



the pioneer



'I AM TRAINED
IN INDIAN
CLASSICAL
MUSIC'

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BJP GOT RS 276.45CR FROM ELECTORAL TRUSTS IN 2019-20, CONGRESS RS 58CR

The BJP received Rs 276.45 crore or 76.17 per cent of total donations given to all political parties from electoral trusts in 2019-20, according to a report by poll rights group ADR (Association for Democratic Reforms). The BJP was followed by the Congress which received Rs 58 crore or 15.98 per cent of total donations received by all parties from all seven electoral trusts, it said. The report that analysed contribution reports of electoral trusts for financial year 2019-20 said top donors to the electoral trusts included JSW, Apollo Tyres, Indiabulls, Delhi International Airport and DLF groups.



CABINET APPROVES EXTENSION OF PMGKAY FOR 5 MONTHS TILL NOV

The Cabinet on Wednesday approved a proposal to extend the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) to provide free ration to over 80 crore people, mostly poor, by five more months till November-end. The PMGKAY was reintroduced for two months till June this year in order to minimise the economic hardships being faced by the poor PDS (public distribution system) beneficiaries during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Early this month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi while addressing the nation had announced that the Centre's free food programme PMGKAY will be extended for five months till Diwali.



MOODY'S SLASHES INDIA GROWTH FORECAST FOR 2021 TO 9.6 PER CENT

Moody's Investors Service on Wednesday slashed India's growth projection to 9.6 per cent for 2021 calendar year, from its earlier estimate of 13.9 per cent, and said faster vaccination progress will be paramount in restricting economic losses to June quarter. In its report titled 'Macroeconomics - India: Economic shocks from second COVID wave will not be as severe as last year's', Moody's said high-frequency economic indicators show that the second wave of COVID-19 infections hit India's economy in April and May. With states now easing restrictions, economic activity in May is likely to signify the trough.



CCI PROBES GOOGLE FOR 'UNFAIR BIZ' WAYS IN SMART TV OP SYSTEMS MKT

The Competition Commission has ordered a detailed probe against Google for alleged anti-competitive practices in the smart television operating systems market in the country. After assessing a complaint, the watchdog has reached the prima-facie view that Google is dominant in the relevant market for licensable smart TV device operating systems in India. In a 24-page order, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) said that prima-facie mandatory pre-installation of all the Google applications under TADA amounts to imposition of unfair conditions on the smart TV device manufacturers.



CM's meeting with Collectors on June 26

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister K. Chandrababu Naidu will hold a meeting with all District Collectors at Pragathi Bhavan here on June 26 at 11 a.m. It was earlier scheduled for June 28.

The meeting, to be attended by all Cabinet Ministers, will discuss the modalities of the next phase of Palle Pragathi, Pattana Pragathi and Haritha Haram programmes commencing on July 1.

40 cases of virulent Delta plus variant found in Maha, Kerala

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

There are over 40 cases in the country of the new Delta Plus strain, which has been tagged as a "Variant of Concern" by the government.

Yesterday, the government sent a warning to Maharashtra, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh on Delta Plus cases found there and urged "immediate containment measures". According to the letter, Delta Plus cases have been found in Maharashtra's Ratnagiri and Jalgaon; in Palakkad and Pathanamthitta in Kerala; and in Bhopal and Shivpuri in Madhya Pradesh.

A four-year-old is among those infected in Kerala.

"As of now among the samples sequenced (45,000+) in India, Delta plus variant -- AY.1 -- has been observed sporadically in



Maharashtra, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh, with around 40 cases identified so far and no significant increase in prevalence," the ministry said in its statement.

Sources say that cases of the new

strain, a mutation of the Delta strain or B.1.617.2 variant first detected in India, are not confined to these states.

What is Delta plus

The Delta Plus or AY.1 strain has been found mainly in Maharashtra, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh and these states have been urged by the Centre to take "immediate containment steps". Cases have been found in Madhya Pradesh's Bhopal and Shivpuri, Maharashtra's Ratnagiri and Jalgaon and Kerala's Palakkad and Pathanamthitta. The Health Ministry says the role of Delta Plus in immune escape, disease severity or increased transmissibility "is under continued surveillance". Which means very little is known about how severely it can hit and how treatment and vaccines work on the strain.

TS begins inoculating persons aged above 30 yrs

NAVEENA GHANATE
■ HYDERABAD

Telangana has begun inoculating citizens aged above 30 yrs quietly. On CoWIN dashboard, several centers are showing up results pertaining to vaccination of people aged above 30 years. On Tuesday, 12 centers in Hyderabad offered free vaccines provided by the government to people aged above 30 years.

It is mentioned in the dashboard that the age criterion is 30. After concluding the drive for vaccinating high-risk and self-help groups, orders were reportedly given to DMHOs late on Tuesday night expanding the cohort.

As per the guidelines, two sessions were to start - 30-44 age group and 45 plus age group. People can directly book through CoWIN app. In all, 500 slots were available online and another 500 offline. Since public were not informed



about it, almost all slots were available even at 6-00 pm on Wednesday. However, the slots for Thursday were not open on Co-WIN until late on Wednesday night.

Sources indicated that in the second wave, the 30+ population were infected more so, the government started inoculating them.

Parents' consent must to attend school: State tells HC

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana High Court on Wednesday came down on the state government for releasing a statement on reopening of schools without considering the sentiments of parents.

The High Court asked the state government as to why it was reopening schools that teach kindergarten to Class 9?

A Bench of the HC, comprising

of Chief Justice Hima Kohli and Justice B Vijaysen Reddy, sought to know if online classes are still available as an alternative.

School Education Secretary Sandeep Sultania informed the Court that the state is preparing modalities and sought time. He conceded that parents' consent should be integral to

the state's approach. The Court sought an explanation as to why the reopening statement was made without doing this exercise.

The state government said that online classes would continue simultaneously with physical classes. Students would be given a choice to opt for either of them, but those picking physical classes will have to produce

parental consent as well.

The Court observed that it would be difficult for children to maintain physical distancing and stick to other Covid-appropriate behaviour. The government said it would issue directions to schools within a week.

The Court also wanted even teachers and school staff to be included in the priority list of vaccination. The matter was adjourned to July 7 for further hearing.

Banks get part of Mallya, Nirav, Choksi's seized assets

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Assets worth Rs 9,371 crore belonging to fugitive businessmen Vijay Mallya, Nirav Modi, Mehul Choksi have been transferred by the Enforcement Directorate to state-run banks that will help them recover losses on account of the fraud.

So far, the agency has seized assets worth Rs 18,170.02 crore, which include assets worth of Rs 969 crore located in foreign countries. The value of those assets represents 80.45% of the total bank loss.

Citing the move, Finance

Citing the move, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in a tweet, said, "Fugitives & economic offenders will be actively pursued; their properties attached & dues recovered"

Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in a tweet, said, "Fugitives & economic offenders will be actively pursued; their properties attached & dues recovered."

No I-T scrutiny on cash deposits up to Rs 2.5 lakh: ITAT

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Cash deposits of up to Rs 2.5 lakh by households post demonetisation will not come under I-T scrutiny as the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT) has held that such deposits cannot be treated as income of the assessee. Ruling on an appeal filed by an individual, the Agra bench of ITAT said the order would act as a precedent for all similar cases.

The appellant, a housewife Uma Agrawal of Gwalior, had declared total income of Rs 1,30,810 in her income tax return filed for fiscal 2016-17. However, post demonetisation, the assessee deposited the Rs 2,11,500 cash in her bank account. The case was selected for scrutiny assessment, during which the assessee was asked to explain the cash deposit of over Rs 2.11 lakh.

State govt caps charges for Covid treatment in private hospitals

ML MELLY MAITREYI
■ HYDERABAD

In a decision that should bring relief to people, the Telangana government has capped the rates that private hospitals and private laboratories can charge for treatment, investigations and other services pertaining to Covid-19.

The related GO 401 issued by the Medical and Health Department has fixed charges for various packages. This includes Rs.4,000 per day for routine ward plus isolation; Rs.7,500 per day for ICU without ventilator plus isolation; and Rs.9,000 per day for ICU with ventilator plus isolation. It also said the PPE kits should not be charged more than Rs.273 per kit. In a detailed GO on charges to be collected, the Secretary, Health, said that the charges per day across different packages would include monitoring and investigations like



CBC, urine, HIV spot, Creatinine, USG, 2D Echo, X-ray, ECG, drugs, consultations, bed charges and meals. The charges also include procedures like Ryles tube insertion, urinary tract catheterization.

The GO clarified that the per day charges, however, do not include interventional procedures like Chomoport insertion, broncho-

scopic procedures and biopsies, central line insertion etc., which may be charged at a rate rack as on Dec.31, 2019. The charges would also not include high-end drugs like immunoglobulins, Meropenem, Tocilizumab, etc., and they are to be charged at MRP.

MAA ELECTIONS

Prakash Raj pushes the envelope in Kamma-Kapu rivalry

MARTHI SUBRAHMANYAM
■ HYDERABAD

The upcoming elections to the Movie Artists' Association (MAA), though traditionally seen as a battle for supremacy between Kammas and Kapus, could be vastly different this time, with actor Prakash Raj, who belongs to neither community and who is known for his staunch support for freedom of expression, being the front-runner for the president's post. In a parallel move aimed at splitting women's votes, candidates backed respectively by camps of the 'Dialogue King' and 'Mega Star', rivals in real life, are also in the fray on either side of the



Kamma-Kapu divide.

A lot of heat has already been generated, though the main fight in the elections, scheduled for September, is confined largely to candidates sup-



ported by Kamma and Kapu communities. Although Tollywood scripts sing peans to a society that is beyond class and caste barriers, and top heroes claim that they are above partisan politics or caste/class feelings, it is an open secret that the industry has strong roots in casteism.

The Kapus of the industry have projected Prakash Raj, a Tollywood star of Kannada origin, while the

177 children in the state orphaned due to Covid

30 of 350 complaints against pvt hospitals resolved

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Child Welfare Secretary Divya submitted a report to the High Court stating that 177 children were orphaned in the state due to Covid.

The High Court asked the government to appoint one or two officers for every 10 children and asked them to stay in touch with the orphans and meet their needs. The state health department received 350 complaints against 170 private hospitals, of which 30 had been resolved, Director of Health G Srinivasa Rao informed the High Court on Wednesday.

A sum of nearly Rs 72 lakh taken in excess by private hospitals was returned to patients/kin.

A Bench of the HC, comprising Chief Justice Hima Kohli and



Justice B Vijaysen Reddy, heard PILs on corona conditions in the state.

In his submissions to the court, the DPH said that an average of 1.17 lakh corona tests are performed per day and the positivity rate in the state has dropped to 1 per cent.

A GO has been issued capping the charges for treatments and tests in private hospitals.

2,135 temporary posts sanctioned for 7 medical colleges

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The TS Govt has sanctioned posts on temporary basis for the upcoming seven new medical and nursing colleges. It has sanctioned 2,135 posts for the seven medical colleges and 900 posts for the 13 new and two old nursing colleges. The services of those appointed in the temporary posts could be availed post March-end, 2022. The Cabinet has approved the establishment of medical colleges in Nagarkurnool, Wanaparthy, Mancherla, Jagtial, Sangareddy, Mahbubnagar and Kothagudem.

TODAY
ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Jyeshtha & Shukla Paksha
Panchangam
Tithi : Purnima 24:08
Nakshatram : Jyeshtha 09:10
Time to Avoid : Time to Avoid (Bad time to start any important work)
Rahukalam : 1:56 pm - 3:34 pm
Yamagandam : 5:47 am - 7:25 am
Variyam : 4:20 pm - 5:46 pm, 7:45 am - 9:10 am
Gulika : 9:03 am - 10:40 am
Good Time : (to start any important work)
Amritakalam : 12:56 am - 2:22 am
Abhijit Muhurtham : 11:52 am - 12:44 pm
HYDERABAD WEATHER
Forecast: Partly cloudy
Temp: 32
Humidity: 60%
Sunrise: 05:43 am
Sunset: 06:54 pm
Current Weather Conditions
Updated JUNE 23, 2021 5:00 PM

KCR STYLE

Saha Pankthi Bhojanam to bond with people

If one observes keenly the speeches and interactions of Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao during his recent tours of Siddipet, Kamareddy, Warangal and Yadadri Bhuvanagiri districts, one would understand that he has now embarked upon a lofty mission of bringing about a qualitative change in contemporary politics. He is trying to bring in awareness among people to sift through divisive politics and development.

During his visit to Siddipet and Kamareddy, KCR's emphasis was on the slew of administrative reforms and how they had brought a transformation in the lives of people. During his visit to Warangal to perform Bhoomi Puja for a super speciality hospital, open administrative block of Kaloji Health University, and inaugurate the new Collectorate building, KCR spoke eloquently as is his wont.

In his Warangal speech, which was something like a Warangal Declaration, the emphasis was on health and the need to develop other cities on par with, or even more than, Hyderabad, the need for media to act responsibly when we are facing turbulent times due to the Covid-19 epidemic. He repeatedly told people not to do politics, except at the time of elections. He asked them to rise above the differences of caste, creed and community and work unitedly for the development of their village, town and city. He advised public representatives to be always among people and understand their day-to-day problems and find immediate solutions to them.

While instructing the officials concerned to develop the super speciality hospital coming up on the lines of major hospitals in Canada, he asked them to complete the complex -- with more than 30 floors as well as a helipad on its terrace -- in 18 months' time.

Some of the people watching this were reminded of how Bhagwan Satya Saibaba, in the late 80s, had asked the L&T representative who was entrusted with the construction of a super speciality hospital in Puttapparthi, how much time he needed. The L&T Chief then replied that they need two years to complete the construction. To

KCR did not mince words while criticising the media, especially the electronic media, for creating panic and fear among people on the spread of Corona virus. But he was polite and in his inimitable style gave a piece of his mind to media not to indulge in creating fear.



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

which, Sri Satya Saibaba said, "No. It should be completed in a year. Exactly from the day I lay foundation stone, I should open the hospital one year from the same day." It happened exactly the way Sri Satya Saibaba wanted. Similarly, KCR said the entire hospital should be ready for the inauguration in 18 months. No doubt, it would be ready.

KCR did not mince words while criticising the media, especially the electronic media, for creating panic and fear among people on the spread of Corona virus. But he was polite and in his inimitable style gave a piece of his mind to media not to indulge in creating fear. While doctors, scientists, epidemiologists in the world have not yet finalized the treatment protocol for Corona as on date, running 24x7 programmes on the possible reasons for the spread and treatment was not correct and the media should not play with public health, he suggested. He said many died due to the fear of Corona rather than from the virus per se.

At the Gram Sabha in Vasalamarri village, which he has adopted, the Chief Minister, as an excellent teacher and a father figure, in simple words explained to the people about Muhammad Yunus, a Bangladeshi social entrepreneur, banker, econo-

mist and civil society leader who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for founding the Grameen Bank and pioneering the concepts of microcredit and microfinance. The Grameen Bank is an institution that provides microcredit (small loans to poor people possessing no collateral) to help its clients establish credit worthiness and financial self-sufficiency. KCR wanted people, especially women to form such groups, become economically self-reliant, and contribute to the overall development of their village in particular and society in general. He desired that Vasalamarri village should develop and prosper in such way that people all over the globe should visit the village to undertake a hands-on study to replicate.

The Vedas equated food with Brahman. It also compared Saha Pankthi Bhojanam to collective meditation. The Saha Pankthi Bhojanam creates brotherhood, a feeling of unity, and belongingness and it leads to bonding among the participants. KCR used this practice to bond with people.

It is said that eloquence is the power to translate a truth into language perfectly intelligible to the person to whom you speak and the finest example of eloquence is that which gets things done. This is exactly what KCR does when he addresses people.

Be it law and order, medical and health, education, development, agriculture, women or any subject, his total grip and understanding of the subject he talks about is amazing. Statistics and data are on his fingertips or the tip of his tongue; he does not require any teleprompter or bureaucrat's passion chits of information. His words come from his heart and the subject from his brain. No other leader in contemporary society has the gift of gab that KCR has and none can beat him in that.

(With VJM Divakar)

RGIA ensures stringent adherence to Covid protocols to ensure safe flying

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad International Airport is taking stringent measures to comply with Covid protocols to ensure safe flying.

As the number of Covid cases are gradually coming down across India and the states are relaxing lockdown rules, GMR-led Airport has said that it is geared up in its fight against the pandemic to give a safe and seamless passenger experience.

Surveillance teams with the help of the Telangana state police are assisting the airport officials on the adherence to Covid protocols.

Random checks are conducted to ensure compliance and penalties are imposed on violators. In addition to this, 20

officials of GMR Hyderabad International Airport Limited (GHIAL) were appointed as Special Police Officers (SPOs) to safeguard and help in the enforcement of Covid-19 safety guidelines.

These special officers have the authority to impose penalties on passengers, visitors and staff who do not follow the Covid-19 safety guidelines within the airport premises.

Awareness signages are displayed across various locations of the airport on precautions and sanitisation methods that everyone needs to take about Covid.

In order to avoid close contact and crowding at the counters, passengers are encouraged to check-in at home or use self-service facilities such as self-check-in facility, self-bag tag

facility, etc.

The airport has deployed self-check-in kiosks, as per social-distancing norms across the airport forecourt area and at check-in halls for a contactless boarding experience. These check-in kiosks are enabled with a touch-less technology which is QR code friendly and helps in the completion of the check-in process, print out of boarding card and baggage tags for bag drop in no time.

GHIAL said it has taken a slew of measures with focus on a seamlessly contactless boarding experience for passengers, including some stringent safety measures viz. thermal scanning of every departing passenger, the availability of automatic hand sanitizer dispensers at various places, placing floor markers, staggered seating

arrangements, remote information desk where passenger queries will be answered without physical presence, allocation of entry gates and check-in islands for departure passengers to encourage compliance of social distancing norms and minimize human contact at the airport.

GHIAL is the only airport in the country that already has an advantage of a paperless e-boarding facility for all domestic travellers. The E-boarding solution is quite unique as it fully eliminates the need to manual stamping of boarding cards.

The passengers can take advantage of the E-boarding system to travel using electronic boarding passes stored on their mobile phones. All boarding gates have contactless E-boarding gates with boarding

card scanners, which will help the passengers to just flash their boarding cards to verify flight details and once done, they can proceed to board the aircraft. This E-boarding facility is now being extended to international travellers also.

"In line with the Government of India's mandatory Covid Protocols, Hyderabad International Airport is taking rigorous measures to ensure passenger safety. While the airport is geared up with all safety norms in place, we request all passengers to extend their cooperation and support in adherence to correct usage of face masks, maintaining social distancing and to comply with all the necessary Covid related travel documents," said GHIAL spokesperson.

No I-T scrutiny on cash deposits up to Rs 2.5...

Continued from page 1

The assessee had explained that she had collected/saved the above sum from her previous saving, given by her husband, son, relatives for herself and her family.

The CIT (Appeals) did not accept the explanation and confirmed the Assessing officer's order treating the cash deposit of Rs 2,11,500 as unexplained money. Following this, the appellant approached the ITAT.

The Tribunal, after going through all the facts and arguments, said "we are of the opinion that the amount deposited by the assessee during the demonetisation cannot be treated as income of the assessee. Hence the appeal of the assessee is allowed."

Observing that housewife's contribution in the family is

"immeasurable", the Tribunal said quoting an order by the Supreme Court, which mentioned that, in India, nearly 159.85 million women stated that 'household work' was their main occupation compared to only 5.79 million men, as per 2011 Census.

"Women all over the country, had been accumulating cash that they had saved for themselves from household budgets, by haggling with vegetable sellers, tailors, grocers and assorted traders..."

"Years of stashing in what-ever little cash gifts they received from relatives during festival times and years of tucking away the change they found in the pants that they washed every day, however, suddenly they were left with no option but to deposit the amount in the denomination of Rs 500 and Rs 1000 notes in

Prakash Raj pushes the...

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The MAA elections are fought without any manifestoes. Prakash Raj has assured members that, if elected as president of MAA, he would ensure that MAA has its own building and also promised to resolve all problems of workers. But Prakash Raj has no broad support among the association members. For the first time, an actor who does not belong to either Kapu or Kamma community is contesting for the MAA president post.

What weighs strongly in favour of Prakash Raj is that he mingles with Tollywood actors. In sharp contrast, Manchu Vishnu does not mingle with industry people and is relatively young. Industry sources described both of them as 'inaccessible'. While Prakash Raj lives in Chennai, Vishnu resides mostly in Tirupathi. However, many members are inclined towards Prakash Raj as he is deemed mature politically.

That Mega Star Chiranjeevi wields considerable influence in the 1,600-member body is an open secret. In fact, whoever has the blessings of the 'Chiranjeevi compound' is likely to become the MAA president. Recently, Naga Babu, brother of Chiranjeevi, pledged his support to Prakash Raj. This gives clear indications that Chiranjeevi's compound has extended full support to Prakash Raj. Immediately, Vishnu, along with father Mohan Babu, called on Super Star Krishna and apparently cemented his support. Besides, the current MAA president, Naresh, has pledged his support to Vishnu, indicating that Vishnu has backing of Kamma bigwigs.

Some time back, sparks flew between Chiranjeevi and Mohan Babu while sharing the dais at an industry function. The belligerent mood continued for many years. However, two years ago the two apparently patched up and even posed before camera claiming to be brothers and thereby bringing down curtain

on the controversy.

As Prakash Raj and Vishnu compete for the top honours of the industry body, the MAA elections have once triggered politics between Kamma and Kaapu groups in the industry.

As Naga Babu went on record pledging his support to Prakash Raj, Jeevita Rajasekhar has offered to contest the MAA president's post.

It is open secret that Chiranjeevi and Rajasekhar do not see eye to eye. Jeevita Rajasekhar's claim has lent an interesting twist to the MAA election episode. The declaration has made Chiranjeevi plan a counter strategy by roping in lady comedian Hema, who has declared that she is also in the fray. The objective is to split the women's votes to marginalise Jeevita Rajasekhar, according to word going rounds in Tollywood circles.

To what extent the non-local factor benefits the rivals of Prakash Raj, who has the blessings of Chiranjeevi, and to what extent remains to be seen.

TS Media Academy disburses Rs 5.15 cr to Covid-affected...

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The second wave of the Covid impacted 1,958 journalists. The academy distributed Rs 1,95,80,000 among them at the rate of Rs 10,000 to each of the affected journalists.

The academy used the interest earned on the corpus of Rs

34.50 lakh to extend relief to the journalists. The academy regards the Government's support to journalists as one of its kind in the country. In fact, the Chief Minister created Rs 100-crore corpus for the welfare of journalists. The total amount credited to the corpus was Rs 42 crore, including Rs 7.50 crore

added in April this year.

At least 70 journalists, including very renowned scribes, succumbed to Corona virus during the second wave. Not only journalists, but also the Media Academy was deeply disturbed by the death of scribes. Therefore, the academy decided to give Rs 2 lakh ex gratia to each

bereaved family of journalists.

On the basis of the application received so far, the Academy would give compensation within a month of receiving the application. Similarly, these journalists' families would receive a monthly pension of Rs 3,000 as was the case of normal death of scribes. The pension would be

paid for a period of five years.

Moreover, two students of the concerned journalists' family pursuing high school education will receive a monthly scholarship of Rs 1,000 each.

The Media Academy, though understaffed, disposed of 3,600 applications for Covid assistance received via WhatsApp.

CM's meeting with Collectors on June 26

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KCR will give his guidance to the Collectors on the implementation of the 10-day programme.

The Chief Minister gives priority for the Haritha Haram and Palle/Pattana Pragathi programmes, which are aimed at transformation of all villages and towns by providing them with all basic amenities and improving greenery as well as sanitation.

Apart from District Collectors, Additional Collectors (local bodies), District Panchayat Officers and DRDO officials would attend the meeting.

CHICKEN RATES ₹/kg	
Dressed/With Skin	₹160
Without Skin	₹200
Broiler at Farm	₹130

EGG RATES ₹/100	
HYDERABAD	490
VIJAYAWADA	524
VISAKHAPATNAM	557
RETAIL PRICE (IN HYDERABAD)	₹4.90

177 children in the state orphaned due to Covid

Continued from page 1

The Telangana High Court took note of the delay on the part of the government in issuing the GO capping COVID treatment rates. The High Court directed that the maximum charges for corona treatments in private hospitals should be widely publicized. The details of charges should be displayed at the hospital reception and billing counters.

The Telangana High Court directed the Director of Public Health to impose penalties on hospitals that overcharge patients by violating the latest

GO -- that is GO Rt. No. 401. The DPH has been directed to issue an order to this effect and communicate it to all hospitals.

The DPH informed the court that the state is making all arrangements to face the third wave of corona. A committee with pediatricians has been set up and the government is taking their advice.

The High Court asked government to issue an order for the imposition of fines on hospitals that charge high fees.

The High Court pointed that domestic violence against women was a concern during the Corona pandemic. The

High Court said that a plan should be drawn up to support women who are victims of domestic violence.

The Department of Education submitted that 17 teachers and two junior lecturers involved in election duties died of Corona. The High Court asked the government to ensure that PF and other benefits are provided to the families of the deceased teachers as soon as possible. The Court asked the government to draw up plans to counter the delta variant. The High Court adjourned the hearing on corona conditions to July 8.

State govt caps charges for Covid treatment in...

Continued from page 1

The GO, however, said the above rates were not applicable to patients covered by insurance scheme as well as patients being treated under various agreements/MoUs entered into hospitals and different sponsored groups.

The GO also fixed ceilings for investigations pertaining to Covid-19: HRCT-Rs.1,995, IL-6-Rs.1,300, Digital X Ray-Rs.300, D-Dimer- Rs.800, CRP- Rs.500, Procalcitonin-Rs.1,400, Ferritin- Rs.400 and LDH- Rs.140.

The minimum charges for

ambulance with basic life supporting system is Rs.2,000 (Rs.75 per km) and Rs.3,000 for ambulance with advance lift supporting system (Rs.125 per km).

The GO further stated that all the private hospitals should strictly follow the treatment guidelines issued from time to time by the Government of India and the State government. Unnecessary investigations, repeated HRCTs and inflammatory markers should be avoided. Admissions and discharge protocols should be followed scrupulously. Non-compliance with the orders

would attract action as per law, the GO said.

There was a hue and cry over exorbitant rates being charged by private hospitals, often running into tens of lakhs from Covid-19 patients and it drew criticism from different sections of people. After PILs were filed, the High Court gave a direction to the State government to initiate action to refund the excess amount collected by private hospitals from Covid-19 patients.

The High Court bench specifically directed the government in May to issue fresh GOs fixing the maximum

prices for all medical services, tests and medical equipment.

The government, on its part, asked people to lodge complaints against excess billing and issued notices to several hospitals and cancelled the licences of some leading private hospitals after issuing show-cause notices.

However, the court noted that cancellation of licences would not bring relief to family members of patients who had paid huge amounts by mortgaging gold and raising loans. In some cases, the hospitals did not discharge the patients or hand over the dead

bodies unless the bill amount was paid fully. The government, Court said, should ensure that the hospitals returned the amount collected excessively.

Subsequently, the Telangana government restored the licences of hospitals and constituted a committee which examined the proposals submitted by the Director of Public Health on fixation of ceiling on rates chargeable by private hospitals and labs.

The committee submitted its recommendations to the government, which approved them with certain modifications.

40 cases of virulent Delta...

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There are 21 cases in Maharashtra, six in Madhya Pradesh, three in Kerala, three in Tamil Nadu, two in Karnataka and one each in Punjab, Andhra Pradesh and Jammu, according to sources.

Delta Plus cases, still low in numbers, are emerging as large parts of India are ending severe lockdowns and restrictions with Covid cases on the decline after a fierce second wave ambushed the nation's health infrastructure in April-May.

INSACOG (Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomic Consortium), a consortium of 28 labs tasked with genome sequencing of the virus causing Covid, says properties of the Delta Plus are still

being investigated. It is characterized by a mutation in the spike protein, which helps the virus gain entry into human cells.

"Currently the number of such Delta plus variants in India are only few but the distribution/detection in various states during past two months indicate that it is already present in some states and states may need to enhance their public health response by focusing on surveillance, enhanced testing, quick contact-tracing and priority vaccination," it says.

Maharashtra says it is collecting data like travel history and vaccination status of those who have reported this version of the virus.

What is Delta plus

Continued from page 1

It has "increased transmissibility, stronger binding to receptors of lung cells and potential reduction in monoclonal antibody response," according to INSACOG (Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomic Consortium), a consortium of 28 labs tasked with genome sequencing of the virus. As of June 18, 205 sequences were detected, over half of them in the US and UK. The Delta Strain, a mutation in the Delta or B.1.617.2 first detected in India, is believed to be faster-spreading and may be more resistant to existing treatment protocol.

Banks get part of Mallya, Nirav, Choksi's seized...

Continued from page 1

Vijay Mallya, Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi - all facing extradition trials - have defrauded Public Sector

Banks by siphoning off the funds through their companies which resulted in total loss of Rs 22,585.83 crore to the banks.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
TELANGANA STATE FORENSIC SCIENCE LABORATORIES
 Road Hills, Hyderabad - 500004, POLICE DEPARTMENT

TESTER NOTIFICATION Dt: 23-06-2021

No. BSKY/TSFL/2021
 A 5-Tester Notification to be released on 24-06-2021 in the Web Site i.e. www.appraisement.gov.in or https://testers.appraisement.gov.in for the procurement of following items: Chemicals, Glassware, Stationery, Miscellaneous Articles, Anti-venom, Fire Printing Stationery and Computer Stationery for Telangana State Forensic Science Laboratory. The Pre-qualification Bid will be opened on 07-07-2021 at 11:00 AM for verification of receipts/certificates and EMD. The technical Bid will be opened on 07-07-2021 at 2:00 PM followed by Financial Bid on 08-07-2021 at 11:00 AM.

R.O. No.: 5744-DP/CLADVT/1/2021-22 **ADGP, TSSP & I/C DIRECTOR, TSFL, HYD**

Mental health takes hit amid Covid

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Coronavirus, apart from other things, has impacted the mental health of citizens in an alarming way. In a period of one year, since the first wave of the pandemic struck the country, the purchase of anti-depressant pills has increased by over Rs 40 crore and the number of phone calls to helpline numbers and counselling centres has also increased significantly.

Problems such as depression and distress are more common in people, who are infected with the virus than in those who are not. This is evident, as has already been stated, in the pattern of use of anti-depressant pills, the consumption of which has increased by almost 25 per cent in the last year since the outbreak of Corona.

According to a research team from All India Origin Chemists and Distributors, which represents over nine lakh pharmacists across the country, sales of the five best-selling antidepressant tablets in the Indian market touched Rs 201 crore by April 2021

compared to the last year's sales of about Rs 177 crore.

The findings of psychologists and mental health experts from across the country also support these statistics. They say that in the course of the pandemic, people's fear, anxiety, and stress-level have increased. Going by the calls made to the counselling centres people's level of anxiety and stress had increased by around 40 per cent in May, compared to earlier months, experts said.

Psychologists further said that cases of suicides have also occurred both during the first and second wave of corona. People infected with the virus are more vulnerable as they suffer from depression and other health problems, as they recover from corona infection.

Another group of people, those who are suffering from epilepsy, mental health problems, stress caused by loss of family members, loss of relationships, etc., are consulting psychiatrists. A study conducted by the Department of Psychiatry, Gandhi Medical College, about a month-and-a-half ago on different categories of Covid patients suggests that patients discharged from hospitals need to be treated with both physical and mental health-enhancing therapy.

Psychiatrist Dr Nishant Vemana and senior psychologist C Virender said that as part of counselling for those, who are contacting them, they were prescribing medications depending on the severity of the problem.

They said the two waves of corona, black fungus cases, loneliness, depression, anxiety etc. had led to a significant increase in the number of people consulting psychiatrists and psychologists over the phone or in person. When there is fear and anxiety around, the majority of people are confused and uneasy. The corona calamity, which has been going on for almost a

year, has had a severe impact on economic, social, and family ties, they said.

The middle class, the lower middle class and the lower class, in particular, have been irreparably affected by these developments. Many of the lower middle class people have lost their jobs and have become lower class people. Before the wake of the Corona, 20 to 30 crore people in the country were living in poverty.

A study by the Indian Economic Forum found that another 40 crore people had fallen into poverty due to the Covid effect. Losing a job, spending all reserved money, dwindling monthly income, subsequent increase in the burden of monthly EMIs and finally having a corona patient in the family can all have a major impact. Anxiety and fear of the future are detrimental to mental peace and health. Fights in families because of financial problems and damaged relationships among family members can lead to psychological problems that need medication, mental health experts said.

MMTS trains back on tracks in twin cities after 15 months

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

After 15 months, Multi-Modal Transport Service (MMTS) in twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad and outskirts partially resumed on Wednesday.

The popular suburban trains catering to the needs of intra-city and suburban traffic were back on tracks with the first train starting from Falaknuma in the old city to Lingampalli on the outskirts.

Due to Covid-19 pandemic, the MMTS services were suspended from March 23, 2020.

The partial resumption of services came as a relief to passengers who prefer this affordable mode of transport.

Before the suspension of services, nearly 1.60 lakh passengers were travelling every day in 121 MMTS trains.

The South Central Railway (SCR), however, resumed the services with only 10 trains. While six trains will be operated between Falaknuma and Lingampalli, the remaining four services will run between Lingampalli and Hyderabad.



The services will be operated between 7.50 am and 7.05 pm. The first train started from Falaknuma for Lingampalli at 07.50 am. The last train will start from Hyderabad at 6.15 p.m. and reach Lingampalli at 7.05 pm.

South Central Railway (SCR) said this was in line with the gradual resumption of the train services.

They advised passengers to follow all Covid protocols like maintaining social distance, compulsorily wearing masks and frequent sanitization, etc. in trains and station premises.

SCR officials said based on the patronage and passengers feedback, they will take a decision on increasing the number of MMTS services.

The MMTS service was introduced on August 9, 2003. With the service becoming popular among commuters, the authorities increased the number of services.

It may be remembered here that the Railway Board has extended the validity of all the season tickets to the extent of number of days lost, from the date of resumption of the train services. Passengers' holding valid season tickets should approach the booking counters to validate and extend their existing season tickets.

In drunken brawl, man's genitals slashed

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a brawl between two men that took place in the late hours of Tuesday at Rudrampur near Kothagudem, a man cut off an ear and the private parts of his opponent.

The accused, Rudrarapu Karthik, a salesman from Moulali in Hyderabad was taking shelter in a shed at Rudrampur. A local, Shaik Hussain Pasha, who was in a drunken state, picked up a quarrel with the accused and hurled invectives at him. In a fit of rage, Karthik beat up Pasha and inflicted bleeding injuries by cutting off his ear and his private parts with a knife. The injured man was shifted to the government hospital in Khammam for treatment.

The accused was taken into custody, and a case under Section 307 of IPC was registered against him. Investigations are underway, informed CI Satyanarayana.



State to get 14 more RT-PCR test centres

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In the wake of the threat of third wave of Coronavirus, the state government has decided to set up 14 RT-PCR centres in districts in addition to the existing 17 RT-PCR testing facilities in Telangana.

Two types of Covid diagnostic tests are being run in the state - Rapid Antigen Tests and RT-PCR tests.

The Rapid Antigen Tests produce result in 15 minutes, while the RT-PCR tests are done to confirm whether a person, who was tested negative in the Rapid Antigen Tests, positive or not for the Covid.

Many people who tested negative in the Rapid Antigen

Tests are roaming free in spite of having Covid symptoms. This is attributed to lack of availability of RT-PCR tests.

This is contributing to the severity of the Covid situation in the state and many cases were going unreported. In the state, majority of the diagnostic tests constitute Rapid Antigen Tests. The number of RT-PCR tests constitutes less than 10 per cent. Sometimes, the RT-PCR tests take at least one week to produce result. Therefore, people incline towards undergoing Rapid Antigen Tests.

That is why, more RT-PCR centres would mean quick delivery of the result, said the medical authorities.

Pomp and splendour to mark Balkampet temple festivities

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Minister for Animal Husbandry Talasani Srinivas Yadav has said that the annual Balkampeta Yellamma Kalyanotsavam celebrations will be held with pomp and gaiety on July 13 as the event could not be celebrated on a grand scale last year on account of the Covid.

Chief Minister K Chandrababoo Naidu ordered the celebration of the event on a grand scale this year, he said. Speaking to media at his office here on Wednesday at the end of a review meeting with officials on arrangements for the event, Srinivas Yadav said that the event would be celebrated with the coordination and cooperation of various government departments.

The Yedurkollu will be celebrated on July 12, while the Goddess will be held on July 13. A car festival of the deity is scheduled for July 14. All arrangements will be made to rule out any inconvenience to



the devotees. Precautions for Covid will be put in place during the event.

Earlier, he directed the R and B authorities to take steps for barricading near the temple to rule out stampede. He insisted on special arrangements for the VIPs visiting the temple for the event. He asked Zonal Commissioner of the GHMC Praveena to undertake repairs to all roads leading to the temple immediately. She asked her to recruit additional workers if necessary to ensure sanitation in the temple surroundings.

He insisted on deployment of mobile toilets near the tem-

ple and round the clock power supply keeping ready mobile transformers to meet any eventuality.

The temple should be bedecked with colourful lights, the minister directed electricity department officials. Further, he directed them to check whether the street lamps in the vicinity of the temple are functional or not. If necessary, fix additional lights, he said.

He asked the Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board officials to keep ready one lakh drinking water packets for distribution among the devotees thronging the temple for the event.

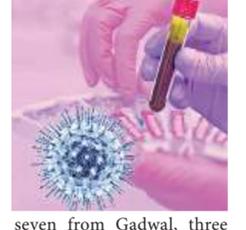
Telangana logs 1,114 new cases, 12 deaths

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana has reported 1,114 new Covid infections and 12 fatalities till Wednesday evening, pushing the cumulative number of deaths to 3598 and the total number of positive cases to 6,16,688. The number of active cases in Telangana, as on Wednesday, is 16,462.

Between Tuesday and Wednesday, authorities conducted 1,18,109 Covid tests of which results of 1,113 samples were awaited. On Wednesday, 1,280 individuals have recovered with a recovery rate of 96.74 per cent. So far, a total of 1,78,88,192 Covid-19 tests have been conducted in the State out of which 6,16,688 have tested positive and 5,96,628 persons have recovered.

The Covid-19 positive cases reported from the districts included two cases from Adilabad, 59 from Bhadrachalam, 129 from areas under GHMC, 23 from Jagtial, 11 from Jangaon, 21 from Bhupalpally,



seven from Gadwal, three from Kamareddy, 69 each from Karimnagar and Khammam, six from Asifabad, 23 from Mahabubnagar, 44 from Mahabubabad, 49 from Mancherial, eight from Medak, 58 from Medchal-Malkajgiri, 24 from Mulugu, 12 from Nalgonda, 72 from Nalgonda, six from Narayanpet, three from Nirmal, eight from Nizamabad, 53 from Peddapalli, 16 from Siricilla, 75 from Rangareddy, 16 from Sangareddy, 44 from Siddipet, 69 from Suryapet, 14 from Vikarabad, 17 from Wanaparthy, 16 from Warangal Rural, 53 from Warangal Urban and 35 from Bhongir.

Doodh Duronto transports 9 cr ltr of milk

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Doodh Duronto special trains which have been started by South Central Railway (SCR) as a unique concept to transport milk for balancing the essential commodity supply chain across the nation has transported 9 crore litres of milk by June 22.

The special has been started

on March 26, 2020 and is being operated from Renigunta in Andhra Pradesh to Hazrat Nizamuddin. Initially the train was running on alternate days, but taking into consideration the increased demand, the frequency of the train was increased to run as a daily special from July 15, 2020, SCR said here on Wednesday.

Transportation of milk by rail from Renigunta to New Delhi plays a vital role in balancing the milk supply across the nation. The zone has been operating 'Doodh Duronto' special on par with Mail express trains and the distance between Renigunta and H Nizamuddin (2300 km) is being covered within a reasonable time of 30 hours.



VACCINE DRIVE

The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation has begun mobile vaccination centers in Monda Market and Secunderabad Railway Station to vaccinate citizens at the earliest.



Swift action by Keesara police saves youth's life

PNS ■ MEDCHAL MALKAJGIRI

The swift action by Keesara Police has saved life of a person who attempted to suicide in Medchal Malkajgiri district on Wednesday.

The victim identified as Nakka Praveen, 24, a resident of Keesara, who is in to milk business has asked his mother to arrange a sum of Rs 1 lakh so that he could construct a new cow shed. His mother refused to do so, after which he picked up an argument and left home on his motor cycle. At around 9 am on Wednesday, Praveen called his elder brother Naveen that he is going die and he may live happily with his parents.

Panicked Naveen along with others searched for his brother in the surrounding localities. After his efforts went in vain, he made a call to 'Dial 100' and complained.

Keesara Patrol-1 in-charge Krishnam Raju informed SHO of Keesara Narender Goud, who formed teams and started searching for the missing person. At 12.30 pm, Praveen was traced in the hillocks of Pedda Parvathapuram of Bommalar-amaram through his mobile location.

The police officials who found him in unconscious state shifted him to a private hospital.

A cold drink and pesticide bottle were found at the spot. The doctors stated that Praveen's condition is stable. Rachakonda Police Commissioner Mahesh Bhagwat has appreciated Keesara SHOs Narender and Krishnam Raju, Kumara Swamy, Indra Reddy, Vijay Kumar, Nagesh, Irfan Ali, Balaiah for saving life of victim. All the cops involved in the rescue operation would be rewarded.

'Complete nala, sewage works at the earliest'

PNS ■ MEDCHAL MALKAJGIRI

Government whip Arikepudi Gandhi along with corporator Jagadishwar on Wednesday inspected the drainage expansion works at Janapriya complex in Hafeezpet division of Serilingampalli municipality.

He asked the civic authorities to complete the works as early as possible as the monsoon season has begun. He asked them to ensure that the works are executed adhering to quality standards.

In fact, the government sanctioned Rs 8 crore for widening of the drainage from Kaidamma Kunta tank to Sitara Hotel. He distributed CMRF cheques Parthasarathi, Mallaiah and Charan at his camp office.

Later, he called on GHMC commissioner Lokesh Kumar and voiced the public opinion on transfer of GHMC land to traffic training institute.

He said the people were against the transfer and asked him to use the land for public purpose.

He urged the commissioner to allot suitable land to set up urban clinics in Hydernagar and Chandra Naik Thanda. The MLA said that the commissioner responded favourably to his request.



UoH study finds key to boost pigeon pea yields

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A breakthrough study on plant symbioses, holds promise of higher pigeon pea yields in the country.

Popularly known as 'Arhar', 'Toor' or 'Tuvar' in Indian households, pigeon pea serves as a primary protein source for millions of poor people in developing countries. However, the crop often suffers from inconsistent yields and poor nodule formation in India.

Plant symbiosis with nitrogen-fixing soil bacteria or rhizobia, is key to sustainable agriculture. Pulses and other legumes develop complex symbiotic associations with rhizobia at root nodules-rhizobia 'fix' and supply nitrogen to the

host plants; plants, in return, provide carbon and energy.

A research team led by Prof Appa Rao Podile, faculty in the Department of Plant Sciences, University of Hyderabad (UoH), in a three-year collaboration with two groups in the United Kingdom - Prof Philip Poole's group at the Department of Plant Sciences, University of Oxford, and Dr Andrew Neal at Rothamsted Research - has made a major breakthrough in plant symbiosis studies, a UoH release stated.

The UoH team comprising of three PhD scholars, Ch Danteswari, Anirban Basu, and PVSRN Sarma, assessed the microbial community associated with pigeon pea roots in



different soil types with a comprehensive approach and found the root microbial composition was primarily determined by the plant developmental stage and soil type rather than the plant variety.

The study concluded that the low nodulation efficiency of pigeon pea is due to the inadequate presence of appropriate symbionts in the soils. Indian soils were mainly found to harbor non-symbiotic

Rhizobium spp, rather than symbiotic or nodule-forming Bradyrhizobium spp.

These findings will pave the way for selecting and applying appropriate symbionts to improve pigeon pea yields and nodulation under Indian conditions. It suggests that the inoculant strain selection of symbionts for pigeon pea should be based not only on their nitrogen fixation potential but, more importantly, on their competitiveness in agricultural soils.

The project was supported by the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Government of India, and Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), UK.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
PANCHAYATH RAJ ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT
 E-Procurement short tender Notice NIT No: 13 to 24/2021-22 Dt: 18.06.2021
 No. of works (12), Name of the works: Construction 2BHK Rural Houses in Jukkai Assembly Constituency in Kamareddy District, Total ECV: Rs.705.60 Lakhs tenders invited undersigned. Tenders can download the tender schedules from 26.06.2021 10.30 AM onwards and last date is (7) working days from date of publishing of each NIT in online. All further details can be seen on the online at e-procurement market place i.e. www.tender.telangana.gov.in
 Sd/- Executive Engineer, PRED, Banswada.

Concerned about AP's illegal projects; injustice of worst order: Govt sources

If AP is not stopped by KRMB, Centre; TS will go ahead with alternative plans

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The opposition parties in TS may be skeptical about the strong statements being issued by Telangana Ministers and underplaying the seriousness of the 'water theft' charges made by the TRS government. Yet, government sources are indeed aghast at the blatant manner in which the Andhra Pradesh government has been 'flouting the rules' to illegally tap Krishna water.

Even as the Telangana State has been seeking rightful general allocation of the Krishna waters post bifurcation, the AP government has been going ahead with its own projects that would necessitate drawing water over and above the allocations made under the Krishna Water Tribunal, according to sources.

Irrigation Special Chief Secretary Rajat Kumar briefed



the State Cabinet on Saturday about the illegal constructions relating to the Rayalaseema Lift Irrigation Scheme and the Rajolibanda Diversion Scheme right canal.

As both the projects were taken up against the orders of the National Green Tribunal and the Union Jal Shakti Ministry, the Special Chief Secretary wrote a letter again on Monday as directed by the Cabinet to the Krishna Water

Management Board Chairman J Chandrasekhar Aiyar and sent a copy to the Union Jal Shakti Ministry complaining about the illegal and unlawful drawal of Krishna waters.

Official sources said that so far 10 letters had been written to the Krishna Water Management Board and AP has been told not to go ahead with its projects. In the latest letter, the Telangana government once again requested the

Krishna Board to give instructions to the AP government to follow the order of NGT.

The NGT-South Zone on October 29, 2020 gave orders that the Rayalaseema Lift Irrigation Scheme works should not be taken up without environmental clearance. But ignoring those orders, the AP government has expedited the work on the LI scheme.

The Telangana government filed a miscellaneous petition on December 14, 2020 against the construction work and the NGT, while issuing orders on December 24, 2020, directed the KRMB to take up an independent investigation on the basis of complaint by the Telangana Government. It said the Board has legal power and freedom to take action against the AP government.

The Chief Secretary of AP submitted to the NGT that they were only doing 'preliminary

survey' for preparing the Detailed Project Report for the Rayalaseema LI scheme. Yet, NGT gave clear orders to KRMB to form a fact-finding committee including nominees from both the Telugu State governments and send it to Andhra to ascertain the truth.

But the fact-finding committee has not been sent by the KRMB despite the Telangana government writing to the Board twice on March 20 and again on June 9, 2021. It made one conclude that the KRMB failed to implement the NGT orders.

This being so, the Telangana has reliable information, along with photographs from the construction site, that the AP government has speeded up the work on the illegal projects. It certainly did not look like work related to 'preliminary survey', sources said.

Karimnagar developed as clean and green city, says Kamalakar

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR

BC Welfare and Civil Supplies Minister Gangula Kamalakar on Wednesday said the Manair River Front works would commence in August once the Detailed Project Report (DPR) is completed in July. Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao has sanctioned Rs 410 crore for the Manair River Front development project, he said.

Speaking after laying the foundation stone for traffic islands at Telangana Chowk here, Kamalakar said earlier, both the Central and State governments used to sanction funds once in a term. The situation, however, changed after State formation, he said. "The Chief Minister, who has soft corner for Karimnagar which played a vital role in the Statehood movement, has sanctioned thousands of crore to take up developmental works without rejecting any proposal," he said.

Karimnagar has been developed as a clean and green city to meet the aspiration of Chandrashekar Rao. "The



city will be a beautiful destination soon once all the ongoing developmental works are completed. The landscape of the city has changed with the completion of a 14.5 km road, medians, central lighting system and footpaths and roads that have been laid to survive for the next 20 years," the Minister said.

Earlier, cows and pigs used to stay in traffic islands. However, the Municipal Corporation of Karimnagar has paid attention to the development of junctions. A pleasant atmosphere has been

developed in the islands by arranging water fountains as well as greenery.

Except Telangana Thalli junction, development of all other junctions such as Naka chowk, Telangana chowk, and IB junction was taken up with Rs 50 lakhs of smart city funds.

Stating that Telangana Thalli junction was a sensitive issue, he informed to take a decision by consulting with all sections of the society.

As promised earlier, supply of daily water is being continued and steps have been taken to supply water 24x7.

Meet targets set for palm oil, mulberry cultivation: Harish

PNS ■ SIDDIPIPET

Finance Minister T Harish Rao has instructed the officials of agriculture, horticulture and sericulture department to meet the targets set for palm oil cultivation, dry seeding of paddy and Mulberry cultivation, among others. He also urged the officials and elected representatives to ensure that Siddipet Assembly constituency stays in the forefront in oil palm cultivation.

Pointing out that Siddipet district was permitted to take up Oil Palm in 50,000 acres, Harish Rao said they had plans in place to take up cultivation of Oil Palm in 5,000 acres this year.

Asking the local public representatives to encourage the farmers to cultivate crops



which the State government suggests, the Minister said they will complete the plantation of Oil Palm in June and July.

Addressing a meeting with officials and elected representatives at Siddipet Urban Development Office here on Wednesday, Harish Rao said they had planted Oil Palm in 36 acres in Chandalapur

Cluster out of 200 acres target. Stating that they will complete the plantation in 64 acres by the end of June, Rao said that the officials will complete the plantation in 100 more acres in July.

He has asked the Agriculture Officers to aim to make at least 10 farmers under their purview to take up Mulberry Cultivation in Siddipet.

Minister to lay foundation for integrated mkt

PNS ■ NARSAPUR

Local MLA Madan Reddy has said that plans for development of Narsapur have been prepared with Rs 25 crore.

Disclosing this to media here on Wednesday, he said that Finance Minister T Harish Rao would lay the foundation stone on Thursday for the integrated market to be built at a cost of Rs 4 crore, Municipal Bhavan to be built at a cost of Rs 2 crore and the crematorium to be built at a cost of Rs 1 crore.

Municipal chairman Murali Yadav, municipal councillors Ashok Goud and Bikshapati and other officials and leaders were present on the occasion.

Give priority for clean environment, plantation in schools, says Collector

PNS ■ MAHABUBNAGAR

In the wake of schools reopening from July 1, all teachers should attend for duties in schools from Thursday onwards and ensure priority for a clean environment by taking up plantation, District Collector Venkat Rao said on Wednesday.

Addressing a video conference from his camp office on Wednesday, the Collector said the schools were closed all these days due to Covid and all teachers must attend without any lethargy after the schools reopened. Issuing the directives that the teachers should not apply for leaves for the next one month, the Collector said they should ensure the cleanliness of school premises and take up plantation works as part of Haritha Haram. These two tasks should be taken as the top priority, he added.



Venkat Rao said the education department was given a target of planting five lakh saplings in the present academic year and they should be planted in the vacant places and as did in the Pattana Pragathi, the plants should be planted thickly.

Every school must follow strict Covid regulations and stern action would be taken against the errant people. Masks and sanitizers must be used without any hesitation for which they can take

support from the local donors. The Public health department should take all precautionary measures causing no inconvenience to the children and they should be protected with safe. The Collector also said the officials should pay special attention to the mid-day meal and convene meetings with MEOs, MPDOs and agencies at the school complex and school levels by inviting sarpanches over school cleanliness, Haritha Haram, Covid regulations and mid-day meals. The medical officials should also attend the meetings to be conducted at the mandal-level, he added.

Since the schools were reopening, paddy stocks, seed balls and isolation centres should be removed from the schools, the Collector said and directed the DEO to issue a circular to all schools on the regulations to be followed in the schools.

NTPC distributes 3,000 face masks in six project-hit villages in district

PNS ■ PEDDAPALLY

The National Thermal Power Corporation-Ramagundam CSR in association with Sahaya Seva Society distributed 3,000 cotton masks and 450 Kg of bleaching powder in six project affected villages on Wednesday.

At a programme held at CSR vocational centre, Dr Emami Rama Murthy, CMO of NTPC, distributed 500 cotton masks and 75 kg of bleaching powder to each of the six project affected villages — Kundanpalli, Autonagar, Narrasalapally, Malyallapalli, Kannala and Medipalli.

Dr Murthy appreciated the villagers for their active involvement and cooperation in NTPC CSR activities.

Covid vaccination drive for teachers begins from today

PNS ■ NAGARKURNOOL

District Collector Sarman on Wednesday said that a special week-long vaccination drive for 6,082 teachers of 1,163 government, private and residential schools will be held in the district from Thursday onwards. They will be administered Covid vaccine in 26 vaccination centres set up for the purpose.

On directions from the state government, vaccination will be held in the district at the PHCs in 20 mandals from Thursday onwards as the government has decided to conduct classroom teaching from July 1 onwards.

Therefore, he advised teachers to get themselves vaccinated against the virus without fail. The district Collector asked them to carry their identity cards and Aadhaar card to the vaccination centre. He asked the District Medical and Health Department officials to work with coordination and complete the vaccination of teachers by June 30.



11 arrested for trading in spurious seeds, herbicides

PNS ■ PEDDAPALLY

In a major crackdown, 11 persons were arrested for allegedly selling spurious cotton seeds in different parts under Thandur police circle on Wednesday. Seven quintals of seed and 500 litres of glyphosate herbicide were also recovered from them. The value of the seeds and herbicide was assessed to be Rs 16.50 lakh. Three more traders are absconding.

The accused persons were identified as A Gopal, A Vignesh, I Mahesh, M Mahender, M Sekhar, R Ashok, A Rajesh, B Santosh, M Babu and T Santosh. Bharat Reddy, Krishna Reddy and Edukondalu were still at large. The eleven traders were found to be selling the seeds and herbicide when police conducted simultaneous raids on their houses, fol-

lowing a tip. Ramagundam Police Commissioner Satyanarayana said that during the course of interrogations, the traders confessed to committing the offence in their respective villages and mandals to make a fast buck. He stated that the traders were duping the gullible farmers by selling the seeds and herbicide promising high yield. He warned that stern action would be initiated against those who indulge in the menace.

The IPS officer commended police officials who cracked the racket of fake seeds. He complimented Thandur Inspector K Babu Rao, Sub-Inspectors Kiran, Manasa, Komuraiah and Prashanth Reddy and their team members for arresting the traders. He gave away cash rewards to policemen who took part in the operation.

'Put Vaikunthadhamams to use at the earliest'

PNS ■ JANGAON

District Collector K Nikhila has instructed the officials concerned to complete the development works taken up under the 'Palle Pragathi' programme and put them to use at the earliest in the district.

Addressing the officials through an online meeting on Wednesday, she also asked the

officials to maintain the 39 registers of which 32 of gram panchayats and 7 related to employment guarantee (NREGS) properly. The Collector asked the officials to visit

the villages in accordance with the schedule.

Stating that the officials should reach the village at 6 am and stay there during the day and resolve the problems if any then and there, she said that the officials should submit an Action Taken Report (ATR) along with the photographs and also

instructed the officials to keep 'Vaikunthadhamams' ready for use by Sunday by completing plastering, fencing and removing weeds and added that wet and dry waste should be collected, making of compost should start in segregation sheds and segregation sheds so far not in use should be brought into use immediately. Nikhila said that there should

be three primary beds per 1,000 saplings in each nursery, out of which fast growing plants should be separated.

She further said that the Panchayat Secretaries would be imparted two-day training on the maintenance of the registers soon. She warned officials of stern action in the light of negligence in the discharge of duties.

Dasoju finds fault with CM's preference to select villages

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

AICC spokesperson Dr Dasoju Sravan expressed serious concerns over Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao's reckless, irresponsible Covid-inappropriate behaviour stressing that CM's careless actions will put the lives of Telangana people at risk.

Warning Telangana people of a potential third wave if precautions are not taken, Sravan urged KCR to set an example by following Covid precautions and protect people, instead of putting crores of lives in danger, by getting back to the old madcap ways.

"We have seen CM touring around the state over the past few days, flouting all COVID-19 precautions. It is extremely disheartening to see the CM, who needs to create



awareness about COVID-appropriate behaviour, himself setting a dangerous example by disregarding Coronavirus precautions," said Dr Dasoju Sravan addressing the media in Hyderabad on Wednesday.

Saying that the Government which needs to educate and protect people from pandemic itself is adding to the woes of people and further jeopardising lives, Congress senior leader urged Telangana public to be cautious and not let down their guard as experts are warning about a potential third wave if proper precautions are

not taken. Sravan also came down heavily on 'TRS Government for bringing a GO putting a cap on hospital treatments price just a day ago, while corporate hospitals have fleeced lakhs of people, with exorbitant bills over the past two months. Dr Sravan exposed that the Government has brought in this GO in a hasty manner only to save its skin as hearing on the issue is going on in High Court.

Referring to KCR's high profile visit to Vasalamarri village, which reeked of preferential treatment and autocratic ways, Sravan demanded CM to show some interest on all 12,000 villages in Telangana, instead of focusing on just two or three villages, which were chosen according to their proximity to KCR.



BJP seeks action against cash-hungry pvt schools

PNS ■ MEDAK

BJP Medak district president Gaddam Srinivas has demanded the private schools to slash their tuition fees by 50 per cent, collect the fees in instalments and sought immediate action against the management of the cash-hungry private schools.

He was addressing the activists of the BJYM district unit who staged protest at Ramdas Cross Roads in the town on Wednesday against the private schools collecting very high tuition fees.

He demanded the state government to render justice to the poor by regulating the tuition fees.

Later, he paid floral tributes to Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherjee by garlanding his portrait at the BJP district office here on Wednesday in connection with his death anniversary, observed as Balidaan Diwas. He took oath on the occasion vowing to tread the path shown by him.

BJYM district president Sandeep Ramakant, BJP district president Vijay Kumar and others were present.

CP TO MAOISTS 'Surrender, get treated for virus'

PNS ■ JAYASHANKAR BHUPALPALLY

Bhadrachalam Commissioner of Police Sunil Dutt on Wednesday appealed to Maoists afflicted with Covid to surrender to the police so that the police department will strive to ensure that the surrendered Maoists get financial benefits and also treatment for the Covid. He claimed to have reliable information that Hari Bhushan succumbed to Covid on June 21.

Not only the top leaders, but also the ordinary members and members of the militia wing have been suffering from Covid-19. It may be recalled that the police department made it public long back.

Quoting reliable information, he said that the Maoist party leaders Kukati Venkanna, Sarada, Sonu, Vinod, Nandu, Iduma, Devender Reddy, Damodar and Bhadru have been affected by the Coronavirus and have other co-morbidities.

However, Maoist party central committee leader Nambala Kesava Rao alias Basavaraju, Mallojula Venugopal Rao alias Abhay, in a statement, ruled out anyone in the party suffering from Corona virus.

However, death of Haribhushan, 50, confirmed the Covid cases in the party, he said demanding that the Maoist party top leaders to hold responsible for the death of Sobrai, Nandu, Hari Bhushan and other leaders.

CM developing T'gana as an ideal state: Errabelli

PNS ■ WARANGAL

Telangana became a pride for the whole nation in the audit of panchayat funds and the statement of Union Minister or Panchayat Raj, Rural Development and Agriculture Narendra Tomar that the remaining states should follow Telangana was a great honour, said Errabelli Dayakar Rao, Minister for Panchayat Raj,



Rural Development and RWS. He said the credit goes to Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao

and his vision as he developed Telangana as an ideal state in the country. Errabelli thanked Union Minister Narendra Tomar for his statement praising the efforts of Telangana.

In a statement here on Wednesday, Errabelli Dayakar Rao requested the Union Minister to release some more funds without confining himself with mere appreciation and awards.

The Union Minister Narendra Tomar organized a video conference on Tuesday with the officials of states Panchayat Raj finance and auditing departments. Speaking on the occasion, Tomar commended the PowerPoint presentation given by the Telangana officials.

Union Panchayat Raj secretary Sunil Kumar suggested that Telangana should be taken as an ideal state.

Errabelli said the village panchayats were progressing in all spheres because of the vision of Chief Minister KCR. Palle Pragathi, Haritha Haram, Rythu Bandhu, paddy procurement and many other schemes designed by KCR were nowhere implemented in the country. Telangana has occupied a top place in the country even in the implementation of Central schemes like EGS.

'Priyanka Cong's 'captain' in UP, party will emerge as principal challenger soon'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Senior Congress leader Salman Khurshid has said it is up to AICC general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra to decide the manner in which she will present herself to the voters in the Uttar Pradesh assembly polls, but asserted that she is a 'great face' and the 'captain' leading the party's charge in the state.

He also asserted that the Congress will emerge as the principal challenger to the BJP before the assembly elections and Priyanka Gandhi is determined to ensure that the party fights the polls with all its might.

In an interview with PTI, Khurshid said the Congress would not keep waiting for alliances but was determined to fight the polls hard with everything "we have got".

Asked if Priyanka Gandhi was the party's best bet to be the chief



ministerial face, the former Union minister said, "I am not going to answer that till such time as she does not give us an indication. But she is a wonderful, great face." "All you have to do is to put the picture of (UP Chief Minister)

Yogi (Adityanath) in front of you and Priyanka Gandhi's picture and you won't need to ask any more questions," said Khurshid, who is the chief of the party's manifesto committee for the state. But the manner in which

she will present herself, offer herself to the voters in UP will be her decision, he stressed.

"I hope that she will take a decision and let us know. As far as we are concerned she is the captain and she is leading us," Khurshid said of the Congress general secretary in-charge of Uttar Pradesh.

On the Congress still not being the principal challenger in UP despite efforts by Priyanka Gandhi, Khurshid admitted that the party was not the principal challenger as of now but expressed confidence that it would be before the polls in 2022. He asserted that the party is going to fight the assembly elections "real hard", highlighting that Priyanka Gandhi is determined to ensure that the party fights with all its might in the polls.

On whether the Congress has the capacity to go it alone, Khurshid asked if there is any alliance on the cards, and added

that "nobody has specifically talked to us about an alliance as I understand".

There is no point in hypotheticals being discussed, the 68-year-old leader said.

Pressed further on whether the party has the bandwidth to go it alone in the assembly polls, Khurshid said the party would have to fight on its own but added a caveat on alliances -- if something happens and leadership takes a call then it may be different.

"But let us not forget the last time we fought in an alliance we did not do well. I am not even sure if the two who got into the alliance -- the Congress and the Samajwadi Party -- have figured out why they did not do well. We did not spend any time on that at all," Khurshid said. He said that for any alliances to happen with anybody, its ground rules must be known as to what might or might not work.

Covid 'Delta Plus' variant: Goa steps up monitoring along Maha border

PNS ■ PANAJI

The Goa government has increased surveillance along the border adjoining Maharashtra in the wake of the neighbouring state reporting cases of the COVID-19 'Delta Plus' variant, which is considered highly infectious.

Chief Minister Pramod Sawant told reporters on Wednesday that cases of 'Delta' variant of COVID-19 have been detected in Goa, but so far there is not a single case of the 'Delta Plus' variant in the coastal state.

Since the 'Delta Plus' variant has been found in Maharashtra's Sindhudurg district adjoining Goa, "surveillance along the border has been stepped up", the CM said.

On Monday, Maharashtra Health Minister Rajesh Tope on Monday said 21 cases of the 'Delta Plus' variant have been found in the state so far, including nine in Ratnagiri, seven in Jalgaon, two in Mumbai, and one case each in Palghar, Thane and Sindhudurg



districts. Sawant said Goa has so far reported 26 cases of the COVID-19 'Delta' variant, which were detected in samples sent to a laboratory in Pune.

He said the Goa Medical College and Hospital (located near Panaji), North Goa District Hospital (Mapusa), South Goa District Hospital (Marga) and Victor Hospital (Margao) have been collecting COVID-19 patients' samples which are sent to the Pune-based lab to check for variants of the virus.

Sawant also said his government has allowed private laboratories to set up their facilities along the Goa-Maharashtra border.

"If we find any suspect (entering Goa with the coronavirus infection), he is isolated and tested before being allowed to move around in the state," Sawant said.

On Tuesday, Goa reported 303 new COVID-19 cases that took its tally of infections to 1,64,957, while 11 fatalities pushed the death toll to 3,008, as per the state health department.

India pushing for full ceasefire in Afghanistan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India is pushing for a comprehensive ceasefire in Afghanistan amid a massive spike in violence in that country and reports of its contact with the Taliban for the first time in the backdrop of a renewed push for the Afghan peace process.

The reports of India reaching out to the Taliban emerged as the US looked to complete the withdrawal of its forces from Afghanistan by September 11, ending a nearly two-decade of its military presence in the war-ravaged country.

In the midst of fast-paced developments relating to the Afghan peace process, a senior Qatari diplomat said at a webinar organised by the Arab Center in Washington DC on Monday that he believed the Indian side was engaging with the Taliban as the group could be a key component in the future of Afghanistan.

The Taliban and the Afghan government are holding direct talks in the Qatari capital city Doha that has killed tens of thousands of people and ravaged



various parts of the country. Qatar has been playing a role in the Afghan peace process.

"I understand that there has been a quiet visit by Indian officials...to speak with the Taliban. Why? Because not everybody is believing that the Taliban will dominate and take over, because Taliban is a key component of, or should be or is going to be a key component of the future of Afghanistan," said Mutlaq bin Majed al-Qahtani, Qatar's envoy for counter-terrorism and conflict resolution.

He made the remarks while replying to a question during a discussion on the theme "Looking towards peace in Afghanistan after the US-NATO withdrawal."

"I see the reason behind having a dialogue or talks or reaching out to all parties in Afghanistan but it is important to keep in mind that we are in a critical stage at this time, and I think if any meeting is going to take place, it should be for a major or main reason, which is to encourage the parties to solve their differences by peaceful means," al-Qahtani said.

There was no official reaction to the comments by the senior Qatari diplomat. Indian officials said India is concerned over the spike in violence in Afghanistan and has been strongly pressing for a comprehensive ceasefire to take forward the peace process.

No vaccine, no salary: Ujjain collector tells govt staff

PNS ■ UJJAIN

In a bid to achieve the target of 100 per cent vaccination against COVID-19, the Ujjain district administration in Madhya Pradesh has issued an order saying government employees will not get their salaries from next month if they are not inoculated.

District Collector Ashish Singh issued an order to this effect on Tuesday. He said salaries of government employees will not be disbursed, if they fail to get vaccinated till July 31.

The salaries of employees for July will be disbursed only after producing the vaccination certificate, a district official said.

"We are making all possible efforts to achieve the target of cent per cent vaccination in the district. Several steps have been taken in this direction," Singh told PTI on Wednesday while confirming the order.

Oppn front without Cong will help BJP: Nana Patole

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra Congress president Nana Patole on Wednesday said any attempt to form an 'anti-BJP front' without his party will indirectly help the BJP.

Talking to reporters at Faizpur in Jalgaon district, he also said elections were three years away and COVID-19 management was the priority of his party.

Amid speculations about formation of an 'anti-BJP front', Patole said such a front was not possible without the Congress.

"Any attempt to do so will indirectly help the BJP," he said.

In 2019, the Congress tied-up with the Shiv Sena and NCP to form government in Maharashtra under the leadership of Uddhav Thackeray.

Last week, Patole caused a flutter in the ruling alliance in Maharashtra by saying the Congress will contest future elections on its own.

All India Congress Committee's Maharashtra in-



charge H K Patil recently asked the state party unit to focus on strengthening the organisation and leave the decision on alliances or going solo in future polls to the party high command.

On Wednesday, Patole said the welfare of farmers and youth, who are facing the "crisis of unemployment", was the Congress's priority.

"I have already spoken about elections and the message has reached the party workers. Elections are three years away and I will not speak on it. We

will highlight misdeeds of the Narendra Modi government in handling the COVID-19 pandemic and the neglect of farmers," he said.

In a veiled jibe at the Congress, Chief Minister and Sena president Uddhav Thackeray on Saturday said people would "beat with footwear" those who only talk about contesting elections alone without offering solutions to people's problems.

An editorial in the Sena mouthpiece 'Saamana' recently said there is no harm in contesting polls independently, but everyone should check the ground beneath.

Patole said, "Today we symbolically buried three (controversial) farm laws of the Centre. A Congress meeting in Faizpur led by (former prime minister) Jawaharlal Nehru and other senior leaders of the freedom movement had deliberated on how farmers' policies should be framed, and the need of the hour is the revisit that."

5,240 vials of Amphotericin B allocated to Karnataka

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Union Minister for Chemicals and Fertilizers D V Sadananda Gowda on Wednesday said additional 5,240 vials of Liposomal Amphotericin B, which is used in the treatment of black fungus, has been allocated to Karnataka.

"In Karnataka, additional 5,240 vials of Liposomal Amphotericin B have been allocated today," Gowda said in a tweet. The Minister, who is an MP from Bengaluru North said, a total of 60,350 vials have been allocated to the state till now ensuring its smooth supply to patients.

The government has been taking various steps to enhance the availability of Amphotericin B in the country to cater to the sudden increase in demand for the medication, including giving a boost to domestic manufacturing.

UP police to use drones to spot illegal liquor dens near Nepal border

PNS ■ BAHRAICH

Drone cameras will be used to find illicit liquor dens in forest areas near the Indo-Nepal border here, an official said on Wednesday.

Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) and the excise department will carry out a joint operation to check the smuggling and trade of spurious liquor, Bahraich District Magistrate Dinesh Chandra said.

Instructions have been issued to identify illegal liquor manufacturing and selling bases with the help of drone cameras, especially in the forests of Mihinpurwa area of the district, he said.

Police, excise and administrative machinery have been asked to develop an effective informer network in this direction, the DM said, adding the Gangsters Act will be invoked against those involved in the trade.

'Reports on homeless people barred from registering for Covid vaccination baseless'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The health ministry on Wednesday dismissed media reports alleging that homeless people have been "barred" from registering for COVID-19 vaccination due to unavailability of technical requirements as "baseless".

There have been some media reports alleging that homeless people have been "barred and conspicuously left out" from registering for COVID-19 vaccination due to unavailability of technical requirements, the ministry said in a statement.

The reports have further stated that the "requirement to register digitally", "knowledge of English and access to a computer or a smartphone connected to the internet" are some of the factors depriving people of vaccination, it added.

"These claims are baseless and not based on facts," the



ministry said while clarifying that the ownership of a mobile phone is not a prerequisite for Covid vaccination, production of address proof is also not compulsory and it is not mandatory to pre-register online on Co-WIN for availing vaccination.

It further said that for an easy understanding of the users, Co-Win is now available in 12 languages -- Hindi, Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu,

Kannada, Marathi, Gujarati, Odia, Bengali, Assamese, Gurumukhi (Punjabi) and English.

The Co-WIN platform is an inclusive IT system that provides a flexible framework with all the necessary features to facilitate vaccination coverage in the remotest parts of the country as well as for those who are the most vulnerable, the statement said. While one of the nine iden-

tity cards, including Aadhar, voter ID card, ration card with photo, disability ID card, is required for vaccination, special provisions have been made by the government for organising vaccination sessions for those who may not have any of the nine specified identity cards or own a mobile phone, it added. Taking full benefit of such provisions, more than two lakh such beneficiaries have been vaccinated so far, the statement said.

It added that the government has issued an advisory on May 27 for near-to-home vaccination centre services for the elderly and differently-abled persons.

For those who may not have access to the internet or smartphones or even mobile phones, free of cost on-site registration (also popularly called walk-in) and vaccination is available at all government vaccination centres.

PM Modi, BJP leaders pay tributes to Mookerjee

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Odisha registers 3,456 new Covid cases, 46 deaths

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Odisha's COVID-19 tally rose to 8,86,946 on Wednesday as 3,456 more people tested positive for the infection, while 46 fresh fatalities pushed the state's coronavirus death toll to 3,717, a health official said. As many as 1,973 new cases were reported in quarantine centres, while the remaining 1,483 new infections were detected during contract tracing. The daily positivity rate rose to 5.24 from 4.79 percent on Tuesday. Khurda district, of which Bhubaneswar is a part, recorded the highest number of new cases at 499, followed by Cuttack (480) and Puri (289), he said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi led BJP leaders on Wednesday in paying tributes to party ideologue Syama Prasad Mookerjee, who founded its progenitor Jana Sangh, on his 68th death anniversary.

"Remembering Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee on his Punya Tithi. His noble ideals, rich thoughts and commitment to serve people will continue to inspire us. His efforts towards national integration will never be forgotten," Modi tweeted.

Home Minister Amit Shah said Mookerjee sacrificed himself to safeguard India's identity and integrity, and saved the country from another division.

His sacrifice, dedication and ideals will guide the coming generations, he said, adding that Mookerjee was an architect of cultural nationalism who favoured making moth-



er tongue the medium of education. He founded Jana Sangh not due to greed for power but for national reconstruction, Shah said.

Paying tributes, BJP president J P Nadda said Mookerjee dedicated his life to the country's unity and integrity while living for cultural nationalism.

Mookerjee was a strident critic of the special status granted to Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 by the then Congress government and was arrested after he entered the state to protest the requirement for a permit to do so.

'Heartening to note 3 out of 5 people who got jabs were from rural areas'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu said it was heartening to note that three out of five people vaccinated as part of the COVID-19 inoculation drive on June 21 were from rural areas, where the majority of the country's population resides.

According to the government, of the record 88.09 lakh vaccine doses administered on June 21, when the revised guidelines for COVID-19 vaccination came into effect, nearly 64 per cent of the jabs were given in rural areas. "It is heartening to note that

3/5 persons vaccinated in the stepped up drive on Monday were from rural areas, where the majority of population resides. My compliments to the Centre and various states for working in a coordinated manner in a truly 'Team India' spirit," the Vice President Secretariat quoted Naidu as saying in a tweet on Wednesday.

States that have done extremely well must share their best practices with others to achieve optimal results, he said. "I also urge people to proactively come forward and get themselves vaccinated," he added.

10-unit rise in PM 2.5 causes 7 hospital admissions with respiratory disease a week in Delhi: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A 10-unit increase in PM 2.5 leads to more than seven hospital admissions due to respiratory diseases in Delhi each week, said a study conducted by Maulana Azad Medical College.

The report of the 15-month study, which started in April 2019 to assess the impact of air pollution on health, was submitted to the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) around three months ago, an official said.

The Maulana Azad Medical College (MAMC) was asked by the DPCC to conduct the study.



A team led by Dr Nandini Sharma, former dean and the head of the Department of

Community Medicine, MAMC, collected data from Baba Saheb Ambedkar

Hospital, Lok Nayak Hospital, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Hospital, Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital, Lal Bahadur Shastri Hospital and Madan Mohan Malviya Hospital.

According to the report, the rate and trend of the cardio-respiratory morbidity in terms of hospital admissions were corroborated with the change in values of Air Quality Index (AQI), PM10 and PM2.5 levels.

It showed that "an increase of 10 units of PM 2.5 leads to 7.09 new cumulative respiratory admissions per week, keeping other factors constant". "The increase in respiratory admissions (bronchitis,

bronchial asthma) is directly proportional to increase in AQI," the report read.

The study has been able to generate evidence that cardiopulmonary admissions in hospitals increase significantly with rising air pollution. "An increase of 10 units of PM2.5 will increase 1.1 new cumulative cardiac admissions in these hospitals each week," it said.

The research team also collected community-based data on the restriction of activity, perceived stress, awareness about the cause and perceived interventions required for improving air quality from 1,879 people in all 11 districts

of Delhi. It was found that as educational status improves, awareness about air pollution increases.

A Majority of the respondents (96.5 per cent) perceived that automobiles were the major reason for air pollution, while 77 per cent said industries are responsible for worsening air quality in Delhi.

Sixty-five per cent of the respondents attributed poor air quality to the burning of waste, while 46 per cent said it was due to construction activities. Only 28 per cent of the respondents perceived stubble burning and firecrackers as the cause of air pollution.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

The plus?

The Government seems to be at a crossroads in its tackling of Delta+ variant despite best intentions

Three steps the Union Government has taken in the last couple of days attest to a change for the better in its COVID-19 management policy. The first is the accelerated pace of vaccinations in the country. Over 8.3 million doses were given on a single day on Monday, the highest so far, beating the April 1 record of 4.8 million. In the first week of May, when the second wave of the pandemic was at its peak, single-day vaccinations hovered around 1.6 million. On Tuesday, however, the pace slowed down with some States experiencing a massive fall in the numbers. While the intention of the Government is honourable, to set a scorching pace to reach herd immunity at the earliest, it needs to ensure that the exercise does not become an event but is part of an organised, consistent process. Two, the Government has declared the Delta+ mutation as a Variant of Concern (VoC). The announcement came within hours of the Union Health Secretary saying the variant is only a Variant of Interest (VoI). Such an open contradiction of its Ministry may be unique for this Government, but it shows the latter is proactive and moving ahead with caution, having drawn flak for failing to recognise the Delta variant earlier.



Three, the Government has cautioned the States against unchecked opening up of the lockdown, recommending a close watch on adherence to safety protocols. In perhaps its first, comprehensive advisory to the States concerning Delta+, the Government has asked them to step up monitoring in the six districts

in three States where cases of the new variant have been detected, increase testing, contact tracing, and vaccination. However, this is only a bit of the task done. Vaccinations continue to be problematic. The Government does give daily data about the number of doses at hand, but transparency is needed about the doses expected from the Indian and foreign manufacturers and the numbers apportioned to the states. This will enable to streamline the vaccination process. There is now an obvious rush to get free vaccinations leading to a fear of a reduced rush for paid vaccinations in private hospitals. Is it the right time for the Government to take over the procurement and supply of 100 per cent of the vaccinations to rationalise the process? India is yet to nail the vaccine efficacy issue. If it is a case of the more mutations the lesser the efficacy, then the Government has to come clear on a big-picture approach than reactive ones. There are reports of Bharat Biotech releasing data of its third phase trial to the Government regulator, but somehow the company shuns transparency. Also, the campaign to remove vaccine hesitancy is still to go national, presently restricted to the imagination of village-level teams. The unlock remains an issue of grave concern, with neither the States nor the Centre coming with tangible mechanisms to prevent safety violations without affecting economic activity.

Constitution, courts & a Prime Minister



RISHI GUPTA

Among a host of obstacles in the path, even with the President on his side, Nepal's Supreme Court has given Prime Minister Oli a rap on the knuckles

The ongoing political instability in Nepal has deteriorated with the Supreme Court's verdict on June 22. In a big blow to Prime Minister KP Oli, the apex court quashed the appointment of 20 new Ministers in the Oli Cabinet. These Ministers were appointed after Oli managed to crack a deal with a faction of the Janata Samajbadi Party led by Mahanta Thakur and Rajendra Mahto to support his minority Government. The acting Prime Minister, Oli, had appointed these Ministers, including two deputy Prime Ministers, on June 4 and 10. Meanwhile, these Ministers were appointed when the House of Representative stood dissolved, and the Supreme Court was examining a pile of petitions against the House dissolution on May 21. The Supreme Court has stoked the fanfare and enthusiasm among Oli's supporters for the second time in a row. On February 23, the court had quashed the unilateral move by President Bidya Bhandari to dissolve a functional Parliament and declaration of new elections in March and April. The first House was dissolved in December 2020 after Oli feared that his tussle with Maoist Party chief Prachanda would fall, which eventually happened in May.



Party itself was based on new portfolios and one deputy premier-ship.

As a result, Oli had asked his Ministers and loyalists in the Cabinet to resign *en masse*. However, amidst two back-to-back defeats in the apex court, the moral question for Oli has to be his resignation as for the last one year, he has merely been interested in the PMO for his political survival rather than focusing on COVID-19 and acting upon corruption charges levied on his fellow Ministers.

However, Oli has been trying to play out the Constitution for months, using the President's Office. As a result, of this nexus between Oli and Bhandari, Nepal again stands at a crossroads similar to the days of the political transition from monarchy to democracy in 2006. The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear hundreds of petitions filed against President Bhandari's decision to dissolve the House for a second time. While the hopes are high that the court may restore the House, it brings severe administrative challenges to the Government. At present, Oli is left with only five Ministers in his cabinet, including himself in charge of several portfolios. As per the Constitution, Oli should have continued with his previous Cabinet as no new appointment can be made under a dissolved House, or the Government in question has not faced the vote of confidence. However, the power-sharing between Janata Samajbadi

Unreliable Oli: Many in India believe that New Delhi facilitated the Janata Samajbadi Party's decision to support Oli. As a result, a long-term critic to India, Oli went on to record to say "differences with India have been resolved". If this is the case, India has taken the biggest strategic risk by trusting an untrustworthy Oli. For the last five years, Oli has been spitting venom against India's goodwill in Nepal. From raising the border issue to manipulating cultural and religious facts to suit his ultra-nationalistic outlook, he unilaterally included India's sovereign territory in a new political map of the country. However, even after everything seemed to be favouring



KP SHARMA OLI IS A PRODUCT OF POLITICAL EQUATIONS AND CALCULATIONS, AND HIS CORD FUNCTIONS AS PER THE POLITICAL SUITABILITY. THEREFORE, HOPING A FRIENDLY OLI WILL BE NEXT TO IMPOSSIBLE TASK FOR INDIA

India in Nepal, Oli once again alleged his claim on yoga as a Nepali practice and "not Indian". While Oli may still hold the powerful office in Nepal, India needs to think beyond him to keep open borders safe and prevent cross-border activities from affecting India's national security.

Oli is a product of political equations and calculations, and his cord functions as per the political suitability. Therefore, hoping a friendly Oli will be next to impossible task for India. On the other hand, China continues to benefit from political instability in the Himalayan country.

Before the second wave of COVID-19 had hit, India had supplied more than two million doses to Nepal. On the other hand, China promised to supply the second consignment of vaccines with four million doses. Meanwhile, the dragon has shown its unhappiness over media reports on the procurement. It exposes China's commercial intent in supplying the vaccines at about \$10 per dose (₹1186 Nepal) than its desired humanitarian intent. Meanwhile, Oli does not seem bothered with Chinese micro-management of Nepalese political affairs, its territorial expansion on the

Nepalese soil, brutal policies on Tibetan refugees living in Nepal and artificial humanitarian acts. The two large photographs of Chinese President Xi Jinping continue to grace the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website in Nepal at the cost of deteriorating relations with India.

Conclusion: The political instability in Nepal is the least desired by the people of Nepal under the current circumstances. Before Nepal, there are immediate challenges in terms of medical infrastructure, employment, economic development, infrastructure and leadership, which are clearly not on Oli's agenda. Therefore, while the people of Nepal await the court's verdict on the fate of Oli as Prime Minister, the latter himself should pave the way for a stable Nepal by resigning on moral grounds. Also, Nepal needs to understand that China may be a "big brother", but it is ill prepared to deal with dragon's ill-intended expansionist outlook where India is an "elder brother" it always needs.

(The author is an ICSSR Doctoral Fellow at the JNU and Visiting Fellow at the Asian Institute of Diplomacy and International Affairs, Kathmandu. The views expressed are personal.)

PIC TALK



People with motorcycles travel by boats to cross the flooded Ganga river, at Kachchi Dargah in Patna

PTI

Red ball

The new, World Test Championship, format has accorded competitiveness to all cricket games, even against lesser names

The World Test Championship was launched to bring excitement back into the longest format of the game, *vis-à-vis* the faster T20 matches, across the globe. The inaugural season, which started immediately after the end of ICC Cricket World Cup 2019 and concluded with the first ever WTC Final in Southampton between India and New Zealand on Wednesday, was the first ever multination ICC event which was played with the red ball. The idea to start the championship in the ultimate format was to give relevance to every bilateral series that is played as the points were awarded to each team after the end of every series and the top two teams with the maximum number of points by the end of a two-year cycle make it to the final and fight for the silverware. Ever since the WTC format came into act, the Test matches saw the rise in level of competitiveness. The teams now go for the kill in every game because a win would get them extra points as against a draw. Earlier, teams used to rest all format players for the red ball matches against the not-



so-fancy opponents but now, under the new format, even after winning the series before all the matches are played, team's don't rest their main players and would rather start with the strongest possible eleven in all the matches.

The competitiveness that was missing from the Test matches was installed back into the game by this WTC championship and it has certainly added an extra flair in the bilateral matches. Now the matches against teams like Bangladesh and Windies also have the same relevance as that of the matches against Australia or England. However, there are still a few things that needed to be sorted out to make it even more interesting and worthy, like the number of points awarded after every Test match win should be the same, irrespective of the number of matches in the series. Every game should be offering equal points and not like a five-match Test series will offer 24 points per Test win as compared to 60 per win in case of two match series. That is quite unfair. There were discussions about if one game is enough to determine the winner, like in case of this year's championship, or the ICC should consider having a proper Best of Three final to get the winner.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THEY'RE OUR KIDS, GO TO THEM!

Sir — With regard to 'Corona's orphans: Kids of a lesser god', June 23, it is extremely pitiful that thousands of children in India have lost one or both parents in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. And the prospect of a surge of abandoned minors worries many. Heart-rending stories in the media and desperate calls for help on social channels reveal a devastating truth of our times.

The intention is good, the schemes are fine but how will orphaned children avail of these benefits? Can we expect small or adolescent orphaned children going to the Government departments, filling up forms, submitting certificates and availing of this scheme? The direction has to be in reverse.

Instead of orphans seeking help from the Government, it is the State machinery which should send its officials to meet these orphaned children, prepare details and arrange a smooth transfer of stipends and educational loans. The entire task devolves upon the State Governments, who will have to provide data to the Centre.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

CHILDREN OF A LESSER GOD

Sir — According to UNICEF, India has over 30 million orphan and abandoned children. Unfortunately, the existing Corona crisis is adding unknown numbers of orphans to the list. In times of crisis of this magnitude, some miscreants try to derive undue benefit by resorting to human trafficking, which surely is a blot on society. These unscrupulous people tend to hoodwink gullible persons, who are easy targets. Their sentiments are exploited for exorbitant sums of money. The business of child trafficking and criminal trading is rampant and must be dealt with an iron hand.

The National and State Commissions for Protection of Child are empowered by law to take legal action against such criminal activities. Social activists, NGOs, newspapers and the aware citizens must report and publicise such incidents so that timely action can be taken against those engaged in illegal activities.

Caution ahead



Delta Plus variant, a mutated version of the more aggressive B.1.617.2 strain that drove the second wave of infections in India, is undergoing additional mutation called K417N which could become a "variant of concern" if unchecked as the variant is causing a surge in cases. India would see a faster surge if aggressive COVID-appropriate behaviour is not followed and insisted upon. The Delta plus is a variant which is of same lineage as the Delta variant, with a slight change as there is one more mutation found, which could be a cause of concern because this mutation, the K417N, is something which may change the virus to some extent

as far as its infectivity is concerned.

The B.1.617.2 variant is characterised as being highly infectious. The spike protein is what helps the virus enter and infect human cells, and the K417N mutation has been associated with immune escape, or evasion, that leaves it less susceptible, or more immune, to the vaccine or any form of drug therapy. India should not take this virus casually as this virus is changing and changing to survive and infect more people, therefore we have to be ahead of the virus.

The UK did a very good job by having an aggressive lockdown for many months and when they started opening up, the new variant caused the surge in number of cases. What it means is we are also in a vulnerable situation and if we are not careful right now then three or four months from now, we will have a similar situation and that is why we need to be very aggressive; it is mutating, changing, new variants are coming up. With this danger of Delta Plus variant looming heavily, we have to tackle it on war footing.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

People must be made aware about the due process of adoption by the Government. The Central Adoption Resource Authority regulates the adoption of the orphaned, abandoned children. In fact, the whole process must be streamlined to avoid delays.

Recently, the SC also came to the rescue of those orphaned by the crisis and gave instructions to the Government about their protection. This critical issue must be addressed and heeded so that they can get their rightful due a dignified life.

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Nainital

A DAMP SQUIB

Sir — Despite much political excitement around an Opposition party, the Rashtra Manch meeting hosted by Nationalist Congress Party chief Sharad Pawar in the Capital turned out to be a damp squib with a majority of the Opposition parties giving it a miss and many of them sending in sec-

ond-line leaders.

The NCP was subsequently at pains to explain that Pawar was only playing the host and did not organise the meeting. It also explained that there was no deliberate exclusion of the Congress. Other than the Congress, the DMK, the RJD and the BSP too did not send any representatives to the meeting.

It has been reported in the media that this meeting of Rashtra Manch was held by Sharad Pawar to unite anti-BJP parties is totally a showpiece rather than serving a desired purpose. Moreover, the meeting should not be misconstrued as a big political step taken by Pawar to exclude the Congress from any potential opposition grouping, pointing out that several Congress leaders were invited but they did not attend.

Chitra Krishnan | Vashi

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

Chiranjeevi garu, on behalf of the State Government, I thank you for your kind words of appreciation. The credit goes to team effort.



Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister — YS Jagan Mohan Reddy

We will not raise interest rates preemptively because we think employment is too high, because we fear the possible onset of inflation.

US Federal Reserve Chair — Jerome Powell

It is totally in the hands of makers as to what role they offer. I am known as a comedian and people have enjoyed my comic avatar for the longest.

Actor — Sunil Grover

Read reports that England cricketers may not be able to have family members with them Down Under this winter.

Former England skipper — Michael Vaughan

The scheme shall come into force with the effect from the date of its publication in the Delhi gazette.

Delhi Lieutenant Governor — Anil Bajaj



FIRST COLUMN

BACKWARDS AS 'FORWARD' IN UP

Rajbhar or otherwise, the names don't matter, but the point is to let the 'backwards' take the lead



BISWAJEET BANERJEE

Is it a coincidence that the state presidents of all the major parties in Uttar Pradesh namely, Bharatiya Janata Party, Samajwadi Party, and Congress belong to the backward castes, or is it a compulsion that has pushed all the major players in UP to woo the backwards by projecting them as state presidents? It is a political reality that the party which will be able to garner the maximum support from the backwards will win Uttar Pradesh. The BJP state president, Swatantra Dev Singh, and the Samajwadi Party state president, Naresh Uttam, are Kurmi, an influential backward caste after Yadavs. The Congress state president, Ajay Kumar Lallu, is a Senthwar, another backward caste.

The results of the 2017 assembly elections and the 2019 general elections show the importance of the votes of the backwards in UP politics. "The BJP was able to win these elections only because it was able to stitch a social alliance between its core, upper caste, and middle-class base and the intermediary castes, constituting more than 50 per cent of the state's electorate," Nomita P Kumar of Giri Institute of Development Studies in Lucknow said. The forthcoming electoral battle in Uttar Pradesh represents a matter of survival for the four major players. After the BJP fared poorly in the West



Bengal assembly elections and got a drubbing in the state Panchayat polls, a message went down the political corridors that it is losing its sheen. A loss in UP would intensify the pressure on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and that could prove detrimental to the party in the 2024 elections.

Senior BJP leaders confirm that the RSS and the BJP leadership have asked senior leaders to contest the elections. The Chief Minister, Yogi Adityanath, and Deputy Chief Minister, Dr Dinesh Sharma, who are members of the Upper House, will contest from Gorakhpur and Lucknow, respectively. For the Samajwadi Party it is a fight for its relevance. It secured only five seats in the 2014 general elections. It lost the 2017 assembly elections despite an alliance with Congress. In 2019, it lost again when it had an alliance with BSP. The party lost these elections under Akhilesh Yadav's leadership. There are reports that Akhilesh Yadav is not willing to forge an alliance with big parties but is ready to share seats with smaller caste-based parties. Samajwadi Party has almost finalized an alliance with the Mahan Dal, a small caste-based party that is popular among the backward Maurya, Kushwaha, and Saini castes. On the other hand, BJP too has started putting its house in order. Sanjay Nishad of Nishad Party and Anupriya Patel of Apna Dal (S) recently met Union Home Minister Amit Shah. The meeting is considered crucial in the backdrop of backward politics and BJP losing the Rajbhar support after Om Prakash Rajbhar of Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party walked out of the National Democratic Alliance.

Rajbhar has formed 'Bhagidari Sankalp Morcha' - a conglomeration of small parties and the front will field candidates in the 2022 assembly elections. The Morcha includes Babu Singh Kushwaha's Jan Adhikar Party, Krishna Patel's Apna Dal, Prem Chandra Prajapati's Bhagidari Andolan Manch, Baburam Pal's National Uday Party, Ram Sagar Bind's Bharat Mata Party, Ram Karan Kashyap's Bharatiya Vanchit Samaj Party, Anil Chauhan's Janata Kranti Party and All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen of Asaduddin Owaisi. Arun Rajbhar, son of Om Prakash Rajbhar, said that the Morcha will emerge as the king-maker. "We have the support of Backwards, MBCs, and Muslims. This is a very potent force which has the potential to topple the apple cart of big parties," he said.

(The writer is Executive Director (News), The Pioneer, Lucknow. The views expressed are personal.)

Fuel, healthcare, online businesses spur prices



SHIVAJI SARKAR

The recovery process, the SBI says, needs a cut in fuel prices by tax rationalisation as otherwise non-discretionary spends will continue to get distorted and cause inflation

The Indian economy may have started recovering with the pandemic unlock but galloping inflation, increasing healthcare expenses, and rising unemployment are major banes.

The global economy is to rise by four per cent and India would marginally benefit from it with some rise in exports. A World Bank report wants India to create 90 million jobs in non-agricultural organized sector - a Herculean task as most private sector offices are either closing down or slashing operations. Humanitarian crises, hunger deaths, and societal conflicts are growing.

Latest figures indicate 12.69 per cent inflation primarily on account of F2 - food and fuel. The fuel price rise is hitting every sector of the economy with nobody to correct it. The basic price of petrol remains still around ₹35.99 and over ₹65 are the central and state tax components. The edible oil prices have reached crisis points with a 62 per cent spike, Food Secretary Sudhansu Pande says. This follows withdrawal of edible oil from essential commodities list in September 2020

A State Bank of India report says that massive increase in healthcare, especially in the hinterland, steadily rising fuel prices, and online delivery of articles will increase inflationary pressure much higher on the one hand, while crowding out other consumer spending on the other, putting a big question mark on overall growth that is still being driven by consumption demand. Month-on-month increase in inflation on non-institutional medicines, x-ray, ECG, pathological and other clinical tests is taking a heavy toll not only in urban areas but even on the rural populace.

The SBI report has questioned the headline inflation figures announced by the ministry. It says that price movements convey important information about the scarcity of particular goods and services like health and medical care as of now. Health expenditure, which currently constitutes five per cent of overall inflation basket, may jump to at least 11 per cent. (It may be noted that health expenditure is around ₹6 lakh crore or five per cent of the private final consumption expenditure). This is likely to also result in a squeeze in expenditure on other items of discretionary consumption.

The daily increase of fuel prices is another bane. "And if we look at credit card spends since December, CPI computed inflation for the five-month ending April is higher than the CSO estimate on an average by 60 basis points and the higher oil prices had forced consumers to ration out discretionary spends in December," says SBI chief economist Soumya Kanti Ghosh. It means the actual inflation is 60 per cent more than the CSO figures.

The RBI has virtually given credence to the SBI finding as it estimates ₹2 lakh crore losses on economic output. It says that it may not reflect on GDP but there would be a considerable value loss across the economy. The SBI report clarifies it as the share of non-discretionary spend which has jumped to 59 per cent in April and 52 per cent in March and "this does not augur well".

The inflation is to further rise as the US has matched its interest rate rise. It would



THE RBI HAS ALREADY LOWERED ITS GDP PROJECTION TO 9.5 PER CENT FROM 10.5 PER CENT. IT HAD HOPED 18.5 PER CENT RECOVERY IN THE FIRST QUARTER, CONSIDERED LOW BASE GIVEN THE CONTRACTION LAST YEAR. IT IS NOW SCEPTICAL DUE TO THE SECOND WAVE OF LOCKDOWN THAT SEES DECLINE IN DEPOSITS, INDICATING HIGHER HOUSEHOLD EXPENSES, AND LOWER SAVINGS

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



impact India as well as there would be commodity price-rise globally. The RBI upon the government's suggestion has suppressed interest rates but it will not help keep prices low. It will make it difficult for the RBI to manage the conflicting targets of inflation, exchange rate, and adequate liquidity amidst weak growth.

The RBI has already lowered its GDP projection to 9.5 per cent from 10.5 per cent. It had hoped 18.5 per cent recovery in the first quarter, considered low base given the contraction last year. It is now sceptical due to the second wave of lockdown that sees decline in deposits, indicating higher household expenses, and lower savings. Additionally, currency holding - cash - with the people decelerated to 1.7 per cent during April against a growth of 3.5 per cent last year.

It substantiates what the SBI says that extra expenses on households have increased manifold. Also, there has been an increase in use of online delivery platforms which is not considered by the NSO and if the NSO considers online prices, there will be 10-15 basic points (bps) impact on CPI inflation. The SBI says

that the online delivery adds to inflation. The RBI says that the increased healthcare and other expenses have impacted domestic demand. That is the reason of delayed recovery of manufacturing, core sector and other activities.

The recovery process, the SBI says, needs a cut in fuel prices by tax rationalisation as otherwise non-discretionary spends will continue to get distorted and cause inflation.

The RBI has given another formula. It has gone a bit beyond and wants to partner with the private sector - in short a prescription for further denuding the PSUs. The recommendation should make the authorities rethink on privatisation.

Over the last few years, major PSUs have consistently increased payouts to the government despite a dip in their profitability. Since 2016, as per an official diktat they are paying a minimum 30 per cent of their profit after tax or five per cent of their net worth, whichever is higher, as dividend.

The 100 government companies declared a dividend of ₹71,857 crore during 2018-19, according to the CAG. In 2021,

the PSUs paid a dividend of ₹39,022 crore (against an estimated ₹34,717 crore), the RBI paid ₹99,000 crore dividend, and other banks paid ₹1,619 crore in 2020-21. In short, a major part of the government expenses are being funded by the PSUs. The government's efforts to sell PSUs are being stonewalled by a poor economy. It should rather change its policies to strengthen the PSUs.

Despite this the India remains an investment destination. A healthy flow of FDI into the country corroborates India's strength and attracts attention of global investors, the Confederation of Indian Industry says. Total equity, re-invested earnings, and capital rose 10 per cent to the highest ever \$81.72 billion during 2020-21.

The RBI expects recent government boost in capital expenditure to spur activity and investment. For all this, however, there has to be a major shift in policy thrust. While private investments must rise, the government must relook at strengthening PSUs to tide over the crisis that is beyond the capacity of the private sector. This would alone cut prices and boost demand.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

ON A DAY INDIA VACCINATED MORE THAN 84 LAKH PEOPLE, DELHI ADMINISTERED ONLY 76,259 OUT OF MORE THAN 11 LAKH DOSES AVAILABLE. WHY? — UNION URBAN DEVELOPMENT MINISTER HARDEEP SINGH PURI



HARDEEP JI: PLS FOCUS ON PROVIDING ENOUGH VACCINES FOR THE YOUTH, RATHER THAN JUST ABUSING ARVIND KEJRIWAL ALL THE TIME. — DELHI DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER MANISH SISODIA

Aviation industry: Pandemic-hit Phoenix waiting to rise

Indian aviation is expected to incur \$4 billion worth of losses in 2021 and it is not easy to even out the operational costs before 2023

The COVID-19 pandemic has clipped the wings of the aviation industry the world over. In India, the lockdown banning air travel has hit this industry the worst. As a ripple effect, the tour and travel and the hospitality industry have also been hit.



GYANESHWAR DAYAL

Downsizing has led to people in these industries losing their jobs and a lucky few are working on half, reduced or meagre salaries. International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) pegs the losses of the aviation industry at \$370 billion. Air travel is down 60 per cent. This has led to airlines shutting most of their operations. They continue to incur fixed costs without the grounded fleets not earning a dime. According to the Indian rating

(The writer is a columnist and a documentary film-maker. The views expressed are personal.)

agency ICRA, domestic passenger traffic between May and September 2020 was only 11 million in comparison to 70 million in 2019.

An aviation expert, PS Nair, says Indian aviation is expected to incur \$4 billion worth of losses in 2021. Nair says: "These losses are not easy to even out. A very careful and integrated approach is required to rejuvenate the aviation industry. Everything would depend upon the economic recovery of the country. But aviation stands a good chance, as it has no alternative. If you have to travel, you have to take a flight; virtual flight is not an option."

India is the seventh-largest civil aviation market in the world. It is the third-largest aviation market in terms of



domestic operations. The country has the potential to overtake the United Kingdom and become the world's third-largest aviation market in terms of handling air passengers within the next five years.

The best minds in the aviation industry recently had a brainstorming session under the aegis of the Air Travellers Association (ATA). GS Bawa, General Secretary, ATA, feels

that the recovery will take years, if not decades. The recovery is linked to Covid-19 vaccination programs and testing procedures worldwide. He feels operational costs would not breakeven before 2023.

PS Nair, the former CEO, Delhi Airport and founder-CEO of HIAL says that the industry has a good chance to bounce back as fundamentals of the country's economy are still favourable. For a few years before the pandemic, the aviation sector of India had registered a steady growth and India had overtaken Japan to become the third-biggest domestic market. Private investors were showing interest in developing the country's airports but Covid-19 struck and stalled everything.

Efforts are already on in the industry as well as in the government to make the turnaround possible. To encourage the development of the aviation industry, the government plans to invest up to \$1.83 billion and develop airport infrastructure and aviation navigation services by 2026. The Culture and Tourism Minister Prahlad Patel is hopeful of early revival, saying the tourism and aviation industries will be back with a bang because the government is linking its vaccination program with the drive to revive the tourism sector. The government is also working on a uniform policy for travel and protocols for vaccinated travellers. The Minister recently launched the Confederation of Hospitality, Technology and

Tourism Industry, an industry body of travel and hospitality tech players like Airbnb, EaseMyTrip, OYO, and Yatra. The idea is to help small operators in the tourism sector.

Nair, however, feels optimistic because the country aims to open 100 new airports by 2024 of which 30 projects are already in progress. Plans are on to have 200 more airports by 2040. The infrastructure boost coupled with a rise in demand should see the Indian aviation industry flying high. "The Government must support the industry. If you increase the airfares, the demand may further come down, if you don't losses would mount," says Bawa.

On its part, ATA has a few recommendations for helping out the aviation industry. It has

asked the government to compensate airlines and airports to the extent of their operating losses and give them some tax relief. It wants a government package for maintaining operations in tier-2 and tier-3 cities. This will improve passenger confidence. The traffic will improve bringing sustainability to the sector.

Bawa has also asked the government to relax the travel restrictions for those who have been vaccinated. "Restrictions like the RT-PCR tests and quarantines should not be mandatory for the travellers with both jabs," he says. The ATA has suggested that for inland travel, a pass with a fitness certificate can also be issued. 'Yatra Setu' on the lines of 'Arogya Setu' can be a good step in this direction.

Travel industry likely to reach 35-40 pc revenue

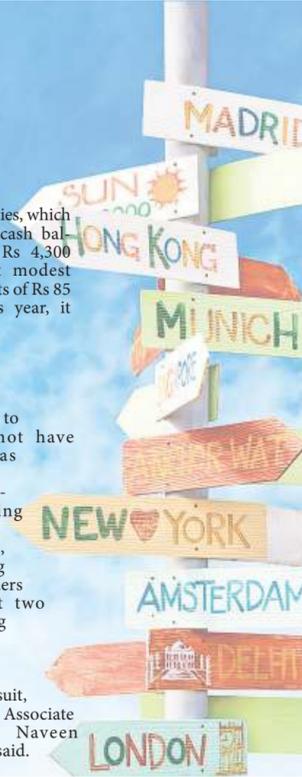
PNS ■ MUMBAI

The travel and tourism industry is likely to reach 35-40 per cent revenue of the pre-pandemic level in the current financial year, according to a report. "With states beginning to ease restrictions and vaccination rates expected to improve, we see domestic travel picking up slowly from the second quarter. "However, segments such as international holidays and inbound travel may see recovery only in the second half, and that too only if travel restrictions are eased in foreign countries," Crisil Ratings Senior Director Manish Gupta said. He also noted that with meetings and events shifting to the online mode, corporate travel is expected to remain under pressure. "Overall, therefore, revenue this fiscal year may reach only a little over a third of the pre-pandemic level, that is 35-40 per cent," he added.

The Crisil Ratings report further stated that while companies have raised capital last fiscal and will continue with cost-control measures to cut cash losses, therefore, a significant decline in travel and continued uncertainty about the pandemic will weigh negatively on their credit profiles. Tours and travel operators provide services such as air or bus ticketing, hotel packages for both leisure and corporate travel within India and overseas. These companies' revenues declined to Rs 2,300 crore last fiscal, which was only 20 per cent of FY20 levels, after the nationwide lockdown and other restrictions led to a sharp reduction in travel, it said. The industry was brought to a standstill in the first quarter of last fiscal – the peak travel season because of summer holidays – which eroded revenue 95 per cent year-on-year. However, there was a gradual turnaround thereafter, with

improving air traffic and demand for short domestic holidays lifting revenue to 55 per cent of the pre-pandemic level by the fourth quarter, the report said. Then the second wave set in and under its impact, the first quarter of this fiscal is expected to be almost a washout once again, this time because of state-level lockdowns, it added. In FY22, too, the industry is expected to post operating cash losses of around Rs 150-200 crore, which is significantly lower than last year, mainly on account of improved bookings and continued control of costs. Moreover, the report stated that the travel operators have limited dependence on debt as their working capital cycle is typically negative because of high customer advances and creditors compared to low receivables. Further, companies raised capital last fiscal amid near-

term uncertainties, which boosted their cash balance to over Rs 4,300 crore, against modest debt repayments of Rs 85 crore due this year, it pointed out. The silver lining for the industry is people's fundamental urge to travel may not have diminished as multiple European countries, including France, Italy and Spain, began opening up their borders over the last two months to bring back tourists and the US is expected to soon follow suit, Crisil Ratings Associate Director Naveen Vaidyanathan said.



Cabinet approves pact between India, St Vincent

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Cabinet on Wednesday approved an agreement between India and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for the exchange of tax information and assistance in the collection. The agreement between India and St Vincent and the Grenadines, which is an island nation, will help in facilitating the exchange of information between the two countries, including sharing of information held by the banks and other financial institutions encompassing the information regarding the legal and beneficial ownership. It will also facilitate the assistance in the collection of the tax claims between the two countries. Thus, it will strengthen India's commitment to fight offshore tax evasion and tax avoidance practices, leading to the generation of unaccounted black money, an official statement said. The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra



Modi, has approved an agreement between the Republic of India and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for the exchange of information and assistance in the collection with respect to taxes, it added. The agreement also contains tax examination abroad provisions, which provide that a country may allow the representatives of the other country to enter its territory to interview individuals and examine records for tax purposes.

There was no such agreement with Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in the past and India was negotiating this agreement for a long time. Finally, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines agreed to conclude this agreement with India, which will promote tax cooperation between the two countries through the exchange of information and assistance in the collection of outstanding tax claims between the two countries, the statement said.

MONEY MATTERS

Heineken acquires 14.98 per cent more stake in UBC

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Dutch brewing major Heineken on Wednesday said it has acquired an additional 14.98 per cent stake in United Breweries Ltd, taking its total shareholding to 61.50 per cent. "Heineken N.V. today (on Wednesday) announces that it has acquired an additional 39,644,346 ordinary shares in United Breweries Ltd (UBL) taking its shareholding in UBL from 46.5 per cent to 61.5 per cent," Heineken said in a statement. UBL, with its flagship brand 'Kingfisher', is the leading player in the beer market in India. The move comes a day after markets regulator Sebi had exempted Heineken International B.V. from the obligation of making an open offer following its proposed acquisition of shares in UBL. Sebi had on Tuesday granted waiver following an application from Heineken International seeking exemption from the applicability of SAST Regulations in its proposed acquisition of UBL's equity shares, from the recovery officer of the Bangalore Debt Recovery Tribunal (DRT) under whose custody the transfer shares owned by the Vijay Mallya Group are being held.



Sensex drops 283 points; Nifty ends below 15,700

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark Sensex gave up early gains and tumbled 283 points on Wednesday following losses in index heavyweights Reliance Industries, HDFC and ICICI Bank. The 30-share BSE index ended 282.63 points or 0.54 per cent lower at 52,306.08. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty declined 85.80 points or 0.54 per cent to 15,686.95. Kotak Bank was the top loser in the Sensex pack, shedding over 1 per cent, followed by L&T, Tata Steel, HDFC, TCS, Reliance Industries, HCL Tech and ICICI Bank. On the other hand, Maruti, Titan, Bajaj Finserv and M&M were among the gainers. Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Shanghai, Hong Kong and



Tokyo ended with gains, while Seoul was in the red. Equities in Europe were largely trading with losses in mid-session deals. Meanwhile, international oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 0.84 per cent higher at USD 75.44 per barrel.



Former Infosys CEO to head task force to help govt in bringing major reforms in bureaucracy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Infosys CEO S D Shibulal was on Wednesday appointed chairperson of a three-member task force formed to help the government in bringing major bureaucratic reforms through its ambitious "Mission Karmayogi".

Besides Lal who is founder of ShikshaLokam and founder and ex-CEO of Infosys Limited, Govind Iyer, Consultant at global management consulting group Egon Zehnder, and Pankaj Bansal, Co-founder and Group CEO of HR tech company PeopleStrong, will be part of

the task force, according to a Personnel Ministry order. Adil Zainulbhai, chairman designate, Capacity Building Commission, Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) will be a special invitee to the discussions of the task force, it said.

Rupee snaps 2-day losing streak, closes up by 10 paise at 74.27

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The rupee snapped its two-day losing streak to settle 10 paise higher at 74.27 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday, following the weakness of the American currency in the overseas market. At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened at 74.26 against the greenback and witnessed an intra-day high of 74.07 and a low of 74.39. It finally ended at 74.27 against the American currency, registering a rise of 10 paise over its previous close. On Tuesday, rupee had settled at 74.37. The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, dipped 0.01 per cent to 91.74.

Dabur commences Rs 550 cr manufacturing facility in MP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

MCG major Dabur India Ltd on Wednesday said it has commenced construction of its largest manufacturing facility near Indore in Madhya Pradesh. The company commenced construction of its largest manufacturing facility in Madhya Pradesh. Being set up with a phased investment of around Rs 550 crore, this new unit would manufacture a range of Dabur's food products, ayurvedic medicines, and health supplements. Dabur said in a regulatory filing. Dabur said the first phase of construction of this new facility – which has been planned under the Mega Projects Scheme of the Madhya Pradesh government as well as the Central Government's Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme – is scheduled for completion by the end of 2021-22 financial year. Located in the SMART Industrial Park near Indore, this unit will provide direct cum indirect employment to around 1,250 people initially and over 3,000 people at the end of the final phase.



Education important for youth to face challenges: Labour Minister

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Labour Minister Santosh Gangwar on Wednesday acknowledged the importance of education system and the labour market to prepare our young generation to face the upcoming challenges of the world of work. Gangwar was addressing the G20 Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting on Joint Education and Labour & Employment Ministers' Declaration here on Wednesday, a labour ministry statement said. The meeting was held under the Italian presidency. While supporting the adoption of the Joint Ministerial Declaration, the Minister emphasised that such an initiative by the member countries shall be very helpful for the overall development and capacity building of the entire young generation, which is rapidly evolving and has now become more challenging due to the pandemic. "India is strengthening its educational and skilling efforts to ensure quality education



from pre-school to senior secondary stage. New National Education Policy, 2020 in India, also aims for reforms in school and higher education systems," he stated. He also informed that the government has taken several initiatives for capacity building and skilling of our youth and for employment generation. The National Skill Development Mission is resulting in convergence of skilling efforts across all sectors. The

Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana, enables the youth to take up industry related skill training to assist them in securing better opportunities. For employment generation in the country, the government is paying up to 24 per cent of wages towards EPF contributions under the Aatma-Nirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana for new employees as well as those who lost their jobs in the pandemic and are being re-employed.

Jet Airways shares continue to fly

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of Jet Airways extended their rally to Wednesday, gaining 5 per cent, after the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) gave its nod to the Jalan Kalrock Consortium's bid for the airline. The stock jumped 4.98 per cent to Rs 104.40 – its upper circuit limit – for the day on both BSE and NSE. On Tuesday also, Jet



Airways shares jumped nearly 5 per cent. Two years after Jet Airways went bankrupt, the National Company Law Tribunal on Tuesday gave its nod to the Jalan Kalrock Consortium's

bid for the airline and the resolution professional is hopeful that the carrier will be back in the skies by the end of this year. While the detailed written order is awaited, the tribunal made it clear that it will not give any direction on the issue of airport slots for the airline, saying that the matter will be handled by the government or the appropriate authority concerned.

IndoSpace launches 2 parks in Tamil Nadu

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Grade A industrial real estate and logistics parks developer IndoSpace on Wednesday announced the launch of two parks in Tamil Nadu to cater to automotive and electronic sectors, among others. With a combined area of 118 acres, the two parks – Vallam II and Oragadam III – will provide smooth access to industrial hubs and micro-markets in the state and boost IndoSpace's footprint across strategically significant regions, the company said in a release.



It has a long-term goal of creating 120 million square feet of modern logistics infrastructure across the country and the setting of the two parks is a step in that direction, it said. The Everstone Group, GLP

and Realterm – promoted IndoSpace has a portfolio of 43 million square feet across developed and under-construction projects spanning 41 industrial and logistics parks in nine cities.

Wipro GE Healthcare to locally make Versana Ultrasound range

PNS ■ BANGALURU

Wipro GE Healthcare on Wednesday said it has commenced local production of its Versana Ultrasound range in the country. The initiative is part of the company's strategy to expand localisation and strengthen the supplier ecosystem. The Versana Ultrasound range is part of Wipro GE Healthcare's affordable product portfolio and will be manufactured at its manufacturing facility in Kadugodi, Bengaluru. "With this new local manufacturing we will cut down our imports of the Versana range by half," Wipro GE Healthcare South Asia Managing Director Shrawan Subramanyam said in a statement. With local manufacturing, the company can fast-track the availability of these critical care equipment, he added. "The price benefit will also be passed on to our customers. By the end of 2021, the plan is to locally manufacture seven ultrasound products catering to OB/GYN, radiology, cardiology, anaesthesia, emergency, and critical care segments," Subramanyam noted.



GoMechanic raises \$42 mn in funding led by Tiger Global

PNS ■ BANGALURU

Car servicing startup GoMechanic on Wednesday said it has raised USD 42 million (around Rs 311 crore) in a funding round led by Tiger Global Management. The Series C funding round also saw participation from existing investors Sequoia Capital India, Orios Venture Partners and Chiratae Ventures. It is the fourth round of institutional funding for the company which plans to utilise the proceeds to accelerate its growth in tier II and III towns, ramping up the technology team and launching operations in international markets. Prior to this round, GoMechanic had raised USD 21 million from Sequoia Capital India, Orios Venture Partners and Chiratae Ventures. Earlier in 2020, Pawan Munjal, Chairman, MD & CEO, Hero MotoCorp also invested in the company. "The current fund raise is further validation of the hard work put in by the GoMechanic team over the last five years and further cements our position as the undisputed market leader in the auto aftermarket ecosystem."



Gold gains Rs 110; silver climbs Rs 324

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold in the national capital on Wednesday gained Rs 110 to Rs 46,396 per 10 gram following recovery in global precious metal prices, according to HDFC Securities. In the previous trade, the precious metal had closed at Rs 46,286 per 10 gram. Silver also climbed Rs 324 to Rs 66,864 per kilogram from Rs 66,540 per kilogram in the previous trade. "Spot gold prices for 24 carat in Delhi were up by Rs 110 in-line with recovery in COMEX gold prices," according to HDFC Securities, Senior Analyst (Commodities), Tapan Patel.

Housing sales in Apr-Jun may rise 93%

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Housing sales are estimated to rise 93 per cent year-on-year during April-June across seven major cities, but may fall 58 per cent compared to the previous quarter due to the adverse impact of the second wave of COVID-19, according to property consultant Anarock. Sales are likely to be around 24,570 units across seven major cities -- Delhi-NCR, Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Pune, Anarock said. Sales of residential properties stood at 12,740 units in April-June 2020 and 58,290 units in March quarter 2021. Anarock released the data of housing sales and launches a week before the end of the current



quarter. When asked about the reason for release of data in advance, Anarock did not reply. PropTiger, Knight Frank India, PropEquity release their data after the end of every quarter. JLL India, of late, is

also releasing the data before quarter ends. "The second COVID-19 wave definitely impacted overall residential property market activity in the second quarter this year when juxtaposed against the preceding quarter. However, compared to the corresponding period of 2020, the sector displayed remarkable resilience," Anarock Chairman Anuj Puri said. Importantly, the localized lockdowns and restrictions did not dent activity as much as the complete nationwide lockdown last year, he added. "Restrictions are now easing across cities and the vaccination drive is gathering momentum. We, therefore, anticipate residential demand to see steady growth in the upcoming quarter," Puri said. The structural shift in housing demand continues – many current homeowners seek to upgrade to larger homes and the previously purchase-averse millennials remain very active property buyers, he said. According to the data, hous-

ing sales in MMR are likely to jump over two-fold at 7,400 units in April-June against 3,620 units in the year-ago period. However, sales may drop by 64 per cent from 20,350 units in March quarter of 2021 calendar year. Pune is likely to witness housing sales of around 3,790 units in April-June 2021 against 2,160 units in the corresponding quarter last year. Demand is likely to fall 64 per cent from 10,550 units sold in January-March 2021. Sales of residential properties in Delhi-NCR may rise by 65 per cent to 3,470 units in June quarter 2021 against 2,100 units in the corresponding period last year. On sequential basis, sales may drop by 61 per cent from 8,790 units in first quarter.

COMING TOGETHER WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH

When a GHMC garbage collector's life was in danger, residents of a colony he worked in came together to pool in lakhs of rupees to help his family pay the hospital bills. They tell *The Pioneer's* RACHEL DAMMALA that they're only giving back what he did to them as a dutiful worker.



Rachael Dawson with her brother David Dawson

Dokka Narasimha has been a garbage collector in the Banjara Hills area for close to 30 years. It was on June 12 that he took his vaccine shot against Covid. Like it happened to most people that took the job, he started showing side effects of high fever and took a Dolo 65 to treat it. Three days later, Narasimha had a series of epileptic attacks and as they kept progressively increasing, he was rushed to the hospital immediately. The doctors found that he was bleeding internally bleeding, and noticed that the blood collected in his lungs was clotting. They immediately, through surgery, removed this clot but Narasimha had remained unconscious for quite a few days and the doctors said he needs to be on life-support to recover.

41-year-old Narasimha is the sole breadwinner of his family. His wife Manga is a homemaker, he has three beautiful children, twin daughters who are 15, and a son, who is 11. Manga has been trying to make ends meet, to pay the hospital bills that cost close to half a-lakh per day! She took her husband's phone and left a message to members of the colony he worked for, with a picture of Narasimha receiving treatment.

And that's when things changed.

"Narsingh, as we fondly call him, has been our colony garbage collector for the past 25 years. He is a hard-working, genuine, helpful worker and has grown to be a



Narasimha with his son

friend to everyone in the colony. I remember him waving goodbye to me when I boarded my bus to school. When my older brother met with an accident in 2000, he brought him tender coconut water every day, and when my parents met with an accident in 2008, he did the same for us all. He is almost the same age as my brother, when my brother returned from Ahmedabad after his higher studies, Narsingh was so glad, they hugged and greeted each other, they were that close," Rachael Dawson, one of the residents of Aurora Colony in Banjara Hills, shares about the kind of relationship they share with Narasimha.

When residents of the colony learnt of his condition, they rushed to help in whatever ways they could think of. As soon as they saw the message, the Dawsons thought of multiple ways to help Narasimha's family. "We then thought of creating a fundraiser online, this was the first time we did something like this. We shared about the same in our colony's WhatsApp group and people responded promptly. We were able to collect close to 2.5 lakhs via the fundraiser for Narasimha's family," Rachael informs.

Members of the colony even

put up his G-pay number for people to send it directly to his wife, and she received close to 50,000 rupees.

Apart from this, the fundraiser reached the families of residents living outside of India, and they sent another 1.5 lakhs to help save Narasimha's life. "My mom's brother and my dad's relative sent us close to 1.5 lakhs and that's how we were able to collect close to 4.5L until now, and hope to receive the remaining money too, this will go a long way in giving back Narasimha what he gave us," the 26-year-old resident shares.

Manga says she's extremely grateful for what the residents of the colony are doing for her. "My own family couldn't help me so much. They have all now become my true family. They're regularly contacting me to check on us, and that support has kept me going, it has been keeping me strong through it all," Manga shares.

Right now, Narasimha, who was shifted out of ICU on Tuesday morning after he seemed to be recovering, was admitted back to the ICU after he had difficulty breathing and acute chest pain. In a day or two, the doctors are going to be running a series of tests to check what could possibly be the cause.

This story of a community coming together to help a worker in dire times is sure the kind we need to hear in times when most care little to even hold a decent conversation or smile back at those helping us every day.



Entrepreneur Aditya Gupta shares what he has learnt by scaling the highest peak on the planet through his book, *7 Lessons from Everest*, in an attempt to help others.



On top of the world

At the age of 50, on May 22, 2019, Aditya Gupta was coming to terms with the overwhelming joy of being at the summit of Mount Everest. Just five days after being on top of the world, he was back home in Delhi and could not help but revisit the memories of the past few weeks. Replaying the dicey situations, he tells us that things could have gone south real quick. "Climbing Mt Everest is a constant battle. You are walking past dead bodies which serve as landmarks for those who are alive. It teaches you that there is something deeply unexplainable which is helping you. It also serves the reminder that you are not alone while enforcing the power of good wishes of my family and friends. You know, it is not recommended for people to stay on the summit for more than 10-15 minutes, because getting there is only half

the job. The summit push can't be regarded as a successful one until you get back, but I was spell-bound, and could not help myself. Since I am an avid photographer I was constantly looking around, overcome by gratitude since we were treated with clear skies on side while the other half of the sky was cloudy. It was an extraordinary view and we ended up staying on the summit for over half an hour. We should not have overstayed, however, God was kind and we made it back without any untoward incident," Aditya

recounted.

Ace mountaineer, TEDx speaker and founder of a leading sustainable homegrown decor brand, Aditya was overwhelmed by the admiration and adulation that came his way after getting back, but he quickly got over it. He told us that he wanted to do a lot more with his experience than just acknowledging compliments.

"As someone who had a considerable reach on social media, I quickly got accustomed to people congratulating me. I had climbed Mt Everest and yes, it was no

mean feat, 'thank you very much' but I remember thinking that surely there was a lot more that I could do with my experience. Following up on this tough process, I accepted offers to give talks at schools and other organisations. After I came back and put up my story on social media, someone from Baroda reached out to me, seeking permission to use my experience in the formulation of a management based game. I eagerly agreed and they successfully developed that gamified experience, which is now used to train management folks. Such interactions happened to be very fulfilling and lent substance to the purpose of sharing my experience. Thinking back, even three months after coming back I could not get over my feat and kept thinking that I need to do more. That is when I decided that I should put together a book highlighting my journey," said Aditya thoughtfully.

In August 2019, he started piecing together his experience, bit by bit. And he tells us it was not as easy as it might have seemed. Shortlisting over 300 photographs from 3,500-4,000 was just one humongous task among many others but, behind the scenes, he felt that the book was about so much more than scaling Mt Everest.

"I was documenting almost every critical juncture on the way to the top. Revisiting those images rekindled my memories. Whole thing was playing in my mind. The weeks that led to the climax of the summit push, all those dicey situations. That is when I realised that the book couldn't simply be about climbing Everest. Okay, Everest is the content but the context is about life, in a larger sense. And when I went down this path, I did not realise the

effort it would take. It was like climbing another mountain altogether. It took me more than a year to finish the whole thing and the pandemic slowed the process down, but I am glad I took my time since it helped enhance my vision. It is just like that saying, 'all good things take time,'" Aditya shared with a smile.

On April 2021, amid the raging pandemic, he launched *7 Lessons from Everest*, as a colourised, coffee table book. While the book in itself was about so much more than scaling the highest peak on the planet, Aditya's appreciation for life was underlined by the fact that all proceeds from the sales of the book went to CRY (Child Rights and You), an NGO which has been helping vulnerable children survive and thrive in a post-Covid world. We ask him whether there is any one lesson that he would say is more prominent than the others. His response? "I cannot possibly explain how hard it is to pick, which is why I just elaborated on seven. I could have just as easily mentioned 25 lessons. You have to understand that the prominence of the lesson depends on the circumstances you are dealing with. Everest is just a metaphor. The book serves the notion that life need not be about climbing a mountain called Everest. It is about taking on large goals which others would not even consider pursuing. Bottomline is, if someone as ordinary as me could climb Everest with a body that was half a century old, anyone can do anything. You just need to apply yourself according to the need of the moment," Aditya wrapped up nonchalantly. That last statement piqued our curiosity and we can't wait to flip through his book to see what other pearls of wisdom he has in store for us.

Pandemic waste, Dr. Binish Desai's gain

Digital content creator duo Abhiraj and Niyati aka AbhiandNiyu who are known for their impactful and inspirational videos recently released a video that documented the magnificent work done by Dr. Binish Desai (the Recycle Man of India) on his eco-friendly bricks 2.0. The video has gained close to 9 million views across Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. After the release of the video, Binish and his team have received 21 kgs of worn-out masks and PPE kits from houses and 125kg waste from mask manufacturers using their 'chindi' waste to make bricks.

Speaking about their video, the duo said, "We wanted to focus on a solution-based approach to everyday living. We highlighted the ever-increasing waste produced globally every month by masks, PPE kits, and gloves. Most of them are disposable face masks made from plastic microfibers so when we came across the amazing work Dr. Binish Desai was doing, we wanted to show that small things can make a difference."

Dr. Binish Desai found a way to convert masks and woven PPE waste into bricks. These bricks cost Rs. 2.8 per brick which is much cheaper than regular bricks and are made of 52% shredded PPE masks, 48% paper industry sludge +

Binish's patented binder. Based on this genius idea, Abhi and Niyu made a video around it to encourage people to donate their used or worn out masks and PPE kits to this cause. The video was also shared by actors Ayushmann Khurrana and Bhumi Pednekar.

Dr. Binish Desai shared "I have always seen waste as something that is useful. When Covid hit and a new type of pollution, i.e PPE waste, came into existence, it became more important than ever to find a solution to this problem. This initiative of collecting used PPE from households is one way of educating people and helping them form a habit of collecting waste. When they see a difference being made with their small efforts it turns into a larger change. I'm thankful to Abhi and Niyu for the video as it has made many people aware of waste and help create a difference one waste at a time. We have also started receiving materials from people and are happily recycling them into the bricks 2.0."

With over 3.5 million followers across all social media platforms, Abhiraj and Niyati, are popular content creators who are famous for their series *#100ReasonsToLoveIndia* where they travelled across India to find 100 heartwarming stories of change, positivity, and inspiration across India.





Environment plays an important role in our lives. This has opened plenty of lucrative options in the field in India as well as abroad, says Dr Mukesh Kwatra

BE EVERGREEN

mining industry, plant food industry, textile and dyeing industry, food processing units and bio fuel industry. After holding a degree in this field you get a variability of careers to choose from and that could be from government, personal organisations or from plentiful of alternative industries.

One can also consider a teaching job in schools or universities. Several private organisations like food processing industries, refineries, distilleries and plant food industries are providing various job opportunities for the graduates in this field.

Aspirants doing various courses in environment field, can apply for a research degree in government organisations. MSC

Environment isn't a single subject but an associate integration of many subjects that embrace each other, like Science and Social Studies. It teaches us about sustainable way of living together with environment. Therefore the scope of environmental studies is very wide and covers some aspects of nearly each major discipline. It offers an overplus of job chance for environmental scientists, biologists, engineers, modellers and journalists. Environmental scientists find opportunities in the



degree holding candidates can find many lucrative career opportunities in India as well as abroad in Environmental Science.

Environmental Professor: The scope of environment studies is tremendously growing in recent years with cutting-edge research and continuous innovation in the field. Researchers find Environmental Professor as a lucrative career choice. If you want to be a part of this highly paid job in government and private sectors then pursue a desired degree to achieve success.

Environmental Engineering: It is a job type in which environmentalists utilise the knowledge of engineering thus acquired in soil science, hydraulics, chemistry etc to evolve answers for ecological issues. They are also better equipped to address global issues, such as ecological

disparity, water issues, climate change, and environmental sustainability. If you choose to start your career at the right place, you are bound to attain heights in your career. It offers you plenty of opportunities to work on broad range of fields.

Environmental Biologists: They are scientists who study how living organisms interact with each other, their environments and surroundings. In this field one can work as field technicians, laboratory technicians, researchers for private or government laboratories, or as independent contractors.

Environmental Scientists: They are the ones who use their knowledge of natural science to protect the environment and human health. Environment scientists are employed with mines, agencies involved in cleaning up of polluted areas, dyeing industry, fertiliser industry, as advisory to policymakers, or work with waste management concerns.

This sector provides plethora of highly paid job opportunities. You can be employed by various Government organisations like Pollution Control Board, Water Authority, Waste management and Urban Planning.

Environmental Journalist: With a lot of media attention off late to environment concerns, reporting on environmental problems is at the rise. People search for complete information associated with the surroundings, for this reason there is an increase in the demand for environmental journalists.

One may also opt for jobs in fertiliser plants and can also work in food processing companies as managers. Besides, regarding the environment issues many NGOs are coming up to take up and work upon to find solutions to the various Environment concerns. According to one's interests, one can also join these organisations.

There is plenty of opportunities, abundance of jobs and various paths a diploma holder in environment field can choose to take. In addition, the earning hereinafter offer a reasonable possibility to clear scholar mortgage debts if any and take care of their family in future.

(The writer is the founder of Smiling Tree.)

Nanotechnology boom in medical diagnostics

Medical diagnostics is more than a 50-billion-dollar industry worldwide with almost 20 billion dollars of it related to nanotechnology in medical diagnostics. Nanotechnology is an enabling diagnostics technology that can catapult the sensitivity sometimes by several orders of magnitude. An example is Surface Enhanced Raman Spectroscopy (SERS) technology, which is three orders of magnitude, that means thousand times, more sensitive than conventional Raman technology. The sensitivity of nano-enabled devices is related to the very small size (about 10 - 200 nanometers in size) particles or fibers that can conduct electrons faster, sensitively and rapidly change color or electronic properties with their environment such as the presence of very minute (part per billion) amounts of chemical constituents. Sensitivity and speed are the biggest demands in the medical industry. Imagine having an instant Covid test done with absolute accuracy. Nanotechnology is by far the overwhelming solution for such rapid and sensitive diagnostics using such materials as gold nanoparticles, gold nanoclusters which are only 1 nm in size, carbon nanotubes and graphene, titania, etc. Furthermore, nanotech diagnostic devices have extremely low power consumption, are ultra-small and compact.

Optical diagnostics are also a wave of the future. Imagine shining a light on a suspected cancer and being able to say in minutes whether it is cancer or not. Mobile light devices can be taken to villages for non-invasive diagnostics that are extremely inexpensive. Such mobile devices are already under development. The advantage of light diagnostics is that it can evolve into therapeutics, that is diag-

nostics combined with therapy. Shine light on a cancer, and if the light detects cancer, the same light can remove the cancer painlessly. The future is almost here.

Medical Imaging technologies for diagnostics is another area that is exploding in size and driven by more and more accurate high-resolution imaging combined with artificial intelligence-based processing. Medical imaging resolution through nanotechnology is accomplished using suitable nanoparticles that can accumulate in target tissues and vastly enhance the contrast of those tissues. Nano contrast agents market is about 3 billion dollars with global companies such as Nanoscan imaging, Nanotherapeutics, GE, Bayer and so on. Contrast agents include nano iron oxide, minerals such as nano calcium phosphate, gold, quantum dots, etc. The hope is to image lesions much smaller than a millimeter so that appropriate steps can be taken long before it is too late. Advance warning is the holy grail of diagnostics and the earlier one can diagnose the more the number of lives that are saved.

Today personal use medical diagnostic devices are mobile integrated with wireless devices. Nano-enabled wireless devices have much higher bandwidth, use a wider RF range, are compact and low cost and can work at high frequencies increasing data speeds to 30-40 Mbps. With such mobile electronic device integration, the market for nanotech medical diagnostics can triple in the next ten years making it commonplace for the ordinary man to be wirelessly connected to analytical data centers that monitor and alert the person and communicate results automatically to medical centers for emergency help.

(The writer, Dr. Shantikumar Nair, is the Dean Research at Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham.)



FUN

ARCHIE



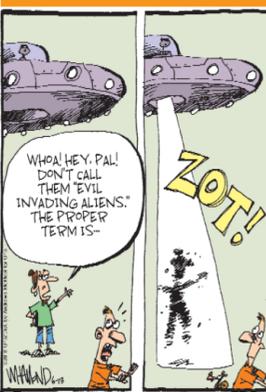
CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



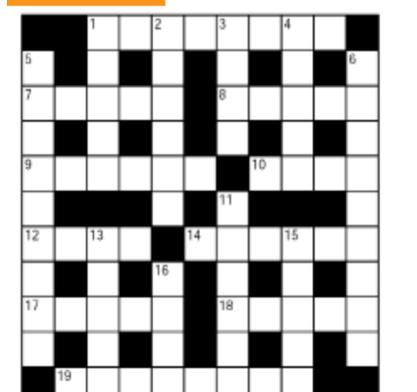
REALITY CHECK



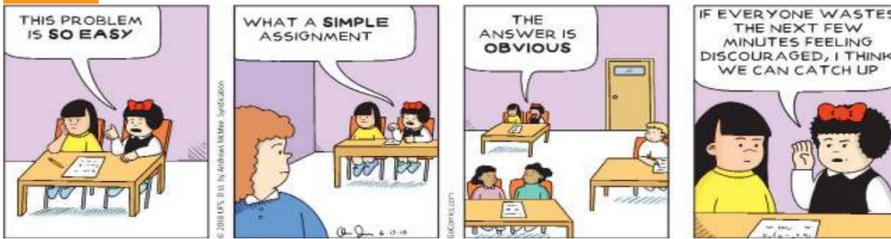
SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

ACROSS

- Fish tank
- Fewest
- Narrow shell
- Ottawa is the capital of this country
- Journey
- Slightly hot
- Thief
- Sweeten a drink with this
- A feeling of rage
- Obstinate

DOWN

- Once more
- Messy, disorganised
- Tumble over and over

4 Beneath

5 A watch's hands move in this direction

6 Not permanent

11 A red fruit used in salads

13 Correct

15 Start

16 A creature with rippers

SOLUTION

P	L	E	A	S	A	N	T	I
U	N	G	O	T				
R	O	T	S	T	U	R	L	E
C	E	S	N	A				
H	U	R	I	E	M	A	G	I
A	H	D	H					
S	H	O	E	S	C	O	C	O
E	A	A	R	N				
D	O	C	T	O	R	L	O	N
U	R	G	E					
T	E	X	A	M	I	N	E	D



'I AM TRAINED IN INDIAN CLASSICAL MUSIC'

Actress Seerat Kapoor, who is known for her work in Telugu films, is also a trained classical singer. She hopes to someday get to work with music maestro AR Rahman.

"While I was preparing Ranbir Kapoor and Nargis Fakhri for *Rockstar* promotions as an assistant choreographer, I had the privilege to watch AR Rahman jam live. It was the most

surreal experience, I didn't blink! I remember, by the end of his performance, I had teary eyes. AR Rahman, through his music, can touch your soul. On the first line he sang, I was absorbed by his world. I hope I get to work with him someday," Seerat shares.

The actor, whose popularity soared after starring in the Telugu film *Krishna And His Leela* says learning dance and singing helped her

understand the field of performing arts better. "I am trained in Indian classical and semi-classical music since the age of 12. At the time, my focus was on both dance and music. Educating myself in the field of performing arts through dance and music simultaneously helped me grow a deeper insight and understanding towards each of them individually, rather early," she says.



Allu Arjun to play a visually challenged role in *Icon*?

Stylish Star Allu Arjun is one of those actors who never shy away from experimenting with roles. The actor is known for accepting challenging roles in his filmy career. Now according to the latest buzz in the film industry, Allu Arjun will be seen playing the role of visually challenged man in *Icon* and the makers have already locked his solid look.

Earlier Mass Maharaja Ravi Teja had attempted the role of a blind man in *Raja The Great* and now the *Icon* star's turn. The *Naa Peru Surya* actor will sport a completely new look for this film. Sources say that Bunny is all set to shock fans and critics with his transformation. The actor is known for his solid looks in all his films and we have reports coming in that he has also locked a solid look which will be quite uber and posh.

The regular shoot of *Icon* is expected to commence from August and Allu Arjun is expected to work for his ongoing project *Pushpa* and *Icon* parallelly.

Allu Arjun starrer *Icon* is going to be helmed by Venu Sriram who recently delivered *Vakeel Saab* with Power Star Pawan Kalyan and Shruti Haasan.



'Confused' Hebah took every offer that came her way

Hebah Patel made a lasting impression with her bold role in *Kumari 21F* after making her debut with *Ala Ela*.

From then on, she was flooded with offers as movie lovers were bowled over by her acting chops, her stunning skills, and uninhibited glamour treat. But despite scoring hits like *Eedo Rakam Aado Rakam*, she failed to take off to the next level.

Opening up on why she couldn't sustain the fame she was launched with, Hebah Patel said, "I did not get many chances after *24 Kisses* which released in 2018. I made a mistake by taking all the offers that came my way after *Kumari 21F* as I started listening to numerous people and was confused in the process."

Hebah said she realised her folly and has now decided to pick only the films and roles that suit her and give her satisfaction.



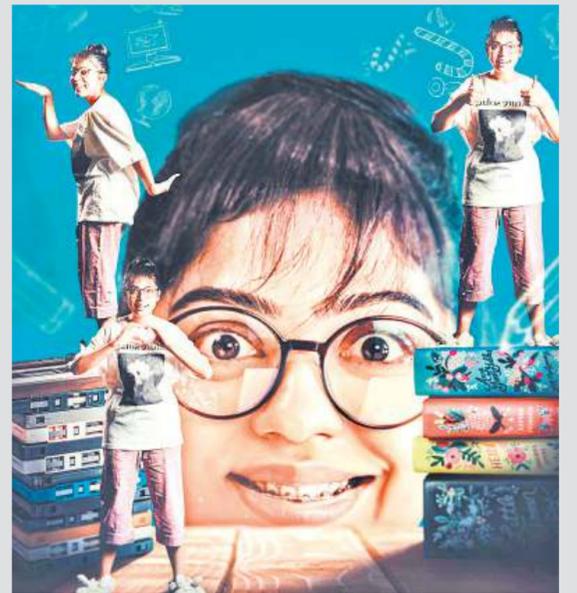
Varsha Bollamma's COMICAL LOOK

Raj Tarun and Varsha Bollamma are coming together with an upcoming romantic and comedy movie *Stand Up Rahul*.

On Wednesday, the makers of *Stand Up Rahul* launched the first look poster of Varsha Bollamma from this film, she looks comical in the poster, donning round spectacles with unusual hairdo and dental braces. The actress poses like a girl with a childish mentality.

In the month of March this year, Samantha Akkineni had launched

the first look poster of Raj Tarun from this film where he was dressed in a blue tee-shirt and sat on the floor looking worried. *Stand Up Rahul* is jointly backed by Nandkumar Abbineni and Bharath Maguluri under the banner of Dream Town Productions and HighFive Pictures. According to the makers, the upcoming film is all about the story of a reluctant stand-up comedian who does not stand up for anything in real life. When he finds true love, he learns to stand up to his parents, for his love and passion for standup comedy. Raj Tarun and Varsha Bollamma-starrer film is helmed by Santo Mohan Veeranki and it has music by Sweekar Agasthi and cinematography is handled by Sreeraj Raveendran. The movie also has Murlu Sharma, Indrāja, Vennela Kishore, Devi Prasad and Madhurima in supporting roles.



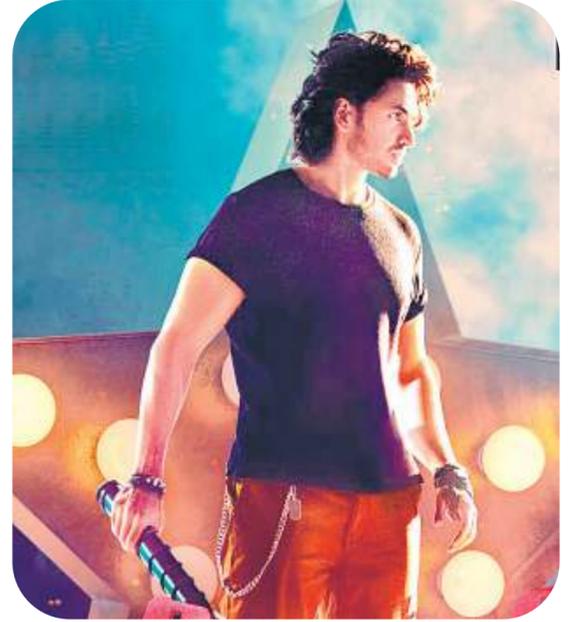
Adivi Sesh to b'day boy Rahul Ravindran: 'You truly have the best heart of anyone I know'

Actor Adivi Sesh took to Instagram to convey birthday wishes to his actor friend Rahul Ravindran on Wednesday. Sesh uploaded two pictures of himself with Rahul, along with two of their close friends — actor Vennela Kishore and Saaho director Sujeeth. The four of them often refer to themselves as Musketeers. Sesh captioned the pictures as: "@rahulr_23 Happy

birthday ra. Words fall a bit short so I can only say this. You truly have the best heart of anyone I know. My brother. @vennelakish @sujeeethsign #Musketeers Aeva."

Rahul, who is married to singer Chinmayi Sripada, will next be seen in Telugu film *Shyam Singa Roy* and the Tamil untitled remake of Malayalam film *The Great Indian Kitchen*.

Adivi Sesh has *Major* coming up besides *Hit 2* and *Goodachari 2*



Mahesh launches nephew's debut film trailer



Another member of the Ghattamaneni family is going to take movie lovers on a ride. Ashok Galla, the nephew of Superstar Mahesh Babu is going to make his debut in Tollywood as the lead actor. The teaser of the film *Hero* was launched by Superstar Mahesh Babu himself. The teaser opens in a deserted location where a train passes by and has Ashok enter in a cowboy-like costume. Following this scene, Ashok was shown in a 'Joker' avatar uttering the famed dialogue 'Why So Serious?' This impressive teaser is keeping the audience wondering what the film is going to be about.

The film titled *Hero* is the directorial venture of Sriram Aditya, known for his films like *Bhale Manchi Roju* and *Devadas*, and has Nidhhi Agerwal is playing the female lead. Ghibran's music goes perfectly well with the visuals. *Hero* is presented by Superstar Krishna and Galla Aruna Kumari.

With just two goals scored, England are the lowest-scoring side to ever top a group at a Euros but their defence is yet to be breached

JOB DONE FOR ENGLAND

AFP ■ LONDON

Raheem Sterling scored the only goal as England found an attacking spark to beat the Czech Republic 1-0 at Wembley on Tuesday and clinch top spot in Group D at Euro 2020.

The Manchester City forward, who kept his place alongside Harry Kane in a rejigged attack also featuring Jack Grealish and Bukayo Saka, settled fans' nerves with an early headed goal, which ultimately proved decisive.

The result means Gareth Southgate's side finish top of their group with seven points while Croatia are second with



Raheem Sterling (10) scores England's opening goal against Czech Republic on Tuesday

@England

four points. The Czech Republic will join them in the last 16 as one of the best third-placed teams.

With just two goals scored, England are the lowest-scoring side to ever finish top of a group at a European Championship but their defence is yet to be breached.

England now have the dubious privilege of a potential match-up against world champions France, holders Portugal or Germany but will have home advantage on June 29.

"We are not fluent but we have moments where we look a good side," Southgate told *ITV*.

"Different sorts of tests. All of our next opponents will be different games. There is a lot of good things we are doing. We are getting minutes for a lot of the players. Ninety minutes for Harry Maguire was important tonight, Jordan Henderson getting 45 minutes is a step forward. A lot of positives."

GREALISH STARTS

There was clamour before the match for Aston Villa captain Grealish to start to shake up a blunt attack that produced an insipid display in the 0-0 draw against Scotland.

Southgate obliged, also

bringing in Saka among four changes to his side.

Chelsea midfielder Mason Mount was unavailable as he was isolating due to coronavirus protocols while Southgate opted to leave Phil Foden out to prevent the risk of a suspension.

Manchester United defender Maguire made his first appearance of Euro 2020 alongside John Stones in central defence.

England started brightly in the evening sunshine and Sterling went agonisingly close in just the second minute but could only watch as his deft chip over the goalkeeper come back

off the post after he collected a raking pass from Luke Shaw.

As chants of "Football's Coming Home" rang around the stadium, captain Kane — heavily criticised for his toothless performances in the tournament so far — shot from distance and Grealish let fly.

England broke the deadlock in the 12th minute, when Grealish, on the left side of the penalty area, lifted the ball to the back post, where Sterling headed in for his second goal of Euro 2020.

Grealish and Man-Of-The-Match Saka were inventive and direct on either side of Kane, showing a willingness to run at their opponents.

Kane went close midway through the first half, forcing a fine left-handed save from Tomas Vaclik and thumping the ground in frustration.

But the Czechs carried a threat of their own on their forays forward, growing in menace as the half wore on.

Tomas Holes forced a flying save from England goalkeeper Jordan Pickford just before the half-hour and Tomas Soucek fired wide of the left post.

Liverpool midfielder Henderson replaced Declan Rice at half-time and the Czechs made their own change, bringing on Petr Sevcik for Jakub Jankto.

The sides were evenly matched in the second half, with the reduced crowd making an impressive noise in the cavernous stadium.

Both sides made further changes as the match wore on and the intensity dipped, with fans having to wait until the 83rd minute for the first attempt at goal in the second half.

Henderson briefly thought he had scored his first England goal late on but it was ruled out for offside.



Croatia captain Luka Modric, center, celebrates after scoring his side's second goal against Scotland

AP

Modric breaks Scotland hearts

AFP ■ GLASGOW

Scotland's shot at reaching the knockout stage of a major tournament for the first time were ended in a 3-1 defeat to a Luka Modric-inspired Croatia at Hampden Park on Tuesday that took the World Cup runners-up into the last 16 of Euro 2020.

After ending a 23-year wait just to qualify for a major tournament, another historic feat was beyond Steve Clarke's men who were undone by a moment of magic from Modric.

Callum McGregor cancelled out Nikola Vlasic's early opener to give the hosts hope heading into half-time.

But Modric showed the class that made him the man to break Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo's grip on the Ballon d'Or in 2018, a stunning strike with the outside of his foot just after the hour mark restoring Croatia's lead.

"No one is sure how Luka manages that," Croatia boss

Zlatko Dalic said of the 35-year-old.

"We expect that Luka will go down, lose his strength, but he is the force that pulls the whole team. Anything I would say about Luka would not be sufficient. I'm very proud to have such a player as part of our team."

Ivan Perisic's header rubbed salt into Scottish wounds 13 minutes from time as Croatia pipped the Czech Republic to second place in Group D behind England.

Zlatko Dalic's side will face the runner-up from Group E, featuring Spain, Sweden, Slovakia and Poland, in Copenhagen next Monday.

Scotland's preparation had been blighted by the loss of Billy Gilmour to a positive test for coronavirus after the 20-year-old midfielder had shone on his first international start in 0-0 draw against England on Friday.

But Clarke's squad escaped without any other players being

forced to isolate as close contacts and, roared on by 12,000 fans inside Hampden, started on the front foot.

Che Adams was inches away from connecting with John McGinn's dangerous cross that Dominik Livakovic did well to turn behind for a corner.

Croatia had barely threatened before they went in front on 17 minutes.

Perisic headed down a lofted ball into the box and Vlasic found space between three Scotland defenders to fire low into the corner.

Croatia then had the hosts chasing shadows for 10 minutes as the midfield maestros of Modric, Marcelo Brozovic and Mateo Kovacic took control of the game.

"Modric was incredible," said Arsenal defender Kieran Tierney. "I think tonight was a big learning curve for us all. They've been there before, the quality they showed it was hard for us to get going."



Lahiri wasn't expecting to qualify for Olympics

Cromwell: Indian golfer Anirban Lahiri says he wasn't expecting to qualify for the Olympics given his below par performance this year but now wants to make it count by returning with a medal from the Tokyo Games.

Lahiri on Tuesday made the cut for the Olympics at the 60th spot, the last quota available as per the International Golf Federation rankings.

"It was a big surprise, I wasn't expecting it," said Lahiri, who is preparing for this week's PGA TOUR stop at the Travelers Championship at TPC River Highlands, Connecticut.

"Even though I've earned it, I don't feel like I've really earned it as I know how far below my potential I've played this year. It's a gift and an opportunity, so why would I throw it away?"

India was eligible for one spot and Lahiri qualified being the highest-placed golfer from

the country at the 340th position.

"I know what it is to be an Olympian as I've done it before (in Rio) and I don't want to be just an Olympian. I want to win a medal, I want to do something that makes a difference," said the 33-year-old.

"I know winning a PGA TOUR event will do that but winning a medal would even do more. I do have a certain responsibility towards the game and my country."

The former Asian No 1 finished a lowly 57th in Rio while playing with an injury. But recently, there have been signs of some good form returning following a recent T-25 finish at the Palmetto Championship at Congaree.

That has made him optimistic of his chances at the Olympics to be held at the Kasumigasaki Country Club from July 29 to August 1. **PTI**

Jadeja becomes No 1 Test all-rounder



New Delhi: India's Ravindra Jadeja on Wednesday dislodged West Indian Jason Holder as the world's top all-rounder in the latest ICC Test rankings.

Jadeja is two points ahead of Holder (384) while England all-rounder Ben Stokes is third on 377 points. Another Indian, Ravichandran Ashwin is at fourth with 353 points, followed by Shakib Al Hasan of Bangladesh (338).

Ashwin remained at second spot in the bowlers' rankings on 850 points, below Pat Cummins (908) of Australia. Tim Southee (830) of New Zealand is third.

Among the batsmen, there was no change in top-five with Indian captain Virat Kohli static at fourth on 814. Steve Smith of Australia continued to be the top batsman on 891 points, followed by Kane Williamson (886) of New Zealand and Marnus Labuschagne (878) of Australia.

England captain Joe Root (797) is at number five, followed by the Indian pair of Rishabh Pant and Rohit Sharma at joint at sixth on 747 points. **PTI**

Kiwis inch closer towards WTC title

NZ need 139 runs to win the inaugural edition

PTI ■ SOUTHAMPTON

Rishabh Pant lived by the sword and died by it while his India seniors found it difficult to survive against a probing New Zealand attack, which left its batsmen with a gettable 139-run target to win the World Test Championship final.

By tea on the sixth and final day, India had another batting disaster with only 170 runs in their second innings leaving New Zealand with a target that they are expected to chase.

At tea, New Zealand were 19 for no loss with 120 runs to get in 45 overs in the final session.

If New Zealand manage to win it with a session left, they would certainly considered deserving winners, being able to force a result despite two full days being lost due to rain.

It was one of the worst batting performances on a good track with sun beating down and the Indian batsmen never found the going get easier.

Kane Williamson is proba-



India's Ajinkya Rahane walks back to pavilion after he gets out on Day 6

AP

bly one of the few captains who have now got Indian team out for less than 250 in six consecutive innings, a testimony to his brilliant cricketing acumen and near perfect execution by his bowlers.

Tim Southee (4/48) did the early damage with his swing bowling, Neil Wagner (1/44) bowled those hard 'rib cage' overs coming round the stumps and Trent Boult (3/44) with his ability to bring it back into the left-hander made it for a brilliant few hours of Test cricket.

And then, India's nemesis Kyle Jamieson (2/30), who again got his 'bunny' Virat Kohli, third time in three Tests and twice in one to make it an icing on the cake.

Rishabh Pant fought for two and half hours for his 41 but it was more intent and less content as a cavalier devil may care approach didn't get him too many runs.

The catch that Henry Nicholls took while running backwards was as good as one would witness at this level. Pant's dismissal did hamper India's chances but before that an inspirational piece of captaincy from Williamson left an indelible mark.

He got Wagner to come round that wicket to Jadeja and the left-arm 'pounder' went wide enough to nearly cut the side crease and angled one for

Jadeja to nick it behind the stumps.

Before that delivery, he had bowled short balls pegging the batsmen on backfoot and then ensured that his feet doesn't move to the pitch of the ball.

However Pant's approach of dealing with the New Zealand attack was better than being in the shell, something that did more harm than good for Cheteshwar Pujara (15 off 80 balls).

Before Pujara, the extra bounce outside the off-stump had the Indian skipper feeling for it and BJ Watling got the easiest of catches in his final game for Black Caps.

Pujara, whose abilities of grinding out bowlers has reached mythical proportions and once again he was never looking to score. The pressure was always there and Jamieson fired one in with the angle. Pujara wanted to remove his bat but it seemed the ball tailed him and Taylor got a easy catch.

Ajinkya Rahane (15 off 40 balls) also didn't last long and as it has happened with India often, their tail didn't wag save Mohammed Shami (13), who sashed three fours before Williamson cleverly deployed a 'fly third-man' (neither short third-man nor traditional third man) for a slash over slips which promptly landed in the fielder's palms.

Haryana to give ₹6 cr to Tokyo Gold winner

Chandigarh: Haryana government on Wednesday announced that sportspersons from the state who win Gold medal in the upcoming Tokyo Olympics would be given a cash amount of ₹6 crore.

The state Government will give the Silver winners ₹4 crore while the Bronze medalists will get ₹2.50 crore.

The state sports minister Sandeep Singh announced this while interacting with Olympic medallists on the occasion of International Olympic Day here, along with Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar.

Sandeep also said that 30 players taking part in the upcoming Tokyo Olympics have been provided ₹5 lakh each as preparation amount.

The Chief Minister said medal winners at the International events will be given Government jobs to encourage youngsters to take up to sports, a state Government statement said. **PTI**

Call off Ashes if families can't accompany players: Vaughan

PTI ■ LONDON

Former England skipper Michael Vaughan believes the iconic Ashes series should be cancelled if families are not allowed to travel with the players for the four-month long tour of Australia due to strict Covid-19 protocols.

According to a report in the UK media, there is still uncertainty whether families of the visiting England players will be permitted to stay with them during the Ashes, beginning on December 8.

"Read reports today that England cricketers may not be able to have family members with them under this winter .. Quite simply if they can't they should call the Ashes off .. 4 months away from your family is totally unacceptable .. #Ashes," Vaughan wrote on his Twitter handle.

The report also drew a sharp response from former England captain Kevin Pietersen, who feels players



shouldn't be criticised if they decide to pull out of the series due to such restrictions.

"Any ENG player that pulls out of this Ashes, if they seriously can't see their families for FOUR MONTHS, has my full backing. Families are the most important part of a players make up. And even more so in the current climate! FOUR MONTHS with no family on Ashes Tour?," he tweeted.

Cricket Australia, however, on Wednesday said that a solution can be worked out and the tournament is still many months away.

"It's only June and England are not due to arrive until November," a CA spokeswoman told the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

"We'll be going through the same process we did with India last summer."

Morgan insists historic tweets 'taken out of context'

London: Dismissing accusations of racism against him, England's World Cup-winning captain Eoin Morgan said the historical tweets, allegedly mocking Indians, were "taken out of context."

The English cricket system was shaken earlier this month after pacer Ollie Robinson was suspended by the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) for his racist and sexist tweets dating back to 2012-13.

Soon after, posts, in which Morgan and wicketkeeper batsman Jos Buttler used the word

England cricketers will not have their families with them for the upcoming tours of Bangladesh and Pakistan starting in September, before they participate in the T20 World Cup campaign from October.

'sir' to mock the Indians, started doing the rounds on social media.

"I don't really reflect on it a lot," Morgan told reporters ahead of England's white-ball series against Sri Lanka in Cardiff on Wednesday.

"If I call somebody 'sir' on social media, or anywhere around the world, it's a sign of admiration and respect."

"If that's taken out of context there's nothing I can control or do about it. So I haven't actually looked into it," he added. **PTI**

Pandemic Games will show 'true Olympic values': Tokyo 2020 chief

AFP ■ TOKYO

The stripped-back Tokyo Games, held despite the ongoing pandemic, will highlight the Olympics' true values, Tokyo 2020 chief Seiko Hashimoto said as organisers mark a month to go.

The Games will be unlike any other, with overseas fans banned and athletes kept away from the public. Competitors have had to leave their families behind and spectators will be capped at 10,000 people.

But former Olympian Hashimoto said the restrictions were a chance to look beyond the usual pomp and celebration that accompany the Games, and to focus on the sport.

"In recent years when I was participating as an athlete, there were concerns that this (event) has become so huge," she told reporters. "The Games tended to end with extreme excitement,



IOC Vice President John Coates, second right, and Tokyo 2020 Olympics Organizing Committee President Seiko Hashimoto, right, listen to a brief as they inspect one of the Olympics venues in Tokyo

AP

but because of that the original meaning and values... were not fully communicated," she added.

"This time, I feel that the true values of the Olympic and Paralympic Games are finally being discussed."

Hashimoto is a seven-time Olympian who competed at

both summer and winter Games, in speed skating and as a sprint cyclist.

She came to office after her predecessor, former Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori, resigned over a sexism row after he said women speak too much in meetings.