amicable settlement and the amount of compensation notwithstanding, one must admit that India as a sovereign nation has had to eat the humble pie in the

entire episode.

Rajasthan HC on live-in relationship

A single bench of Justice Pankaj Bhandari of the Rajasthan High Court recently held that a live-in relationship between a married and unmarried person is not permissible under law. Refusing to grant protection of life and liberty to the petitioners, the court observed that the petitioner No.2 (man) was already married. Hence, relying on the apex court verdict in *D. Velusami V.s D. Patchaiahmmal* (2010) 10 SCC 469, the petition was dismissed.

However, there seems to be a legal dichotomy in this matter. On June 7th the Punjab and Haryana High Court directed SSP, Faridkot to look into the grievance of an already married woman and an unmarried man in a live-in relationship and seeking protection of life and liberty against private parties.

Further, there are several other similar cases also where the High Courts have taken different views and it will be in the fitness of things if the Apex Court sets right the issues.

J&K HC on reopening of a case

By an order dated June 4, a single-judge bench comprising Justice Sanjaydhar of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court held in *Ajit Chopra V.s UNION territory of J&K* and others held that once a case has been closed by the superior authority, it is not permissible to the subordinate office to reopen it.

Terming the courts adopted by respondent No.3 in the said case as not only amounting to abuse of process of law but also smacking of insubordination, the court held that the action of reopening the case by respondent No.3 is not sustainable in law and as such, the same deserves to be quashed. The

court also granted liberty to the relevant authorities of the Police Department "to take appropriate disciplinary action against respondent No. 3 for having acted in a manner which smacks of insubordination."

New CJ for Allahabad HC

The acting Chief Justice of Allahabad High Court, Justice Sanjay Yadav, has been appointed as the Chief Justice of the same Court by a Presidential Order dated June 10.

TS -HC judges' strength increased:

The Supreme Court of India has approved the sanctioned bench strength of Telangana High Court to 42. At present, the strength is 24.

Out of the proposed 42 judges, 32 will be permanent judges and 10 will be additional judges. The composition of the 42 judges will be 28 from the Bar and 14 from the judicial services. The proposal had been hanging fire since 2019.

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Pandemic dents TSSPDCL revenue

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana State Power Distribution Company Limited (TSSPDCL) has sustained a total revenue loss to the tune of Rs 4,00 crore on account of dip in demand for power in 2020 and 2021 summer season. This is attributed to Coronavirus situation affecting industries, hotels, cinema theatres, IT units and ITES units, educational institutions and hostels. Exports and imports have been affected.

The TSSPDCL during April and May this year sustained loss in additional revenue to the tune of Rs 25 to 30 crore a month. It may be recalled that the power demand reached the peak level of 70 million units per day in May last year as against 60 MU during the corresponding month this year.

Under GHMC limits, there are over 50 lakh power connections, including 7 lakh commercial power connections and 50,000 industrial power connections. The total number of Low Tension (LT) consumers is put at over 45 lakh. Monthly, over 2,000 new connections are issued. From revenue perspective, the High Tension (HT) consumers are more valued than LT consumers. Generally



speaking, the unit cost for HT consumers is high. Closure of various commercial establishments and ITES units due to lockdown and due to suspension of export and import activity, industries cut down their production.

Because of the work from home option, the power consumption in offices - both government and private - has come down, affecting the revenue of the TSSPDCL.

The power consumptions goes to 350 units a month during March-June period as against the 200 units a month during July-February period. The TSSPDCL expected a power demand of at least 75

MU per day. But in sharp contrast, the demand did not cross 55 MU per day in May this year. This is due to imposition of lockdown due to the second wave of Covid-19. Last year May recorded 60 MU demand per day.

TSSPDCL director (operations) Srinivasa Reddy said that the per day power demand in summer was estimated to be around 75 MU, but the summer this year was less harsh compared to the summer last year. Moreover, the lockdown has been imposed. The consumers did not use air-conditioners much, causing a dent in the revenue of the distribution company.

Ready to tackle monsoon

The southwest monsoon has arrived with the onset of monsoon winds in the city for the last two weeks. In this context, the department of electric supply, TSSPDCL has been alerted to its duties and roles in the metropolitan area. Southern Power Distribution Company Limited, the biggest power distributor in the metro city has formulated a special operation scheme with department personnel to prevent any problem in providing uninterrupted power supply during the monsoon. Overall there are nine circles in the Greater Hyderabad city area and the Operations Department officials have set up disaster management teams consisting of three members in each circle for uninterrupted distribution of power and effective work. Proper measures will be taken to ensure uninterrupted power supply during the monsoon season beginning in June and continuing through July, August and September. TSSPDCL this year has taken proper measures and is constantly vigilant at the field level by recruiting additional staff in addition to the staff currently working. Officials said TSSPDCL has set up a control room in every circle office and disaster management personnel are available at the control units to go immediately to a place where there is a power problem. The staff will be available 24 hours a day. 11 KV lines had already been specially inspected and repaired wherever necessary, to ensure that there were no power shortages to businesses, commercial connections and industries, as well as to home users. Superiors have already issued orders to prepare as many personnel as needed to ensure that there is no disruption anywhere within the nine circles. If there are any complaints regarding power supply within the nine circles in Greater Hyderabad, the authorities have asked consumers to call the 1912 toll-free number. They have made available the technology to register a large number of complaints at one time - nearly 60 complaints will be registered at once. Authorities advised city residents to be constantly vigilant of the power poles and other electrical systems when they leave their homes. During the monsoon season, there is a risk of accidents mainly due to the passing of electric power through iron pillars in many places. For this at the field level, the staff members have inspected them section by section and instructed the linemen along with the AEI to take measures to avoid any accidents there.

Fuel prices touch almost century in Hyderabad after Sunday hike

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Petrol prices in the city are touching almost centum.

The fuel prices were increased again on Sunday, making it the seventh hike in the month of June alone. As on June 13, the petrol price in the city was Rs 99.90 per litre whereas diesel was priced at Rs 94.82 per litre.

On June 1, the petrol and diesel prices in the State were Rs 98.10 and Rs 92.98 per litre respectively. The fuel prices have been increasing constantly since the last month and were hiked more than 15 times in May. In many districts of Telangana, including Nizamabad, Khammam and parts of Siddipet, the petrol prices already crossed Rs 100 per litre on June 9.

Rajiv Amaram, Joint Secretary of Consortium of Indian Petroleum Dealers,



says, "It is expected that the petrol prices will go up further in the coming weeks. As on June 1, the base price of the petrol in the country was Rs 35.63, and that of diesel was Rs 38.16. The sales price of fuel is determined after adding various costs such as excise duty, dealer commission, VAT, etc. to this."

Fuel prices differ from one state to another depending on the amount of local taxes such as VAT and freight charges that are levied, he said.

In several other states of the country, including Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh the per litre petrol price has crossed Rs 100.

Now, report grievances to GHMC on WhatsApp

Helpline to report storm water drains

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation launched an exclusive number to report grievances pertaining to storm water drains.

Citizens with grievances can WhatsApp the details to 9848021665 and they can also send pictures along the location of the drain that needs to be fixed. People can also directly report the grievances to 9848098166- phone number of Animal Husbandry Minister Talasani Srinivas Yadav. State government sanctioned Rs 45 crore to widen and repair the

drains. To make sure these works are executed efficiently and on a war footing basis, elected representatives will inspect their respective jurisdiction from June 14 to 19.

The Animal Husbandry Minister will also inspect the storm water drains works in Begumpet on June 14. According to a press release issued by the minister's office, Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao and Municipal Administration and Urban Development Minister KT Rama Rao are constantly monitoring the works related to nalas.



COURTESY CALL

Telangana senior police officials called on Chief Justice of Supreme Court of India NV Ramana at Raj Bhavan on Sunday. Director General of Police Mahender Reddy, Rachakonda Commissioner of Police Mahesh Bhagwat, Hyderabad CP Anjani Kumar, Cyberabad CP VC Sajjanar, ADG (Law and Order) Jitender, Intelligence chief Prabhakar Rao and others interacted with the CJI about the coordination between different stakeholders in criminal justice system.



MPV overturns on PVNR Expressway, 2 persons injured

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Two persons were injured after an Innova car overturned on PVNR Expressway at Mehdiapatnam on Sunday.

According to police, the multi purpose vehicle (MPV) coming from Mehdiapatnam towards Aramgarh jumped the divider and turned turtle around 9 am near Pillar no 38.

Apparently the driver who was driving at high speed lost control over the vehicle, the police said. On information the police reached the spot and shifted the vehicle from the road.

31 youngsters booked for organising birthday party

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Cyberabad police on Sunday booked 31 youngsters for organising birthday party in violation of Covid lockdown norms at Kadthal near Hyderabad.

The youngsters including girls participated in the birthday party which was organized at a farm house at Kadthal in Ranga Reddy district under the limits of Cyberabad Police Commissionerate.

In blatant violation of the Covid-19 protocol and the ongoing lockdown, the guests consumed liquor and danced with DJ. The participants, most of them college students, violated social distancing norms and many were without mask.

On receiving information about the party, police reached the venue in the early hours of the day. Deputy Commissioner of Police N. Prakash Reddy said the police seized liquor bottles.

Police booked a case against the organizers and guests for violation of the

lockdown norms and took up further investigation.

The organizers choose the farm house outside the city for the birthday party, apparently to avoid police.

This is the second such case in less than a week. Hyderabad police had on June 11 booked nine persons for celebrating birthday in violation of Covid protocol. The police had taken action after a video of the celebration in Habeeb Nagar area went viral on social media. A large maskless crowd was seen in the video dancing to loud music and flashing swords.

The birthday celebration was organized late on June 9. Birthday boys Arjun and Sriram were among those booked for flouting Covid norms.

Covid induced lockdown norms are in effect across Telangana till June 19. The lockdown is in force between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m.

All gatherings including social, political, religious, sports, entertainment, academic and cultural are prohibited.

5 held for selling Amphotericin B, nine vials seized

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Five persons who were selling Amphotericin B injections illegally were caught by the Commissioner's Task Force (North) team on Sunday. The police seized nine injections and three mobile phones from them.

Acting on a tip off, the Hyderabad Commissioner's Task Force (North) team caught V Venugopal, a medical agent from SR Nagar and native of Krishna district in Andhra Pradesh, G Naveen of Banjara Hills, V Ashok of Kothapet, K Prasad of Nizampet and B Harish of Kukatpally.

"Due to the demand of the Amphotericin injection used during treatment of black fungus, the gang procured it and planned to sell it at a higher price to relatives of patients," said P Radha Kishan Rao, DCP Task Force Hyderabad.

On information, the police laid a trap and nabbed them. The five persons along with the property were handed over to the SR Nagar police station for further action.

Fire breaks out at Nizam Club

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A fire broke out at famous Nizam Club on Sunday early morning.

Officials said that the furniture and interior were gutted. According to the sources, the fire control room has received information about fire accident, upon which three fire tenders were rushed to the spot. The fire fighters started extinguishing operation at first floor of Nizam Club and after two hours the fire was brought under control.

During the incident, the server room, furniture and the interior decoration was gutted. On receiving information, a team of Saifabad Police reached the spot and registered a case. Investigation is underway.

However the police are trying to gather information about the cause of fire.

Nizam Club India is one of the oldest clubs in Hyderabad established on September 26 in 1884 by Nawab Mir Mahboob Ali Khan, Asaf Jah VI.

TS logs 1,280 Covid cases

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana on Sunday recorded 1,280 new Covid cases and 15 deaths, pushing the tally so far to over six lakh and 3,484 respectively.

The GHMC accounted for the highest number of cases with 165 followed by Khammam (156) and Nalgonda (80) districts, a bulletin said. The number of active cases was 21,137. The number of cases in TS stood at 6,03,369 while with 2,261 people being cured, the recoveries were 5,78,748.



Over 91,000 samples were tested today. Cumulatively, over 1.58 crore samples have been tested. The samples tested per 10 lakh population

Activist arrested after suicide bid by woman YouTuber over harassment

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad police have arrested an activist after a woman YouTuber attempted suicide due to defamatory comments man had been making against her.

Syed Saleem, who runs an NGO, was arrested after a video of the woman YouTuber surfaced. The woman said that she was ending her life due to harassment by the accused.

The victim, a YouTube reporter who also runs Khidmat e-Khalq Charitable Trust, reportedly tried to commit suicide by consuming sleeping pills.

Saleem, a resident of Hafeez Baba Nagar and president of an NGO, had allegedly made comments against the woman and posted videos against her.

Mild tension prevailed near the house of Saleem when he was being arrested. Some peo-

ple who had gathered there tried to attack the accused and hurled abuses. Meanwhile, MBT leader Amedjullah Khan alleged that the police arrested Saleem under pressure from MIM. He said there was mockery of democracy and breakdown of law and order when MIM workers including corporators gathered and tried to attack Saleem and used filthy language in presence of police.



Vehicles line up at T'gana-AP border

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Vehicles lined up at Telangana-Andhra Pradesh State border at Ramapuram crossroads near Kodad in the district with increase in traffic coupled with police allowing vehicles only after checking the e-pass.

Following further relaxation from 6 am to 6 pm in Telangana State, people who went to their native places in AP are keen on returning to Hyderabad to resume their work here. With this, the flow of vehicles towards Hyderabad on National Highway No. 65 suddenly increased from Sunday morning.

Three police teams were deployed at the state border to check the e-passes before allowing the vehicles into the state.

The police sent back the vehicles, which don't have e-passes. Vehicles were lined up for more than kilometers long at the state border.

The police made it clear to the vehicular that e-pass was mandatory to enter into the state until the state government makes an announcement.

They asked the people not to plan any travel to Telangana from Andhra Pradesh without an e-pass.

Facilitating legitimate travel for Indian students...

Continued from Page 1

On June 14, we will open July and August appointments for students," he added.

Asked about apprehensions relating to vaccination, the official said proof of vaccination is not required to enter the United States.

"Please note that proof of a negative COVID-19 test result, taken within 72 hours of your flight's departure, is required to board a flight and for entry into the United States.

"While proof of vaccination is not required to enter the United States, individual schools or institutions may set their own requirements. The US education system operates



independently from the federal government, and students should consult closely with their host institution to ensure compliance with individual vaccination requirements," he added. Heflin said there are more than 4,500 accredited

universities in the US that operate autonomously, and the policy adopted by one school for its students and teaching community may not be the same as that for another one.

Asked if an exception will be considered for a parent who

wishes to accompany a student headed to the US, the official said parents travelling to the country, in that case, will be classified as tourists.

"Tourist travel remains prohibited pursuant to Presidential Proclamation 10199," he said.

In view of surging Covid infections in India, President Joe Biden authorised a travel ban for certain nonimmigrants from India under a Presidential Proclamation that came into effect on May 4.

Heflin said student visa applicants with a cancelled appointment will need to make a new appointment and that new student visa appointments will be made available on a first-come, first-served basis.

No clarity on Covid vaccine procurement: Pvt hospitals

Continued from Page 1

In the whole process, Gupta said, vaccination of people is getting delayed.

"With fear of a possible third wave hitting India, we want to vaccinate as many people as possible. Also several people and many of our healthcare workers who have taken the first dose are waiting for their second dose," he said. P K Bhardwaj, Chief Executive Director and Head of Department of Surgery, Saroj Hospital also said that nothing has been clearly spelt about procurement by pri-

vate hospitals and how much vaccines will be given to each private hospital.

The vaccinations at most of the private hospitals are on hold and the public, especially those patients who need to get the second doses, are at the receiving end.

"The government should soon come out with transparent and clear guidelines so as to avoid any further delay in this crucial exercise of inoculating people against the deadly virus," Bhardwaj, who is also secretary of the Delhi Voluntary Hospital Forum, said.

GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
NIT. No.21/E/HD/UPL/GHMC/2021-22
Nature of the Work: Storm water drain. Estimate Amount (Rs In Lakhs): 30.00. Start Date/ Last Date & Time for receipts of Bids: 14.06.2021 @ 10.30 AM. - 17.06.2021 @ 10.30 AM. Name & Address Officer Cell No: Executive Engineer, Uppal Division, No-2, GHMC
R.O. No.: 12785-PPVCL/AGVT/1/0621-22 EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, GHMC, UPPAL, DN-NO-2

Manusmrithi: fundamentally an age-old Constitution

It has become a fashion these days to ridicule and speak badly about Manusmrithi, Manu Dharma Sastra, Brahmanism, Hindu religion and connected belief systems. Little-known political sociologists here and there unequivocally profess hatred towards the ancient dharma, thousands of years of old ancient Hindu religion, Manu dharma etc.

It is essential to clarify for the benefit of such critics what Brahmanism, ancient dharma, human dharma that they criticize day in and day out is all about so that they would set themselves right.

These people conduct seminars and symposia with subjects such as Anti-Brahmanism and "upper caste domination" and liberally use a word "spiritual democracy". In fact, in each and every word of Manusmrithi it is crystal clear that the so-called spiritual democracy is reflected. These people also indulge in criticizing the Hindu religion and praising Buddhism, Islam and Christianity! If, according to them, these three religions are spiritual fragrances, then even Hinduism is equally and for that matter more of a spiritual fragrance. On the one hand they profess casteless society and on the other they divide Brahmins and Dalits and speak of them differently. In any reform in society anywhere in the country Brahmins have played their role. Why criticize them for no reason?

If anyone feels that he or she knows everything and no one need tell them anything then they should be treated as stupid according to late Pullella Srirama Chandrudu, an Indian scholar of Vedanta, Vyakarana and Alankara Sastra and a prolific writer of Sanskrit and Telugu literature.

Writing introduction to a book on Manusmrithi in Telugu authored by late Komaragiri Yogananda Laxmi Narasimha Rao, popularly known as KYL, late Pullella mentioned that if anyone desires to know about justice, injustice, virtue, sin, heaven, hell, life and death, God, relationship etc. one has to look at Vedas. Among several books written by KYL, *Manusmrithi* needs special mention.

Manusmrithi or Manu Dharma Sastra, whose basis is Vedas, is an all-time great book, a work of genius. Author KYL, in his introduction and as well as in subse-

Manusmrithi professes all virtues only...it speaks of welfare of society and variety of procedures everyone has to adopt in life. It has never belittled women...it only mentioned about proper protection to women like the "Nirbhaya" Act or for that matter the SHE Teams.



VANAM JWALA NARASIMHA RAO
CHIEF PUBLIC RELATIONS
OFFICER OF CHIEF MINISTER
OF TELANGANA

quent chapters, has enunciated several aspects with appropriate examples and said that for all types of Justice -dharma --the foundation is laid in the Vedas. Manusmrithi is nothing but an extension of Vedas' philosophy and principles. For the entire Hindu community, it is a Constitution-like book. In fact, based on this, India's first Governor General Warren Hastings brought out a comprehensive legal code. Taking cue from him, William Jones, who was Supreme Court Judge while Hastings was Governor-General, got it translated and printed in English.

For this work, the British Government honoured Jones with "Sir" title. The then British Government always respected Indian and Hindu literature and also the ancient culture, tradition and religious beliefs and with a view to enrich the British officers about the legal procedures they got *Manusmrithi* translated into English.

The Manu Code is encyclopaedic in nature and applicable for all times. It has included in it a variety of ancient codes on dharma and thus evolved as the best available code of dharma and influenced for centuries the Hindu and Indian society. In fact, *Manusmrithi* has even influenced the world society too in different ways. Manu Code is nothing but a Human Code of dharma and several extraordinary human beings

or may be humans with supernatural powers might have compiled it after years of hard work.

Manusmrithi professes all virtues only...it speaks of welfare of society and variety of procedures everyone has to adopt in life. It has never belittled women...it only mentioned about proper protection to women like the "Nirbhaya" Act or for that matter the SHE Teams. It is crystal clear in the Shloka "*Yatra naaryastu poojyamte...phalaa kriyah*" meaning 'where women are revered, there we find gods and goddesses'. In the society visualized by Manu, woman has a respectable place. It has in it 2,684 shlokas.

Only when one reads it with an open mind one will be able to understand it. One has to understand the inner meaning in it. Whatever is mentioned in it may not be applicable for all the times to come and in some areas; it might require amendments like we do for our Constitution. However, the basic structure of Manusmrithi shall remain in tact. At least let us take the best part of it and apply in our life.

'Hinduism', whether it is a religion or not, is a way of life and questioning it is nothing but questioning the way of life of millions of people who have followed it for centuries.

Indian culture and Hindu culture are one of the best cultures in the whole world. It has come to stay despite umpteen social revolutions and continue to stay as a way of life for more and more centuries to come. The reason for this is that, its roots are in the Vedas.

Those who criticise Manusmrithi should understand that it is fundamentally an age-old Constitution which suited those times in toto when it was written. With the passage of time, all that is mentioned in it may not be relevant to the modern times, but certainly the spirit of it can be imbibed.

Prepare plans to face third wave corona, says Collector

PNS ■ MAHABUBNAGAR

In the pretext of apprehensions of the third wave of the Corona pandemic, the health officials should be prepared to face it with proper planning and action plans and as part of it more people be inoculated, District Collector S Venkat Rao said on Sunday.

While addressing a videoconference from his camp office here on Sunday, District Collector Venkat Rao directed the officials to initiate special sanitation works for one week in the villages and municipal towns from Monday. With support from all people, the Covid positive rate has come down from 34.2 to 3.2 per cent in the district and commended the officials who were responsible for achieving it.

He said no single positive case of the corona was recorded in 233 village panchayats and 53 wards in the district and efforts should be made for making



Covid-free areas in other wards and villages. As the cases have reduced, the usage of oxygen was also declined and despite the fall in cases, doctors, officials and officials of other departments should continue to fight against the Covid. The district should be prepared even to face the third wave of corona pandemic, he said and added that it was time for educating the people with pamphlets and short films to take care of children.

The Collector asked the

DM&HO to commence the vaccination drive from tomorrow as the government has recognised another 10 categories under superspreaders as part of the vaccination programme. Steps should be taken to give vaccination in all Primary Health Centres, six vaccination centres which were allocated for super spreaders in Jedcherla, and Mahabubnagar towns. The RBSK staff should be made part of the containing corona, he added.

He said inoculation would be

given from Monday to all the bank employees, excise, transport, postal, electricity and special branch and directed the officials to issue the slips to them. About 50 tonnes of waste was removed as part of the sanitation drive at the government general hospital. Later, the Collector reviewed the basic infrastructure in the hospital, oxygen plant, 200-beds and other details. He asked the officials to increase the bed strength to another 60 in SNCU. Stating that the basthi davakhana were functioning well, the Collector said the doctors and other staff should extend support and welcomed the private hospitals for extending support for catering for the medical experts along with doctors and staff.

Revenue Additional Collector K Seetharama Rao, DM&HO Dr Krishna, main hospital Superintendent Dr Ramkishan, Deputy DM&HO Dr Sasikanth, SM IDC Sarat, LDM Nagaraja Rao and others were present.



Warangal top cop gets place in World Book of Records

PNS ■ WARANGAL

The Warangal Police Commissionerate secured its place in the World Book of Records. The police have been ranked in the Best Policing and Public Health Service Category in the World Book of Records for the measures taken on the prevention of pandemic. Warangal Police Commissioner Dr Tarun Joshi will soon be presented the World Book of Records and the Certificate of Commitment by a London delegates in connection with the record. The World Book of Records Head of Europe Wilhelm Jezler informed that the Warangal Police Commissionerate has been selected for taking safety measures in line with WHO guidelines for the coronavirus.

Site to build new collector complex finalised

PNS ■ MULUG

The Incherla nursery site was almost finalised to construct the new Collectorate complex in 25 acres of revenue land in Mulug district. The proposed site was centrally located for the people of both Wazedu and Venkatapuram in the district.

The Mulug district spreads around 200 km from Mohammad Gousepally to Brahmanapally, Wazedu and Venkatapuram and the present site was located beside national highway No 163.

Mulug District Collector Krishna Adithya said a site at the Gattamma area has been identified to construct the Collector office, but it would come under the reserved forest jurisdiction. However, the majority of politicians preferred the Incherla nursery site instead of going for a reserve forest area.

MLA Seethakka maintained that the officials have to take permission from the forest department if Gattamma premises was chosen. She said the government has allocated Rs 55 crore for the Collectorate in which 57 offices would be accommodated.



The revenue division was upgraded as district headquarters after Mulug was formed as a new district. Additional Collector Adarsh Surabhi and other district officials were staying in rented houses due to the non-availability of government buildings with camp office facility.

The SP office and CRPF

camp office buildings were likely to come up behind the Incherla Haritha Hotel in Jangalpally. District Collector Krishna Aditya and SP Dr Sangram Singh G Patil were also holding additional charge of Bhupalpally district even though it was the painstaking task to shoulder the responsibility of both the districts.



Governor urged to intervene in Satavahana varsity row

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR

The Lok Satta Udyama Samstha Karimnagar district unit has urged Governor and Chancellor Dr Tamilisai Soundarajan to intervene in the affairs of Satavahana University which were embroiled in a controversy over the appointment of OSD to the VC recently.

In a memorandum sent to the Governor and a copy of which was released to the media here, Lok Satta district secretary Prakash Holla and district leaders R Chandra Prabhakar, M Gangadhar, T Ganga Rao, Damodar, M Mahender Reddy, KS Narayana, P Nagamohan and others said that the Lok Satta had received complaints from the academicians stating that newly appointed Vice-Chancellor S Mallesh, who took charge on May 24 this year had appointed a tainted faculty member Vannala

Ramesh, an assistant professor in the Sociology department as the OSD to VC on June 10.

Lok Satta Udyama Samstha informed that then University Registrar Umesh Kumar had issued orders informing the university authorities not to allocate any administrative duties to Vannala Ramesh for a period of three years from 2020 to 2022 as he had violated the norms of financial discipline and code of the university and resorted to temporary embezzlement of university funds.

Ramesh worked as Sports Secretary from August 8, 2012, to February 22, 2018, in the university. During 2017-18, he had taken advances to the tune of Rs 7,79,400 in four spells to meet the expenditure in conducting various games and sports in the university colleges. But he failed to submit the bills of expenditure despite oral instructions.

MLA Stephenson caught in a land row

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Nominated MLA Stephenson caught in another controversy over a land encroachment that came to light on Sunday. The followers of Stephenson allegedly flattened a farm owned by a person and they threatened him of dire consequences when he tried to obstruct them.

With the threats of Stephenson's followers, the landowner lodged a complaint with the local Chengomil police station. The victim Narsimhulu said he owned 3.10 acres of land and he sold 1.25 acres to Stephenson's daughter Jessica in 2016. However, Narsimhulu's son Venkataiah alleged that



Stephenson's followers pressurized his father to sell another 1.25 acres to Jessica. When he rejected, Stephenson's followers entered into the land and took into their possession. He complained to the police seeking justice. It may be recalled that Stephenson was a key person in a sensational 'vote for note' case.

Mega vax camp launched for Singareni workers

PNS ■ PEDDAPALLY

Singareni Collieries Director for Operations S Chandrasekhar inaugurated a mega Covid vaccination camp at a community hall in Sector 1 in the Singareni area of Godavarikhani in Peddapalli district on Sunday.

Speaking on the occasion, Chandrasekhar said Singareni workers and employees aged between 18 and 60 would be inoculated as per the directives of Singareni Chairman and Managing Director N Sridhar. He said the Singareni Collieries was taking all precautionary measures to protect the workers from the corona pandemic and as part of it without hesitating on the expenditure, it decided to give a free vaccination to all



Singareni employees. Commending the employees who came for the vaccination, Chandrasekhar said four vaccination centres were opened in the RG1 area at Community hall, Vithal Nagar Dispensary, CER Club and TTC/VTC centres. He interacted with the people who have taken the jab

and took their opinion. Area GM K Narayana said the vaccination would be organized for three days and people who wished to take a jab could go to the Community Hall. SO to GM Thyagaraju, agents Chilaka Srinivas and Srinath, DGM civil Naveen, Madanmohan and others were present.

Maoist Katti Mohan dies of cardiac arrest

PNS ■ JAYASHANKAR BHUPALPALLY

Naxalbarry movement second-generation leader Katti Mohan Rao @ Prakashanna @ Dama Dada died of a heart attack on June 10, Communist Party of India (Maoist), Telangana unit spokesperson Jagan said in a press release on Sunday.

Born in a middle-class family at Garla village in Bayyaram mandal of Mahabubabad district, Katti Mohan Rao became part of the revolutionary movement for the past 39 years. He studied intermediate at Mahabubabad, a degree in Khammam and M.Sc in Kakatiya University where he bagged gold medal twice. He worked in the Radical Students Union in 1982 and since then he served the Maoist party in many capacities for 39-long years.

Jagan said Mohan Rao was arrested in Khammam district in 1985 and spent six years in jail. After he released in 1991, he worked in the Mahadevpur area Dalam in Jayashankar Bhupalapally district. As part of the expansion of the movement, he worked as deputy commander of the newly formed Kinnera Dalam and in 1992 he promoted as commander for the same Dalam. The same year, he was posted as DVC. He worked in the press unit for some time and worked as a Khammam district committee member in 2002 and Khammam and Warangal division committee member and secretary after the plenary in 2003 till 2007. Jagan said because of neces-



sities in the revolutionary movement, he was transferred to Dandakaranya in 2008. Despite his illness with asthma, BP and sugar, Comrade Dama Dada made efforts in every turn of the event with political maturity and in-depth ideologist knowledge and he faced many challenges and up and downs. Because of his ill-health, Comrade Dama Dada worked as a teacher at the Janathana sarkar-run school in Dandakaranya and groomed many children.

Despite the age factor and ill-health, Jagan said that he fought till his last breath overcoming them with revolutionary inspiration. Raising slogans as 'Sobha Roy amar rahe', he went inside the camp and collapsed on June 10. A memorial meeting was organized on June 11 and the last rites were performed amid revolutionary slogans raised by the PLGA members. Stating that the party could not hand over the body of Katti Mohan Rao to his family members, the Maoist Party Telangana state committee paid rich tributes to the departed leader.

Water inflows surge in Srisaillam dam

PNS ■ NAGARKURNOOL

Following the onset of the monsoon, heavy rains lashed in the upstream areas of the Krishna River for the past five days causing heavy water inflows into the projects like Almatni and Narayanpur. As the Jurala project received heavy floodwater, the Srisaillam project flooded with water flows.

About 20,239 cusecs of water received to the Jurala project from Narayanpur and the officials were reportedly taking steps to release 20,239 cusecs of water from Jurala and 3,284 cusecs from the Sunkesula project. According to the officials, Srisaillam water inflows recorded at 12,167 cusecs and the present water storage in the dam was 33.76 tmc. As the power generation came to a halt in the right and left banks of the Srisaillam project, the engineers were on high alert for the past three days. Meanwhile, as the sufficient water levels reached the Jurala Project, power generation commenced in the two units there. Since heavy rains were forecasted in the next five days, the officials said heavy inflows of water were expected to reach the dam, officials said on Sunday.



Kakatiya period rock carving uncovered

PNS ■ WARANGAL

Noted historian Ratnakar Reddy traced a Lajja Gouri sizzling drawn on a huge rock during the Kakatiya period at Cheryala in Siddipet district of Telangana on Sunday. The carving is drawn on an eight-foot-high rock near the Sub-Registrar office at Cheryala in which an infant sat depicting the childbirth. Ratnakar observed that people used to pray for children and for yielding more crops. He said Lajja Gouri culture of sizzlings was spread all over the world and they are similar everywhere. The rock has also a Kala Bharava idol. The Archeology Department has to report after studying the drawings on the rock, he said.

Ratnakar, who was research-



ing Kothagutta and its surroundings said a group of aborigines made a shelter at Kothakonda Illara Gundu. Along with Kolleti Srinivas, Rajender and other team members, Ratnakar Reddy inspect-

ed the hillock of 'Illara Gundu'. Kothakonda hillock in Bhimadevarapalli mandal of Warangal urban district was famous for its historical facts and it was proved that Harappa culture was spread up to the

Kotha Konda where the stone age human beings lived there way back 10,000 years. Some treasure hunters dug the tombs which are believed to have belonged to the Stone Age in the village.

'Illara Gundu' means a sprawling rock that was 30-foot high on the Veeranna Gutta on way to Gummi Gutta. A huge cave with 12-feet in height, 100-foot length and 45 feet in width was noticed and it was closed from the inside on the other end. Demand was growing in the area to develop Kothakonda as a tourism centre as devotees throng to have darshan at Veerabhadra Swamy temple on the hillock in huge numbers. The government has to develop the Illaragundu and its surroundings to attract more tourists and pilgrims as well.

Guj FDCA seizes over 24,000 pregnancy termination kits

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

The Food and Drugs Control Administration in Gujarat seized 24,363 pregnancy termination kits worth over Rs 1.5 crore along with narcotic and psychotropic drugs that were being sold illegally, leading to eight people being arrested, officials said on Sunday.

These people have been charged under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, while one of the accused has been arrested by Gujarat police under the NDPS Act after drugs were found in his possession, DCA Commissioner Hemant Koshia said.

He said such abortion kits could be sold only on the prescription of gynecologists as per the provisions of the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act.

‘Shiv Sena was treated as slaves in erstwhile BJP govt’

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Shiv Sena was virtually treated as "slaves" and attempts were made to finish off the party politically when it was in power with the BJP in Maharashtra from 2014 to 2019, Sena MP Sanjay Raut has alleged.

Addressing Sena workers in Jalgaon in north Maharashtra on Saturday, Raut said, "The Shiv Sena had a secondary status in the previous government and was (treated) like slaves. Attempts were also made to finish off our party by misusing the very power which was enjoyed because of our support".

Raut's remarks came days after Maharashtra Chief Minister and Shiv Sena president Uddhav Thackeray met Prime Minister Narendra



Modi in Delhi separately, setting off political speculations in the state.

The Shiv Sena-BJP alliance crumbled in 2019 over the issue of chief ministership.

The Sena, which was one of the oldest allies of the BJP, later formed an unlikely alliance

with the NCP and Congress to form the Maha Vikas Aghadi government in Maharashtra.

Raut said he always thought that the Sena should have its chief minister in Maharashtra.

"Even if Shiv Sainiks don't get anything, we can proudly say the state's leadership is now

in the hands of the Shiv Sena. The Maha Vikas Aghadi government was formed with this sentiment (in November 2019)," he said.

Recalling the drama preceding the formation of the tripartite government in November 2019 after the Assembly elections, Raut said senior NCP leader Ajit Pawar, who briefly switched sides to form a government with the BJP under Devendra Fadnavis, is now the "strongest spokesman" of the MVA. The second Fadnavis-led government which was formed with Ajit Pawar had lasted for just 80 hours.

"...Anything can happen in politics. Ajit Pawar, the deputy CM of Maharashtra, is now working shoulder to shoulder with Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray," Raut said.

‘Love jihad’, ‘cow terror’ will not work in UP polls: RLD chief

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Asserting that the BJP's alleged "apathy" towards protesting farmers will hurt it in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls, RLD chief Jayant Chaudhary on Sunday said artificial issues such as "love jihad" and "cow terror" will not work as issues of development will win in the elections.

As the focus shifts from the West Bengal polls earlier this year to the high-stakes election battle in Uttar Pradesh in 2022, newly-appointed Rashtriya Lok Dal chief Chaudhary asserted that his party will not allow a communalised polarised campaign to ruin the Hindi heartland state in the run up to the assembly polls.

In an interview with PTI, Chaudhary, who took over as RLD chief after his father Chaudhary Ajit Singh's demise last month, said his party and the Samajwadi Party have a good rapport and a strong working relationship.



He said details need to be worked out for a formal alliance for the polls.

Asked if a 'Mahagathbandhan' or a grand alliance is needed in UP to take on the BJP and whether the BSP and the Congress would be part of such an alliance, Chaudhary said, for him, issues come first and an understanding of those needs to be built between all alliance partners.

"Who can be accommodated depends on who is honestly open to working together on the common framework," the 42-year-old leader said.

On whether the Congress

would play a significant role in the assembly polls despite its poor showing in the panchayat elections, Chaudhary said he would not like to comment on the Congress' plans and chances.

Asked about the speculation over UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's political future as CM and reports about Cabinet reshuffle in the state, Chaudhary said the BJP is just trying to divert attention and create an illusion of dialogue to manage the disgruntled elements in the party.

"Social engineering doesn't come about by tinkering with one or two leaders at the top. The fact is that BJP's Uttar Pradesh government has been caught in a caste-based matrix and has not delivered jobs, economic growth, and efficient governance to people," he alleged.

The state government's Covid response has been atrocious and no one can forget the scenes of dead bodies in the Ganga, he added.

Cong must clear stand on Digvijay's remarks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Senior BJP leader and Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad on Sunday asked the Congress leadership to make its stand clear on the purported remarks of Digvijay Singh that his party will have a "relook" at Article 370 revocation if it returns to power, saying "time of silence is over".

A row erupted on Saturday over Congress leader Digvijay Singh's comments in an audio chat on social media that his party will have a "relook" at Article 370 revocation and Jammu and Kashmir's lost statehood if it returns to power, with the BJP accusing him of spewing venom against India in "collaboration" with Pakistan.

"It is now more than a day when the central leadership of the Congress is maintaining a conspicuous silence on its stand about Article 370. Does the Congress want restoration of Article 370 as Digvijay Singh has indicated? Time of silence is over. Please explain your clear stand,"

Prasad wrote on Twitter.

Singh had said, "The decision of revoking Article 370 and reducing the statehood of J&K is extremely, I would say, sad decision, and the Congress party would certainly have a relook on the issue.

Singh was responding to a question about the "way forward" on the issue "once the Modi government is gone".

While abrogating Article 370, good governance was promised both in J&K and Ladakh.

The speed with which vaccination against COVID-19 is going on even in the remotest parts of J&K and Ladakh is a sign of pro-people good governance in the region, Prasad said in another tweet.

Singh's remarks to a person, who the BJP said was a journalist of Pakistani origin, were seized by its leaders on Saturday to unleash a torrent of criticism against the opposition party and demand statements from Congress president Sonia Gandhi and her son Rahul Gandhi on the issue.

Covid: Rlys' income dip by 94 pc with no sale of platform tickets

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The railways' earnings from platform tickets took a severe hit in 2020-21 with revenue from sale dipping by about 94 per cent as compared to the previous year due to restrictions imposed on entry into stations because of the coronavirus crisis, a RTI has found.

In a reply to a RTI query from Madhya Pradesh-based Chandra Shekhar Gaur, the railways said it earned Rs 10 crore till February in 2020-21 through sale of platform tickets.

In 2019-2020, the railways netted Rs 160.87 crore which was the highest earning from platform tickets for the national transporter in the last five years, the RTI has found.

The railways took the step to restrict overcrowding at railway stations even before the nationwide lockdown was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in March 2020.

With the divisional railway managers empowered to decide on the rate of platform tickets and the decision on whether to restrict entry, several railway zones completely denied entry and allowed only



valid ticket holders entrance for most of the year.

Later, a decision was also taken to increase the prices of platform tickets from Rs 10 to Rs 30 and even Rs 50 in certain zones in an effort to dissuade people from entering stations.

The railways, however, maintained that the rise in prices of tickets was temporary and a measure to counter the pandemic.

Revenue from platform tickets has lingered around the Rs 131 crore mark except 2018-2019 when it shot up to Rs 139.20 crore.

In 2019-20, it touched the Rs 160 crore mark, but dipped severely to Rs 10 crore in 2020-

21 until February this year.

With the easing of restrictions, the Northern Railways -- the largest zone of railways -- on Saturday announced that they have decided to restart the sale of platform tickets at eight major stations in the Delhi Division.

The rates of the platform ticket have been enhanced to Rs 30 per ticket in order to prevent unnecessary crowding at the station, it said.

The eight stations where passengers can avail of the platform ticket facility include New Delhi, Delhi Junction, Hazrat Nizamuddin, Anand Vihar Terminal, Meerut City, Ghaziabad, Delhi Sarai Rohilla and Delhi Cantt railway stations.

Three bodies found floating in Ganga

PNS ■ KANNAUJ(UP)

Three bodies, including that of a woman, were found floating in the Ganga on the Kannauj-Hardoi border, police said on Sunday.

The bodies, found on Saturday, have been handed over to the Hardoi police, they said.

Kannauj SP Prashant Verma said the bodies were found floating in the river near the Badnapur Ghat on Saturday.

Since the bodies were spotted in the area under the Hardoi district, the Hardoi police was informed, and they were handed over to the Hardoi police, Verma said.

Children orphaned by Covid seek aid

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Losing a loved one is never easy but if one were to compare, there would not be a loss that could quite match the severity of losing one's parents, especially for dependent children.

The death of a parent strips away the child of not just the emotional blanket of comfort, but also in several cases takes away the financial support, leaving their futures in a lurch.

According to the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), 3,621 children have been orphaned during the pandemic, and over 26,000 children have lost one parent.

Ten-year-old Deepika is one of them.

She lost her father to COVID-19 less than a month back and is trying to get her life back to normal, but her mother Kalpana said "nothing will ever be normal again", and who could argue?

The sole breadwinner of the family, her 57-year-old husband -- an editor at a Hindi publishing house -- was gone almost in a night's span, without even getting a chance at proper treatment, and now she is at a loss for ideas to secure her daughter's future.

"He had low grade fever and a slight cough, which actually got better in a few days, but one morning he suddenly collapsed. Although we managed to revive him then... after scrambling for an ambulance and a bed for hours, by the time we reached the hospital, we had lost him," Kalpana said.

Need to check exploitation of migrant workers :Soren

PNS ■ RANCHI

Concerned over "exploitation" of Jharkhand migrant workers in various parts of the country, especially in difficult terrains, Chief Minister Hemant Soren has voiced the need to put in place a robust mechanism to check such practices and said he would hold necessary discussions with his counterparts from other states.

Soren also claimed that several central government agencies have failed to protect the rights of the workers after hiring them for development projects, while underlining that a "nexus between recruiting bodies and contractors" makes such unfair treatment possible.

"It pains me to see their plight... The workers are denied their legitimate dues even when organisations such as NTPC and BRO engage them



through contractors or middlemen. Policies to protect their rights do exist, but they are usually not implemented," Soren told PTI.

The CM further stated that he had been raising the issue on different platforms but to avail.

"Once we tide over the COVID-19 crisis, I will personally hold meetings with chief ministers and administrators of Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh among

other states and UTs and pitch for a robust mechanism to check workers' exploitation," Soren said.

He lamented that the state had to use its own resources during catastrophes to evacuate workers or in some cases bring their mortal remains home, having received no help from the stakeholders.

Citing examples, the CM said 15 Jharkhand migrant workers engaged by Border Roads Organisation (BRO) in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district, near India-China boundary, had lost their lives in an avalanche in April.

Similarly, several workers were killed in February when a devastating flash flood demolished a 13.2 MW hydel project and caused extensive damage to another NTPC venture in along Dhauliganga in Uttarakhand, he said.

MP: 5k Pakistan refugees to get jobs

PNS ■ INDORE

About 5,000 Pakistani refugees from the Hindu Sindhi community living in Madhya Pradesh's Indore will be administered COVID-19 vaccines, an official said on Sunday.

The representatives of the Pakistani refugees from the Hindu Sindhi community had recently requested the administration for anti-coronavirus inoculation, District Immunization Officer Dr Praveen Jadia told PTI.

"This demand has been accepted following the state government's approval. These Pakistani refugees will now be able to receive anti-coronavirus jobs at the city's vaccination centres by showing their passport as the identity

card," he said.

Jadia estimated that about 5,000 Pakistani refugees are living in Indore and most of them are settled in the city's Sindhi Colony area.

"We are administering anti-COVID 19 doses to all adults on humanitarian grounds. Last month, we had vaccinated a Dutch citizen who had come to Indore for some work," he recalled.

Indore district, which is the worst hit by the pandemic in Madhya Pradesh, has so far recorded 1.52 lakh COVID-19 cases including 1,370 fatalities, according to officials.

About 13.53 lakh people were administered the first dose of the vaccine in the Indore district while 2.35 lakh people had received both doses.



Delhi: 4.5L non-PDS people get foodgrains

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Arvind Kejriwal government on Sunday said it has provided food grains to over 4.5 lakh people who did not have ration card under a new scheme in the national capital.

Starting from June 5, the scheme allows those who don't have a ration card to avail five kilogram of food grains by showing their Aadhaar card.

"The scheme caters to people who do not possess ration cards, including unorganised workers, migrant workers, building and construction workers, and domestic helpers. More than 4.5 lakh people have been aided up until now through this scheme," the Delhi govern-

ment said in a statement.

Under the scheme, the beneficiaries receive four kg of wheat and one kg of rice each.

It added that 5,000 metric tonne ration has been provided to the people and another 5,000 metric tonne will be reaching the distribution centres.

A total of 280 Delhi government schools, one in every municipal ward, have been designated for distribution of food grains.

"We assure you that things will be further streamlined in the coming days to make the entire process smooth and hassle-free. Your government believes that ration is the right of people," Food and Civil Supplies Minister Imran Hussain said.

Direct link between malnutrition and diseases: UN's WFP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Underlining that there is a direct link between malnutrition and diseases, India country director of UN World Food Programme Bishow Parajuli suggested safeguarding and promoting access to nutritious, safe, and affordable diets and investing in improving maternal and child nutrition to protect children's right to nutrition in the COVID-19 pandemic.

India has been battling high prevalence of malnutrition among its population, especially children, with National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-4 (2015-16) data showing that 35.7 per cent children below five years are underweight, 38.4 per cent are stunted and 21 per cent are wasted in the country. Even NFHS-5 which was conducted in 22 states and union territories present-



Bishow Parajuli

ed a grim scenario and showed a rise in malnutrition.

In an interview with PTI, the World Food Programme India's country director said malnutrition is particularly lethal in combination with infectious diseases such as ARI, malaria, measles, diarrhoeal diseases -- the major

killer diseases affecting children.

Responding to a question if malnutrition can become a comorbidity for children infected with COVID-19, he said in general, there is a direct link between malnutrition and diseases like coronavirus disease.

"Malnutrition can make a person more susceptible to infection through a lowered immune response, and infection further contributes to malnutrition resulting in a vicious cycle of repeated infections, reduced immunity, and deteriorating nutritional status.

It is known that malnutrition magnifies the effect of disease and a malnourished person has more severe disease episodes, more complications, and spends more time ill for each episode," he said.

There have been speculations that the third wave of COVID-19 may impact children more. However, the available evidence show that children are as much affected as adults.

"It is, however, important that parents and caregivers of children get vaccinated so that they act as a protective ring

around the children till such time vaccination is not opened up to young children," he said.

Noting that even though many programmes are still in place, the country director said to mitigate the impact of the crisis on families and society and to protect the nutrition of the most vulnerable families and individuals, further action is urgently needed from national and state governments.

He suggested five urgent actions to protect children's right to nutrition in the COVID-19 pandemic -- safeguarding and promoting access to nutritious, safe, and affordable diets, investing in improving maternal and child nutrition through pregnancy, infancy, and early childhood, re-activating and scaling-up services for the early detection and treatment of child wasting, maintain the provision of nutri-

tious and safe school meals for vulnerable children and expand social protection to safeguard access to nutritious diets and essential services.

Elaborating on WFP's work on fortification and take-home ration (THR), he said WFP is collaborating with Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Odisha to design nutritious take-home rations aligned to both ICDS norms and global guidelines for such products for young children and pregnant/lactating women; set up THR production units where the same is produced by women's self-help groups following industrial quality assurance and control protocols; capacity building of women's self-help groups and establish the link between THR and social behaviour change communication.

Opening up

The Government is quite right in deciding to declassify details of all of India's wars

The Government has taken a welcome step in deciding to declassify, on a case-to-case basis, details of the wars fought by India. The new policy for archiving, declassifying, compiling and publishing such records is going to be put in place. The modalities for taking up declassification one by one are being worked out. For a country that has fought as many as six wars since Independence but has managed to declassify the operations of just the 1948 Jammu and Kashmir operations, this is a giant step in transparency. The new policy says records should ordinarily be declassified in 25 years and transferred to the National Archives of India once the war or operations histories have been compiled. The policy statement alone should mean that the official records of the 1962, 1965 and 1971 conflicts, Operation Pawar of the IPKF in Sri Lanka (1987-1990) be declassified right away. The Kargil affair



still has over a couple of years of secrecy left. There are two issues with this policy. First, the implications of opening secret details of the past. In a country like India where political leaders and their actions are assessed not in terms of their times but by current political standards, the declassification can become a Pandora's box. Take the Henderson-Brooks-Bhagat report on the 1962 India-China war, for instance. Technically, the report is yet to be made public though a foreign journalist did just that with part of the report he accessed. That section of the report has some startling revelations about India's

Forward Policy adopted by then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

One can well imagine the implications of judging Nehru's thinking at that time by today's standards. The BJP, which till early 2014 was demanding release of the report, made a U-turn once it came to power. If much of any war report is to be kept hidden either on ground of military relevance or political sensitivity, the purpose of the new policy will be lost. Two, there is a clear case for the bull being taken by the horns and past war records being declassified at once. A Defence Ministry official rightly said: "Timely publication of war histories would give people an accurate account of the events, provide authentic material for academic research and counter unfounded rumours." Even though the United States faced condemnation for its reasons for the war on Iraq, it did declassify records in 2013 to mark the 10th anniversary. The documents showed how ineptly it caused and handled the war, but the country did not hide the secrets from the American public. Secrecy is also redundant because it has no place today when technology has turned war into an algorithm and where every military moment can be recorded live and strategies assessed and analysed in real time. At best, old files can muddy the records of individuals — political or military — who made controversial decisions. Unclassified records can at best keep the past hurts buried.

PICTALK



Clean Ganga Mission workers spray bioremediation solution in the river, at Dashashwamedh Ghat in Varanasi

Compassion

The world froze in prayers for a good half hour when Christian Eriksen collapsed during a UEFA match

The past weekend had barely tiptoed into infancy when the entire world suddenly went numb and stood still. Apart from praying lips, the only other thing that moved were zillions of nimble, and concerned, fingers on Twitter and other social media sites. No, it wasn't because of a hallucination-inducing party drug but because Denmark's ace attacking midfielder Christian Eriksen had suddenly gone down. For no apparent reason. Inexplicably. Right there on the field, near the touchline, just four minutes before the referee would have blown his whistle to indicate half time. The boisterous Copenhagen stadium suddenly went into mute mode; not only the home crowd but even the visiting



Finnish spectators were taken aback by the sudden turn of events as millions of pairs of palm after palm pierced through the evening air in its hurry to clasp the unbelieving eyes and quivering lips. The palpitation in the hearts is an altogether different story. In sadness, in wonderment, in care, in concern, in poignancy, it was an emotional union of the two rivals and their spectator fans in the face of the fear of the unknown. As a dark hush fell down upon the stadium, clamorous as hell only a few seconds ago with the hosts dominating the on-field proceedings and the Finland natives egging their team on to put some spirit into the game, the Finnish fans also fell quiet with discernible distress.

For their part, the Finland players — who had been getting the short shrift in the exchange of affairs thus far — also now stood as heroes, shoulder to shoulder with their Danish counterparts to shield Eriksen from the view of the public and roving television cameras so that he could receive immediate medical attention in relative peace and privacy. It reminds one of several similar incidents where competing players and the spectators immediately forged into one entity, a solid mass of humanity, in the face of unanticipated adversity; the most notable being in the 1982 FIFA World Cup when West German goalie Toni Schumacher deliberately thudded into French player Patrick Battiston and knocked him down unconscious. But Saturday night's scene was a tad more touching, perhaps a reminder as it were in these trying times of the COVID-19 pandemic that whatever our nationality, religion, gender or belief, we are one race, one people: Humans, first of all and after everything else!

MPLADS: A boon or necessary evil?

The fund allocated to all MPs for local area development is hardly utilised for above-board projects that would really benefit the locals



PRAFULL GORADIA

Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme, or MPLADS, which allots ₹5 crore annually to every MP, was suspended for 2020-21 and 2021-22, and for good reason. But several MPs feel the scheme should be revived. There are 543 Lok Sabha and 250 Rajya Sabha MPs, a total of 793. Each was last entitled to ₹5 crore for this purpose. If fully utilised by every member, the Government of India would spend ₹19,825 crore over five years (the Rajya Sabha's term is six years but let us ignore the sixth year for the time being). Over five years, the Government's outlay would total up to ₹99,125 crore or nearly ₹1 lakh crore on account of MPLADS.

Individual MPs are not accountable to anyone regarding what they have done with their ₹25 crore during their terms. There is no audit at all. At its most practical, it is money for jam. At its inaction, it remains unspent. It was introduced by Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, in my view, to keep the MPs happy as his Congress Government was some 50 MPs short of a majority. The figure then was ₹2 crore annually; Manmohan Singh increased the figure to ₹5 crore, again to keep the MPs happier. In both cases, this scheme was a *baksheesh* to every MP in exchange of support, present or future, to the Government — as cynical as that.

Rather than comment, let me give my own experience of the ₹4 crore allocable to me for my two-year membership. My party allocated to me Vadodara, the city as well as the district. We are talking of the period towards the end of 2000. The party held a meeting of local workers, of whom some 30 persons turned up. They warmly applauded my coming and garlanded me. I had never before been so honoured. In my brief speech, I thanked them but asked jocularly whether their warmth



was out of regard for me or in expectation of our spending ₹4 crore. The audience laughed, which eloquently meant the latter. I said we would meet again to decide what development works we should do and where.

The next day I went to see the District Collector, who was warm and friendly. My request to him was to help me implement this scheme as I had no machinery. I went on to say that I did not wish to mix it up with my business. His advice was that I should set up an NGO and get the scheme implemented through it.

Another wise man I consulted advised me to get my party MLAs together and a few active workers, and then verbally distribute the total fund amongst them. That meant that if an MLA was to get ₹20 lakh, up to this figure, whatever work he recommended in his constituency, I would sign on. He would do the rest and I would ask no questions, except go to inaugurate his work if he invited me. The wise man went on to say: "Then you see how these people work for you at elec-



INDIVIDUAL
MPs ARE NOT
ACCOUNTABLE
TO ANYONE
REGARDING WHAT
THEY HAVE DONE
WITH THEIR
₹25 CRORE
DURING THEIR
TERMS. THERE
IS NO AUDIT AT
ALL. AT ITS MOST
PRACTICAL, IT IS
MONEY FOR JAM.
AT ITS INACTION,
IT REMAINS
UNSPENT

tion time in case you contest for the Lok Sabha next time."

Meanwhile, someone non-political suggested that I should build as many Sulabh Shauchalayas as possible on Vadodara's streets. The common people, especially the women, would bless you. This suggestion not only gave me confidence but also a reliable, known and professional implementer.

It took two odd years to get all the piece of land too for 10 bus stops in the city. In the rural sector, 88 brick and mortar bus stops were built, fortunately obliged by the same agency. Medical equipment for Ahmedabad's public hospital Sheth Vadilal Sarabhai, a computer system in a school in Vadodara city and several *anganwadis* in a few villages were also set up. Imagine the amount of work that could be done with a mere ₹4 crore!

In many cases, the MP finds it difficult to implement projects. In my time, no particular item could entail more than ₹10 lakh. This meant that I had to spend my total grant on at least 40 small projects.

Therefore, some MPs have a go at a few projects and leave the remaining funds unspent. Some distribute the money among local MLAs and others. Others use their own NGOs. The whole scheme is so clumsy that it is wasteful. It was comprehensively useful if the purpose was only to distribute perquisites to the MPs.

In spite of these shortcomings, if there be a parliamentary consensus for resuming the grants to MPs, be it so. But a change in procedure is necessary; let a keen MP apply to the Finance Minister giving what s/he proposes to do and how, within how much time. If an earmarked joint secretary finds the proposal viable and useful for the particular area, an approval could be given but subject to audit by a licensed auditor empanelled for MPLADS. The result would be beneficial to the area's people, executed economically and with a degree of uprightness.

(The writer is a well-known columnist and an author. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

COVID: ACCURACY IN FIGURES NEEDED

Sir — The official COVID-19 toll so far in India is around 4 lakh lives. However, experts are of the opinion that this is not an accurate figure. They think that the real figure will be much higher. It is assumed that over a million people may have lost their lives due to COVID-19, which is considered the second largest cause of death in the country. It is worrisome that COVID-related data is not properly collected and maintained. Recording of accurate data helps understand the enormity of the disease and the steps to be taken to combat it. Further, demographic and geographical data will help combat the third wave.

As any kind of death is a great loss to the families concerned, the families of COVID victims too deserve to be treated fairly by the Government. However, unlike railway accidents or industrial disasters, the families of COVID victims are not compensated. Just as the Government holds the responsibility to compensate those rendered jobless or destitute, it has the responsibility to compensate the families of COVID victims.

A number of factors have contributed to India's underreporting of COVID death data. As a consequence, it has raised doubts about India's real COVID-related death toll. In fact, many countries have not reported accurate COVID death toll.

Venu GS | Kollam

ECOLOGY MORE PRECIOUS THAN ECONOMY

Sir — This decade has been designated as the "decade of ecosystem restoration" by the UN. The ongoing pandemic must serve as a wake-up call for humanity to revisit the concept of GDP as a true measure of a country's growth. In fact, economic parameter alone does not present the true picture of a nation's growth and development, even as half of the world's GDP is dependent on natural resources alone.

But several developed and developing countries, in the guise of developing natural areas, resort to commercial plantations and designate them as forested areas, which goes against the tenets of natural law. It is no wonder then that the UN has declared

Revised vax policy makes sense



The Government's revised vaccination policy has brought fresh hope to students eyeing admission at foreign universities, job offers and also for the States that have faced difficulties in procuring vaccines and managing funds. Changing the previous policy of making the States procure 25 per cent of the doses through open market to vaccinate the 18-44 age group, now the States will have no role in procurement and the Centre will distribute vaccines to States for free, who will inoculate their populations.

From June 21, every Indian citizen will receive free vaccination at the Centre and State

Government-run centres. Earlier, the Centre provided free vaccination only to three priority groups: Healthcare workers, frontline workers and people aged above 45 years. Else, for the 18-44 age group, the vaccines were free only at the State-run centres. As the Centre moved to a centralised procurement mechanism, the Union Government said that both the State and Central centres will administer vaccines to all free of cost.

The vaccination at private centres will not be free; they can charge up to the maximum price as set by the Centre, besides a service charge. The Centre will directly procure three-fourth of the doses that the vaccine makers manufacture to distribute among States and administer doses. The number of doses allocated to a State will be based on three factors: Population, the progress of vaccination and degree of the spread of infection and the degree of wastage of vaccines. A number of measures in the revised policy will help smaller private centres based at remote locations to procure vaccine supply. From June 21, all centres will start on-site registration.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

the (2021-2030) decade a time for ecosystem restoration, and called on the world to restore at least 1 billion hectares (2.5 billion acres) of degraded land in the next decade.

It is also an alarming situation that if the ecosystem services decline at a steady rate, an estimated \$10 trillion in global GDP may be lost by 2050. In this context, Uttarakhand, also called the Dev Bhumi (god's paradise), has become the first State in the country to assign monetary value to natural resources like air, water, forest and soil to arrive at Gross Environmental Product (GEP) in evaluating the GDP.

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Nainital

GST COUNCIL AND COVID-19 RELIEF

Sir — The GST Council meeting has turned its back on COVID-19 relief. The lone decision we might be satisfied with was the waiver of the tax levied on two critical drugs against COVID-19 and mucormycosis, Tocilizumab and Amphotericin B.

Instead of reducing tax on Remdesivir and anticoagulants like heparin, medical grade oxygen, oxygen concentrators, ventilators, BiPAP machines, pulse oximeters and testing kits from 12 per cent to 5 per cent, and from 18 per cent to five per cent for hand sanitisers, temperature checking equipment, gas or electric furnace for crematoria and from 28 per cent to 12 per cent for ambulances and keeping the tax on COVID-19 vaccines unchanged at five per cent, the GST Council should have made all COVID-19 related products, technologies and service tax-free.

It is inconceivable that the Government is insisting on raising revenue by taxing what is needed to fight the battle against the pandemic. Why on earth should any Government with compassion and empathy tax electric/gas furnaces used in crematoria?

G David Milton | Kanyakumari

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

Stalin had opposed the opening of Tasmac shops under the AIADMK Government. Now in power, the DMK-led Government is opening these liquor shops.

Tamil Nadu BJP president
— L Murugan

Historically, the people of Mongolia and we Tibetans have been like twin brothers and sisters.

Tibetan spiritual leader
— Dalai Lama

Buzzed Asymmetry. #HairMajesty #supershort #one-side #love. Few people know, I had a boy cut for a large part of my childhood.

Singer

— Sona Mohapatra

This (English) battling line-up is fragile. We have to now start looking at players and wondering if they are good enough.

Former England skipper
— Michael Vaughan

We will observe the situation of the markets and restaurants for one week. If the cases do not increase, we will continue with the phase-wise unlock.

Delhi Chief Minister
— Arvind Kejriwal

FIRST COLUMN

HONOUR SANCTITY OF ECOLOGY

Disrupted ecology invites virulent viruses; India must cut dependence on scant natural resources



KOTA SRIRAJ

As a result of rapid industrialization, the ever-hungry industrial nations consumed natural resources at an alarming rate. The collateral damage became evident through adverse impacts on environment - air and water pollution of air and water to the global problem of climate change. Today every nation is suffering contamination of ecology due to anthropogenic intervention. Issues like dwindling groundwater or soil erosion apart, the world faces serious consequences of 'development' virulent viruses such as the novel coronavirus SARS-COV-2 for example.

Covid-19 has unleashed unimaginable fury on people's lives and livelihoods. The Scientific Reports (Nature research) Journal said an astounding 20,507,518 life years have been lost worldwide including India due to the pandemic. Statista Data figures show that the world lost over \$4 trillion in economic output. These consequences are a direct result of overzealous human activities that have disrupted normal ecological conditions causing rare virus strains to surface. Sixty per cent of the world's ailments stem from animals, of which 72 per cent is from wild animals. Usually referred to as the 'reservoir' species they do not infect humans directly; the infection happens through an 'inter-



mediary animal' or the 'carrier animal' because the virus in the latter undergoes mutation and becomes contagious. Virus mutations are normal processes in the evolution of a virus and occur at gene level and, therefore, cannot be avoided.

Various studies point out that intact ecosystems and bio-diverse nature hotspots are supremely successful in drawing the crucial line of separation between humans and animals. But insatiable human hunger for natural resources-driven economic prosperity means that mankind is crossing the invisible line and driving into the 'prohibited' sphere of the wild plant and animal world that are replete with hitherto unknown viruses that quickly latch on to the 'human hosts'. This trespass into nature's domain has its own set of penalties and associated costs.

The breakage of ecosystem integrity usually occurs when deforestation, change in land use and mining sort of activities abound. These activities triggered by human intervention have an irreversible impact of the ecosystem biodiversity as they forever alter the indigenous specie population and density. This helps viruses to spill over, mutate and multiply finally leading to more toxic and contagious phenotypes against which humanity has no known remedy or protection available.

Given these conditions, it is easy to comprehend that restoration of lost ecosystems and ensuring preservation of existing ones is a primary priority for mankind. India must understand that the biodiversity of the ecology is irreplaceable and that the disruption of the same means inviting certain death and destruction. Towards that end, India must take immediate measures to preserve the sanctity of its ecology by first gently encouraging the population to adopt environmentally friendly lifestyles which are less and less dependent on precious natural resources.

A resource-exploitative lifestyle that is intensely dependent on harvesting precious natural assets of the environment is also unable to develop and retain natural immunity against common infections and viruses. This is due to over dependence on medicine regimes. An eco-friendly lifestyle will ensure resurrection of biodiversity which in turn will help revive the natural immunity that humans are born with.

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

India gets poorer, investors richer



UTTAM GUPTA

Imagine if all of ₹2100,000 crore under Atmanirbhar package had been distributed among 40 crore workers in the informal sector; it would have boosted demand

The Corona pandemic may have brought about sharp deceleration in India's economic growth - the sharpest ever during the last four decades or so - but has yielded a bonanza for the investors.

The wealth of investors in the stock market as represented by the market capitalization of Indian equities (market value of shares multiplied by their number) almost doubled from around Rs 113 trillion (a trillion equals 100,000 crore) as on March 31, 2020 to Rs 226 trillion as on March 31, 2021. In contrast, India's GDP at current prices declined from Rs 203 trillion during 2019-20 to Rs 197 trillion during 2020-21. As a result, the market capitalization to GDP ratio almost doubled from 56 per cent during 2019-20 to 115 per cent during 2020-21.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of a country is the total value of goods and services produced during a specific time frame say a quarter or a year. Used worldwide, it is the most crucial economic indicator for reflecting on the economic health of a country. For developing countries such as India, a high year-on-year GDP growth should result in increasing prosperity for its people and vice versa.

During 2020-21, when the Corona pandemic destroyed economic activity on a mammoth scale, annihilated millions of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), took away jobs of tens of millions and severely impacted earnings of others, one section that went unscathed was the corporate sector in particular, the investors who made huge gains from their shareholdings in corporate entities across all categories such as large-caps, mid-caps, small-caps etc. So, what explains this anomalous situation?

The market value of a share depends on the demand or investors' interest which in turn, is a function of the company's current profitability and their assessment of how this is expected to be in the years to come.

During the year, profitability of majority of the listed firms increased despite decline in revenue. This was made possible due to higher prices of their products on the one hand and reduction in expenditure (that included expenses on wages and salaries, other fixed costs, interest outgo, etc.) on the other. As regards expectation for the future, investors including foreign investors have confidence in the fundamentals of firms and their ability to deliver good returns in the medium to long-term. This is vindicated by a record FPI (foreign portfolio investment) of about US\$37 billion during 2020-21.

Even the measures announced by the Union Government and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) purportedly to revive growth, boost aggregate demand and promote 'inclusive' development with emphasis on reinvigorating MSMEs ended up adding to the fortunes of the corporate sector.

The steep reduction in the corporate tax rate to 15 per cent for new enterprises set up after October 1, 2019 and to 22 per cent for existing entities (subject to their foregoing exemption and deductions available under existing dispensation) meant leaving an additional about Rs 150,000 crore in the hands of corporate in a full year. The corporate entities also benefitted from the reduction in the policy rate (interest rate at which RBI lends money to commercial banks) by 1.15 per cent during 2020 over and above a total cut of 1.35 per cent delivered during 2019.

Of the much trumpeted special package of Rs



TO SUM UP, THE HIGHLY INEQUITABLE OUTCOME DURING 2020-21 WAS DUE TO THE GOVERNMENT RELYING TOO MUCH ON MONETARY SUPPORT WHICH WAS AVAILABLE MOSTLY BY CORPORATE ENTITIES AND TOO LITTLE FISCAL SUPPORT (FREE FOOD, SUBSIDISED LPG, PM-KISAN ETC) WHICH BARELY HELPED TENS OF MILLIONS LOW-INCOME EARNERS KEEP THEIR HEAD ABOVE WATER

(The author is a policy analyst. The views expressed are personal.)



2100,000 crore announced by the Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman (May, 2020) under the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan', a mere about Rs 200,000 crore was spent on catering to food and other bare basic needs such as higher subsidy on LPG, hike in wages under MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act), financial assistance to farmers under PM-KISAN, ex-gratia to Jan Dhan (JD) account-holders etc. under PM Garib Kalyan Yojna (PM - GKY).

The rest Rs 190,000 crore was given as (i) liquidity support by RBI (measures announced by Governor, Shashikant Dason March 27 and April 17, 2020) injected close to Rs 500,000 crore followed by another Rs 300,000 crore on May 22; (ii) increasing resources of banks and other financial institutions (FIs) to enable them on-lend; (iii) releasing pending dues to agencies tasked with implementation of welfare schemes of the Union Government. A big slice of these funds either landed with corporate entities or remained un-utilized.

For instance, out of the Rs 100,000 crore auction of targeted long-term repo operations (TLTRO - 1) of three-year tenor by the RBI, Rs 75,000 crore went to the big corporate. The apex bank tried to rectify this anomaly when under the TLTRO 2.0 (April 17, 2020) it reserved 50 per cent of additional liquidity injection Rs 50,000 crore for small and mid-sized non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) and micro-finance institutions

(MFIs). One wonders whether this reserved quota of Rs 25,000 crore actually went to small players.

Consider Rs 300,000 crore meant for MSMEs or identified stressed sectors under the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS). As against a target of eight million MSMEs beneficiaries, only four million got loan aggregating to Rs 150,000 crore. Even today, the money available under the scheme remains un-utilized; this has prompted the Government to extend the scheme till September 30 and even relaxed the conditions to allow firms with outstanding up to Rs 50 crore (up from existing Rs 25 crore) avail of the facility.

Look at the payment of Rs 65,000 crore to fertilizer manufacturers (in addition to Rs 71,000 crore allocated in the budget for 2020-21) towards subsidy dues being carry forward from previous years. These payments went towards bolstering their bottom-line. Likewise, Rs 90,000 crore given to power distribution companies (PDCs) (amount since raised to Rs 130,000 crore) eventually landed with power generation companies being former's pending dues to the latter. As for food subsidy, the Government paid to the Food Corporation of India (FCI) Rs 350,000 crore (as per RE) over and above the budget provision of Rs 116,000 crore for 2020-21. A good chunk of this was used by the FCI for clearing dues to its creditors/companies.

Thus, contrary to the stated

intent of the Atmanirbhar package to provide succor to MSMEs and millions of workers in informal sector etc., on ground zero, the money was given mostly by way of tax cuts, reduction in interest rate, loans, liquidity support and clearance of dues which contributed to enrichment of those (read: corporate) who were already well-off. The latter also gained a lot from the reckless spending by governments in developed countries (a gargantuan US\$9 trillion was pumped in) even as a lot of that money found its way to emerging market economies including India.

To sum up, the highly inequitable outcome during 2020-21 was due to the Government relying too much on monetary support which was availed mostly by corporate entities and too little fiscal support (free food, subsidized LPG, PM-KISAN etc) which barely helped tens of millions low-income earners keep their head above water. In contrast, imagine if all of the Rs 2100,000 crore under the Atmanirbhar package were to be distributed among 40 crore workers in the informal sector. This would have given the much-needed boost to demand across all sectors and resultant fillip to inclusive growth, but that was not to be.

Even as the pandemic continues to bite during the current year as well (though, to a lesser extent), will the Government give a big fiscal push directed at these most vulnerable people? Going by Finance Minister's stance thus far, it seems unlikely.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

DIGVIJAYA SINGH TELLS A PAKISTANI JOURNALIST THAT IF CONGRESS COMES TO POWER, THEY WILL RECONSIDER THE DECISION ON ARTICLE 370. — BJP IT CELL CHIEF AMIT MALVIYA



CERTAIN UNEDUCATED PEOPLE MIGHT HAVE NOT UNDERSTOOD THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN "SHALL" AND "CONSIDER". — SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER DIGVIJAYA SINGH

India-UK trade talks: Case for tariff optimisation

A notion worth dispelling is that Scotch whiskies are costlier to produce; it is 50 per cent more expensive to produce it in India than in Scotland

In wake of the Indo-UK trade discussions, many 'experts' argue for reduction in tariff, particularly slashing custom tariffs on imported Scotch and on 'intermediate' products which they say are nothing but high-strength, potable, undenatured ethyl alcohol used for bottling and blending in India.

They argue on three main grounds. One, that India has a large trade surplus in the category and can afford greater imports; two, customs duty reduction on intermediate products will encourage 'Make in India'; and three, even if tariff is reduced the bulk of consumption will remain locally produced whiskies -- so why bother.

This industry contributes nearly Rs 250,000 crore in taxes



VINOD GIRI

(The author is Director General of the Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies. The views expressed are personal.)

and for most states it constitutes 15-30 per cent of revenue. Customs duty is not even Rs 5000 crore in comparison. Second, this industry uses agricultural products as primary raw material and nearly 50 lakh farmers depend on it. It provides employment to 20 lakh people. Any disruption will have widespread ramifications for the government, farmers and labour market.

The problem with the first argument is that it hides the true balance of trade on alcoholic beverages using a wider head of 'Food and Drinks'. If one separates alcoholic beverages/products for human consumption from the wider clubbing of Food and Drinks, a very different picture emerges.

As per DGFT data for

2018-19, India exports only Rs 5 crore worth of alcoholic products/beverages to the UK, against import of Rs 1300 crore. Clubbing alcohol under a much bigger Food & Drink category to claim favourable balance of trade is highly misleading.

The second argument is also a misconception. Scotch whisky goes through two major stages of production -- distillation and bottling. The 'Intermediate' Scotch whisky is actually the output of the first stage, it has been produced and matured in Scotland. What happens in India is only bottling. Therefore, while incentivising Intermediate products through reduced or zero duty will lead to an increase of usage of bottling plants in India, which will be a big loss for



Indian farmers and manufacturers.

The third argument misses out on three vital points. One, in product categories with multiple price segments like whisky, consumers seamlessly shift to the next category up or down depending on affordability.

So, when a Scotch whisky is sold at a lower price it takes away consumers from products in the price segment, starting a

domino effect that makes the domestic industry the net loser. Two, introduction of Scotch whisky at lower price attacks the profit driving end of portfolio of Indian companies, thus jeopardising their viability. Third, Indian premium whiskies like Amrut, Paul John or Rampur are now regarded amongst the best in the world but are unable to make the same headway in the domestic market due to an unsupportive regime and reducing customs duty further just will not help.

Another notion worth dispelling is that Scotch whiskies are costlier to produce. Rather, it costs at least 50 per cent more to produce a whisky of similar quality in India than in Scotland. This is primarily on account of a higher cost of cap-

ital and higher taxes in India, interstate restrictions and higher evaporation losses.

Also, many states offer concessionary taxes on imported products, but reduction in customs tariffs cannot be done without removing compensatory state-based concessions as otherwise it will create a hugely discriminatory tax regime against Indian products.

If we talk about reciprocal duty concessions, the problem is that barriers put up by the UK are not tariff based but non-tariff ones. India, being a sugar producing country, has evolved whisky recipes based on spirit distilled from molasses. The UK does not accept this as it is not 'recipe standards'. The result of these non-tariff barriers is that of the 70 lakh cases of whisky

exported from India every year, the whole of the EU including the UK accounts for less than 30,000!

Indian industry is not against reducing customs duty on alcohol, but it should be in a phased manner and up to a point where it creates a level playing field.

Accordingly, it has put forward its recommendation to reduce import taxes, aggregate of customs duty and AIDC, from 150% to 100% now and to 75% in five years' time. It has also recommended a threshold import price for taxation at \$5 per bottle, and reciprocal concessions from the UK allowing whiskies from India to be allowed in the UK market as 'Indian Whisky' without minimum maturity conditions.

Pradhan says Cong-ruled states should cut tax on petrol, diesel

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With petrol and diesel prices climbing to record high, Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Sunday asked Congress governments in Rajasthan and Maharashtra to cut sales tax if the party was concerned about fuel price burden on common man, but did not say if BJP-ruled states like Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka, where petrol has crossed Rs 100 mark, would do the same.

Petrol and diesel have risen to all-time high across the country after fuel rates rose by Rs 5.72 to Rs 6.25 per litre in less than six weeks. This is due to a combination of rising international oil prices and record high central and state taxes.

Talking to reporters on the sidelines of an event organised to inaugurate oxygen plant set up by Indraprastha Gas Ltd at Maharaja Agrasen Hospital, he said central and state gov-



ernments need additional money from the taxes on petrol and diesel to meet expenses for fighting pandemic as well as development work.

"I accept that fuel prices are pinching consumers," he said, adding the government is spending Rs 1 lakh crore on

providing free food grains to poor this year alone besides spending money on vaccines and healthcare infrastructure.

Asked about Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's repeated attacks on the Modi government for skyrocketing fuel prices, Pradhan said, "Why is fuel expensive in Maharashtra,

Rajasthan and Punjab (which are ruled by the party)?"

"If Rahul Gandhi is concerned about the poor being hit by fuel prices, he should ask chief ministers of Congress-ruled states to cut taxes. He should ask (Maharashtra Chief Minister) Uddhav Thackeray to reduce taxes," he said.

He, however, did not say if BJP-ruled states like Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka, which too have seen petrol price cross Rs 100 a litre mark due to local taxes, would follow suit.

Fuel prices differ from state to state depending on the incidence of local taxes such as VAT and freight charges. And because of this, petrol retails at over Rs 100 per litre mark in seven states and union territories -- Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka and Ladakh.

Of these states, Congress is in power in Rajasthan and is a coalition partner with Shiv

Sena and NCP in Maharashtra. BJP rules Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka and Ladakh too is under central rule. Andhra Pradesh has YSR-Congress in power while TRS rules in Telangana.

Rajasthan levies the highest value-added tax (VAT or sales tax) on petrol and diesel in the country, followed by Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Karnataka.

While international oil prices have crossed USD 72 per barrel in anticipation of demand recovery following the rollout of vaccination programme by various countries.

Last year when rates collapsed to two-decade low, the union government instead of passing on the benefit to consumers raised excise duty to record high. The excise tax on petrol was Rs 9.48 per litre when the Modi government took office in 2014, and that on diesel was Rs 3.56 a litre.

'Income inequalities telling story of 'uneven' economic recovery'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former RBI Governor D Subbarao has expressed concerns over "extreme unevenness" in economic recovery and "sharpening inequalities" between upper income segments and lower income households in the country, cautioning that the trend will hit growth prospects going forward.

Terming the uneven recovery "morally wrong and politically corrosive", he said liquidity in the domestic market and foreign fund inflows are leading to soaring of prices of stocks and other assets despite disruptions due to Covid pandemic. The ex-central bank governor further said that earlier expectations of a sharp economic recovery this year have been dashed by the new pandemic wave.

"The economy contracted last year, for the first time in four decades, by as much as 7.3 per cent. That was less deep than we had first feared but still deep enough to have caused distress to millions of families in the informal sector. There was expectation of a



sharp recovery this year but those expectations are now tempered by the impact of the second wave," Subbarao told PTI.

The RBI too reduced its growth forecast for the current fiscal by one percentage point, from 10.5 per cent to 9.5 per cent, he said adding that even 9.5 per cent growth might seem impressive but note that this is coming on a very low base of last year.

"Even if we clock this growth rate, the output during this fiscal 2021/22 will still be less

than the output two years ago before the pandemic hit us. Compare that with China which never fell below its pre-pandemic level and the US which is expected to recover to its pre-pandemic level this year," the former RBI chief said.

Expressing concerns, Subbarao said that while the majority of people have lost jobs and saw reduction in their income, the wealth of some rich individuals have increased during the pandemic period.

MONEY MATTERS

CIL's 114 grounded projects under different stages: Report

State-owned CIL's 114 ongoing coal projects, costing Rs 20 crore and above, are under different stages of implementation, according to a report.

Implementation and completion of these projects depend upon critical extraneous factors such as possession of land, green clearances and evacuation infrastructure, the Coal Ministry said in its annual report 2020-21. In 2020, total 34 projects were sanctioned and nine mining projects completed by Coal India Ltd (CIL), it said. The coal behemoth took various measures to ensure timely completion of projects. There was persistent persuasion by CIL with state governments for expediting land authentication in Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. "Further, land owners are being constantly persuaded to accept compensation and handover land acquired by the company," the report said.



Axis Bank stake in Max Life to rise to 20 pc in 18 months

In line with the proposed deal, Axis Bank is likely to raise its stake in Max Life Insurance to about 20 per cent over the next 12-18 months, said the insurance company's CEO Prashant Tripathy said. Currently, Axis Bank and its two subsidiaries -- Axis Capital Ltd and Axis Securities Ltd -- collectively own 12.99 per cent in Max Life Insurance post approval of the deal in April this year. With this, Axis entities have now become co-promoters of Max Life with three board seats. "Axis Bank is to increase to 19.99 per cent in tranches. Thirteen per cent is already done over the next two quarters, we will seek approval for the balance seven per cent. So, it will reach about 20 per cent and that will be the ownership of Axis Bank," Tripathy told PTI.



When asked about the timeline for the completion of the remaining stake transfer, he said: "It should happen in the next 12 to 18 months." Under the deal, the Axis entities also have the right to acquire an additional stake of up to seven per cent in Max Life, in one or more tranches, subject to regulatory approvals.

NTPC invites Eol for hydrogen fuel cell-based pilot projects

State-run power giant NTPC has floated a global expression of interest (Eol) for setting up hydrogen fuel-based power backup system and a standalone fuel-cell based microgrid system, a statement said on Sunday. Through these projects, NTPC is looking to further strengthen its footprint in green and clean fuel, the company said. NTPC will collaborate for implementation and further commercialization of the projects. This is in line with NTPC's initiatives towards adopting hydrogen technologies. The power PSU is exploring the use of hydrogen-based fuel cells-electrolyser systems for backup power requirement. Currently, the backup power requirement and micro grid applications are being met from diesel-based power generators. Looking at these as early adopter use case of hydrogen based technologies, NTPC is working towards creating solutions which are a green alternative to diesel generators.



Exchanges to suspend trading in DHFL shares from today

Leading exchanges BSE and NSE will suspend trading in the shares of Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Ltd (DHFL) with effect from Monday. The move, aimed at avoiding "market complications", comes against the backdrop of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) approving Piramal Group's resolution plan for the bankrupt-DHFL. The resolution plan under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) was approved by the tribunal on June 7. In separate but similarly-worded circulars issued on Friday, BSE and NSE said they would suspend trading in the shares of DHFL with effect from June 14. The approved resolution plan provides for delisting of equity shares of the company. As per the circulars, the company made an announcement on June 9, saying that "no value was attributable to the equity shares as per the liquidation value of the company estimated by registered valuers appointed under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India Regulations, 2016".



G-7 urged to deliver on vaccines, climate

■ FALMOUTH (ENGLAND)

The Group of Seven leaders aim to end their first summit in two years with a punchy set of promises Sunday, including vaccinating the world against coronavirus, making huge corporations pay their fair share of taxes and tackling climate change with a blend of technology and money.

They want to show that international cooperation is back after the upheavals caused both by the pandemic and the unpredictability of former U.S. President Donald Trump. And they want to convey that the club of wealthy democracies -- Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States -- is a better friend to poorer



nations than authoritarian rivals such as China.

But it was uncertain how firm the group's commitments will be on coronavirus vaccines, the economy and the environment when the leaders issue their final communiqué. Also unclear was whether all of

the leaders would back the United States' call to chastise China for repressing its Uyghur minority and other abuses.

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, the summit's host, wanted the three-day meeting to fly the flag for a "Global Britain," his government's ini-

tiative to give the mid-sized country outsized influence when it comes to global problem-solving.

Brexit cast a shadow over that goal during the summit on the coast of southwest England. European Union leaders and U.S. President Joe Biden voiced concerns about problems with new UK-EU trade rules that have heightened tensions in Northern Ireland.

But overall, the mood has been positive: The leaders smiled for the cameras on the beach at cliff-fringed Carbis Bay, a village and resort that became a traffic-clogged fortress for the meeting. The last G-7 summit was in France in 2019. The pandemic scuttled the planned 2020 event in the United States.

ITC hotels to expand 'Welcomhotel' brand

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Amid COVID-19 pandemic and slump in the hospitality industry owing to lockdown and travel restrictions, ITC Hotels is optimistic about domestic tourism prospects and planning to increase the number of properties under the brand Welcomhotel.

The Rs 45,000 crore hospitality arm of ITC, said it was planning to increase the number of properties under the brand Welcomhotel to 25 in a year's time from 19 now.

"ITC Welcomhotel will be a 25 property brand over next 12



months," an ITC official told PTI.

The brand opened two properties in a span of six months. Welcomhotel Tavleen Chail was unveiled on Thursday and Welcomhotel Shimla about six months ago. And Welcomhotel Ahmedabad and Welcomhotel Port Blair were relaunched in March quarter.

RE: This fiscal may see highest model launches

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Mid-sized motorcycle maker Royal Enfield expects the current fiscal to be one of the best for the company in terms of new model launches as it looks to drive in an array of new products for domestic and international markets, according to a top company official.

The company, which is part of Eicher Motors, noted that it has a rich pipeline of products under development which could hit the market in the coming days.

DLF targets 30% growth in sales bookings to Rs 4Kcrs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Realty major DLF aims a 30 per cent jump in its sales bookings to Rs 4,000 crore this fiscal, as the company expects a rise in housing demand despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

The company will launch various projects, comprising 8 million square feet of saleable area, to tap this growing demand for residential properties, especially those built by trusted developers.

In a conference call with analysts, DLF's new CEO



Ashok Kumar Tyagi gave sales bookings guidance of Rs 1,000 crore per quarter during the current financial year.

During the financial year 2020-21, DLF sold residential properties worth Rs 3,084 crore, up 24 per cent from the previous year, despite muted

sales in April-June 2020 due to a nationwide lockdown.

DLF's Group Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Vivek Anand said the company is committed to delivering on sales bookings guidance.

"Internally, we are gearing for even higher number," Anand said adding that sales would be slow in the current quarter due to the second wave.

On supply, DLF's CFO highlighted that the company targets to launch eight million square feet area in the current fiscal.

Discoms' dues to gencos fall 11.2 per cent to Rs 81,628 crore

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Total outstanding dues owed by electricity distribution utilities or discoms to power producers fell 11.2 per cent to Rs 81,628 crore in April 2021 from a year ago.

Distribution companies (discoms) owed a total Rs 91,915 crore to power generation firms in April 2021, according to portal PRAAP-TI. However, outstanding dues of discoms towards electricity producers have been increasing year-on-year as well as month-on-month for years showing perennial stress in the power sector till February this year. It has started tapering off from March 2021.

Total dues in April increased sequentially compared to Rs 78,841 crore in March this year. Total outstanding dues of discoms had dipped 3.4 per cent in March this year from Rs 81,687 crore in the same month last year. In April 2021, the total overdue amount, which was not cleared even after 45 days of grace period offered by generators, stood at Rs 68,732 crore as against Rs 76,117 crore in the same month a year ago. The overdue amount stood at Rs 67,656 crore in March this year.

FPIs invest Rs 13,424 cr in Indian mkts in June so far

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Overseas investors pumped in a net Rs 13,424 crore so far in June as risk-on sentiment improved with declining COVID-19 cases and hopes of early opening of economy.

Depositories data showed that foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) invested Rs 15,520 crore in equities during June 1-11.

"The robust net inflows over the last two weeks could be attributed to the improvement in investor sentiments on the back of consistently falling

coronavirus cases in the country and hopes of an early opening of the economy," said Himanshu Srivastava, associate director - manager research, Morningstar India.

At the same time, FPIs withdrew Rs 2,096 crore from the debt segment during the period under review. The total net inflow stood at Rs 13,424 crore. This comes following a net withdrawal of Rs 2,666 crore in May and Rs 9,435 crore in April.

For the inflows in June, VK Vijayakumar, chief investment strategist at Geojit Financial

Services, added that it appears from fourth quarter corporate figures that a cyclical recovery in Indian economy is imminent post the progressive unlock that is happening now. "The FPI activity was centred around IT, financial and energy sectors," noted S Rang anathan, Head of Research at LKP Securities.

Overall, the MSCI Emerging Markets Index has lost 0.91 per cent this week, noted Shrikant Chouhan, executive vice president, equity technical research at Kotak Securities.

Stock markets to follow Fed interest rate decision

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Domestic equity markets would track inflation data, the pace of COVID-19 vaccination and reopening of the economy this week, say analysts.

Market participants are also awaiting the US central bank's monetary policy meeting for its stance on continuing stimulus measures, they said.

"This week, India's inflation data for May will be the key economic driver in the domestic market. On the global front, the Fed's monetary policy meeting will be in focus as the market awaits its stance



on continuing stimulus measures," said Vinod Nair, Head

of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Nirali Shah, Head of Equity Research, Samco Securities said the US FOMC meet would keep markets volatile.

During the last week, the 30-share BSE benchmark jumped 374.71 points or 0.71 per cent. The 30-share benchmark touched a lifetime high of 52,641.53 points on Friday.

"Investors will continue to monitor economic data and COVID-19 related updates," said Sumeet Bagadia, Executive Director, Choice Broking.

"The key factors to watch out remains the pace of vaccination and the re-opening of the economy. We would also

be watchful of trends in global liquidity and the policy stance of central bankers," Shibani Sircar Kurian, Senior EVP & Head- Equity Research, Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Company said.

Besides, movement of Brent crude, rupee and foreign institutional investors (FIIs) would also be watched by investors. Shrikant Chouhan, Executive Vice President, Equity Technical Research at Kotak Securities said, "Markets are expected to monitor the spread of monsoon in the coming weeks, daily new case count and easing of lock down restriction."

Raima Sen has worked with the Hindi, Bengali, Telugu, Tamil, and Malayalam film industries, and forayed into the OTT space long before it was considered the next big thing. The actress of *Dhairyam*, *Dus*, *Forbidden Love*, and *The Last Hour* fame, talks to *The Pioneer's* SHIKHA DUGGAL about her choice of roles, and upcoming projects.

‘Would love to do more projects down south’

Bengali belle Raima Sen was last seen in the ethereal of *The Last Hour*, a supernatural mystery series that streamed on Amazon Prime Video, wholly shot around Sikkim, it sure was a pleasure to watch. Her appearance in the series was timely, a gobsmackingly stunning one in a red saree! Many of us were found holding our breath to know what her title role in it was, why she appears in parts and portions of the episodes, if she's a mere spectre, what's her tale, etc. With mountains all around, she manages to draw us all so closely like a story never told before — a story revolving around 'Shamans'! Raima was searching for some vindication and revival for her daughter at some given point in the series. Following her return to the entertainment realm now, it was with Rituparno Ghosh's film 'Chokher Bali' that Raima got fame! She has also done a Malayalam film, a Telugu, and a Tamil one too. While garnering immense praises from fandom on social media for her latest venture, she feels *The Last Hour* was a very fascinating and authentic concept during which she had to also give her first-ever screen test too. "I got to know about a lot of things, including shamanic traditions. I said yes to the series after watching Amit

Kumar's *Monsoon Shootout* because I really liked the film. He was screen-testing in Calcutta. He told me about doing one, and I told him that I had never done a screen test. I did it and got the part. This was my first, full-fledged screen test." She made her debut in the critically acclaimed film *Godmother* back in 1999, and was later seen in *Daman* as Raveena Tandon's daughter. Talking about celebs and reminiscing her olden times on set, she speaks about her latest co-star Sanjay Kapoor who played her husband in *The Last Hour*. "I had a great time working with him! He is a big foodie, we were shooting in very remote areas and it was freezing. We knew that if we need food, we could go to Sanjay. We went to a restaurant in Darjeeling. Also, he has a great sense of humour," she adds. She also shares about her most-worked with Bengali co-star Parambrata Chattopadhyay, with whom she's also shooting a new music video, a Bangladeshi song. "We have done so many films and ads together. When the makers think of me, they think of Param and vice-versa. We have a really nice, easy-going on-screen chemistry, my mother thinks so too. She feels it is really cute. I understand him and his humour and he understands me. Of course, there is always a 'tu

tu main main' between us. We shot the song in Tajpur, four hours away from Calcutta and also in a house in Bangladesh. This is my first Bangladeshi music video," an excited Raima informs. What excites the veteran actress-turned-politician Moon Moon Sen and husband Bharat Dev Varma's daughter in choosing her characters at the moment while she has already delivered so many acclaimed performances in the past twenty years? She says, "It depends, if the director or the role is really good, I'll say yes and if the production house is really big, we go ahead and do the film!" Also sometimes, there might be a very good co-star that she would like to work with, that too, could inspire her to say yes to the film. But, life is very unpredictable. The game of life is full of twists and turns, changing direction to forge new paths that are not anticipated sometimes. What if a film doesn't work? Raima never loses hope. "One has to learn from mistakes. You do your work with all the dedication and honesty and learn as you go along. It is a part of life. Just like in life, there will be ups and downs in your career. Initially, I used to feel bad about trolls, but I'm not bothered now. If I read it, I'll throw it out of my brain. I usually engage

with social media mostly to give out information about my work and for endorsements. And then I share my pictures. I know that it is important to be visible. Also, I retweet. But I am not an activist. I do it because you have to do it," she tells us. With one Telugu film already in her kitty, Raima

would love to work more in the industries down south!

"Let's see what happens once everything opens up and another Tamil film of mine releases. I am a go-with-the-

flow kind of person. I don't plan ahead too much. From the beginning of my career, films just started coming, one after the other. Now, I take up work when I want to, when I feel like it. I don't take any extra pressure where I have to constantly do films as I used to, earlier. Since the pandemic, our outlook towards life has changed. Earlier, one would make plans for the future. But now we take each day as it comes and enjoy the moment. You never know what's going to happen next. I don't like to waste my time unnecessarily. Now I do things that are important." Recently, Raima's bold avatar on social media created a sensation and also raised a few eyebrows. Currently, she's enjoying the success of her recently released web series and we look forward to more of Raima Sen in films and OTT.



WFH STRESS? YOGA TO THE RESCUE



The work-from-home situation mandated by the pandemic has made it challenging for professionals to maintain routines and efficiency. This disruption of the regular working experience is causing increased physical, mental and emotional stress for many that are now working from home. Employees struggle with the concept of unplugging and ending their workday

compared to those who work in an office setting. A sudden stress response experienced by working professionals causes increased heart rate, increased respiratory rate, tremors, sweating, headache, dry mouth/throat, concentration issues, performance issues, fear, and anxiety. negativity, uneasiness, and body pain. Yogic practices help to overcome the effect of stress at physical, mental, and emotional levels and thus ensure

overall wellbeing. Here are some yoga practices which will help in relieving stress arising from working from home. It is recommended to hold each posture for three to five breaths (one breath equals one inhale and exhale cycle). **Seated twist** With both knees facing forward, bring your left hand to your outer right knee. Sit up tall and activate your abs. The right hand can rest at

your side or down by your right hip. On every inhale, sit up a little taller, and on every exhale, move your right shoulder back an inch as your left shoulder moves forward. Pull your left hip back as you twist to the right; you want the twist to stay in your lumbar spine. Also, don't twist too far; you'll know you've overdone it if it is challenging to keep a steady breath and a tall spine.

You can look toward the right, and eventually toward your right shoulder. Breathe here for a couple of counts, then repeat on the other side, toward the left.

Benefits: This simple twist promotes good posture, stimulates circulation, and aids digestion.

Mountain pose – Tadasana

Inhale, stand with feet together big toes touching. Spread the toes, firm the feet and leg muscles, bend the knees slightly, draw the abdominal muscles in and up.

Exhale, tuck the tailbone down, draw the low ribs in, straighten the spine, broaden the shoulders away from the ears, take the hands open and down by the sides. Chin is level with the floor.

Hold this posture for three to five breaths.

Benefits: Lengthens and strengthens the spine, legs, and feet, can relieve sciatica pain.

Caution: Those with low blood pressure should practice with a hand on a wall or the back of a chair for balance.

Side stretch

From Tadasana, extend your right arm toward the left side of your body, finding as much length as possible from right hip to right armpit.

Palm can face to the left, and gaze can shift up toward your bicep if that feels okay on your neck. Create space between your shoulders and

ears.

Tip: Keep your shoulders in line with each other to avoid leaning forward or back — only sideways.

Studies show looking down at a smartphone or screen can add as much as 60 extra pounds of pressure on your spine, so daily stretches can also help you practice good posture.

When stressed, it's common to find your shoulders slowly creeping towards your ears, causing your neck and shoulders to become stiff over time.

Next time you feel your anxiety levels rise, this move will help you roll away the tension and restore mobility in your neck in 10 seconds max.

Cow – Bitilasana / Cat – Marjariasana

Inhale lengthen the spine and come down to hands and knees on a yoga mat

Cow: Find a "tabletop" position with the hands shoulder-width apart, wrists under the shoulders, knees hip-width apart, spine is neutral, eyes looking down. From here, inhale to cow: arch the back, drop the belly, lift the sitting bones, lift the chest forward, and look forward or up.

Cat: From cow, exhale and draw the spine back to neutral, then continue rounding the back up toward the ceiling for cat pose. Draw the abdominal muscles up toward the spine and the sky.

Aim the crown of the head to the floor.

Repeat cow/cat poses three to five times—inhaling to arch the spine for cow, and exhaling to round the spine for cat.

Benefits: Lengthens and stretches the muscles of the back, torso, and neck; gently massages spine and internal organs.

Caution: Those with back or neck injuries should keep the back of the neck long and neutral.

Bhujangasana

Inhale, press the palms to the floor under the fronts of the shoulders, engage abdominal and pelvic floor muscles, and press the pubic bone into the mat.

Straighten the arms as much as possible without discomfort in the back, neck, or shoulders.

Draw the shoulder blades together, lift the chest (but not forward), and the belly lifts. Thighs stay on the mat. Breathe here for about three to five breaths.

Relaxing asanas in acute stress

Shavasana and Makarasana

1. It helps to relieve muscle tension.
2. All vital organs get to

rest in this position.

3. Strain on joints also relieves.

4. Heart rate decreases and metabolic rate also slows down.

5. Breath becomes slow, rhythmic, and deep which helps in the relaxation of all tissues.

For mental and emotional stress breathing practices/ pranayama are extremely effective. The following routine can be followed every-day for best results

Breath awareness- Keep the breath as it is (or slightly slow and feel the touch of air inside the nostrils).

- Slow deep breathing- 30 to 50 rounds.
- Anulom – vilom- 20 rounds.
- Bhramari- 20 to 30 rounds.
- Omkar Chanting- 20 to 30 rounds.

The above yoga practices should be undertaken at least 3 hours before or after a meal.

Daily practice of just 30 to 45 minutes will ensure you have the energy and enthusiasm to work with your full efficiency at home without any stress.

(The writer, Subodh Tiwari, is the CEO of Kaivalyadharm.)

Here's a look at highlight films, shows and series that are scheduled to drop in the digital space this week.

KHWABON KE PARINDEY, Season 1 (Series on Voot, June 14) Cast: Asha Negi, Mrinal Dutt, Manasi Moghe, Tushar Sharma; Direction: Tapasvi Mehta

The drama series is about three friends and a stranger, and unfolds in Australia. It is a story of realisations in life through a journey of love, friendship, hope, despair, joys and sorrows.

THE REPUBLIC OF SARAH, Season 1, (Series on Voot, June 14) Cast: Stella Baker, Luke Mitchell, Megan Follows, Ian Duff; Created by: Jeffrey Paul King

When the greedy ways of a mining company starts destroying a town, high school teacher Sarah Cooper unearths an obscure cartographical loophole to declare independence.



Hot on OTT: COMING UP THIS WEEK

nursery rhyme characters.

THE SILVER SKATES (Film on Netflix, June 16) Cast: Fedor Fedotov, Sofya Priss, Kirill Zaytsev; Direction: Michael Lockshin

The Russian period adventure film is inspired by *Romeo And Juliet* and the novel *Hans Brinker, Or The Silver Skates*.

Set in Saint Petersburg during the winter of 1899it tells the story of romance that blooms between Matvey the courier and Alisa the aristocrat.

PENGUIN TOWN, Season 1 (Series on Netflix, June 16)

Documentary series set in South Africa, where an endangered group of penguins flock to find mates, raise families and mix with the locals.

KATLA (Series on Netflix, June 17) Cast: Guorun Yr Eyfjor, Iris Tanja Flygenring; Created by: Sigurjón Kjartansson

and Baltasar Kormakur

The Icelandic sci-fi thriller series is about how a catastrophic eruption of the sub-glacial volcano Katla turns a nearby community's world upside down as mysteries begin to emerge from the ice.

SHERNI (film on Amazon Prime Video, June 18) Cast: Vidya Balan, Vijay Raaz, Sharat Saxena; Direction: Amit Masurkar

Newton director Amit Masurkar presents Vidya Balan as a forest officer who must lead a team of trackers and locals intending to capture an unsettled tigress, while battling intense obstacles and pressures, both natural and man-made.

JAGAME THANDIRAM (Film of Netflix, June 18) Cast: Dhanush, Aishwarya Lekshmi, James Cosmo; Direction: Karthik Subbaraj

The Tamil action thriller is about a clever

gangster who is hired by a crime lord to take down a dangerous rival.

LUCA (Film on Disney+ Hotstar, June 18) Voice cast: Jacob Tremblay, Jack Dylan Grazer, Emma Berman; Direction: Enrico Casarosa

Pixar's new animation film is set in the 1950s, in a seaside town on the Italian Riviera. A young boy Luca shares adventures with his new best friend Alberto. They are hiding a secret from each other – they are both sea monsters.

ELITE, Season 4 (Series on Netflix, June 18) Cast: Itzan Escamilla, Miguel Bernardeau, Danna Paola; Created by: Carlos Montero

Season four of the Spanish suspense drama series is about a group of middle-class students who have an altercation with their wealthy and influential classmates in the elite

school they enrol, which leads to a horrific murder.

THE RATIONAL LIFE, Season 1 (Series on Netflix, June 18) Cast: Bao Wen Jin; Calvin Li, Lan Qin; Direction: Hsu Fu Chun

The Chinese romantic drama series is about a career-driven young woman balancing workplace tension with a love triangle and a nagging mother at home.

A FAMILY (Film on Netflix, June 18) Cast: Go Ayano, Naoyuki Fernandez, Hayato Ichihara; Direction: Michihito Fujii

The Japanese action drama is about Kenji, whose father died from using a stimulant drug, following which he joins a crime syndicate and Kenji discovers a new concept of the family.

MOUCHAK (Series on Hoichoi, June 18) Cast: Monami Ghosh, Kanchan Mallick, Sourav Chatterjee, Apratim Chatterjee; Direction: Sayantan Ghosal

The Bengali comedy series marks the OTT debut of popular television star Monami Ghosh, as the friendly neighbourhood 'boudi' or sister-in-law.

EL CORAZON DE SERGIO RAMOS: LA LEYENDA DE SERGIO RAMOS (Series on Amazon Prime, June 18)

Documentary series on Spain and Real Madrid captain, the legendary defender Sergio Ramos.

The series narrates the incredible story of the football superstar who has garnered popularity the world over.

CHIVAS: EL REBENO SAGRADO, Season 1 (Series on Amazon Prime Video; June 18) A documentary series for Latin American football buffs, about the unforgettable season of Mexico's home-grown club, the Chivas of Guadalajara, as it resurrects the legendary team after five consecutive seasons of failure.

NEVERTHELESS, Season 1 (Series on Netflix, June 19) Cast: Song Kang, Han So-hee; Direction: Kim Ga-ram

The Korean teenybopper drama is about a cynical youngster who is drawn into a friends-with-benefits arrangement by his flirtatious art school classmate.

A decade ago, global popstar, Lady Gaga gave the world its most unapologetic unofficial pride anthem as she sang 'I am beautiful in my way, cause God makes no mistakes... I'm on the right track baby... I was born this way'. Taking this very celebratory spirit of individuality and inclusivity, Lomotif announces its latest campaign, *#BeProud*. June is the month of pride, acceptance, and celebration of the LGBTQAI+ community, and above all love. Extending their support, for the entire month – the video sharing platform will also don the rainbow pride flag on their logo!

With a meaningful message wrapped in the most exciting manner, the *#BeProud* campaign that started on June 10 will go on till June 30. It will host colorful effects, glittery themes, and foot thumping music to celebrate YOU. All you have to do is share your unique transition videos and or remix your favourite influencers' videos with your own clips sprinkled with pride flavour and share them on the platform.

Guess what? There are prizes to be won too. The top five remixes with the most likes will win a virtual meet and greet with some of your favourite influencers that include the likes of Sushant Divgikar (@sushantdivgikr), Benafsha Soonawalla (@benafsha-soonawalla), Paras Tomar (@parasotmar) and Deepti Sati (@deeptisati). Popular actor Sophie Choudhry (@sophiechoudry) is also showing her support for the *#BeProud*

#BeProud and celebrate YOU



campaign by remixing with the community.

Beaming with enthusiasm to be a part of the campaign, Sushant Divgikar, popularly known as Rani KoHenur says, "Initiatives like these deserve appreciation. We have all grown up learning the adage that it's our work, words and how we conduct ourselves that define us as human beings. But when it comes to accepting the rainbow community, we forget everything we have learnt. To make things a little dramatic, let me say this loud again that we have the same blood and upbringing as anyone else. So, I am very excited to see how this campaign rolls out and the kind of videos Lomotif users are going to create to celebrate the pride month. The

fact that everyone, irrespective of their age and orientation can participate, is what makes this campaign special. The idea has always been to make people aware that we all are equal, and simple things like love, support and recognition make the pride community happy."

Well, there's more to spice up the thrill. The app will also pay a special tribute to Gaga's *Born This Way* that completes ten glorious years. Hope you have already got your thinking caps on. This is your time to shine with 'Pride'. Don't ponder, take the plunge. Remember, your favourite social media influencers are waiting to have a fun-filled virtual meet and greet with you. So, just let your creative juices flow!

'Playing a homosexual character in the series made me more aware'

Actress Rashmi Agdekar, who plays a homosexual character in the series *Dev DD* feels that while the discussion around the LGBTQ+ community has started in the society, we still have a long way to go! She also feels that it is important not to stop the movement.




"Our cultural and societal values are deep-rooted. A change in such a society can't happen overnight, but we are having an open conversation about the existence and rights of the LGBTQIA community, which is a step in the right direction. There are definitely a lot of problems and we are far away from making a safe place for them. This will take time, but we shouldn't give up and learn to be better allies to the

community," Rashmi told. The actress, who plays the character of Chandni in both parts of the series, also asserted that playing a homosexual character in the series made her more aware and responsible as a citizen.

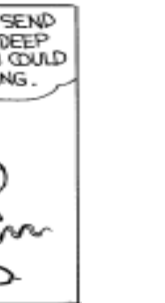
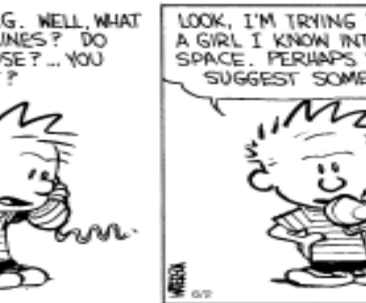


"My character was welcomed very well, it gave me a sense of responsibility for representing the LGBTQIA community through my work. I am happy that I could support them in my little way," she said. The actress also added, "It is a very important and correct step towards the inclusion of the community. The introduction and conditioning of these concepts from an early age will make it a safe space for children to not only come out, but also be accepting of those with different sexual orientations. After all, they are the future of this world."






ARCHIE




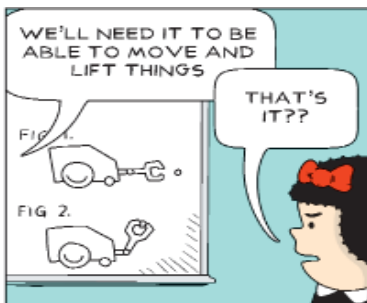

CALVIN AND HOBBS






GARFIELD




NANCY



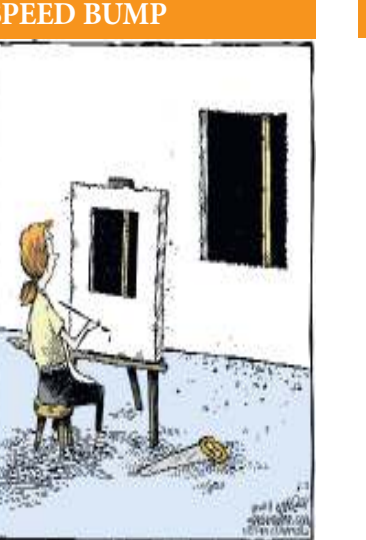
GINGER MEGGS



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD

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

SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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



Despite turning to be a hit, the second season of *The Family Man* has had its fair share of obstacles. Manoj Bajpayee, who plays the lead, has, for the first time, responded to the controversies.

‘ALL CHARACTERS IN THE FAMILY MAN 2 ARE HEROES OF THEIR OWN STORY’

The *Family Man 2* received a good response but also faced the ire of certain sections before and after the release, over allegations that it depicted Tamils in an “objectionable manner”. Manoj Bajpayee, who plays the lead role Srikant Tiwari, feels the series has worked, and that proves people know the story isn’t about hurting sentiments. “We as a team — our directors, writers — are very sentimental to each and every person and state. We are sensitive to culture. We would never do

anything to offend anyone. Even in the first season, and in this season of *The Family Man*, we don’t talk about politics. We put the characters there and look at those characters in a humanised way. All those characters are heroes of their own story. Now, the show has released and is for you to see. We see many of you loving it, because it turned out to be nothing like you were apprehensive about. It is talking about you and your sentiment in a very respectful manner with love,” Bajpayee said. Controversy erupted when Tamil Nadu Minister for

Information Technology, Manoj Thangaraj, had written a letter to the Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Prakash Javedkar, on May 24, calling for a ban of the web series. In his letter, Thangaraj said that “the series had depicted the Eelam Tamils in a highly objectionable manner and that if allowed to stream it would be prejudicial to the maintenance of harmony in the state”. *The Family Man 2* has Samantha Akkineni in her debut OTT role, as a Sri Lankan Tamil suicide bomber named Raji, and also brings back

Priyamani, Sharib Hashmi, and Sharad Kelkar in familiar roles. On pre-release expectations, Bajpayee said, “You don’t expect the extent of response. You are confident that people will like it but to what extent they will like it is unpredictable. It has taken us by surprise and we are overwhelmed with the response. The show is going to be there forever and I have read that many people are watching it a second time. It is not only flattering but it makes you feel so indebted and grateful.” The series created by Raj and DK streams on *Amazon Prime Video*.



Madhavan not part of Ram-Linguswamy film



Young and energetic actor Ram Pothineni has teamed up with legendary Tamil director

Lingusamy for an upcoming bilingual drama that will be made in Telugu and Tamil. The upcoming film marks the *iSmart Shankar* fame actor’s debut in Kollywood.

Recently numerous reports surfaced that R Madhavan will have a key role to play in Ram Pothineni and Lingusamy’s project. But Madhavan took to Twitter to clear the air about the report. He tweeted, “I would love to work with the director Lingusamy and recreate the magic on the screen because he is a wonderful and loving man but unfortunately no truth in the news doing the rounds recently (sic).” He clarified that he was not approached for a role in the Ram Pothineni-starrer. Uppena fame Kriti Shetty has been roped in as the female lead and Devi Sri Prasad will render the tunes. Ram Pothineni was last seen in action-drama *Red*, the remake of the Tamil film *Thadam*.

Raashi Khanna to play a psycho killer?

It is already reported that Raashi Khanna is going to work with Ajay Devgn in an upcoming web drama *Rudra*. Ajay Devgn is foraying into the OTT space and is making his web series debut with the show, *Rudra – The Edge Of Darkness* on Disney+ Hotstar VIP, which is a remake of the British show, *Luther*. *Rudra* will be Raashi Khanna’s second OTT outing in Hindi after Raj and DK’s web series alongside Kabir Singh fame Shahid Kapoor. Recently, the *World Famous Lover* actress revealed that with two big and exciting projects in her kitty, she is looking forward to seeing her on-

screen! Now according to the latest update, Raashi Khanna is playing the role of a psycho killer, who has a fluctuating mindset, in Ajay Devgn starrer web drama *Rudra*. Sources say that the makers of psychological crime thriller drama *Rudra* are looking to take the project on the floors by July 21, which is next month. Produced by Applause Entertainment in association with BBC Studios India, the Hotstar Specials series will be shot across iconic locales of Mumbai. On the other side, Raashi Khanna was last seen playing the female lead in Vijay Deverakonda-starrer romantic movie *World Famous Lover*, which did average business at the box office.



Super Star Mahesh Babu is currently busy with his upcoming entertainer *Sarkaru*

Vaari Paata under the direction of Parasuram. Mahesh Babu is playing the role of a bank officer while Keerthi Suresh plays the

Mahesh’s children in Sarkaru Vaari Paata

role of his subordinate in the film which is all about various banking scams happening in the country. In the meantime, we hear that *Sarkaru Vaari Paata* will have Mahesh Babu’s family in it. It is known that Mahesh Babu is delighting fans by sharing videos of his children Sitara and Gautam Krishna on social media. Insiders tell us that Mahesh Babu is planning to cast Sitara and Gautam



Krishna in *Sarkaru Vaari Paata*. Son Gautam Krishna

already made his debut on screen in Mahesh Babu’s *1—Nenokkadine* and Sitara has become the brand ambassador for a 3D animated web series for children *Fantastic Star*. The prospect of watching Mahesh Babu’s children Sitara and Gautam in *Sarkaru Vaari Paata* is exciting for all his fans. Mahesh, apart from *Sarkaru Vaari Paata*, will soon star in the direction of Trivikram Srinivas and Rajamouli.

tollywood

Balayya confirms film with Anil Ravipudi



For a long time, there have been reports that actor-politician Nandamuri Balakrishna will team up with young director Anil Ravipudi of *F2* fame. However, neither Balayya nor the director responded to these speculations. Recently Balakrishna, while interacting with his fans, opened up about these speculations and spoke in detail during a New Jersey fans’ zoom meet. Speaking there, the Legend actor first con-

firmed his film with Gopichand Malineni, followed by a film with Anil Ravipudi. In the zoom meeting, the actor also expressed his interest to work with young directors and that he would be giving more chances to young directors henceforth. It is learnt that Anil Ravipudi met Balayya and narrated a strong mass story and that the actor was impressed with his script and gave his nod for the film. This film is expected to roll early next year. Meanwhile, we have reports coming in that

Anil Ravipudi will be presenting the actor in a complete mass avatar and it will be bankrolled by the Shine Screens banner. On the other side, Balakrishna is currently working for *Akhanda*, which is on the verge of completion. The action drama, which is being directed by Vinaya Vidhaya Rama fame Boyapati Srinu, has Pragya Jaiswal in the female lead role. Currently, Anil Ravipudi is helming *F3* starring Venkatesh Daggubati, Tamannah Bhatia, Mehreen Kaur Pirzada and Varun Tej.

▶ shortpasses

CILIC WINS STUTTGART FINAL
BERLIN: Felix Auger-Aliassime suffered more heartbreak on the ATP Tour as he lost his eighth straight final on Sunday, going down to Marin Cilic in straight sets at Stuttgart's grass-court tournament. Cilic won the 19th career title with a 7-6 (7/2), 6-3 victory.

MCKEOWN SMASHES WR
ADELAIDE: Australia's Kaylee McKeown threw down the Olympic gauntlet to American rival Regan Smith by smashing her 100m backstroke world record on Sunday, while Ariarne Titmus fired a warning shot to superstar Katie Ledecky with the second fastest 400m freestyle ever.

MALVIKA REACHES FINAL
KAUNAS: India's Malvika Bansod defeated France's Anna Tatranova 21-13, 21-10 to enter the women's singles final at RSL Lithuanian International badminton tournament on Sunday.

DU PLESSIS RECOVERING
ABU DHABI: Much to the cricket community's relief, South African star Faf du Plessis on Sunday said he was back from the hospital and 'recovering', after suffering a concussion during his Quetta Gladiators' PSL match against Peshawar Zalmi.

SÁNCHEZ OUT OF COPA
SANTIAGO: Striker Alexis Sánchez will not travel to Brazil with the rest of the Chile squad and will miss at least the group stage of Copa America due to a calf injury.

MANKAD IN ICC HALL OF FAME
DUBAI: The ICC on Sunday inducted 10 icons of the game, including India's Vinoo Mankad, into its illustrious Hall of Fame with two players each from five eras, dating back to cricket's early days, making it to the list.

HASAN ALI TO MISS PSL
ABU DHABI: Islamabad United fast bowler Hasan Ali will miss the remainder of the PSL because of family commitments. Agencies

GREATEST OF ALL TIME

Djoker comeback from 2 sets down to beat Tsitsipas & win his second Roland Garros title



AP ■ PARIS

Novak Djokovic has won his second French Open championship and his 19th Grand Slam title by rallying past Stefanos

Tsitsipas in a seesaw final at Roland Garros. The score was 6-7 (6), 2-6, 6-3, 6-2, 6-4. Djokovic also erased a two-set deficit to win in the fourth round, and has done it six times in his career.

The 22-year-old Tsitsipas looked like the fresher player early on, and Djokovic was coming off an epic semifinal victory over Rafael Nadal. But the 34-year-old Serb found his form and held every service

game in the final three sets. Djokovic improved to 35-10 in five-set matches. He has won the first two majors of the year, and at Wimbledon he'll have a chance to match the men's record of 20 Grand

Slam titles shared by Nadal and Roger Federer. Djokovic joined Rod Laver and Roy Emerson as the only men to win each of the four major tournaments at least twice.



Barbora Krejčíková, right, and compatriot Katerina Siniakova kiss the cup after defeating Bethanie Mattek-Sands and Iga Świątek in women's doubles final AP

Barbora completes rare sweep, wins women's doubles crown

AFP ■ PARIS

French Open champion Barbora Krejčíková completed a rare sweep of titles at Roland Garros as she won a third women's doubles major trophy with fellow Czech teammate Katerina Siniakova on Sunday.

Less than 24 hours after she claimed her maiden singles slam title, Krejčíková became the first woman since Mary Pierce in 2000 to lift both trophies at the clay-court major. Only seven women have completed the titles sweep at Roland Garros.

"Right now after all of this happened, this last two weeks, last two days, I feel really relieved and relaxed," Krejčíková said. "I just know from now

on I can really enjoy because I have pretty much achieved everything I really wanted. Now I can just improve, that's the only thing I can do, just improving."

In addition to her pair of trophies, Krejčíková will reclaim the No 1 spot in the doubles rankings next week.

"We will have a little bit glass of champagne," Krejčíková said. "I already said I don't really drink but I think it's a time to actually celebrate it. I think we going to really enjoy."

Krejčíková, who defeated Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova for the women's singles title on Saturday, also became the first player to sweep both titles at any Grand Slam tournament since Serena Williams at Wimbledon in 2016.

Sterling saves England's day

Three Lions make winning start as Raheem strike sinks Croatia

AFP ■ LONDON

Raheem Sterling ignited England's Euro 2020 campaign as the Manchester City forward's clinical finish sealed a 1-0 win against Croatia in their Group D opener on Sunday.

Gareth Southgate's side were struggling to break down Croatia until Sterling struck in the second half at sun-baked Wembley.

The 26-year-old's first goal at a major tournament — in his 13th game — was the perfect riposte to critics who questioned Southgate's decision to select him instead of Jack Grealish.

Sterling has endured a chequered relationship with England fans after being hounded following his tame performances at Euro 2016.

He also struggled to hold down a place with Premier League champions City this term, culminating in his lacklustre display in their Champions League final defeat against Chelsea.

But, days after he was given an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List for his anti-racism campaigning, Sterling enjoyed a perfectly-timed moment of redemption.

In a rematch of the 2018 World Cup semi-final won by Croatia, England were hampered by a lack of cutting edge until Sterling came to the rescue.

Sterling's winner eased the tension at Wembley and got fans bellowing 'Football's coming home' in the hope England can emulate their run to the semi-finals when they hosted Euro 96, and maybe



Raheem Sterling, center, celebrates after scoring England's opening goal against Croatia at Wembley stadium in London AP

even win a major tournament for the first time since the 1966 World Cup.

In truth, this was a far from convincing performance, but Southgate will take heart from the way his team kept their nerve on a pressure-packed occasion.

England host neighbours Scotland in their second Group D match on Friday before taking on the Czech Republic in their final game of the first stage on June 22.

FINLAND SNATCH WIN
Copenhagen: Finland beat

Denmark 1-0 in their opening match of Euro 2020 which was overshadowed by Christian Eriksen collapsing and having to be revived on the field by medics.

Joel Pohjanpalo scored the only goal on the hour mark of a Group B match which was stopped for nearly two hours after Danish playmaker Eriksen slumped to the turf towards the end of the first half.

The match, which had kicked off at 1800 local time (1600 GMT), resumed two-and-a-half hours later in front of a passionate

crowd at the Parken Stadium.

The two teams played out an uneventful final few minutes of the first half after both sets of players returned to the pitch with several Danish players in tears.

After a short break of five minutes the second half of the match continued with a similar pattern as before Eriksen's collapse.

Pohjanpalo stunned the crowd into silence when he headed home Jere Uronen's cross, capitalising on Finland's one true chance of the game.

No 1 for a reason

Lukaku scores brace in Belgium's 3-0 win



Belgium's Thomas Meunier, right, celebrates with Romelu Lukaku after scoring his sides second goal against Russia on Saturday AP

St Petersburg: Belgium striker Romelu Lukaku sent a message of support to his stricken Inter Milan team-mate Christian Eriksen after scoring, as his double helped the Red Devils open their Euro 2020 campaign with a 3-0 win over Russia on Saturday. Lukaku gave Belgium an early lead in Saint Petersburg, then shouted "Chris, Chris, stay strong - I love you" into a pitch-side camera during the celebration for his opening goal.

"I am really happy with the win, but it was hard for me to play because my thoughts were with Christian Eriksen," said Lukaku, who revealed he cried tears of concern before kick-off for his Inter team-mate. Substitute Thomas Meunier

doubled Belgium's lead on 34 minutes before Lukaku put the result beyond doubt with a late second goal.

Belgium, the world's top-ranked team, are under pressure to deliver at the European Championship as some pundits claim this is Martinez's last chance to win a title with an ageing squad.

Yet even with Manchester City playmaker Kevin De Bruyne and Borussia Dortmund midfielder Axel Witsel sidelined by injury, Belgium were too strong for Russia.

Before kick-off, the Belgium team were booed for taking a knee to highlight racial injustice, while their Russian opponents stood. AFP

Black Caps win Test series

Big challenge coming up: Latham on WTC final

AFP ■ BIRMINGHAM

New Zealand overpowered England by eight wickets in the second Test at Edgbaston on Sunday as they sealed a 1-0 series win with more than a day to spare.

Set a target of just 38 after England tailender Olly Stone was out to the very first ball of the fourth day, the Blackcaps finished on 41-2.

Tom Latham, captaining the team in place of the injured Kane Williamson, hit the winning boundary to be 23 not out after the first Test of a two-match series at Lord's last week ended in a draw.

Victory gave New Zealand just a third win in 18 Test series in England, and a first this century after their 1986 and 1999 triumphs.

And it means they will head into next week's inaugural World Test Championship final against India at Southampton in confident mood.

"It's great to get an extra day



New Zealand players celebrate with the winners trophy after win in 2nd Test AP

of rest before India but we'll celebrate as well — we've not won here since 1999, so it's important to celebrate those achievements," said Latham at the presentation ceremony.

By contrast, this was England's first series loss at home since a 2014 defeat by Sri Lanka.

"It hasn't been our best week, has it?" England captain Joe Root told BBC Radio.

"I think we've massively

underperformed. Credit to New Zealand, they have outperformed us throughout the game."

Matt Henry was named player of the match following overall figures of 6-114.

South Africa-born opener Devon Conway was named New Zealand's player of the series after he followed a remarkable 200 on Test debut at Lord's with 80 in the first innings of this match.

Birmingham: India is dangerous on all fronts, New Zealand vice-captain Tom Latham on Sunday said of their challengers for the World Test Championship crown, describing the Virat-Kohli unit a "completely different side" from vanquished England.

In the absence of injured Kane Williamson, Latham led the team to a memorable 1-0 Test series triumph in the two-match rubber against hosts England, their first in the UK since 1999.

Asked where does he see the biggest danger from India coming, Latham said, "All around the board."

"They've got a fantastic set of bowlers, a lot of quality batsmen that have scored runs in different conditions all around the world. They were over here a few years ago and played really well, so we know we'll have to play well to beat them."



While the team celebrated a fine series triumph, Latham said the focus will shift to India in two days' -

time. "The preparation has been great but it's important that we do shift our focus

and adapt to a completely different side," he said at the post-match press conference.

Latham said that India's performances on their tour of England in 2018 — albeit in a 4-1 series defeat — showed that they would be tough to beat at the Ageas Bowl.

The inaugural WTC final is scheduled to be held in Southampton from June 18-23.

With the match finishing in under four days, the Kiwis will get a day extra to rest and prepare for the India challenge.

"Great to put the feet up for a day, big challenge coming up but looking forward to celebrating, haven't won here since 1999, so celebrate tonight and then look forward," Latham said.

"Great support from Kiwis, the English and also back home. Atmosphere was amazing."

EURO2020BRIEFLY

VERRATTI CLOSE TO RETURN

ROME: Italy midfielder Marco Verratti is close to regaining fitness after missing his country's opening Euro 2020 match with a knee problem, the team's medical chief said on Sunday. PSG's Verratti sat out Italy's 3-0 win against Turkey, but has returned to training this weekend. The team are now hopeful the 28-year-old could be fit for the final Group A games against the Swiss on Wednesday and Wales four days later.

PORTUGAL'S CANCELO OUT

LISBON: Portugal's Joao Cancelo has tested positive for Covid-19 and is out of Euro, the defending champions' announced on Sunday. Manchester United's Diogo Dalot, on loan to AC Milan, has replaced the Manchester City right-back in the Portuguese squad with the titleholders opening their Group F campaign against Hungary in Budapest on Tuesday.

BENZEMA, GRIEZMANN FINE

PARIS: France coach Didier Deschamps gave Karim Benzema and Antoine Griezmann a clean bill of health on Sunday ahead of the world champion's Euro 2020 opener against Germany on Tuesday. The pair emerged from team's final friendly win against Bulgaria five days ago with niggling injuries — a dead leg for Benzema and calf issue for Griezmann.

RUEDIGER READY TO GET DIRTY

MUNICH: Chelsea defender Antonio Ruediger insists Germany need to get a little dirty in their Euro 2020 opener against France on Tuesday in order to subdue the world champions' forward firepower. France start as clear favourites for the Group F clash while Germany's defence faces a stern test having leaked 20 goals in 13 games this season. Fresh from winning the Champions League final with Chelsea, Ruediger insists the Germans can ill afford to allow France's star forwards like Kylian Mbappe and Antoine Griezmann room to attack. "Of course, they have good forwards, we have to be ready to win the one-on-one challenges," Ruediger said. We have to be a little dirty, not always be nice or try to play nice football. "Against players like them, you have to throw down a marker."

ITALY'S HUNGER IS LIKE CHELSEA

ROME: Italy midfielder Jorginho said on Sunday that he sees the same hunger in his national side's Euro 2020 squad as his Chelsea team that recently lifted the Champions League trophy. "This group resembles Chelsea, it's wonderful, they are so hungry and want to prove something, from the youngest to the most experienced," former Napoli player Jorginho told a press conference. "We have learned (coach Roberto) Mancini's philosophy, what he wants is in our heads. "I still have a great desire to win. I don't want to stop now. I would like to experience those same emotions with the national team."

ERIKSEN STABLE POST COLLAPSE

COPENHAGEN: Denmark midfielder Christian Eriksen remained in hospital but is in a 'stable' condition after collapsing in his country's Euro 2020 game against Finland on Saturday, the Danish Football Union (DBU) said Sunday. "This morning we have spoken to Christian Eriksen, who has sent his greetings to his teammates. His condition is stable, and he continues to be hospitalized for further examination," the football body said in a post to Twitter.

MATCHES TODAY

Scotland vs Czech Republic (6:30pm)
Poland vs Slovakia (9:30pm)
Spain vs Sweden (12:30am)

Live telecast in Sony Ten 2 Network