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India can save logistics fuel worth
Rs 311 lakh cr

P 5



Money printing
should be last option

P 8



'Working with Samantha was
effortless'

P 12

In brief

In revised Covid toll, Bihar confirms more than 9k deaths

The Covid-19 death toll in Bihar was on Wednesday revised drastically upwards by the state health department which put the total number of fatalities caused by the pandemic at 9,429.

According to the department, which had till the previous day stated the number of deaths to be under 5,500, as many as 3,951 deaths have been added to the toll after verification.

However, it was not specified as to when these additional deaths took place though a breakup was provided for all 38 districts. Going by the fresh figures, the number of lives lost in the second wave is close to 8,000 and a nearly six times increase in the death toll since April. Patna district bore the brunt of the outbreak, accounting for a total of 2,303 deaths. Muzaffarpur was a distant second with 609 fatalities.

El Salvador approves first law for bitcoin as legal tender

El Salvador has become the first country in the world to formally adopt bitcoin as legal tender after Congress approved President Nayib Bukele's proposal to embrace the cryptocurrency. With 62 out of 84 possible votes, a majority of lawmakers voted in favor of the initiative to create a law that will formally adopt bitcoin, despite concern about the potential impact on El Salvador's program with the International Monetary Fund.

DRDO invites EoI to transfer 2-DG tech for bulk production

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), which developed 2-Deoxy-D- Glucose (2-DG), a drug used for treatment of COVID-19 patients, has called for Expression of Interest (EoI) to transfer the technology to Indian pharmaceutical industries for production. 2-DG was developed by the Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS), a lab of DRDO, in collaboration with Dr Reddy's Laboratories. Clinical trial results have shown that this molecule helps in faster recovery of hospitalised patients and reduces supplemental oxygen dependence.

15 days spl casual leave for govt staff whose parents test +ve

All central government employees will be able to get 15 days of special casual leave (SCL) in case their parents or any dependent family members test COVID-19 positive, according to an order issued by the personnel ministry. "In case of active hospitalisation of any of the family members/parents even after 15 days of the expiry of SCL, the government servants may be granted leave of any kind due and admissible beyond 15 days of SCL till their discharge from hospital," it said. The ministry has come out with the detailed order on treatment, regularisation of hospitalisation or quarantine period during COVID-19 pandemic after it received several queries related to it and keeping in view the "hardships faced by the government servants".

6 months on, most vaccines went to 45-60 age group in AP

SNV SUDHIR
VIJAYAWADA

nistered in Andhra Pradesh have been given to beneficiaries in the 45 to 60 age group. These include both only the first or both doses.

As per the latest data provided by the Union government, as on Wednesday, Andhra Pradesh which had started vaccinating people from January 16 onwards, administered 44,49,065 doses to those who fall in the age group of 45 to 60. This data may probably include priority groups of health-care and frontline workers, but this is not specified.

Until now, AP had administered 1,11,41,284 doses of which 85,50,719 were first and 25,90,565 second doses. As many as 27,98,548 doses were given to those above 60 years of age while 13,01,421 doses were administered to those between 18 and 44 years of age.

Among the people who have been vaccinated until Wednesday, men are slightly more in number than women. While 43,35,442 men either received at least one dose, the number of women who have got jabbed are 42,13,942.

Andhra Pradesh has administered 90,87,464 Covishield vaccines and a meagre 20,50,921 Covaxin doses. While 1,098 are government sites conducting the vaccination, 49 are in private.



AP logs over 2 cr tests; records 8,766 cases

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh crossed another milestone, completing over two crore tests for coronavirus on Wednesday, which turned out an overall 8.5 percent positives of the infection in the state so far.

The state completed one crore tests on November 29 last year that showed 8,67,683 positives for the infection. The second crore tests yielded 9,12,090 positives, taking the aggregate number of cases in the state to 17,79,773.

The tests covered about 3.75

lakh persons per million population, according to Health Department data.

Addressing a press conference here, State Principal Health Secretary Anil Kumar Singhal said that 2,00,39,764 samples have been tested across the state so far since March 2020. Across the country, AP conducted most tests at 3.75 lakh tests per million population, compared to only 2.67 lakh tests per million population across the country, Singhal said.

Govt accepts demands, Junior Doctors call off strike

PNS VIJAYAWADA

In major relief to patients, the Andhra Pradesh State Junior Doctors Association (AP JUDA) has called off the strike after talks with the government officials turned out to be successful.

State Medical Health Minister Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas (Nani), Health Secretary, Anil Kumar Singhal, along with DME M Raghavendra held talks with the junior doctors on Wednesday, sources said.

The government responded positively to the demands of the junior doctors and the strike was called off.

After the four hour meeting the junior doctors assured that they would resume duties from Thursday.

AP JUDA state president Dr Rahul Rao said that their demands were positively heard, and in response proposals were made by the Government for gratia/health insurance, specialist healthcare for Covid-infected doctors, security for doctors on duty besides a solution to the TDS issue.



Jagan for Delhi today to meet Shah

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy is scheduled to visit Delhi on Thursday where he would meet several Union ministers. Meeting Union Home Minister Amit Shah is said to be top on his agenda during his visit to the national capital.

According to sources, the Chief Minister has got Amit Shah's appointment for Thursday evening.

It is learnt that Jagan was supposed to fly to Delhi on Monday and meet Amit Shah later the same night. As there was no confirmation of appointment with Amit Shah, Jagan cancelled the trip.

Government sources said that Thursday's visit is aimed at bringing several issues like funds to Polavaram multipurpose project, vaccination drive, Covid aid etc to

the notice of Amit Shah.

It is reliably learnt that political issues are also on top of Jagan's agenda. It is learnt that the Chief Minister may request Amit Shah for the Centre's cooperation for the state government's plan for three capitals.

Jagan is also expected to meet Union Jai Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekawat seeking funds for the Polavaram project, work on which has picked pace.

With the state staring at precarious financial position due to several factors, including Covid, the Chief Minister a few days ago directed officials to rush to Delhi to get the pending bills at the Centre to the tune of Rs 1,600 crore spent by the state government on Polavaram project cleared.

Only States will gain from Modi's u-turn on vax

SNCN ACHARYULU
HYDERABAD

The revised vaccination policy announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday may not help the BJP politically, but it will certainly help the state governments, particularly those ruled by non-BJP parties.

In fact, the revised policy will help the State governments both politically and financially.

According to highly-placed sources, in a preparatory meeting for the forthcoming Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections, top BJP leaders criticised the Central government's handling of the Covid-19 second wave.

This criticism and the resultant pressure from party leaders prompted Modi to announce the revised vaccination policy in which all adults will be vaccinated for free in government hospitals. The sources say that the announce-

ment was nothing but part of the BJP's damage control exercise.

It's not just the Opposition that has been critical of the Central government's handling of the pandemic; the image of the BJP and also the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has plummeted among the common public.

Keeping this in view, Modi took the decision to revise the country's vaccination policy.

BJP leaders believe that the announcement of the new policy would salvage the image of the Central government and also the party while silencing the Opposition parties at the same time.

However, there is a flaw in this assumption, the situation on the ground is different, particularly in states ruled by non-BJP parties.

In these states, BJP leaders have been criticising the state governments, accusing them of mishandling the pandemic situation. Now that the Central government has



taken over the responsibility of procuring and supplying vaccines to the states, the BJP leaders in states not ruled by the BJP have a weapon to attack the governments with.

Moreover, the ruling parties will now be able to criticise the Central government if there is any lapse in procurement and supply of the vac-

cine to states.

For example, when asked "where is my vaccine" by a user, during his #askKTR session on Twitter, Telangana Minister KT Rama Rao Minister KTR replied: "ask Prime Minister".

Complaint lodged against AP CID chief

PNS HYDERABAD

In a six-page letter sent on Wednesday, Legal Rights Advisory Convener NI Joshi complained to the Union Ministry of Home Affairs seeking dismissal of AP CID chief P Sunil Kumar from service for "violating service rules".

The complainant said that Sunil Kumar, who got the job under SC-Mala category, subsequently converted to Christianity.

He appended a recent verdict of Chennai High Court to the complaint. The court ruled that those who changed their religion should give up the benefit received under rule of reservation. Quoting the verdict, Joshi urged the Centre to dismiss Sunil Kumar from service.

Further, the letter said that the AP CID chief, in violation of service rules, floated an organisation called Ambedkar India Mission. Joshi urged the Government to probe the organisation.

Joshi accused Sunil Kumar of fanning anti-Hindu sentiments with the help of the organisation, calling for a thorough probe into his omissions and commissions under Sections 153 (a) and 295 (a).

Joshi's complaint also accused Sunil Kumar of trying to drive a wedge among the SCs and charged him with working against the RSS.



Joshi submitted video-graphic evidence to the Home Ministry in support of his complaint.

It may be recalled that the YSRC rebel MP from Narasapuram K Raghurama Krishna Raju lodged a complaint against the AP CID chief with the Union Ministry of Home Affairs.

Raju addressed letters to all MPs accusing the CID chief of being high-handed against him. MPs of all parties have condemned the police behaviour in their twitter messages.

Many MPs assured the Narasapuram MP of their support if he raised the issue in the forthcoming Parliament session.

Meanwhile, Raju kicked off a legal battle against the CID chief and has been making efforts to make it a political issue.

Curfew to be relaxed from 6 am to 2 pm

PNS VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh Government on Wednesday decided to extend to relaxation in the curfew timings from 6 am to 2 pm, effective June 11 to June 20, in view of the decline in the Covid positive cases in the state.

A GO issued to this effect said

that after a thorough review of the Covid prevalence, the curfew timings were modified from 2 pm to 6 am with effect from June 11.

He said that any violation of the aforesaid instructions shall result in prosecution under Disaster Management Act 2005 and Section 188 IPC as well as other applicable laws.

State Museum to be established in Vizag

PNS VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh government will establish a State Museum in port city Visakhapatnam this year, while three more museums will be set up in temple town Tirupati, Srikakulam and Ongole.

Four more museums in different districts will be expanded and upgraded to international standards, according to Special Chief Secretary (Tourism and Culture) Rajat Bhargava.

"The State Museum in Visakhapatnam will reflect the rich national heritage and culture and also that of Andhra Pradesh. Our



File photographs of the Visakhapatnam State Museum.

endeavour is to educate people on our great history, incredible culture, tangible and intangible heritage. We are using digital

technologies as well for better understanding," Bhargava said.

He said in the last two years, the Babu Museum in

Vijayawada city was upgraded to international standards with Rs 6.40 crore financial assistance from the Centre under the Museum Grant Scheme.

"We have set up very advanced technical, non-technical and interactive displays at the Babu Museum, named after renowned artist and film director, to showcase our culture and history in a grand manner. This has been developed into an iconic museum in the state, besides as a Centre of Excellence in archaeological, heritage and cultural research," Bhargava said in a release.

A new museum established in Eluru has also got new digital and interactive display technologies with immersive projection mapping theatre, augmented reality, virtual reality and interactive kiosks.

The Special Chief Secretary said a lot of emphasis was laid on upgrading the museums in different parts of the state, using digital technologies.

The museums in Anantapur and Kurnool were among those upgraded, where the rich heritage and culture of Rayalaseema region was showcased.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:
Vaishakha & Krishna Paksha
Panchangam

Titthi : Amavasya: 04:21 pm

Nakshatram : Rohini: 11:44 am

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

Rahukalam : 01:53 pm - 03:30 pm

Yamagandam : 05:45 am - 07:22 am

Variyam : 05:59 pm - 07:46 pm

Gulika : 09:00 am - 10:37 am

Good Time : (to start any important work)

Amritakalam : 08:08 am - 09:56 am

Abhijit Muhurtham : 11:49 am - 12:41 pm

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Scattered thunderstorms

Temp: 32/26

Humidity: 70%

Sunrise: 05:41 am

Sunset: 06:50 pm

Current Weather Conditions
Updated JUNE 9, 2021 5:00 PM

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

On the basic premise of the RCA, 1948, several states enacted their Acts purportedly to prevent exploitation of tenants by landlords. All such avatars in the form of state acts were also highly skewed in favour of tenants

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

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

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

The Model Tenancy Act mandates filling written agree-



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Vax drive in Mahesh Babu's ancestral village complete

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

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

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

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



to have got our village vaccinated Thank you Mahesh Babu, for always being as solid as a rock, @andhrahospitals

@mbofficialteam for your relentless support and most importantly, a big thank you to all our villagers who came forward to take it," she wrote.

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

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

Babu will be next seen in the action thriller "Sarkaru Vaari Paata".

The actor is also currently awaiting the release of his production, "Major", based on the life of 2008 Mumbai terror attack martyr Major Sandeep Unnikrishnan. It stars Adivi Sesh and Sobhita Dhulipala.

AP logs over 2 cr tests...

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He said that the 12th phase of the state-wide fever survey was started on Wednesday across the state and results would be available by June 11.

Meanwhile, a health department bulletin said 8,766 fresh Covid-19 cases were reported in the state in 24 hours ending 9 am on Wednesday.

It said 12,292 patients recovered and another 67 succumbed during this period.

The cumulative recoveries touched 16,64,082 and deaths 11,696. The number of active cases decreased further to 1,03,995, according to the bulletin.

Only the hotspot East Godavari district reported 1,980 fresh cases, while the remaining 12 added less than 1,000 each.

Chittoor reported 11 fresh Covid-19 fatalities, East Godavari and Visakhapatnam seven each, Srikakulam and Vizianagaram six each, Anantapur, Guntur and Kurnool five each, Krishna and West Godavari four each, Prakasam three, Kadapa and SPS Nellore two each in a day.

Guntur became the fourth district in the state to log more than 1,000 Covid-19 deaths, reaching 1,004 on Wednesday, behind Chittoor, East Godavari and Krishna.

A total of 2,72,240 people with fever were identified in the 11th fever survey conducted in the state of which 33,262 turned out to be corona positive.

Singhal said that 4,20,000 Covshield vaccine doses purchased by the state government reached Andhra Pradesh on Tuesday.

So far 1,09,69,000 doses have been administered across the state. Of those, 58 lakh people took only one dose, while 25,87,000 took two doses. Another 16,54,000 doses of vaccines purchased by the state government from various companies are yet to be received.

Only States will gain...

Continued from Page 1

The Centre has been blaming the states for the mess that the vaccination drive has become in the country ever since its launch, and has been facing criticism from all quarters for the dual pricing structure, allowing private hospitals to purchase the vaccine, and the looting of the public for providing treatment to Covid patients.

It is this criticism that has forced the Centre to revise the vaccination policy and also fix the price at which private hospitals can charge for vaccination.

6 months on, most vaccines...

Continued from Page 1

According to the latest available data from May 10 to June 8, Andhra Pradesh witnessed five Adverse Event Following Immunisation (AEFI) cases with an overall AEFI rate of 0.004 percent.

Among the 13 districts of the state, Krishna, Vizag and East Godavari have administered more than 10 lakh doses, while Vizianagaram with 5,21,959 people being inoculated was last.

East Godavari administered 10,84,868 doses, Vizag 10,70,662 and Krishna 10,73,078 doses.

Andhra Pradesh has administered maximum doses since the launch of vaccination drive between May 22 and 28 with more than 15 lakh doses following the implementation of phase three strategy of vaccination announced by the Centre.

Implementation of the liberalised and accelerated phase-3 strategy of Covid-19 vaccination has started from May 1 onwards.

Under the strategy, in every month 50 percent of the total Central Drugs Laboratory (CDL) cleared vaccine doses of any manufacturer would be procured by the Government of India. These doses are made avail-

Confusion over global tender floated by AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

With the Centre stepping in and taking over the responsibility of vaccination and Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy having pitched for such an arrangement to avoid any supply gaps and to avoid any clash among the states, there is no clarity on the fate of global tender floated by the Andhra Pradesh government.

It is not immediately clear whether the State government will withdraw the tenders or continue the procedure.

Notably, Andhra Pradesh was one of the first states to float a global tender but after the bid didn't elicit any response, Jagan wrote to all the Chief Ministers that the situation has now transformed into a 'State vs Union' battle over vaccine and all Chief Ministers should 'speak in a single voice'.

The global tender floated



by Andhra Pradesh government to procure vaccines to vaccinate at least one crore population in the coming months failed to evince any interest from international vaccine manufacturers. No vaccine manufacturer submitted bids by the time of the bid on June 3, though three companies had attended the pre-bid meeting.

With no response from vaccine manufacturers, the state government extended the bid submission date by

two more weeks.

The state-run Andhra Pradesh Medical Services & Infrastructure Development Corporation (APMSIDC) on May 13 invited e-bids for the procurement of Covid vaccine doses to vaccinate the 10 million population. The vaccine doses were to be delivered within six months from the day the company gets statutory approvals from the government of India and Letter of Intent (LoI) is signed.

able to the state governments free of cost and remaining could be procured by the state governments directly. However, the Centre has been rationing the vaccine doses on several parameters even

under direct state procurement category.

Until now, more than 25 crore vaccine doses have been provided to states and UTs so far, through Government of India's free of cost channel

and through direct state procurement category.

State medical and health secretary AK Singhal in an earlier occasion said Andhra Pradesh is expecting over 50 lakh vaccine doses in June.

Govt accepts demands, Junior Doctors call off strike

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In turn, the government assured that the family of any doctor who succumbed while serving during the Covid pandemic will be given an ex-gratia amount of Rs 25 lakh by the state government irrespective of the amount given by the Central Government. Accordingly, Rs 25 lakh was promised to the family members of Dr Kandikatla Rosy,

house surgeon (2016 batch), ASRAM Medical College as ex-gratia within 2-3 days.

Also, specialist healthcare will be given to any doctor infected in the line of Covid duty, free of cost at any hospital at the expense of the state government.

Security measures at all government hospitals will be strengthened to prevent any untoward incidents. Finally, an assurance was given to resolve

the TDS issue regarding stipends after discussions with the concerned authorities by authorities, said Dr Roy.

He said that a request was made regarding the provision of an incentive/hike in stipend, as a gesture of appreciation and encouragement for the junior doctors, which was received positively by the Minister and the feasibility of the same will be looked into in the future.

Delta variant can infect despite vaccination: AIIMS study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The 'delta' variant of COVID-19 - the version first detected in India in October last year - is capable of infecting people even after they have received both doses of the Covaxin or Covishield vaccines, according to separate studies by AIIMS (Delhi) and the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC).

The AIIMS study suggests the 'delta' variant - which others, including one by British health authorities, say is between 40 and 50 per cent more infectious than the 'alpha' version first reported from the UK - is likely behind the majority of breakthrough infections in India.

The AIIMS-IGIB (Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology) study was based on an analysis of 63 symptomatic patients who reported to the hospital's emergency ward complaining of high fever persisting for five to seven days.

Jagan for...

Continued from Page 1

It is estimated the state needs at least another Rs 1,400 crore in the coming months to spend on the Polavaram project which has entered a crucial phase. Polavaram project always remained a politically rallying point for all the parties YSRCP, TDP and BJP. A controversy also erupted a few months ago over Centre stopping clearing bills asking the state government accept 2014 base price estimates. He may also meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi depending upon the latter's schedule.

State Museum to be established....

Continued from Page 1

"The Department of Archaeology and Museums also initiated conservation of monuments and preservation of antiquities through scientific chemical treatment. All antiquities in Babu Museum, Eluru Museum, Government Museum

(Kakinada) and Kondapalli Fort and Kondapalli Museum have been completed so far," Bhargava added.

The Department has now taken up chemical cleaning of the Quran and palm leaf manuscripts in the ASP Government Museum in Kakinada.

Cloudy urine is indicator of diabetes: Endocrinologist

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

If you notice some haziness while urinating, then it may be because of diabetes. Cloudy urine can be alarming, especially when you do not know the underlying cause, according to Dr Chintala Venkata Rakesh, MD, DM, endocrinologist and diabetologist.

"The volume, colour, and odour of urine are indicators of our health. Any abnormality in the appearance of urine is an indicator of health conditions — like diabetes infection, kidney disease, medicines, or the food you eat," Dr Rakesh said.

He said that diabetes is a chronic metabolic disorder that

is marked by elevated blood sugar levels. "The elevation in blood sugar level is either because the body is not producing enough insulin or the body cannot utilise the insulin properly. Thus, there is an increase in blood glucose levels," the doctor said.

He said that people with type-1 and type-2 diabetes may experience cloudy urine due to urinary tract infections while people having diabetes are at increased risk of developing urinary tract infections (UTIs). The urine of people having UTIs appears cloudy because of the presence of white blood cells, proteins, and sugar.

Dr Rakesh said that people

with diabetes are highly susceptible to developing kidney diseases.

"Around one in four adults suffering from diabetes develop kidney ailments. The excessive presence of sugar in the blood causes increased workload on the kidneys leading to its dysfunction," the doctor said.

Continuous damage to the kidneys due to uncontrolled sugar may finally lead to chronic kidney disease. As the kidneys are not working, the proteins also get excreted from the body along with the toxins. The presence of proteins in the urine due to kidney dysfunction may result in a cloudy appearance of the urine, Dr Rakesh said.

GVMC razes school for disabled...

Continued from Page 1

Naidu said that the said school was leased by the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) in 2013 with two rooms and is currently running with about 190 students. It is to be noted that the majority of the school children come from financially unstable families.

The TDP chief said that all civilised norms of law and justice have been grossly violat-

ed by the Government.

The YSRCP-led Government had lost the moral right to remain in power after the demolition of the school for children with different intellectual and physical abilities. There was a stronger need to support non-profit organisations serving society in true spirit. Justice needs to be done to the school children currently enrolled at the Hidden Sprouts.

TS High Court bench strength up by 75%, to have 42 judges soon

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Union government has approved a proposal sent by the Telangana High Court to increase its sanctioned Bench strength from the current 24 judges to 42 judges. Thirty-

two out of these 42 judges will be Permanent Judges and 10 will be Additional Judges.

Currently, Telangana has a sanctioned strength of 24 judges, but only 14 judges are working, while the remaining 10 posts are vacant.

AP gets Rs 1,438 crore...

Continued from Page 1

The eligibility of states to receive this grant and the quantum of grant was decided by the Commission based on the gap between assessment of revenue and expenditure of the state. Assessed devolution for the financial year 2021-22 was also taken into account by the

Commission.

The 15th Finance Commission has recommended a total PDRD grant of Rs 1,18,452 crore to 17 States in the financial year 2021-22. The grant is released to the states in 12 monthly instalments. From April to June this year Andhra Pradesh received Rs 4,314.24 crore as PDRD Grant.

ANDHRA PRADESH INDUSTRIAL INFRASTRUCTURE CORPORATION LIMITED
(An under taking of A.P.Govt)
O/o Chief Engineer-II, APIC Ltd., Mangalagiri
e-Procurement Notice
Tender Notices Nos. 08/CE-II/APIC/2021-22 Dt. 04-06-2021
Tender Notice No. 08: Construction of Administrative Building and other Source Complex at New Industrial Estate at Kopparthi, Kadapa, Andhra Pradesh under Micro & Small Enterprises Cluster Development Programme (2nd Call) ECV of Rs 59,13,013/- Last date for submission of bid on e-procurement is 21.06.2021 up to 3.00 PM. The details of tender notice and bid documents can be down loaded from www.approcurement.gov.in (or) <http://tender.approcurement.gov.in>
DIPR R.O. No. 1419/CL/ADVT/1/2021-22 01/06/2021 CHIEF ENGINEER APIC LTD., MANGALAGIRI

CBI intensified probe into Viveka murder case
PNS ■ KADAPA

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which is conducting an in-depth investigation into the murder of former minister YS Vivekananda Reddy, has intensified its probe.

CBI officials have been questioning Kiran Kumar Yadav, a YSRCP activist from Pulivendula, from various angles since Wednesday morning at a guest house, near Kadapa Central Jail.

Similarly, Hidayatullah, who worked as a computer operator in Viveka's house, was also questioned along with the late leader's driver Dastgiri. A team of CBI officials, who questioned Hidayatullah for about seven hours on Tuesday.

Hidayatullah was the first to photograph Viveka's body using his phone on the day of the murder.

Pilot project to transform Vja into garbage-free city

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada Municipal Corporation commissioner V Prasanna Venkatesh on Wednesday said that a plan was being put in place to transform Vijayawada into a garbage-free city.

In this regard, the Corporation has selected six divisions under VMC limits as part of a pilot project to convert them into model divisions.

Venkatesh reviewed the sanitation management policy in the Municipal Commissioner's Chamber on Wednesday. He explained that Divisions 4, 10, 27, 36, 39 and 42 — two divisions from each Assembly constituency — have been selected for the pilot project. He stressed the need to create a comprehensive awareness among the people on wet and dry waste collection systems.



Venkatesh said that the authorities, representatives of the local residential Welfare Associations would organise awareness programmes through a wide range of activities.

He directed VMC officials and staff to campaign among people in the six divisions about segregation of wet and dry garbage in two

separate bins. He said that the house-to-house collection should take place with separate wet and dry garbage in such a way that no complaints are received from the public.

Venkatesh said that as part of the pilot project, garbage collection, sewerage systems in the divisions will be regularised.

The Commissioner directed the officials to conduct underground drainage cleaning and dredging activities in the side canals and further directed the authorities to take necessary steps to clean the vacant spaces and to collect the cost from the landowners.

Anti-larvae operation work should be continued to prevent mosquito breeding in the larval stage and to stop infestation in the city. He asked the officials to carry out anti-larval operations in landfills and ponds through oil balls, fogging and pyrethrum spraying.

VMC Additional Commissioner (Projects) U Sarda Devi, Chief Engineer Y Prabhakar, Chief Medical Officer Dr G Geeta Bai, Estate Officer Dr A Sridhar and Public Health and Engineering officials participated in the meeting.



Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy plays with the grandson of Sheikh Yaseen, a senior YSRCP leader from Ponnur town in Guntur district, who passed away three months ago. Yaseen's wife, son and other members met the Chief Minister at his camp office on Wednesday

Revised YSR Bima scheme implementation from July 1

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy has directed the authorities to implement the revised YSR Bima scheme from July 1, wherein the state government shall provide assistance to families of the deceased directly.

An insurance amount of Rs 1 lakh will be paid if the breadwinner of the family aged between 18-50 years dies of natural causes and Rs 5 lakh if a person aged between 18-70 years succumbs due to an accident.

During a review meeting conducted on YSR Bima on Wednesday, the Chief Minister instructed officials to revamp the existing guidelines of the scheme and make the claim settlement process much simpler and easier.

He asked officials to implement the scheme with the changes from July 1 and to take steps to resolve the claims related to the deaths of earning members of a family. The Chief Minister said that the insurance compensation should be paid within a month of an application being received. He directed officials to appoint a special officer to monitor the scheme.

Additionally, the Chief Minister told the authorities to pay compensation for the death of fishermen, accidental death of fishermen and death of livestock on time without any delay and thus support the bereaved families.

He instructed the collectors to report on all types of insurance claims every three months, strictly monitoring how many claims have been received and resolved.

The responsibility for screening of insurance applications must be given to village, ward secretaries, said the Chief Minister.

The officials informed the Chief Minister that the government has not backed out in providing financial assistance to those families who lost their sole breadwinner.

The officials explained that the government started the YSR Bima scheme for about 1.4 crore ration cardholders across the State, despite the Central government, which earlier paid 50 percent share of the premium amount, withdrawing from the scheme.

After that the Centre withdrew, the entire premium was paid by the state on humanitarian grounds to provide security for those families in need.

Authorities said that there was a serious delay in opening bank accounts, linking to insurance and non-settlement of claims, compensating the affected families and many more. Even if the premium is paid in full by the state government, the accounts are not being opened or linked to insurance, resulting in lakhs of applications pending at bank branches to enrol for eligibility under insurance.

Even after completing the paper process, 45 days are taken as a lean period and the authorities do not give any compensation if the person earning in the family dies during that period.

As many as 12,039 people have died in this 45-day period and no compensation was paid to those families by the banks, but with the intervention of Chief Minister Rs 254.72 crore has been released to them on humanitarian grounds.

The officials informed that so far only 60 lakh accounts have been opened and remaining 58 lakh applications are pending. Similarly, with regards to claims, 6,173 applications have been received till date, where only 2,839 documents have been uploaded and 152 families have received the claim settlement.

Repeal property tax rules changes, demand taxpayers

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Taxpayers Association on Wednesday demanded the Government withdraw the proposal of levying property tax based on the capital values of the property.

Leaders of the Association said the change of levying property tax from rental values to capital values will inflict heavy burden on property owners. The Association demanded immediate repeal of amendments made to Andhra Pradesh Municipal Corporations Act 1955 in respect of Property Tax.

The Association on Wednesday submitted a representation to Municipal Commissioner V Prasanna Venkatesh in response to the objections/suggestions and advice called by the VMC



from people on proposed property taxes to be collected by the VMC. The VMC issued notification on June 5 for levying property tax stating that 0.15 percent tax to be levied on residential buildings and 0.30 percent on non-residential buildings based on capital values of both the structure and the land, in which building is constructed as decided by the Registration and Stamps

department. Association secretary MV Anjaneyulu said capital value of a property is realised to the property owner when the property is sold. As long as the property is used for residential purposes either by owner occupation or tenant occupation the property renders use value only. He said only when the property is sold, it gives exchange value.



J Nivas assumes charge of district

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

J Nivas, a 2010 batch IAS officer, assumed charge as Krishna district collector at the collectorate in Machilipatnam on Wednesday.

Joint Collectors K Madhavi Latha and L Siva Sankar, Sub-Collectors and other officials welcomed the new Collector.

Later, briefing the media, Nivas said his priority was to

address public grievances and solve the problems.

He said the Krishna district has a good team of officers and added that he would try to implement the welfare schemes of the State government.

Nivas had earlier served as the Commissioner of Vijayawada Municipal Corporation. He recalled his association with VMC and added that he was aware of the district and the people.

Covid lockdown leaves kids with autism in lurch, wrecks routines

Parents with autistic kids advised not to skip therapy

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Covid pandemic and lockdown are affecting children with autism as fear of contracting the virus is making parents skip therapy. Experts say delaying therapy due to Covid fear and restrictions is adding to the problems of children.

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

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

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



Since much of the brain development happens when the baby is between 12 and 60 months, she said delaying therapy will add to the problems.

"Babies are born with 25 percent of their brain. As baby reaches their one year mark, it increases by 50 percent. By the time the child is 48 to 60 months old, the brain is fully developed. The development of the brain, which collects signals from the five senses and delivers them to the baby,

must take place before the baby is 12 to 60 months old. Otherwise the motor and executive functions that the child should be capable of doing on their own will most certainly be impaired," said Sreeja Reddy. She believes that missing crucial months will render kid dependent and unable to navigate through life without parent's aid. It is of utmost importance that parents get them the therapy they require to build their motor and executive functions.

JE suspended for collecting money

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

AP TRANSCO has placed a junior engineer P Sreeharibabu, working in Venkatagiri town in Nellore district, under suspension for collecting money from his colleagues on the pretext of helping them in promotions.

Sreeharibabu, a directly recruited junior engineer of Nellore circle, allegedly collected huge amounts from other directly recruited sub-engineers by striking deals by claiming to be able to influence their promotions. He allegedly did this with the help of some other directly recruited junior engineers due to which the Sub-Engineers converted from O&M promotions were stopped.

During a Vigilance inquiry, it came to be known that Sreeharibabu was actively involved in the ongoing promotion process of assistance engineers.

"Sreeharibabu collected around Rs 34 lakh through his personal account from Anantapur district sub-engineers and other directly recruited sub-engineers of APSPDCL region for their promotions and thus he committed the offence of cheating which is being probed thoroughly," said AP TRANSCO Joint Managing Director (Vigilance & Security) K Venkateswar Rao.

The accused engineer has been in touch with the higher officials of the APSPDCL, Corporate office, Tirupati. He collected money by saying that he would manage the things in favour of the sub-engineers who were in the promotion list of assistant engineers.

Earlier, Sreeharibabu was also involved in spreading rumours in WhatsApp groups against the decisions of higher authorities and government policies, thereby violating conduct rules.

Sharmila opens doors of her YSRTP for Eatela Rajender

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a surprising move, YS Sharmila Reddy, daughter of former uninvited AP chief minister YS Rajasekhara Reddy and founder of YSR Telangana Party, on Wednesday invited former health minister Eatela Rajender to join her party.

However, party leaders around her were reportedly cold to her suggestion. They queried her as to what was the use of inviting him as he appeared inclined to join the BJP sooner or later.

Earlier, there was a lot of speculation over which party Eatela Rajender would choose. The Congress has openly welcomed Eatela into the party.

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

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

She said that she would have no objection if Eatela wants to join her party. Sharmila said that Eatela was preferring BJP as he was afraid of the cases foisted on him by the ruling TRS.

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

party.

No discussion took place in the party about Eatela's future, she said. Her party would be called after her father Dr YS Rajasekhara Reddy and hence the name YSR Telangana Party. She said that the party's policies would be framed depending on what people of the state expected. People's agenda would be the party's agenda, Sharmila clarified.

She said that KCR had not drawn his lessons in tackling the Covid situation so far. She accused KCR of having no intention to contain Covid. Sharmila said that it was difficult to wake up those pretending to be asleep and make them see reason.

Ramatheertham temple to be ready by Jan '22

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Endowments Minister Velampalli Srinivas Rao on Wednesday said that the renovation works of the Ramatheertham temple in Vizianagaram district, taken up at an estimated cost of Rs 3 crore, will be completed and the shrine inaugurated by January 2022.

The Minister visited the temple accompanied by MP Bellana Chandrasekhar and MLA Badukonda Appalanaidu and others and performed puja. The Minister also released a model of the completed temple on the occa-



sion. Srinivas Rao said, "We are procuring the material required for the construction of the temple and are making

arrangements to complete it by the given time. The renovation work will comply with 'Agama Shastra', following consultations with priests and seers,

without hurting the sentiments of devotees." He said stonecutters from Chilakaluripeta have been roped in for the reconstruction

works wherever needed as the famed temple was planned to be fully stone structure.

Earlier, in December 2020, Lord Ram's idol in the temple was decapitated and dumped in the lake by some unidentified miscreants, leading to a major controversy as similar such incidents occurred earlier as well. Following these incidents, police increased security and installed surveillance cameras at several temples in the state.

The Minister said that security was strengthened at all the temples across the state and they were brought under CCTV camera surveillance.

Jagan regime scaring away industries from AP: Lokesh

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP national general secretary Nara Lokesh on Wednesday accused the YSRCP Government of misleading the people by making 'wrong claims' on the setting up of large scale industries with employment generation potential in AP.

Lokesh asked whether Industries Minister Mekapati Goutham Reddy could give any proof for the so-called 65 major industries that came up in the past two years of the Jagan regime.

He claimed AP performance in attracting foreign investments fell drastically ever since Jaganmohan Reddy came to power two years ago. AP stood in 3rd and 4th positions in investments in the previous five-year regime of the TDP but now its rank slipped to 13th place, he alleged.

Lokesh alleged that YSRCP MPs themselves behaved like 'rowdies' and threatened industries like the Kia Motors.

Jagan should speak about SCS: TDP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Telugu Desam Party MP K. Rammohan Naidu on Wednesday demanded Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy to explain to the people why he was not able to bring Special Category Status to Andhra Pradesh and thus fulfil his main election promise.

Addressing a press conference here, the TDP MP recalled how Jagan, when he was in the Opposition, used to put out an argument that the youth would get funds, industries and jobs only when the State is accorded Special Category Status.

"After coming to power, the CM stopped talking about the issue. He took a total U-turn and has blatantly breached the trust of the people. Jagan should explain to the people why he was not able to pressurise the Central Government," Rammohan Naidu said.

He said that the Special Status was a rightful demand of the AP people going by how this promise was made at the time of the state division.

"At the time of election, Jagan had said that he would get Special Category Status if



his party was given 25 MPs. Now, he has got Lok Sabha MPs and another six in the Rajya Sabha. Though he got a total of 28 MPs as of date, Jagan was not bringing pressure on the Centre," he said.

The TDP MP alleged that Jagan was using all his lobbying power with the Centre only to save himself from his CBI and ED cases. The CM was going to Delhi on special flights only to get his cases waived but not to protect the AP interests, he alleged.

Rammohan Naidu said that the YSRCP regime in AP has brought disrepute and shame to the State all over the country with the latest attack on Lok Sabha MP K Raghurama Raju. The 'custodial third degree' on a sitting Member of Parliament took place in AP for the first time in the entire country, he said.



Jagananna Thodu: Stree Nidhi roped in as banks keep away defaulters

DHV SAMBASIVA RAO
■ KAKINADA

In a significant development, bankers in East Godavari district are learnt to be reluctant to advance loans under the Jagananna Thodu scheme to defaulters. Under the scheme, which is intended to benefit small traders, banks are to lend Rs 10,000 to beneficiaries identified under the scheme and the interest component is to be paid by the government.

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy on Tuesday deposited the second tranche of

the scheme in the beneficiaries' accounts to protect the small traders from the clutches of moneylenders.

A total of 90,979 beneficiaries were identified in the district in the first phase of the scheme. However, the number of beneficiaries for second phase of the scheme in the district fell sharply. Only 33,445 people were paid the scheme amount of total Rs 33.45 crore at the rate of Rs 10,000 per beneficiary. Many banks did not advance loans to many people saying that they had defaulted on loan payment. Consequently, the number of

beneficiaries has come down.

DRDA Project Director Y Hariharanadh also conducted teleconferences with bankers asking them to advance loans even to loan defaulters but in vain.

Earlier, the Central government had directed banks to lend up to Rs 50,000 to small traders depending on their business. It also set a target for each bank. However, this is a scheme where the interest along with the loan is paid by the beneficiary. Banks did not even cooperate with that scheme.

District Collector D

Muralidhar Reddy and DRDA Project Director Y Hariharanadh discussed the matter after which Rs 23, 24, 10,000 was paid by DRDA-owned Stree Nidhi to 23,241 people in rural areas. The bank operates entirely under the auspices of the DRDA. Also, Rs 10, 20, 40,000 for 10,204 people from urban areas was negotiated through APCOB and sanctioned by the District Central Cooperative Bank.

Despite the banks' indifference, the initiative of the Collector to advance loans through Stree Nidhi and DCCB has paid off.

Legal Metrology dept doing well: Kodali

PNS ■ GUDIVADA

Minister for Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Kodali Sri Venkateswara Rao (Nani) has said that the Weights and Measures department has been performing well in the State for the past two years.

Briefing the media on the performance of the department on Wednesday, he said during the financial year 2019-20, stamping fees of Rs 18,33,02,707 was collected in 13 districts of the State. In the financial year 2020-21, Rs 20,58,48,256 was collected and better results were achieved. Also, in the 2019-20 financial year, cases were registered against 18,326 stores across the State for MRP and other violations.

Kodali Nani said that 19,660 cases were registered in the financial year 2020-21

3,547 kids half-orphaned by Covid-19 seek ex gratia

K K KRISHNA KUMAR
■ VIJAYAWADA

In a fervent appeal to the State government, semi-orphan children, who have lost one of their parents, are seeking ex gratia financial support on the lines of the relief announced for orphans. Covid-19 has cast a shadow on a large number of families in the second wave, rendering 3,547 children semi-orphan after losing one of their parents. While many families have lost their breadwinners, in some cases the children lost both the parents.

According to a report of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) submitted to Supreme Court on June 5, the orphans and semi orphans across the country identified during Corona crisis from April 1 2020 to June 5 was 30,071.

The State government authorities say that as on June 9, Corona impacted the families so much that it left 3,547 semi-orphaned. As many as 144 orphans were identified as on June 7.

The authorities further said they have identified only nine

children, who lost both the parents due to Covid between March 1 and March 31, 2021 in AP. Meanwhile, the total number of children who lost at least one parent due to the pandemic was 164 during the same period. However, the number rose substantially thereafter, taking the toll to 3,547 as on June 9.

Some States have declared an ex gratia for both Covid orphans and Covid semi-orphans. In the neighbouring Tamil Nadu State, CM Stalin had announced Rs 5 lakh as immediate relief for 100 per cent orphans and Rs 3 lakh for semi-orphans, who have lost one of their parents due to Corona.

But in Andhra Pradesh, Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy announced an ex gratia of Rs 10 lakh to the Covid orphans along with free education, but has not declared any relief for semi-orphans who have lost one parent. Many of these children have lost their father, the breadwinner of the family. Therefore, they are appealing to the CM Jagan to support them with immediate financial assistance.

Speaking to The Pioneer,

District	No. of kids who lost one parent
Srikakulam	428
Vizianagaram	271
Visakhapatnam	398
East Godavari	205
West Godavari	723
Krishna	544
Guntur	107
Prakasam	133
Nellore	99
Kurnool	208
Kadapa	97
Anantapur	155
Chittoor	179
Total	3,547

BVS Kumar, former Chairman of Child Welfare Committee, Krishna district, said that the government should come to the rescue of semi-orphans and support them financially to facilitate a comfortable life for them. "A single parent, especially a mother, may not be able to keep the children comfortable. So, there is a need to announce ex gratia to Covid semi-orphans too," he added.

Priority to development: Minister

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Agriculture Minister Kurasala Kannababu has said that priority will be given to the development of villages in the mandal in a planned manner.

He said a second water tank would be constructed at a cost of Rs 10 crore to solve the drinking water problem in the villages and water pipelines would be expanded.

Speaking after a review meeting with the newly-elected sarpanches chaired by MPDO Karre Swapna on Tuesday at the Karpa Mandal Praja Parishad conference hall in East Godavari district, he said Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy had brought



about revolutionary changes in the State for establishment of village self-government. He said the CM was working

towards welfare and development. Sarpanches and the officials should cooperate in the development of the villages in all respects, he added.



EVM SECURITY REVIEW

East Godavari District Collector D Muralidhar Reddy has directed the officials of Election Commission and Revenue Department to take strict measures for the security of electronic voting machines (EVMs). The Collector inspected the EVM and VVPAT warehouse at Kakinada Collectorate on Wednesday. He reviewed the arrangements being made for the protection and security of EVMs and issued instructions to the authorities.

Minister lays foundation for Jagananna houses

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Minister for Housing and also the In-charge of Guntur district Cherukuvada Sri Ranganatha Raju has said that Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has embarked on the massive programme of 'Navaratnalu - Pedalandariki Illu' with the aim of providing shelter to the homeless in the State.

Ranganatha Raju paid a whirlwind visit to Guntur district along with District Collector Vivek Yadav along with Narasaraopet MP Lavu Sri Krishna Devarayulu, to lay the foundation stone for Jagananna houses. He visited Vinukonda, Narasaraopet and



Pedapuradu constituencies and laid the foundation stone for houses along with the respective MLAs Bolla Brahma Naidu, Gopireddy Srinivas Reddy and MLA Namburu Shankar Rao.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said that owning a home with all facilities was a dream of everyone and CM Jagan was working to make it a reality.



HOMAM AGAINST CORONA ENDS

The 11-day Maha Mrutyunjaya Homam organised by Pancharama Kshetra in Samarthkota, East Godavari district, at the temple of Lord Sri Chalukya Kumararama Bhimeswara Swamy ended on Wednesday with Poornahuti. The Homam was conducted praying for the end of the Corona pandemic and good health for all.

RTC incurs loss of Rs 5.12 cr

PNS ■ KURNOOL

Corona has literally stopped RTC buses on their track, causing a Rs 5.12 crore loss to the State-owned transport company. Only a few buses are plying from the Kurnool depot in the wake of Corona curfew in the State. Most of the interstate services were completely discontinued and run within the district. Traffic from Kurnool to Hyderabad has been completely halted since May 5. Since then, passengers have been using alternative routes in Telangana.

Steps apace to desilt clogged drains: MLA



PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

Bhimavaram MLA Grandhi Srinivas has said that steps are being taken to develop drains in the constituency.

Inaugurating the silt removal work at Gunupudi south drains at a cost of Rs 8.8 lakh on Wednesday, he said regular silt removal in minor and major drains would help in draining out flood water from the fields submerged during heavy rains. He recalled that the fields were inundated with rainwater

last year and the water could not be drained out in time. In this context, he said that besides removing silt in the drains, steps would also be taken to strengthen them.

AMC Chairman Thirumani Yedukondalu, drainage D E Subrahmanyeswara Rao, JE Durga Rao, party leaders Kotti Kutumba Rao, Kamana Nageswara Rao, A S Raju, Kode Yugandhar, Komati Rambabu, Namana Mahesh, Muthyala Rao and others were present on the occasion.

Borewell works taken up under 'Jala Kala' prog

PNS ■ KADAPA

Rajampet MLA Meda Venkata Mallikarjuna Reddy on Wednesday the borewell works under the 'Jala Kala' scheme at Racha Gudupally village in Vontimitta mandal of Kadapa district.

Speaking on the occasion, he said that the State would register progress if farmers prosper. Ever since Jagan Mohan Reddy took over as the Chief Minister, farmer welfare has been the motto of the State, he added. Through the scheme, the government would set up borewells free of cost on farmlands of the size of 3.5 acres to 5 acres belonging to small and marginal farmers.

The event was attended by former ZP Vice-Chairman Iragamreddy Subba Reddy, sarpanch Badullabi, MPYC Nalgonda Lakshmi Devi, officials and farmers.



Govt misusing power to impose taxes, says Alapati

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Former minister Alapati Raja has said that the powers over imposition of taxes in the State are being abused. He criticized the YSRCP government for imposing new taxes.

Addressing a press conference at the TDP office in Guntur district on Wednesday, he said taxation on property value and the imposition of tax on garbage had never been witnessed before.

He alleged that the YSRCP government's rule was arbitrary as the party had a total number of 151 MLAs in the House. He demanded immediate abolition of GOs 197 and 198.

Former minister Nakka Ananda Babu said there were no buyers for maize and sorghum in the delta region of Guntur district. He said the Minimum Support Price was not being offered. He sought to know from Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy what the government was doing with the Price Stabilisation Fund of Rs 3,000 crore.

Eedara, ex-AD of Lam Farm, passes away

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Former assistant director of Lam Farm Research Centre, Dr. Eedara Narayana, 63, died after battling with a respiratory illness at a private hospital here on Wednesday. He is survived by wife and two sons. Narayana is credited with rendering a great service at Lam Farm. He was born at

Chamallamudi village in Vatticherukuru mandal of Guntur district and settled in Stambalagaruvu. Former Rajya Sabha members Yalamanchili Sivaji, former Cotton Board director Athota Subba Rao and Senior Citizens Association secretary Dasari Hanumantha Rao condoled the death of Narayana



Sponsored Corona tests at of Rs 250 in Kakinada

PNS ■ KAKINADA

An antigen rapid test programme was conducted under the auspices of the Kakinada Reddy Welfare Society, at four hospitals in Kakinada on Wednesday. In view of the non-availability of full range of tests with the government locally and the exploitation by private labs, the association has come forward to conduct an official antigen rapid test with a fee of just Rs 250 for all those in need as per the instructions of Kakinada MLA Dwarampudi Chandrasekar Reddy.

The association has conducted tests on hundreds of people at Blu-Ray Hospital, Lakshmi Hospital, 7 Star Hospital and Akshara Hospital in the city.

Director of Aditya Educational Institutions Dr. Nallamilli Suguna Reddy, Kakinada MLA Dwarampudi Veerabhadra Reddy, businessman Karri Bhami Reddy and K Veera Reddy inaugurated the tests in the hospitals. On the occasion, many lauded the services rendered by Reddy Welfare Society during the Covid difficult times.

Polavaram oustees seek quick clearance of R&R package

K BALA SHOWRY
■ ELURU

Even as the Polavaram project works are going on at a brisk pace, the people of upper Godavari basin are a worried lot. Many villages are at risk of being flooded in June and July due to the construction of the Polavaram dam. The authorities are urging the people in flood-prone areas to move to safer areas as a precautionary measure.

With the construction of the dam, the backwater fills the area near the project. Coastal people are panicked, especially those from Perantapalli to Nallavaram village in the mandal, due to flood threat. The residents are appealing to the government to pay the Relief and Rehabilitation (R&R) amount so that they can move over to safer places. They are against linking the completion of construction of the Rehabilitation Centre with R&R payment.

This time around, the Godavari river flood level is likely to reach 76 feet at Bhadrachalam and inland areas will be inundated. As a result, people in



many villages have started moving to safe areas and setting up settlements there. They may not be able to return to their homes when the flood subsides.

In this context, the residents urge the government to be able to go to safer places of their choice in this itself with R&R package payment.

Locals find fault with the officials who are advising them to take shelter somewhere for three months and

return home later as the houses they have been constructing for many years have not been completed. The officials are adamant about not paying R&R package amount until construction of the houses is not completed, claim locals.

The locals say that the government's advice is ridiculous as all their properties will be submerged in the event of floods and there is no use going to their original dwellings after the floods



recede. It will be impossible for them to go back home in such worst circumstances, they say.

Twenty-five 25 villages in Kukkunur mandal and many others are likely to be affected by floods, locals say.

Meanwhile, CPI district secretary Dega Prabhakar demanded an immediate solution to the problems of the Polavaram oustees. He was participating in a CPI-sponsored dharna at the local collectorate on Monday seeking

solution to the problems of the Polavaram project oustees. Prabhakar said that due to the closure of the dam, water had receded and the people of the displaced areas are suffering.

He criticized the present government for not coming forward to address the problems of the people of the displaced mandals who have sacrificed for the construction of the Polavaram project for the benefit of the State.

Shiv Sena says it values personal ties irrespective of political stand

PNS ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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



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

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

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

Thackeray had led a delegation of his cabinet colleagues

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

The court was hearing a



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

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

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

"Why should the same not be encouraged in other states

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

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

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

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

Allotment of water body: NGT issues notice to TN

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

Hospital official apologises over controversial 'no Malayalam' circular

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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



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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ MUMBAI

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

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

The bench was hearing a

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

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

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



'Decision on free vax appropriate but late'

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

PNS ■ BAHRAICH (UP)

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

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

1,000 or both. As per the FIR lodged by the Food Safety department, the businessmen have been accused of using of "non-edible golden offset colour" for polishing wheat at the premises of Darshil Agro Industries situated in Village Kanawati at Neemuch.

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

"This transformation will be defined by tapping into opportunities such as efficient rail-based transport, the optimisation of logistics and supply chains, and shifts to electric and other clean-fuel vehicles. These solutions can help India save ₹311 lakh crore cumulatively over the next three decades," said Clay Stranger, Managing Director, RMI.

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



tion, and stricter fuel economy standards. When successfully

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

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

U'khand ranked 4th in Niti Aayog's SDG India Index 2020-21

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

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

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

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

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

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

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





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PAPER WITH PASSION

Good intent

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

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

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

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

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

PICTALK



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

PTI

Better tomorrow?

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

The travel and tourism industry, along with associated arms like the hospitality and aviation sectors, has been in the doldrums for at least two seasons in a row. Depression has set in, hope has touched nadir, jobs have been lost and revenue — both for individual players and the Governments, alike — is shying away from the invested entrepreneurs like Vijay Malya from the Indian law-enforcement agencies. But the Centre and State Governments' ongoing inoculation drive, as it gathers momentum, has injected a sense of optimism and enthusiasm among the stakeholders. From Kashmir to Uttarakhand to Himachal Pradesh to Goa and Kerala, basically almost all the States

where the economy thrives on travel, tourism and hospitality, it's the same story of despair. But Wednesday brought with it a sliver of hope and positivity when Culture and Tourism Minister Prahlad Patel fanned the embers of their dying hope. He said in unequivocal terms that the ongoing vaccination drive is going to drive the revival of the tourism sector. Giving the entrepreneurs in the above-mentioned sectors another reason to smile, he added that the Government is working on a uniform policy and setting up protocols for travellers getting vaccinated against COVID-19.

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

Likud oxygen for Israel's polity

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



PRIYADARSHI DUTTA

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

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

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



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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

REGIONAL PARTIES IN VIRTUAL SPACE

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

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

Bichu Muttathara | Pune

TESTING TIMES OF DEMONETISATION

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

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

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

Keep staying in battle mode



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

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

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

G David Milton | Tamil Nadu

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

Jayanthi Subramaniam | Navi Mumbai

NOT EASY FOR THE TMC OUTSIDE BENGAL

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

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

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

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

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

Sravana Ramachandran | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

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

Congress general secretary — Priyanka Gandhi Vadra

The #BitcoinLaw has been approved by a supermajority in the Salvadoran Congress. 62 out of 84 votes!

History! El Salvador President — Nayib Bukele

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

Actor — Kangana Ranaut

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

Indian footballer — Sunil Chhetri

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

Goa Chief Minister — Pramod Sawant



FIRST COLUMN

WHEN DOCTORS BECOME PATIENTS

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



N SOUMIK

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

G7 plans end of tax paradise for MNCs

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



GOVIND BHATTACHARJEE

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

POINT COUNTERPOINT

WE WELCOME FORMER UNION MINISTER JITIN PRASADA INTO THE BJP. HIS JOINING WOULD FURTHER STRENGTHEN THE PARTY.
— UTTAR PRADESH CHIEF MINISTER YOGI ADITYANATH



IN THE CONGRESS, HE BECAME AN MP AND A MINISTER. THE CONGRESS HAS GIVEN HIM SO MUCH BUT WHAT HAS HE DONE IN RETURN?
— UPCC PRESIDENT AJAY KUMAR LALLU

Environment is forever, not diamonds

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

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

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



KOTA SRIRAJ

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sensex tumbles 334 pts; Nifty drops below 15,650

PNS ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

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



Binod Modi, Head - Strategy at Reliance Securities.

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

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

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Seoul, Tokyo and Hong

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

India's exports grew by 67.39 per cent to USD 32.21 billion in May, driven by healthy growth in sectors such as engineering, and petroleum products.

Aus: WTO should punish Chinese economic coercion

■ AUSTRALIA

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

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



meeting in Cornwall.

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

PHDCCI suggests strategy to stop possibility of third wave of infections

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



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

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

MONEY MATTERS

Petronet shelves USD 2.5 billion Tellurian deal

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



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

Gold declines Rs 92, silver tumbles Rs 414

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



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

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

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



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

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

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

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

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



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

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

"We have a capacity to man-

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

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



Uber to hire 250 engineers in India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

"Uber's expansion plans are in line with its vision to make mobility and delivery more accessible, and to become the backbone of transportation in over 10,000 cities across the globe," it said. Uber Senior Director Manikandan said the teams work on important global mandates, and pioneer various industry-first innovations.

By the end of the year, the cumulative headcount at these centres is expected to touch 1,000 people. "In order to serve more people across the globe, we're expanding our teams and are looking for bright engineering minds so we can collectively solve mobility and delivery challenges across all our global markets," he added.

RBI money printing should be last option, govt can consider Covid bonds: Subbarao

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The central bank can directly print money and finance the government, but it should avoid doing so unless there is absolutely no alternative, former RBI governor D Subbarao on Wednesday said while pointing out that India is 'nowhere' near such a scenario.

In an interview with PTI, Subbarao suggested that to deal with the second wave of COVID-19 induced slowdown in the economy, the government can consider Covid bonds as an option to raise borrowing, not in addition to budgeted borrowing, but as a part of that.

"It (RBI) can (print money) but, it should avoid doing so unless there is absolutely no alternative. For sure, there are times when monetisation despite its costs - becomes inevitable such as when the government cannot finance its deficit at reasonable rates.

"We are nowhere near such a scenario," he said.

India's economy contracted by less-than-expected 7.3 per cent in the fiscal ended March 2021. For 2021-22, the deficit has been put at 6.8 per cent of the GDP, which will be further lowered to 4.5 per cent by 2025-26. The RBI has lowered the country's growth projection

for the current financial year to 9.5 per cent from 10.5 per cent estimated earlier, amid the uncertainties created by the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic, while the World Bank on Tuesday projected India's economy to grow at 8.3 per cent in 2021.

According to Subbarao, when people say the RBI should print money to finance the government's deficit, they don't realise that the central bank is printing money even now to finance the deficit, but it is doing so indirectly.

For example, he said, when the Reserve Bank of India buys bonds under its open market

operations (OMOs) or buys dollars under its forex operations, it is printing money to pay for those purchases, and that money indirectly goes to finance the government's borrowing.

"The important difference though is this when RBI is printing money as part of its liquidity operations, it is in the driver's seat, deciding how much money to print and how to channel it into the system," the former governor noted.

In contrast, Subbarao said, monetisation is seen as a way of financing the government's fiscal deficit, with the quantum and timing of money to be

printed being decided by the government's borrowing requirement rather than the RBI's monetary policy.

"That will be seen as RBI losing control over the money supply, which will erode the credibility of both the RBI and the government with costly macro-economic implications," he observed. The RBI's monetisation of fiscal deficit means the central bank printing currency for the government to take care of any emergency spending to bridge its fiscal deficit.

Asked whether a Covid bond is an option that the government can consider to raise some borrowing, the former

RBI governor said, "It is something worth considering, not in addition to budgeted borrowing, but as a part of that."

In other words, Subbarao said instead of borrowing in the market, the government could raise a part of its borrowing requirements by issuing Covid bonds to the public.

"Appropriately priced and structured, they can provide relief to savers who are short-changed by the low-interest rates on bank fixed deposits.

"Moreover, such Covid bonds will not add to the money supply and will not, therefore, interfere with RBI's liquidity management," he pointed out.

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

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



SNAPCHAT MAKES learning languages fun

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

The new feature was launched to reinforce the company's localisation efforts in India to build locally and culturally relevant experiences, it said. A member of the Snap Lens Network, Atit Kharel is a digital creator who created the 'learn language' lenses following his own passion for the multilingual Indian culture. He comments: "I have always been fascinated by the cultural diversity in India and the range of languages spoken here. The idea behind these lenses was to make

learning Indian languages fun and easy — especially for new learners. Augmented reality can be really entertaining and can make learning more interactive and accessible." The lenses are available on Snapchat by searching 'Learn Bengali', 'Learn Telugu', 'Learn Kannada', 'Learn Hindi', 'Learn Marathi', 'Learn Punjabi' or by scanning the Snapcode or searching for Atit Kharel's official profile, said Snapchat. How to use these Lenses: Snapchatters have to point



their cameras at an object to scan it, and the Lenses will simultaneously display, along with a phonetic transcription of the word to help with pronunciation. In an effort to engage youth, Snapchat has previously released localised lenses, filters and stickers.

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

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

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

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

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

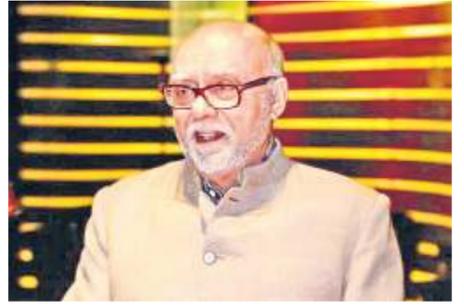
In addition, the author has summed up the changes coming to the construction industry, automated clothes manufacturing and automated home cooking solutions.

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

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

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

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

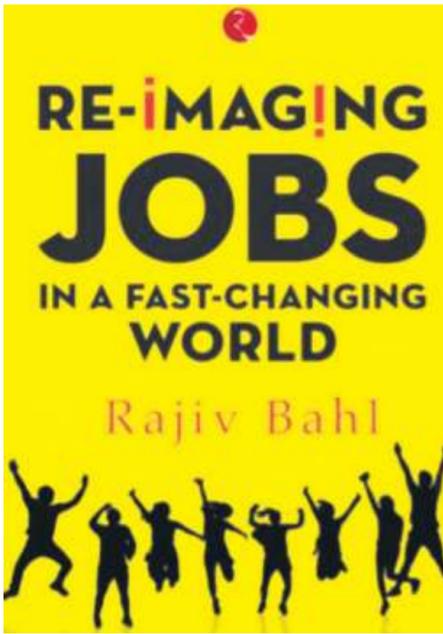


"We are not entirely helpless against the advancing tide of automated humanless jobs. There are many jobs that intelligent machines will not be able to do for at least one of three reasons. The first reason is that some jobs that require human interactions will be difficult to automate. It is difficult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

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

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

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



SECRETS OF WAR-ROOM

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



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

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

Adoption of privacy-preserving technologies

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

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

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

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

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

Need for strong early alert frameworks

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

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

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

Enabling effective contact tracing

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

FUN

ARCHIE



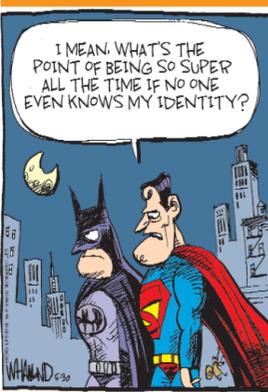
CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



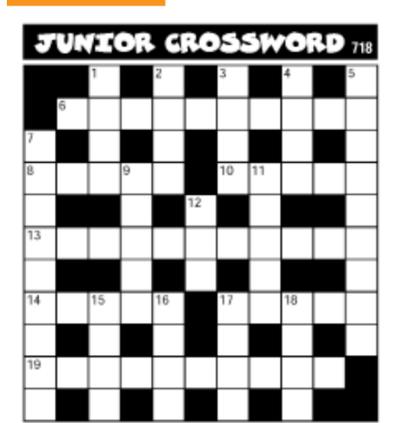
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

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

- A traffic circle where roads cross
- A fishing pole
- A curved support under a bridge
- Rescue
- Grow weary
- Wear this on a finger

DOWN

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

SOLUTION

A	L	M	O	S	T	G	R	I	N
P	O	L	E	D	O	N			
S	H	A	D	E					
J	R	I	O	E	T				
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W	I	N	E	Y	E	A	R	L	I

GINGER MEGGS





THE ATTITUDE OF gratitude in dire times

RACHEL DAMMALA

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



hand-written letters to be sent would only mean more con-

After months of waiting, students were informed that the CBSE and CISCE Class XII board exams would be cancelled. While this came as good news at a time when people sought nothing more than wanting to be alive, the cancellation didn't bring relief in the longer run.

While the board exams stand cancelled, more than 60 percent of the respondents in the IANS-CVoter CBSE Snap Poll felt that the move can adversely affect the career of the students. A total of 60.6 percent of respondents said that the cancellation can adversely affect the career of the students, implying that there is great uncertainty over what will unfold next. The poll was conducted in the aftermath of the Union government's decision to cancel the Class XII board exams taken on June 1. The all-India sample size for the snap poll was 5,422 and the fieldwork was conducted on June 2.

A majority of the respondents — 49.1 percent — are of the view that instead of cancelling the Class XII board

Cancellation of Class XII board exams: Bane or boon



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Gleaning the benefits of yoga to fight Covid



K RAMYA SREE

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

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

EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEW:

How can yoga help a Covid-recovered patient?

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

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

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

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

What is 'yoga meets science'?

The source of knowledge of Yoga is in its various traditional texts, such as Patanjali Yoga Sutra, Yoga Vashistha, Hathpridipika which have been written between 2500 BC to 1100 AD. These texts lay down the fundamental principles of Yoga and also the techniques of the practice. Swami Kavalayandama the founder of Kaivalyadhama, undertook scientific research to re-search these principles and prove the efficacy in the scientific terminology. Therefore, the source is tradition and the language is science, and thus we say "Where Yoga traction and science meet". For example, the importance of Uddiyana bandh has been laid out in traditional texts, however, Swamiji's scientific publication in 1924 on Uddiyana bandh generating a negative pressure in the viscera and impacting pale static movement gave the scientific understanding of the importance.

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

Can you share some basic yoga positions for beginners?

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

▶ shortpasses

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sakkari ends Swiatek win streak

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

AP ■ PARIS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And both dealt with early deficits on Wednesday.

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tsitsipas, Nadal in semis



Rafael Nadal consoles Diego Schwartzman after their quarterfinal match

AFP ■ PARIS

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

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

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

row to seal the match.

Nadal will be up against either top-ranked Novak Djokovic or Matteo Berrettini in the semifinals. On Tuesday night, Stefanos Tsitsipas defeated Daniil Medvedev in straight sets to stay on track for a first Grand Slam final at the French Open.

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

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

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

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

Look at her now. She's ranked a career-high 33rd and on a 10-match winning streak in singles.

Krejčíková ended the nine-match run of the 24th-seeded Gauff, who is based in Florida and was the

youngest French Open quarterfinalist since 2006. Gauff's 41 unforced errors included seven double-faults — and after one, she mangled her racket frame by whacking it three times against the ground.

Dahiya to fight for Gold at Poland Open

PTI ■ WARSAW

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Buttler, Morgan under investigation for alleged racist remarks against Indians

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I see myself on Olympic podium: Pooja

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A second successive Asian Championship Gold adding to her confidence, Olympic-bound Indian boxer Pooja Rani (75kg) on Wednesday said she can visualise herself winning a medal at the Tokyo Games next month.

Pooja defended her Gold in the Asian Championships in Dubai a few days ago by beating Mavluda Movlonova in the final. That was her lone bout of the event as she got a bye and a walkover earlier.

"I will give my best in the Olympics and the rest is up to



God. Of course, I see myself on the Olympic podium," Pooja said during a virtual interaction from Pune where she is currently training.

"I am happy with my preparations for the Olympics and this Gold (in Asian Championships) has given me more hope and confidence."

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

PTI ■ BIRMINGHAM

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



rest and rehabilitation will help maximise his recovery.

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

Latham assured Williamson will be back for the WTC final.

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

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

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

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

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

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

IOA in search of new kit sponsor

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

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

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

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

Benzema injured in France's win

AFP ■ PARIS

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

Neymar helps Brazil maintain perfect record

AFP ■ ASUNCION

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

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

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

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

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

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



yards.

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

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

ARGENTINA BLOW LEAD

Miguel Borja scored four minutes into stoppage time to

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

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

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

Selecao players won't boycott Copa America

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

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

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

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

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

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

Argentina remain unbeaten in second place while Colombia are just outside the automatic qualification spots in fifth.

PERU CLAIM FIRST WIN

Peru earned their first win of the qualification campaign but remained bottom of the group despite a surprise 2-1 success at Ecuador.

In Caracas, Venezuela held Uruguay to a 0-0 draw to remain above Peru on goal difference, while the visitors clung on to a top four automatic qualification spot. Marcelo Moreno's penalty edge minutes from time earned Bolivia a 1-1 draw in Santiago with dominant Chile, who took the lead through Erick Pulgar on 69 minutes.



AVIKA: CONFIDENCE HAS TO COME FROM WORK ETHIC, KNOWLEDGE

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

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

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

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

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

'WORKING WITH SAMANTHA WAS EFFORTLESS'



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

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

gy is a notch higher from the previous season."

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

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

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

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

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

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



Nani 'cooking' something for frontline workers



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

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

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

In the photograph, Nani is seen

observing 'something' that was shot on the camera.

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

Ravi Teja turning Chantabbayi?



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

superhit title.

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

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

MALAYALAM ACTRESS TO PLAY LEAD IN SHEKAR



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

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

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

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