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Raashi Khanna to play a psycho killer?



Sena treated as slaves in BJP govt

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Pradhan: Cong-ruled states must cut tax on fuel

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In brief

Maha updates Covid numbers with delayed data to 1.08L deaths

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

Delhi's unlocking: All shops, restaurants to reopen

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

Milkha Singh's wife Nirmal dies due to Covid

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

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

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

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Jyeshtha & Shukla Paksha
Panchangam
Tithi: Chaturthi: 10:33 pm
Nakshatram: Pushya: 08:36 pm
Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)
Rahukalam: 07:23 am - 09:00 am
Yamagandam: 10:38 am - 12:16 pm
Variyam: NIL
Gulika: 01:54 pm - 03:31 pm
Good Time: (to start any important work)
Amritakalam: 01:47 pm - 03:29 pm
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:50 am - 12:42 pm

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: partly cloudy
Temp: 32/23
Humidity: 73%
Sunrise: 05:41 am
Sunset: 06:50 pm
Current Weather Conditions
Updated JUNE 13, 2021 5:00 PM

POLITICAL SLUGFEST CONTINUES

Govt going tough on land encroachers in Vizag

SNV SUDHIR
VIJAYAWADA

While the focus has been shifted towards Vizag after the announcement of the city as state's new executive capital, every inch of land had become invaluable, especially those close to Madhurawada-Kommodi-Kapulupada-Rushikonda-Anandapuram-Bheemili cluster where the entire government buildings are speculated to come up once the Chief Minister Y S Jaganmohan Reddy starts functioning from the city of destiny.

Even as land prices in Vizag had gone up manifold political slugfest between the ruling YSRCP and opposition TDP too intensified over the past one year. While TDP leaders have been raising hue and cry that YSRCP senior leaders like V Vijaysai Reddy and others have 'eyed' most valuable lands and are disturbing the tranquility of the peace loving port city, the YSRCP



government has gone a step ahead and has started recovering the government lands which are alleged to be in the clutches of the TDP leaders, who are said to have encroached by them during the previous five year's TDP rule.

Over the last one year such recovery of government lands had also turned controversial with the incidents like dismantling the boundary walls of GITAM varsity

on the Rushikonda-Bheemili Beach Road, belonging to TDP leader M Bharath and the residence of former Anakapalle MP Sabbam Hari in Seethammadhara. Bharath had contested for Vizag Lok Sabha seat on a TDP ticket and Hari was TDP's candidate from Bheemili and the TDP leaders had cried political vendetta by the ruling party.

SIT report yet to see light of the day

PNS VIJAYAWADA

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) constituted by the YSRCP government to probe into several irregularities in the land transactions that took place in Vizag had completed its task and readied its report. However, the SIT report is yet to see the light of the day.

The government formed the SIT comprising ex-IAS officers Vijay Kumar and YV Anuradha and retired judge T Bhaskara Rao in October 2019.

TS police block AP vehicles sans e-pass

C PRADEEP KUMAR
VIJAYAWADA

Hundreds of vehicles had to return from the Andhra Pradesh-Telangana state border at the Ramapuram crossroad check post since Saturday night.

Heavy traffic snarl was witnessed at the Ramapuram check post as Telangana Police did not allow vehicles coming from Andhra enter TS without valid e-pass. However, traders on the border districts are facing the heat of the travel restrictions imposed by the police at the state border.

As many as 1,500 vehicles were sent back to AP from the AP-TS border by the TS police since Saturday night, sources say. Only 700 Vehicles that had valid e-pass were given permission to enter Telangana State at the check post. Huge traffic was witnessed as it happened to be the weekend and people trying to sneak into the neighbouring state were stopped by the TS police.

As the daytime curfew was relaxed in Telangana State, people from Andhra Pradesh reached the Ramapuram check post and were



trying to slip into Telangana State, but were stopped, resulting into a huge traffic snarl near the check post. On the other hand the Kodad police were allowing travellers coming from Andhra Pradesh with a valid e-pass to enter the neighboring Telangana State and travellers without e-pass were sent back.

Hundreds of vehicles that tried to make their way into the TS, without e-pass, were sent back by the Kodad police; after hours of waiting about 1,500 vehicles returned from the check post. Only 700 vehicles that had valid e-pass were allowed to enter the Telangana State by the police since Saturday night, said the police.

Subba Reddy's term as TTD chief extended?

MARTHI SUBRAHMANYAM
VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy is understood to have decided to extend the term of the current TTD chairman YV Subba Reddy, whose two year tenure is coming to a close on June 22, for another term.

According to political grapevine, Subba Reddy was understood to have told Jagan his desire to become a minister in the state Cabinet as she has had no interest in continuing as TTD Chairman.

After Nathwani now Adani to Rajya Sabha from YSRCP

Amit Shah proposed to YS Jagan in the recent discussions

SNCN ACHARYULU
HYDERABAD

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

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

It may be recalled that, at the behest of Prime Minister Narendra



Modi and Shah, in the previous Rajya Sabha elections YSR Congress party gave ticket to Parimal Nathwani, senior group president of Reliance Industries owned by Mukhesh Ambani. Jagan, during his recent trip to Delhi, held lengthy discussions

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

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

NBCC to submit project report on RINL's 22-acre land in Vizag by June-end

PNS NEW DELHI

State-owned NBCC will submit the detailed project report (DPR) to RINL by month-end for the steel maker's 22.19 acre land in Visakhapatnam city, a popular tourist destination in Andhra Pradesh.

In March 2021, construction firm NBCC had informed about signing an MoU with Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Ltd (RINL) for redevelopment and monetisation of its 22.19 acre land in the port city.

"NBCC is conducting the DPR on the project and submit it to RINL by end of June," a company spokesperson said.

Post signing of the MoU, RINL asked NBCC to conduct a DPR to ascertain the value of the land.

RINL is expecting to get around Rs 1,000 crore from the sale of the land parcel in Maddilapalem which is a prime location situated about 3-4 km from the beach.

NH-16 which connects Howrah in West Bengal to Chennai in Tamil Nadu passes at a distance of about 2 km from the site. Besides, the land is in the proximity of tourist attractions like zoo, Simhachalam temple, stadium etc.

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

PNS JAMMU

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

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

the region.

In a series of tweets, the office of the Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor said the much-awaited 'Bhoomi Pujan' ceremony of Sri Venkateswara Swamy Temple by Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) was held at Majeen here.

Took part in Bhoomi Pujan and unveiled the plaque to mark the laying of foundation stone in presence of Union MoS Dr Jitendra Singh, Union MoS G Kishan Reddy, Chairman TTD Board and

other dignitaries, Sinha said.

He expressed sincere gratitude towards TTD Board and the Union government for fulfilling the long pending wish of people of J&K and north India for establishing the temple of Lord Balaji on the land of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi.

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

Car swallowed by sinkhole at Mumbai parking lot after rain

PNS MUMBAI

A parked car disappeared within seconds into a sinkhole at a residential complex in Mumbai, which has been receiving heavy monsoon rainfall over the past few days.

A video of the bizarre incident in Ghatkopar, which is doing the rounds on social media, shows the car's bonnet and front wheels enter the sinkhole first.

The rear part of the car follows and soon the vehicle disappears whole under the water. The other vehicles parked near the car, including one right next to it,



were not affected.

The video has emerged at a time when Mumbai, along with other areas in coastal Maharashtra, is getting heavy monsoon rainfall.

Congress needs widespread reforms: Kapil Sibal

PNS NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

the point that minority and majority communalism are equally dangerous for the country. He cited this as one of the rea-



Monday Mirchi

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

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

When hunks are at helm, it pays to hunker down

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

Thriving T-Hub and underperforming CIOs, CEOs

There are government organizations in which a committed workforce, driven by able superiors and motivated by commanding taskmasters, makes the CEO redundant. Led by Jayesh Ranjan, the IT Department has a lot of foreign returnees who have taken up befit-

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

Bouquets for Ministers, brickbats to govt servants

Wanna grievance fixed? Post it on social media platforms and tag the Minister concerned. Response guaranteed. This channel celebrates Ministers' responsiveness and paints babus in poor light as it appears as if officials act only if nudged their political bosses at public fora.

The Telangana government created 33 districts ostensibly to make administration easily accessible to people. Definitely small is beautiful when it comes to paying attention to the public, delivering services, and addressing public grievances. The whole idea was that the District Collector, overseeing a relatively smaller geographical area, would ensure proper implementation of programmes and obtain feedback in real time. Alas! People still rely on MLAs and Ministers for getting things done, be it sourcing medicines, oxygen concentrators or correction of errors in pat-darani passbooks for uploading particulars in Dharani portal. Social media platforms have become virtual offices for grievance redressal, often replacing the official mechanism.

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

- Yours truly

AP BJP feels pinch of Centre's tilt towards YSRCP

MARTHI SUBRAHMANYAM
■ AMARAVATI

BJP AP leaders have expressed concern over the alliance of the party with the YSRCP at the central level as working against the same party-led state government in the state was posing some problem because of it. On Sunday, AP leaders who attended a core committee meeting at the residence of former Union Minister Purandeswari in Vijayawada lamented their plight in front of BJP national joint general secretary and southern states in-charge Shiv Prakash.

On this occasion, a leader pointed out that match-fixing and campaigning were going

on as there was understanding with YSRCP at the central level and that had its impact at the state level. The rest of the leaders told him that there was growing impatience among the activists in the grassroots level and that the leaders also did not understand how to speak and how to respond to the ruling party, and that a definite solution had to be found for this. Responding to this he ordered that surely everyone should play the role of opposition.

On this occasion there was a lengthy discussion on the fall in party voting percentage to one per cent in the state. All the leaders informed Shiva Prakash that the voting percentage had dropped due to the

effect of the previous alliance with Telugu Desam. However, he advised the leaders to definitely move up to the second position in the state and work hard for it.

Later, he told the state affairs in-charge, Union Minister Muralitharan that high command had received many complaints against him that he was not available in the state. He suggested that more time be allotted to the state.

Meanwhile, Sunil Deodhar, the state co-in-charge, took a vow from the participants in the core committee that they would not disclose anything to the press regarding the discussion in the core committee and its decisions. He also suggest-

ed that only those whom the party officially nominated should give interviews on TV.

BJP National Secretary Satya Kumar also addressed the core committee meeting. National Leader Purandeswari, State Sanghatana Secretary Madhukar, State President Somu Veerraju, Former President Kanna Lakshminarayana, General Secretary Vishnuvardhan Reddy, MLC Madhav, were present.

However, the absence of party MPs Srujana Chaudhary, TG Venkatesh, GVL Narasimha Rao and CM Ramesh from the meeting became a hot topic of discussion.

After Nathwani now Adani to...

Continued from Page 1

Recently the Andhra Pradesh government gave the Gangavaram port to the Adani group of companies.

Jagan is of the considered view that if the country's richest industrialists are given Rajya Sabha tickets, the image of the party will improve. At the same time, the industrialists will invest huge money in the state. Mukhesh Ambani and Adani are internationally famous industrialists.

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

Govt going tough on land...

Continued from Page 1

The YSRCP government over the past one year had recovered around 480 acres of government land, which the government had alleged were encroached by TDP leaders. The open market value of the recovered land is pegged at Rs 5,100 crore, and majority of such land sites recovered are located in and around Adavivaram, Yendada, Rushikonda, Madhurawada, PM Palem, Paradesipalem, Nerellavalasa, Chippada Kapuluppada, Dakamarri, Bheemili and Anandapuram.

Around 49.05 acres were recovered only on Sunday in Gajuwaka mandal belonging to former Gajuwaka MLA Palla Srinivas. The Gaajuwaka lands that were recovered were valued at Rs 791.41 crore in the open market. Government had also booked several cases against some individuals, who were said to be the proxies of some senior leaders of the TDP who were once powerful and influential.

"The state government has been conducting a drive since over a year to recover government lands occupied by the TDP leaders on a mission

mode. However, these illegal encroachments have been going on. We are clearing the encroachments and recovering the land sites whenever we are receiving either complaints or information," said a senior government official.

However, TDP leaders are not convinced with such an argument by the government and are alleging that the YSRCP government has been targeting TDP leaders while unleashing political vendetta.

"Why Chief Minister is not taking action against his party leaders who were committing so many irregularities.

SIT report yet to see light of the day...

Continued from Page 1

Later the SIT chief included three more members, retired IAS officer of Chhattisgarh K Durgananda Prasad Rao, former city police commissioner, RK Meena and Chief Conservator of Forests Rahul Pandey.

The SIT probed into allegations in six categories such as change of classification, tampering of records, encroachment of government land, grabbing of government land, allotment of government land to private individual and organisations and NoC issued to political sufferers and freedom fighters. Of the total of 1,400 representations received, SIT has

cleared around 400 with its recommendations and observation.

The SIT is said to have named around 25 to 30 prominent persons, including a few serving and former bureaucrats and senior government officials.

Interestingly, TDP during its last term had also constituted a SIT to probe irregularities in land transactions in Vizag and named a few YSRCP leaders, who were in opposition then.

The SIT appointed during the previous TDP regime had found prima facie involvement of at least 49 government officials, including a few IAS officers and grade I officials in the land scam in Vizag.

NBCC to submit...

Continued from Page 1

However, the value of the project would be ascertained after the preparation and finalisation of the DPR. RINL, under the Ministry of Steel, owns and operates a 7.3 million tonne steel plant in Visakhapatnam. It is the country's first shore-based integrated steel plant producing special steel products.

Helping Indian students a top...

Continued from Page 1

"Student visa applicants do not need an expedited appointment to schedule their visa interview. On June 14, we will open July and August appointments for students," he added.

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

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

"While proof of vaccination is not required to enter the

United States, individual schools or institutions may set their own requirements. The US education system operates independently from the federal government, and students should consult closely with their host institution to ensure compliance with individual vaccination requirements," he added.

TS police block...

Continued from Page 1

The police further appealed to the people travelling to Telangana State to carry a valid e-pass failing which they would not be allowed entry, police said. People should make a note of it and cooperate with the police and not create issues at the state border, TS police said.

Congress needs...

Continued from Page 1

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

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

The veteran added that India needs a resurgent

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

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

India needs a resurgent Congress. But for that, the party needs to show that it is active, present, aware and is in the mood to engage meaningfully

No clarity on Covid vaccine...

Continued from Page 1

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

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

Subba Reddy's term as TTD chief extended?

Continued from Page 1

The party circles are agog that he will be made an MLC and later inducted into the state cabinet, appointing former MP Mekapati Rajamohan Reddy or Tirupati MLA Bhumana Karunakar

Reddy in Subba Reddy's place as the TTD chairman.

The YSRCP leaders analyse that it is impossible to give two ministerial berths to a single family since Subba Reddy's relative Balineni Srinivasa Reddy is already a minister in the state cabinet.

Some other leaders express doubt how Mekapati Rajamohan Reddy be appointed TTD chairman given the fact that his son Mekapati Gautam Reddy is serving as a minister in the State Cabinet.

Precious metals remain firm

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

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

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

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

lar: Rs.9.44. In local markets, standard gold (24 carats) declined by Rs.170 and closed at Rs.49,900 (per 10 gms). Ornamental gold too followed suit and was quoted in the range of Rs.45,650 - 45,750 on the closing day. Silver (0.999) further appreciated by Rs.1,000 and closed at Rs.77,300 (per kg). Amidst the prevalent market uncertainty due to Covid-19 pandemic conditions, all major markets have suffered heavily. However, following the gradual easing of lockdown restrictions, an air of optimism has buoyed up the market mood.

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

During the week, common pulses such as tuar dal, masoor dal, moong dal and urad dal and commodities like chillies and garlic remained unchanged at their respective last week's closing levels, while staple food grains and common edible recorded a negligible decline. Common vegetables such as cabbage, cauliflower, ribbed gourd, snake gourd, lady's finger, cucumber, potatoes, onions, French beans and leafy vegetables flared up still further in the range of 8% to 14%. Tomatoes continued to rule at lower levels. Mango growers have suffered huge losses due to pre-monsoon and cyclonic winds that have devastated mango crop on a large scale. The NECC wholesale price of egg in Hyderabad appreciated by Rs.2 and closed at Rs.510 (per 100). The highest price of Rs.575 was recorded at Kolkata, while Ludhiana recorded the lowest price of Rs.499.

WEEKLY MARKET REVIEW

New tenancy law in offing: pros and cons

■ HC UPADHYAY

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

The government expects that State tenancy laws based on the MTA will benefit both landlords and tenants. The draft bill also aims at speedy disposal of tenancy disputes. Among the salient features of the bill, the important ones are: compulsory registration of written agreement between the landlord and the tenant with the designated authority, limit of security deposit payable by the tenant to a maximum of 2 months'

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

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

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

It is unfortunate that since Independence, despite making tall claims about poverty elimination by providing food, clothing and shelter to people, successive governments have done precious little. In the 50s and 60s, the housing problem which was confined only to the big cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata and Chennai percolated down to even the smaller cities and towns.

With the rapid industrialization and growth of trade, the employment avenues have definitely increased manifold. Most of the employment opportunities are available in the big cities and towns which results in large scale migration of people from rural areas to urban

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

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

Italian marine's case comes closer to the end

Considering the fact that the Republic of Italy has deposited a sum of Rs.10cr towards compensation, the Supreme Court is likely to pass appropriate orders on the application filed by the central government to quash the criminal proceedings pending in India against Italian marine Massi Milano Latorre and Salvatore Girone in connection with the sea-firing incident near Kerala coast, resulting in the death of two Indian fishermen in 2012. A division bench of Justice Indira Benerjee and Justice M.R Shah adjourned the matter to June 15 for orders.

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

Rajasthan HC on live-in relationship

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

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

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

J&K HC on reopening of a case

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

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

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

New CJ for Allahabad HC

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

TS -HC judges' strength increased:

The Supreme Court of India has approved the sanctioned bench strength of Telangana High Court to 42. At present, the strength is 24. Out of the proposed 42 judges, 32 will be permanent judges and 10 will be additional judges. The composition of the 42 judges will be 28 from the Bar and 14 from the judicial services. The proposal had been hanging fire since 2019.

Naidu must respond on land grab charge : Minister Srinivas

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Tourism Muttamsetti Srinivasa challenged opposition leader N Chandrababu Naidu to respond on TDP members land grabbing in Visakhapatnam and further asserted that the government was not being vindictive towards opposition.

Addressing the media in Vizag on Sunday, he said that there was no need for the government to be vindictive towards the TDP, but it was being responsible for safeguarding the lands and taking action against illegal encroachments. Unlike during TDP rule, when Visakhapatnam was turned into a city of corruption, the government was now making it the safest city.

Thousands of acres worth lands were encroached by TDP leaders with the support of Chandrababu Naidu and same was the case with Palla Srinivasa Rao, who encroached



49 acres of land which was valued at Rs 791.41 crore in the benami account of his father, the minister said.

He dared Chandrababu Naidu to answer whether he supported the encroachment of government lands and to reveal what action should be taken on his party leader Palla Srinivasa

Rao for involvement in the land grabbing.

The previous government failed to take action on land encroachments in Visakhapatnam and didn't make the SIT report public. Soon after forming the government, Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy had consti-

tuted SIT to investigate the land scams in Visakhapatnam and would take action based on the report. Nobody has the right to encroach government land and action will be initiated against any unlawful activity committed by any person whether he belongs to the ruling party or the Opposition, and will be sent to jail by pressing criminal charges, said the Minister.

Refuting the allegations made by the opposition leaders that the YSRCP had been involved in encroaching lands in Visakhapatnam, Minister Srinivas said that land

grabbing was done by TDP members during Chandrababu Naidu's rule and challenged to prove if any single yard of land was encroached by him or any YSRCP member in the last two years. He said that the state government was taking back all the lands which were encroached by the TDP leaders and would distribute them to the poor, as Chief Minister

YS Jaganmohan Reddy worked for the welfare

of the public. In the last two years, various development programmes had been undertaken in Visakhapatnam, with an aim to develop the city. He stated that Chandrababu Naidu had spent money from land sale in Visakhapatnam on development of Hyderabad city in United Andhra Pradesh.

Further, he said that the Chief Minister has come up with decentralisation with an aim to develop all three regions equally. Chandrababu Naidu should answer whether he and his party members were for or against Visakhapatnam to be an executive capital. He stated that the government would soon complete the construction of NAD flyover and Bhogapuram Airport.

If BJP leaders were truly concerned about Visakhapatnam, they should bring in a railway zone and start its works, he added.

Lokesh urges Governor for probe into Group-1 evaluation

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP National General Secretary Nara Lokesh on Sunday wrote a letter to Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan, urging for a thorough probe by a sitting judge into the injustice done to candidates in the arbitrarily-introduced digital evaluation in the Group-1 Mains examination.

Lokesh told the Governor that the digital evaluation was not mentioned in Group-1 notification. Later, the AP Public Service Commission (APPSC) replaced manual evaluation with digital mode without any prior intimation to the candidates. As a result, many deserving candidates could not get qualified in the Group-1 Mains. All this happened because of the questionable practices being adopted by the APPSC,

which was under various unwanted political influences nowadays.

Nara Lokesh said that the conduct of the APPSC became dubious in the past two years and it eventually forced many aspirants of



Group-1 examination to approach the High Court of AP for justice. There were many concerns about the evaluation process of Group-1 of which the preliminary and written exams were conducted in 2019 and 2020. Final interviews are scheduled this June. About 340 candidates were selected for interviews out of nearly 7,000 candidates, who wrote the Mains examination.

Lokesh told the Governor that he had interactions with hundreds of aspirants over the past month and they raised suspicions on the APPSC's highly questionable steps in evaluation.

Several candidates, who cleared the tougher UPSC exams failed in the AP Group-1 Mains examination. The aspirants expressed doubts on the arbitrary introduction of digital means to evaluate written answer papers.

TDP blames YSRCP for targeting dissenting voices

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP AP President K Atchannaidu on Sunday accused the YSRCP government of launching unchecked attacks on the opposition leaders just for questioning the atrocities and irregularities of the ruling party leaders in the otherwise peaceful north Andhra districts.

In a statement here, the TDP leader deplored that with each passing day, the atrocities of the YSRCP leaders were increased by leaps and bounds. The latest attack on Palla Srinivasa Rao should be seen as an attack on the backward classes leaders as a whole. Jaganmohan Reddy has begun a novel programme of limitless destruction and demolitions during the time of holidays of the courts.

Atchannaidu strongly objected to the Vizag officials unilaterally removing the fencing surrounding the lands of Palla Srinivasa Rao. The officials could not do anything with regard to the lands of the MLA in Gajuwaka as everything was in order and as per the rules. Now, the fencing was removed



in the name of encroachment of 2 feet of land belonging to the Yadava Jaggarajupeta tank.

The TDP leader said the Chief Minister was resorting to non-stop vindictive political attacks on the backward classes and weaker sections. With his politics of hatred and destruction, Jaganmohan Reddy and his ministers were mindlessly destroying the future of Andhra Pradesh as a whole. If MLA Srinivasa Rao encroached lands, the government should hold a joint survey and show proof of the lands encroachments, he said.

TSSPDCL ready to tackle monsoon, ensure uninterrupted power supply

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The southwest monsoon has arrived with the onset of monsoon winds in the city for the last two weeks. In this context, the department of electric supply, TSSPDCL has been alerted to its duties and roles in the metropolitan area.

Southern Power Distribution Company Limited, the biggest power distributor in the metro city has formulated a special operation scheme with department personnel to prevent any problem in providing uninterrupted power supply during the monsoon.

Overall there are nine circles in the Greater Hyderabad city area and the Operations Department officials have set up disaster management teams consisting of three members in each circle for uninterrupted distribution of power and effective work.

Proper measures will be taken to ensure uninterrupted power supply during the monsoon season beginning in June and continuing through July, August and September.

TSSPDCL this year has taken proper measures and is constantly vigilant at the field level by recruiting additional staff in addition to the staff currently working.

Officials said TSSPDCL has



set up a control room in every circle office and disaster management personnel are available at the control units to go immediately to a place where there is a power problem. The staff will be available 24 hours a day. 11 KV lines had already been specially inspected and repaired wherever necessary, to ensure that there were no power shortages to businesses, commercial connections and industries, as well as to home users.

Superiors have already issued orders to prepare as many personnel as needed to ensure that there is no disruption anywhere within the nine circles. If there are any complaints regarding power supply within the nine circles in Greater Hyderabad, the

authorities have asked consumers to call the 1912 toll-free number. They have made available the technology to register a large number of complaints at one time - nearly 60 complaints will be registered at once.

Authorities advised city residents to be constantly vigilant of the power poles and other electrical systems when they leave their homes.

During the monsoon season, there is a risk of accidents mainly due to the passing of electric power through iron pillars in many places. For this at the field level, the staff members have inspected them section by section and instructed the linemen along with the AEI to take measures to avoid any accidents there.

Circle officials said they were alerting consumers to take necessary steps to prevent power shortages as the Meteorological Department had forecast heavy rains this time.

TSSPDCL officials said that generally during heavy rains broken branches of trees fell on power lines, snapping supplies. There are areas where such incidents are more likely to happen. However, the DES and AEs in the respective circles have arranged special meetings and instructed the field-level staff to monitor such areas further. Arrangements have been made to monitor the power supply system online from the Skoda building in Vengal Rao Nagar, Transco, for continuous monitoring.

J. Srinivas Reddy, Director, Operations, TSSPDCL, said that with the computerization of the power supply system, it was possible to detect if there was a power outage in any circle, division or section.

Based on this, appropriate instructions were given to the staff at the field level to monitor the power supply for 24 hours in the Greater Hyderabad area. However, this year there was enough electricity available to meet the city demand, he said.

Vizag Zoo to launch campaign on wild dog

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

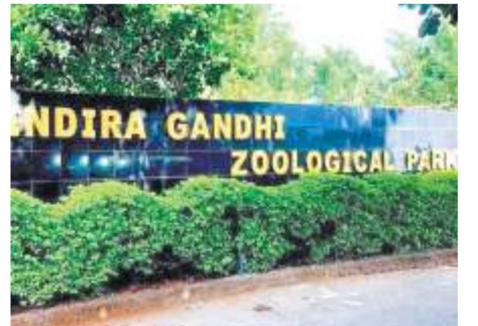
To mark the 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsava' (75 years of independence) from June 14 to June 20, Indira Gandhi Zoological Park, Visakhapatnam was organising awareness activities about the species of Asiatic wild dog, said Nandani Salaria curator, Indira Gandhi Zoological Park, Visakhapatnam.

In a release on Sunday the curator said that this was an effort to celebrate this species as well as create awareness among the people through various activities.

There will be some interesting online sessions by eminent speakers from various organisations like Wildlife

Institute of India, IISER, Tirupati and SACON, Coimbatore. She said that online competitions like quiz, drawing and short story writing during this week will be conducted. During the one-week programme, people will know interesting information about conservation and breeding of Asiatic wild dogs, behavioural ecology on dholes, veterinary care of Asiatic wild dogs and much more about the species.

The YouTube Channel Link to watch the Live sessions is <https://qrqo.page.link/NJfjk>. For further details one may contact T Ch V Ramana, PRO 9441130894 and M Purushottam, Zoo Biologist 9000151920, she said.



Govt will keep dignity of Brahmendra Mutt: Minister

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Endowments Minister Velampalli Srinivasa Rao said that it was their responsibility to uphold the dignity of the Veerabrahmendra Peetham in Kadapa district and clarified that they would proceed in accordance with the rules and traditions of the Endowments Department to appoint the pontiff. The Minister said that 11 people served as Peethadhipati of the Peetham and they had not received any

will on who should be the next head of the Peetham.

Addressing the media persons here on Sunday, the minister said that the confusion over the appointment of the head of the Peetham would be cleared as per the Endowment rules and traditions. The government would go ahead as per the Endowment rules and the traditions protecting the honour of the Peetham.

Velampalli announced the appointment of assistant commissioner Sankar as a fit person

to collect the details of the confusion and to manage the day-to-day affairs of the Peetham. Referring to the imbroglio, the minister appealed to one and all not to make any controversial comments on the Peetham and the government would decide in order not to cause injustice to anyone.

He said as per the Endowment Act, the details and the copy of the will should be submitted to the Dharmika Parishad within 90 days after the demise of the Peethadhipati.

Role of Revenue Dept crucial in Govt services: Collector Nivas

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Krishna District Collector J Nivas said the Revenue department plays a pivotal role in the programmes implemented by the government for the welfare of the people and the services provided to them. Everyone who works in such a priority department should work with commitment and dedication and bring pride to the Revenue Department.

AP state Revenue Services Association leaders met the Collector at the camp office here on Sunday. The leaders

who met the Collector are AP JAC Arnavati chairman Bopparaju Venkateswarlu along with YV Rao, T Krishnamurthy, Kishore, G Praveen Kumar Reddy and others. The Collector appreciated the Revenue department employees for their efforts on the land acquisition required for the establishment of layouts of Jagananna colonies. He said the department should work hard to reach the welfare programmes implemented by the government to the beneficiaries and bring a good reputation to the government.

AP govt violated protocol honours to CJI Ramana: Butchaiah

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Telugu Desam Party MLA and senior leader Gorantla Butchaiah Chowdary on Sunday strongly objected to the manner in which the Andhra Pradesh government ignored giving proper protocol to Chief Justice of India Justice NV Ramana during his latest visit to Tirupati.

Butchaiah Chowdary asked whether the ruling YSRCP leaders would not acknowledge the fact that Justice

Ramana was the second Telugu judge to adorn the CJI post, next only to Justice Koka Subba Rao. This was true in the entire history of united and residual Andhra Pradesh. Only two Telugus reached to the top most post in the Indian judiciary till now. In a statement here, the TDP MLA deplored that just two MLAs of the ruling party were present during the CJI visit to the temple town. In addition, there were TTD Chairman and the executive officer. Neither the AP

Chief Minister nor any Minister came to accord a warm reception to the Chief Justice of India. Of the five Deputy Chief Ministers of AP, none had time enough to spare for the CJI visit.

Butchaiah Chowdary asserted that good governance and right attitude would come with experience and wisdom. The Telangana Governor, Chief Minister, Ministers and everybody gave a warm welcome to Justice Ramana during his visit to Hyderabad.

Government to pay funeral expenses to Covid victims

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

DM,mp HO Dr M. Suhasini said that Rs 15,000 would be provided to the family members of those who died due to corona infection for performing funeral rites as per the state government orders.

In a statement on Sunday, the DM HO said that the family member of the deceased will be given Rs 15,000 for funeral expenses after the doctor confirms that the deceased died due to corona.

For obtaining the amount, a death certifi-

cate certified by a doctor, a document of family members certified by the Tahsildar was mandatory.

The above documents should be handed over to the concerned PHC Medical Officer through the concerned Secretariat and health workers. The bank account number, IFSC code, bank name and branch details shall be enclosed and the documents will be examined by the concerned authorities and Rs 15,000 will be credited to the account.

The family members of the victims should take note of the above details, said Dr M. Suhasini.

SRLDC backs mapping network of AP Transco

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

AP Transco has attracted the attention of power corporations at national level again with its another new initiative of mapping power network based on ArcGIS (Geographical Information System), which helps to manage and maintain transmission and distribution networks in more effective manner.

The Reliability group of Southern Regional Load Dispatch Center (SRLDC), headquartered at Bangalore, a constituent of Power System Operation Corporation (POSOCO), a government of India enterprise, has requested AP Transco to share the details of the comprehensive system to replicate the same for the entire

southern grid, which connect five States and a Union territory. According to officials, the AP Transco has introduced a comprehensive solution for displaying the total AP power network on the geographical system software, ArcGIS, with the support of internal teams.

The system, which was introduced in February, 2020, facilitates the entire AP grid and geo tagging of substations, transmission and distribution lines, physical position and entire transmission and distribution network of AP Transco and AP Discoms.

In its communication to AP Transco, the reliability group of SRLDC says, "It's a very beautiful system and we would like to replicate it for the entire southern grid.

For this, we request you to please share all tower locations of the 400 KV and 220KV AP Transco lines."

Electricity is the main engine for the overall growth and shortage of power is one of the main reasons that hinder overall development. The GIS techniques have come as the boon to solve many problems in the electric power system. In view of this, the AP Transco has introduced the system to strengthen power transmission and distribution network in the state which helps to supply 24x7 quality power to consumers.

The ArcGIS helps in creating grid map of entire AP network from consumer to generating stations, knowing the real time overloading or under

loading of lines and creating the map of total assets boundaries of all power companies of AP and identifying the vacant land.

Forecasting of weather and load scheduling, visualizing areas which could be affected during natural calamities, real time monitoring of lines patrolling etc., are the other advantages of the ArcGIS system. "The initiatives of AP Transco did us proud and enhanced the image of AP power utilities at national level. We are always ahead of other states in embracing emerging technologies and implementing best practices that would strengthen the sector and benefit consumers," said a senior official of AP Discoms.



Manusmrithi: Fundamentally an age-old Constitution

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

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

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

If anyone feels that he or she knows everything and no one need tell them anything then they should be treated as stupid according to late Pullella Srirama Chandrudu, an Indian scholar of Vedanta, Vyakarana and Alankara Sastra and a prolific writer of Sanskrit and Telugu literature. Writing introduction to a book on Manusmrithi in Telugu authored by late Komaragiri Yogananda Laxmi Narasimha Rao, popularly known as KYL, late Pullella mentioned that if anyone desires to know about justice, injustice, virtue, sin, heaven, hell, life and death, God, relationship etc. one has to look at Vedas. Among several books written by KYL, Manusmrithi needs special mention.

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Youth held for forging signatures of CM, IAS officer; Rs 2 cr seized

DHV SAMBASIVA RAO
KAKINADA

The East Godavari police have cracked a white collar crime wherein a youth was found allotting sand mining sub-contracts and an appointment letter for a job in AP CM's peshi with forged signatures.

The crime came to light when two persons were gearing up for sand mining with the help of forged sub-contract documents, unaware of the fact that they were fake ones.

The accused, Kanukurti Ramakrishna Chandrasekhar, of Nadakuduru village in Karapa mandal of the district, allegedly sub-contracted sand reaches using the forged signatures of the CM and the IAS and made Rs 2 crore in the process. However, the youth landed behind the bars after the offence came to light.

Chandrasekhar used to live with his parents in Nadakuduru. He got addicted to vices and started going to Hyderabad and Vijayawada with plans to make easy money.

It is learnt that he was also



involved in a case related to ivory smuggling in East Godavari district. He moved over to Hyderabad saying that he found a pharmaceutical company. With this, everyone in the village forgot about him.

Meanwhile, the State government has awarded a contract for sand reaches to Jayaprakash Power Ventures (JPV). Knowing this, Chandrasekhar convinced some people that the sand reaches would be sub-contracted to them. He forged the signatures of IAS officers to show the relevant documents and extorted Rs 2 crore from them. In this context, JPV's representative Satish came to know about this while some were

looking for some laborers and machines for sand excavation in Vijayawada. He lodged a complaint with the Bhavanipuram police in Vijayawada. With this, the police arrested Sudhakar Infratech representatives Praveen Kumar; M Srinivasu and Nagamalleswara Rao and interrogation. However, they showed documents signed by Gopalakrishna Dwivedi, Chief Secretary of the Mines department, stating that they had been sub-leased for three years by JP Ventures to mine sand from the reaches in the state. The police then showed the documents to a JPV representative who confirmed that it was a case of forgery. Soon, Chandrasekhar, who gave

them the documents, was arrested. With this, the police started questioning Chandrasekhar and it was found that he was involved in several other white collar crime.

Chandrasekhar, who earlier joined a pharmaceutical company in Hyderabad, had forged the signature of the Finance Secretary and created fake documents to make people believe that the Telangana government was releasing funds to the company he was working for. A case was registered against him at Saifabad in 2018 itself and subsequently he served a jail term. After coming back from the jail, he started resorting to white collar crimes again. He met a man named Lokabhiramudu from Visakhapatnam and got acquainted with him during a train journey. Lokabhiramudu fell for his words. Later, Surendranath and Thirumala Reddy from Hyderabad were introduced by Lokabhiramudu to Chandrasekhar. He then offered them sand reaches subcontract. As sand is a good source of income, they hoped to earn more money in a short time. Believing his

words, Surendranath deposited Rs 1.4 crore and Thirumala Reddy Rs 60 lakh in his accounts for the sand contract.

He made and gave them fake documents again. The fraud was unearthed when they were making arrangements for sand excavation believing that they were original documents. The police raided Chandrasekhar's house and seized Rs 2 crore cash, a laptop and a fake stamp. Chandrasekhar also claimed that he was working for I-PAC company where he looked after political affairs of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. He also showed Lokabhiramudu a forged certificate of appreciation issued by Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy. He then took Rs 25 lakh from him promising a job in the Sagarmala project for his son and an advisor post to him in the CM Peshi. It is learnt that Chandrasekhar had even given Lokabhiramudu the forged appointment letter. When he went to the CM Peshi with the appointment letter, Lokabhiramudu was shocked to know that he had been deceived.



Minister vows to provide better facilities to people

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Education Minister Adimulapu Suresh has said that he will work tirelessly to satisfy the aspirations and needs of the people and make better facilities available to them.

Speaking after laying the foundation stone for the APSRTC bus station complex in front of the panchayat office in Yerragondapalem, he said that it was the dream of the people of the area for four decades to have a bus stand accessible to all and it was coming true now. He said 98 bus services from Markapuram depot were being operated to various places via Yerragondapalem but people were having trouble as there was no specific place for them to get off so far. The minister explained that all these prob-

lems would be solved by the bus stand, which is currently being constructed with four platforms at a cost of Rs 1 crore.

A 100-bed hospital with state-of-the-art medical facilities at the Yerragondapalem at a cost of about Rs 25 crore and a tribal super specialty hospital at Dornala at a cost of about Rs 45 crore were also expected to be completed soon. The minister said the Dornala PHC would be converted into a maternity hospital and announced that steps would be taken to make the TTD marriage hall and farmers' market in Yerragondapalem available to the public soon. Suresh lauded the Chilakaluripet-based Assist, a social service organisation for coming forward to help Covid victims.

Married woman cheats man, disappears with money

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

You might have heard about umpteen stories of men cheating women. But here is one which tells the tale of a married woman

allegedly cheating a man and robbing him of his money in the name of marriage. A complaint to this effect was lodged by one Sunil Kumar, who works as a marketing executive in a private company, in Tirupati at Alipiri police station on Saturday night.

According to Alipiri Sub-Inspector Parmeshwar Naik, Sunil Kumar (29) of Narapuraja Kandriga in Vijayapuram mandal has been living in Satyanarayanaapuram since five years. During his routine marketing calls, he came in contact

with one M Suhasini who works for ADB Finance Corporation, and this slowly turned into a love affair. Suhasini told

Sunil that she is an orphan and both got married in December last year. Sunil Kumar's parents presented 20 grams of gold jewellery to Suhasini at the time of marriage.

A few days ago she told Sunil Kumar that the people who had raised her were ill and that she had also taken loans before she married him. Saying this, she borrowed Rs 4 lakh from Sunil. Suhasini told the same story to the parents of Sunil and borrowed Rs 2 lakhs from them and

she went missing on the next day. Sunil tried to reach her on the phone but in vain. When he checked her Aadhaar card details, Sunil Kumar was shocked to find out that she was already married to one Venkateswarlu from Konetirajupalem in Nellore district and that they have two children.

Meanwhile, Suhasini called up Sunil Kumar and told him that she was in Hyderabad and would return the money soon. She also threatened that he would be in trouble if he tried to approach the police and file a complaint. She sent her marriage pictures to Sunil Kumar on WhatsApp.

The SI said a case was registered based on the complaint and started investigation. He said the call details of Suhasini are being verified and efforts are being made to trace her whereabouts.



All are equal before law: Addl SP

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Prakasam district Additional SP (Admin) B Ravichandra Prakasam has said that all are equal before law and advised the authorities to act impartially. He was inaugurating the Oral Enquiry (OE) Mela organized in the city under the instructions of SP Siddharth Kaushal. The Mela was organized to inquire into allegations against police personnel working in Prakasam district. As part of it, witnesses were questioned in connection with investigation done by Sub-Divisional Police Officers and Circle Inspectors into departmental charges against the personnel and officers working in different parts of the dis-



trict. The Additional SP inspected the proceedings and went to each DSP and CI several times to observe the OE proceedings. "Orders would be issued as per the departmental proceedings after inquiries into the mistakes committed by officers and the staff during discharge of their duty," he added. District Police Officer (DPO) A-Section Superintendent Satyavani and DPO staff, DSPs, CIs, SIs, and other police personnel participated.

Piyush Goel prays at Tirumala

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Union Railway Minister Piyush Goyal, along with his wife and other family members, offered prayers at the ancient hill shrine of Lord Venkateswara at Tirumala here on Sunday.

Goyal, along with his wife and family members, arrived here on Saturday night on a one-day spiritual visit and offered prayers to Lord Venkateswara early on Sunday morning.

As per the tradition, temple priests offered silk clothes to Piyush Goyal amid chanting of Vedic hymns. A memento was given to him by TTD Additional Executive Officer AV Dharma Reddy.



After darshan, Goel said he had prayed to the Lord to protect people around the world from the Corona pandemic. Finance Minister Buggana Rajendranath, Tirupati MP M

Gurumurthy, TTD Chairman YV Subba Reddy, MLA Chevireddy Bhaskar Reddy, BJP spokesperson Bhanu Prakash Reddy and others accompanied him.

Raghurama sets 48-hr deadline

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Raghu Rama Krishnam Raju, who had objected to the removal of his name by including the name of newly-elected MP Gurumoorthy from Tirupati, announced a 48-hour deadline for his name to be included in the list again. In a letter to YSRCP chief Jagan Mohan Reddy, Raju said that if his name was removed by mistake without the party president's knowledge, he would have to rectify the mistake within 48 hours and take action against those responsible or if he was deliberately expelled from the party, he would inform the Parliamentary Secretariat and declare himself an independent candidate.

State BJP unit in a tricky situation as Central leadership goes 'soft' on YSRCP

MARTH SUBRAHMANYAM
AMARAVATI

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders in the State have expressed concern over adopting a soft stance on YSRCP at the Central level and working against the latter which is in power in the State.

On Sunday, BJP State leaders, who attended a core committee meeting at the residence of former Union minister Purandeswari in Vijayawada, shared their plight with BJP national joint general secretary and southern states in-charge Shiv Prakash. One of the leaders pointed out that it has become an irksome issue for

lower level functionaries in the State on how to counter YSRCP in the State while the party is going soft on it at the Central level.

The rest of the leaders told him that impatience was growing among the activists at the grass root level due to the trend. They also said that the leaders did not understand how to respond to the ruling party, and that a definite solution had to be found for this. Responding to this, he ordered that everyone should play the role of Opposition for sure.

A lengthy discussion took place on the fall in party voting percentage to 1 per cent in the State. All the leaders informed

Shiv Prakash that the voting percentage had dropped due to the impact of the previous alliance with Telugu Desam. However, he advised the leaders to lay efforts to move to the second position in the State and work hard for it.

Later, he told the state affairs in-charge and Union Minister Muralitharan that the high command had received many complaints against him that he was not available in the State. He suggested to him to allot more time to the state.

Meanwhile, Sunil Deodhar, State co-in-charge, took an oath from the participants in the core committee not to disclose anything to the Press regarding the discussion in the core com-

mittee and its decisions. He also suggested that only those whom the party officially nominated should give interviews to TV channels.

BJP national secretary Satya Kumar also addressed the core committee meeting.

National leader Purandeswari, State Sanghatan secretary Madhukar, State president Somu Veerraju, former president Kanna Lakshminarayana, general secretary Vishnuvardhan Reddy and MLC Madhav were present. However, the absence of party MPs Srujana Chaudhary, TG Venkatesh, GVL Narasimha Rao and CM Ramesh from the meeting became a hot topic.

US boy raises funds, donates vehicle for Covid services

PNS ■ GUNTUR

In a show of empathy and leadership, Nihara Charagulla, a 16-year-old boy born to NRIs from San Jose, California, USA, raised \$15,000 for the cause of Covid patients in India. He provided a service vehicle and PPE kits to help Covid patients in the Tadepalli - Mangalagiri region to be dropped at hospitals in emergency and to shift Covid bodies to the graveyard.

Nihara is an active volunteer in community services. He started community service when he was 9 years old. In his free time, he teaches coding to kids from low-income communities. The increasing number of Covid-19 cases in the country has put strain on the existing health infrastructure. When he heard that poor sick people are struggling to reach hospitals as they do not have enough money to ride ambulances, he felt very sad.



He decided to raise funds to address the need for a service vehicle. He was to collect \$15,000 from friends and families. Empower and Excel India chapter handed over the Covid-19 service vehicle along with PPE kits to members of the Don Bosco Alumni Association. Four oxygen concentrates were also donated to another facility. Kommuru Kanaka Rao, chairman of the Maida Finance Corporation Chairman, AP, flagged off the Covid service vehicle at the Don Bosco School at Yerrabalem under Mangalagiri mandal in Guntur district on Sunday.

He made and gave them fake documents again. The fraud was unearthed when they were making arrangements for sand excavation believing that they were original documents. The police raided Chandrasekhar's house and seized Rs 2 crore cash, a laptop and a fake stamp. Chandrasekhar also claimed that he was working for I-PAC company where he looked after political affairs of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. He also showed Lokabhiramudu a forged certificate of appreciation issued by Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy. He then took Rs 25 lakh from him promising a job in the Sagarmala project for his son and an advisor post to him in the CM Peshi. It is learnt that Chandrasekhar had even given Lokabhiramudu the forged appointment letter. When he went to the CM Peshi with the appointment letter, Lokabhiramudu was shocked to know that he had been deceived.

Some of the aged people taking shelter in the Gautami Jeeva Karunya Sangham, Rajahmundry, are orphans who have no children and others are parents who have been abandoned by their children. The ashram presently houses 73 elderly people. They include leprosy patients. Ainavilli temple Executive Officer V Tarakeshara Rao

has decided to vaccinate all of them and then met the Superintendent, District Government Hospital, Rajahmundry. The authorities agreed to know the condition of the elderly and vacillate them. Immediately, the first dose of vaccine was given to all the 73 elderly inmates of the old-age home on Sunday. The doctors agreed to come back at the end of the month and give them the second dose.

Guj FDCA seizes over 24,000 pregnancy termination kits

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

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

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

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

'Shiv Sena was treated as slaves in erstwhile BJP govt'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Raut said he always thought that the Sena should have its chief minister in Maharashtra. "Even if Shiv Sainiks don't get anything, we can proudly say the state's leadership is now

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cong must clear stand on Digvijay's remarks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

Prasad wrote on Twitter.

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

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

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

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

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

Need to check exploitation of migrant workers :Soren

PNS ■ RANCHI

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MP: 5k Pakistan refugees to get jobs

PNS ■ INDORE

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

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

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

card," he said.

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

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

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

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

Delhi: 4.5L non-PDS people get foodgrains

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

ment said in a statement.

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

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

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

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

Direct link between malnutrition and diseases: UN's WFP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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



Bishow Parajuli

ed a grim scenario and showed a rise in malnutrition.

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

killer diseases affecting children.

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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



valid ticket holders entrance for most of the year.

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

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

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

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

21 until February this year.

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

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

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

Three bodies found floating in Ganga

PNS ■ KANNAUJ(UP)

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

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

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

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

Children orphaned by Covid seek aid

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

Ten-year-old Deepika is one of them.

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

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

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

Rs 499-cr budget approved for defence innovations

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has approved budgetary support of nearly Rs 499 crore for research and innovation in the defence sector for the next five years.

The Defence Ministry on Sunday said the funds will be used to provide financial support to nearly 300 start-ups, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and individual innovators with a large goal of ensuring self-reliance in the defence sector.

The scheme is in sync with the government's push to cut imports of military hardware and weapons and make India a hub for defence manufacturing.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has approved the budgetary support of Rs 498.8 crore to Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX)-



Development in the defence and aerospace sector.

"The scheme, with budgetary support of Rs 498.8 crore for the next five years, is aimed at providing financial support to nearly 300 start-ups/MSMEs/individual innovators and 20 partner incubators under the DIO framework," the ministry said.

It said the DIO will enable the creation of channels for innovators to engage and interact with the Indian defence production industry. "The scheme aims to facilitate rapid development of new, indigenised and innovative technologies for the Indian defence and aerospace sector to meet their needs in shorter timelines," it said.

In the last couple of years, the government has unveiled a series of reform measures and initiatives to make India a hub of defence manufacturing.



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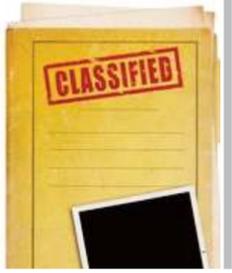
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PAPER WITH PASSION

Opening up

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

The Government has taken a welcome step in deciding to declassify, on a case-to-case basis, details of the wars fought by India. The new policy for archiving, declassifying, compiling and publishing such records is going to be put in place. The modalities for taking up declassification one by one are being worked out. For a country that has fought as many as six wars since Independence but has managed to declassify the operations of just the 1948 Jammu and Kashmir operations, this is a giant step in transparency. The new policy says records should ordinarily be declassified in 25 years and transferred to the National Archives of India once the war or operations histories have been compiled. The policy statement alone should mean that the official records of the 1962, 1965 and 1971 conflicts, Operation Pawar of the IPKF in Sri Lanka (1987-1990) be declassified right away. The Kargil affair still has over a couple of years of secrecy left. There are two issues with this policy. First, the implications of opening secret details of the past. In a country like India where political leaders and their actions are assessed not in terms of their times but by current political standards, the declassification can become a Pandora's box. Take the Henderson-Brooks-Bhagat report on the 1962 India-China war, for instance. Technically, the report is yet to be made public though a foreign journalist did just that with part of the report he accessed. That section of the report has some startling revelations about India's



Forward Policy adopted by then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

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

PICTALK



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

Compassion

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

The past weekend had barely tiptoed into infancy when the entire world suddenly went numb and stood still. Apart from praying lips, the only other thing that moved were zillions of nimble, and concerned, fingers on Twitter and other social media sites. No, it wasn't because of a hallucination-inducing party drug but because Denmark's ace attacking midfielder Christian Eriksen had suddenly gone down. For no apparent reason. Inexplicably. Right there on the field, near the touchline, just four minutes before the referee would have blown his whistle to indicate half time. The boisterous Copenhagen stadium suddenly went into mute mode; not only the home crowd but even the visiting Finnish spectators were taken aback by the sudden turn of events as millions of pairs of palm after palm pierced through the evening air in its hurry to clasp the unbelieving eyes and quivering lips. The palpitation in the hearts is an altogether different story. In sadness, in wonderment, in care, in concern, in poignancy, it was an emotional union of the two rivals and their spectator fans in the face of the fear of the unknown. As a dark hush fell down upon the stadium, clamorous as hell only a few seconds ago with the hosts dominating the on-field proceedings and the Finland natives egging their team on to put some spirit into the game, the Finnish fans also fell quiet with discernible distress.



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

MPLADS: A boon or necessary evil?

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

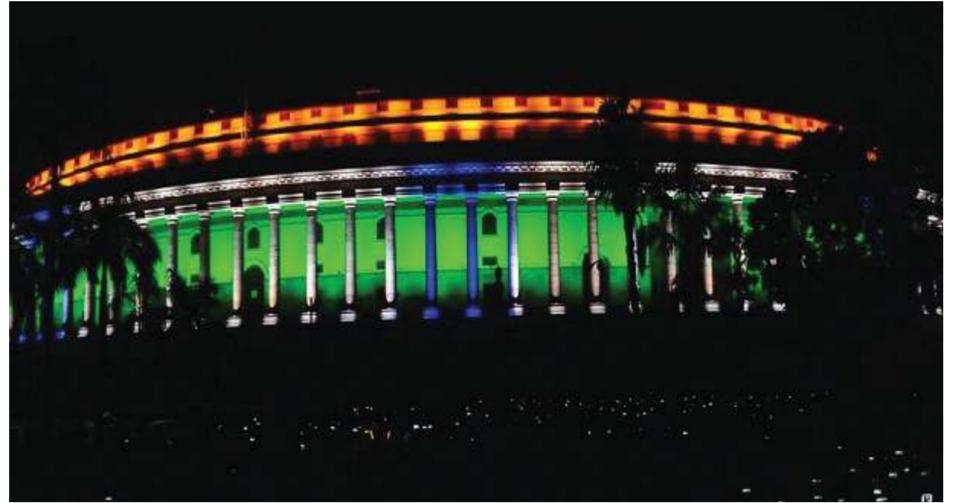


PRAFULL GORADIA

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

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

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



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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

COVID: ACCURACY IN FIGURES NEEDED

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

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

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

Venu GS | Kollam

ECOLOGY MORE PRECIOUS THAN ECONOMY

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

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

Revised vax policy makes sense



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

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

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

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

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

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

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

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Nainital

GST COUNCIL AND COVID-19 RELIEF

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

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

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

G David Milton | Kanyakumari

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

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



Tamil Nadu BJP president — L Murugan

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

Tibetan spiritual leader — Dalai Lama

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

Singer — Sona Mohapatra

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

Former England skipper — Michael Vaughan

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

Delhi Chief Minister — Arvind Kejriwal



FIRST COLUMN

HONOUR SANCTITY OF ECOLOGY

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



KOTA SRIRAJ

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

India gets poorer, investors richer

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



UTTAM GUPTA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Of the much trumpeted special package of Rs



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

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



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

The rest Rs 1900,000 crore was given as (i) liquidity support by RBI (measures announced by Governor, Shashikant Dason March 27 and April 17, 2020) injected close to Rs 500,000 crore followed by another Rs 300,000 crore on May 22); (ii) increasing resources of banks and other financial institutions (FIs) to enable them on-lend; (iii) releasing pending dues to agencies tasked with implementation of welfare schemes of the Union Government. A big slice of these funds either landed with corporate entities or remained un-utilized.

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

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

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

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

Thus, contrary to the stated

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

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

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

POINT COUNTERPOINT

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



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

India-UK trade talks: Case for tariff optimisation

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

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

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

This industry contributes nearly Rs 250,000 crore in taxes



VINOD GIRI

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

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

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

As per DGFT data for

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

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



Indian farmers and manufacturers.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

MONEY MATTERS

CIL's 114 grounded projects under different stages: Report

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



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

G-7 urged to deliver on vaccines, climate

■ FALMOUTH (ENGLAND)

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

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



nations than authoritarian rivals such as China.

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

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

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, the summit's host, wanted the three-day meeting to fly the flag for a "Global Britain," his government's initiative to give the mid-sized country outsized influence when it comes to global problem-solving.

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

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

Essilor Group to add 2K Eye Mitra opticians

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Vision care provider Essilor Group has said it is looking to add 2,000 Eye Mitra opticians across India by the end of 2022, as this inclusive business programme seeks to address issues of providing vision correction, developing skills and creating jobs.

"Currently, more than 8,000 Eye Mitra opticians are successfully running their micro enterprises (optical stores) in India. And, by the end of 2022, we are aiming to add 2,000 more and have a total of 10,000 Eye Mitra opticians across the country," EssilorLuxottica Vice-President (Inclusive Business and Philanthropy) for Asia-

Pacific Saugata Banerjee said. The company will add the Eye Mitras in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Karnataka, West Bengal, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar, he added. "The programme is fully managed and funded by the Essilor group. "The implementation of the programme is done by the NSDC-accredited skilling organisations and we work with multiple implementing partners in different geographies," Banerjee said. The implementing partner is responsible for mobilising and enrolling prospective candidates, training and handholding for shop set-up, he added.

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

In line with the proposed deal, Axis Bank is likely to raise its stake in Max Life Insurance to about 20 per cent over the next 12-18 months, said the insurance company's CEO Prashant Tripathy said. Currently, Axis Bank and its two subsidiaries -- Axis Capital Ltd and Axis Securities Ltd -- collectively own 12.99 per cent in Max Life Insurance post approval of the deal in April this year. With this, Axis entities have now become co-promoters of Max Life with three board seats. "Axis Bank is to increase to 19.99 per cent in tranches. Thirteen per cent is already done over the next two quarters, we will seek approval for the balance seven per cent. So, it will reach about 20 per cent and that will be the ownership of Axis Bank," Tripathy told PTI. When asked about the timeline for the completion of the remaining stake transfer, he said: "It should happen in the next 12 to 18 months." Under the deal, the Axis entities also have the right to acquire an additional stake of up to seven per cent in Max Life, in one or more tranches, subject to regulatory approvals.



ITC hotels to expand 'Welcomhotel' brand

PNS ■ KOLKATA

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

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

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



months," an ITC official told PTI.

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

RE: This fiscal may see highest model launches

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

NTPC invites Eol for hydrogen fuel cell-based pilot projects

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



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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

Distribution companies (discoms) owed a total Rs 91,915 crore to power generation firms in April 2020, according to portal PRAAPTI. However, outstanding dues of discoms towards electricity producers have been increasing year-on-year as well as month-on-month for years showing perennial stress in the power sector till February this year. It has started tapering off from March 2021.

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

Services, added that it appears from fourth quarter corporate figures that a cyclical recovery in Indian economy is imminent post the progressive unlock that is happening now.

"The FPI activity was centred around IT, financial and energy sectors," noted S Rang anathan, Head of Research at LKP Securities.

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

Skoda eyes going past all-time peak sales vol

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Czech car maker Skoda Auto is confident of crossing its historic peak sales volumes in India achieved nearly a decade ago by the middle of next year as it continues ramping up and launching new products despite businesses being hit by the second Covid wave.

Skoda Auto India, which hit its peak volume of 34,265 units in 2012, is targeting to sell at least 60,000 units next year as it brings new products, including those under Volkswagen group's India 2.0 project. "Historically,

we sold 35,000 cars and I think next year we will surpass that number, probably in the middle of the year already. We plan to sell at least 60,000 cars. So certainly we are on a huge growth path and the long term plan is to sell 1 lakh cars," Skoda Director Zac Hollis said.

The sales growth will be driven by new products that the company is bringing to the market, including the newly launched fourth generation Octavia sedan and the upcoming SUV kushaq along with a mid-sized sedan at the end of the year.

Exchanges to suspend trading in DHFL shares from today

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



Stock markets to follow Fed interest rate decision

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



on continuing stimulus measures," said Vinod Nair, Head

of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

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

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

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

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

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

Besides, movement of Brent crude, rupee and foreign institutional investors (FIIs) would also be watched by investors.

Shrikant Chouhan, Executive Vice President, Equity Technical Research at Kotak Securities said, "Markets are expected to monitor the spread of monsoon in the coming weeks, daily new case count and easing of lock down restriction."

'Would love to do more projects down south'

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

Bengali belle Raima Sen was last seen in the ethereal of *The Last Hour*, a supernatural mystery series that streamed on Amazon Prime Video, wholly shot around Sikkim, it sure was a pleasure to watch. Her appearance in the series was timely, a gobsmackingly stunning one in a red saree! Many of us were found holding our breath to know what her title role in it was, why she appears in parts and portions of the episodes, if she's a mere spectre, what's her tale, etc. With mountains all around, she manages to draw us all so closely like a story never told before — a story revolving around 'Shamans!' Raima was searching for some vindication and revival for her daughter at some given point in the series.

Following her return to the entertainment realm now, it was with Rituparno Ghosh's film 'Chokher Bali' that Raima got fame! She has also done a Malayalam film, a Telugu, and a Tamil one too. While garnering immense praises from fandom on social media for her latest venture, she feels *The Last Hour* was a very fascinating and authentic concept during which she had to also give her first-ever screen test too. "I got to know about a lot of things, including shamanic traditions. I said yes to the series after watching Amit

Kumar's *Monsoon Shootout* because I really liked the film. He was screen-testing in Calcutta. He told me about doing one, and I told him that I had never done a screen test. I did it and got the part. This was my first, full-fledged screen test."

She made her debut in the critically acclaimed film *Godmother* back in 1999, and was later seen in *Daman* as Raveena Tandon's daughter. Talking about celebs and reminiscing her olden times on set, she speaks about her latest co-star Sanjay Kapoor who played her husband in *The Last Hour*. "I had a great time working with him! He is a big foodie, we were shooting in very remote areas and it was freezing. We knew that if we need food, we could go to Sanjay. We went to a restaurant in Darjeeling. Also, he has a great sense of humour," she adds. She also shares about her most-worked with Bengali co-star Parambrata Chattopadhyay, with whom she's also shooting a new music video, a Bangladeshi song. "We have done so many films and ads together. When the makers think of me, they think of Param and vice-versa. We have a really nice, easy-going on-screen chemistry, my mother thinks so too. She feels it is really cute. I understand him and his humour and he understands me. Of course, there is always a 'tu

tu main main' between us. We shot the song in Tajpur, four hours away from Calcutta and also in a house in Bangladesh. This is my first Bangladeshi music video," an excited Raima informs.

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

with social media mostly to give out information about my work and for endorsements. And then I share my pictures. I know that it is important to be visible. Also, I retweet. But I am not

would love to work more in the industries down south!

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

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



WFH STRESS? YOGA TO THE RESCUE



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

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

Mountain pose - Tadasana

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

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

Hold this posture for three to five breaths.

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

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

Side stretch

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cow - Bitilasana / Cat - Marjariasana

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

Cow: Find a "tabletop" position with the hands shoulder-width apart, wrists under the shoulders, knees hip-width apart, spine is neutral, eyes looking down.

From here, inhale to cow: arch the back, drop the belly, lift the sitting bones, lift the chest forward, and look forward or up.

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

Aim the crown of the head to the floor.

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

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

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

Bhujangasana

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

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

Draw the shoulder blades together, lift the chest (but not forward), and the belly lifts. Thighs stay on the mat.

Breathe here for about three to five breaths.

Relaxing asanas in acute stress

Shavasana and Makarasana

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

rest in this position.

3. Strain on joints also relieves.

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

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

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

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

● Slow deep breathing- 30 to 50 rounds.

● Anulom - vilom- 20 rounds.

● Bhramari- 20 to 30 rounds.

● Omkar Chanting- 20 to 30 rounds.

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

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

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

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

compared to those who work in an office setting. A sudden stress response experienced by working professionals causes increased heart rate, increased respiratory rate, tremors, sweating, headache, dry mouth/throat, concentration issues, performance issues, fear, and anxiety, negativity, uneasiness, and body pain.

Yogic practices help to overcome the effect of stress at physical, mental, and emotional levels and thus ensure

overall wellbeing. Here are some yoga practices which will help in relieving stress arising from working from home.

It is recommended to hold each posture for three to five breaths (one breath equals one inhale and exhale cycle).

Seated twist

With both knees facing forward, bring your left hand to your outer right knee. Sit up tall and activate your abs. The right hand can rest at

your side or down by your right hip.

On every inhale, sit up a little taller, and on every exhale, move your right shoulder back an inch as your left shoulder moves forward.

Pull your left hip back as you twist to the right; you want the twist to stay in your lumbar spine.

Also, don't twist too far; you'll know you've overdone it if it is challenging to keep a steady breath and a tall spine.

▶ shortpasses

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

GREATEST OF ALL TIME

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



AP ■ PARIS

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

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

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

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

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



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

Barbora completes rare sweep, wins women's doubles crown

AFP ■ PARIS

French Open champion Barbora Krejčíková completed a rare sweep of titles at Roland Garros as she won a third women's doubles major trophy with fellow Czech teammate Katerina Siniakova on Sunday. Less than 24 hours after she claimed her maiden singles slam title, Krejčíková became the first woman since Mary Pierce in 2000 to lift both trophies at the clay-court major. Only seven women have completed the titles sweep at Roland Garros. "Right now after all of this happened, this last two weeks, last two days, I feel really relieved and relaxed," Krejčíková said. "I just know from now

on I can really enjoy because I have pretty much achieved everything I really wanted. Now I can just improve, that's the only thing I can do, just improving." In addition to her pair of trophies, Krejčíková will reclaim the No 1 spot in the doubles rankings next week. "We will have a little bit glass of champagne," Krejčíková said. "I already said I don't really drink but I think it's a time to actually celebrate it. I think we going to really enjoy." Krejčíková, who defeated Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova for the women's singles title on Saturday, also became the first player to sweep both titles at any Grand Slam tournament since Serena Williams at Wimbledon in 2016.

Sterling saves England's day

Three Lions make winning start as Raheem strike sinks Croatia

AFP ■ LONDON

Raheem Sterling ignited England's Euro 2020 campaign as the Manchester City forward's clinical finish sealed a 1-0 win against Croatia in their Group D opener on Sunday. Gareth Southgate's side were struggling to break down Croatia until Sterling struck in the second half at sun-baked Wembley. The 26-year-old's first goal at a major tournament — in his 13th game — was the perfect riposte to critics who questioned Southgate's decision to select him instead of Jack Grealish. Sterling has endured a chequered relationship with England fans after being hounded following his tame performances at Euro 2016. He also struggled to hold down a place with Premier League champions City this term, culminating in his lacklustre display in their Champions League final defeat against Chelsea. But, days after he was given an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List for his anti-racism campaigning, Sterling enjoyed a perfectly-timed moment of redemption. In a rematch of the 2018 World Cup semi-final won by Croatia, England were hampered by a lack of cutting edge until Sterling came to the rescue. Sterling's winner eased the tension at Wembley and got fans bellowing 'Football's coming home' in the hope England can emulate their run to the semi-finals when they hosted Euro 96, and maybe



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

even win a major tournament for the first time since the 1966 World Cup. In truth, this was a far from convincing performance, but Southgate will take heart from the way his team kept their nerve on a pressure-packed occasion. England host neighbours Scotland in their second Group D match on Friday before taking on the Czech Republic in their final game of the first stage on June 22.

FINLAND SNATCH WIN
Copenhagen: Finland beat

Denmark 1-0 in their opening match of Euro 2020 which was overshadowed by Christian Eriksen collapsing and having to be revived on the field by medics. Joel Pohjanpalo scored the only goal on the hour mark of a Group B match which was stopped for nearly two hours after Danish playmaker Eriksen slumped to the turf towards the end of the first half. The match, which had kicked off at 1800 local time (1600 GMT), resumed two-and-a-half hours later in front of a passionate

crowd at the Parken Stadium. The two teams played out an uneventful final few minutes of the first half after both sets of players returned to the pitch with several Danish players in tears. After a short break of five minutes the second half of the match continued with a similar pattern as before Eriksen's collapse. Pohjanpalo stunned the crowd into silence when he headed home Jere Uronen's cross, capitalising on Finland's one true chance of the game.

No 1 for a reason

Lukaku scores brace in Belgium's 3-0 win



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

St Petersburg: Belgium striker Romelu Lukaku sent a message of support to his stricken Inter Milan team-mate Christian Eriksen after scoring, as his double helped the Red Devils open their Euro 2020 campaign with a 3-0 win over Russia on Saturday. Lukaku gave Belgium an early lead in Saint Petersburg, then shouted "Chris, Chris, stay strong - I love you" into a pitch-side camera during the celebration for his opening goal. "I am really happy with the win, but it was hard for me to play because my thoughts were with Christian Eriksen," said Lukaku, who revealed he cried tears of concern before kick-off for his Inter team-mate. Substitute Thomas Meunier

doubled Belgium's lead on 34 minutes before Lukaku put the result beyond doubt with a late second goal. Belgium, the world's top-ranked team, are under pressure to deliver at the European Championship as some pundits claim this is Martinez's last chance to win a title with an ageing squad. Yet even with Manchester City playmaker Kevin De Bruyne and Borussia Dortmund midfielder Axel Witsel sidelined by injury, Belgium were too strong for Russia. Before kick-off, the Belgium team were booed for taking a knee to highlight racial injustice, while their Russian opponents stood. AFP

EURO2020 BRIEFLY

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

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

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

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

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

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

MATCHES TODAY
Scotland vs Czech Republic (6:30pm)
Poland vs Slovakia (9:30pm)
Spain vs Sweden (12:30am)
Live telecast in Sony Ten 2 Network

Black Caps win Test series Big challenge coming up: Latham on WTC final

AFP ■ BIRMINGHAM

New Zealand overpowered England by eight wickets in the second Test at Edgbaston on Sunday as they sealed a 1-0 series win with more than a day to spare. Set a target of just 38 after England tailender Olly Stone was out to the very first ball of the fourth day, the Blackcaps finished on 41-2. Tom Latham, captaining the team in place of the injured Kane Williamson, hit the winning boundary to be 23 not out after the first Test of a two-match series at Lord's last week ended in a draw. Victory gave New Zealand just a third win in 18 Test series in England, and a first this century after their 1986 and 1999 triumphs. And it means they will head into next week's inaugural World Test Championship final against India at Southampton in confident mood. "It's great to get an extra day



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

of rest before India but we'll celebrate as well — we've not won here since 1999, so it's important to celebrate those achievements," said Latham at the presentation ceremony. By contrast, this was England's first series loss at home since a 2014 defeat by Sri Lanka. "It hasn't been our best week, has it?" England captain Joe Root told BBC Radio. "I think we've massively

underperformed. Credit to New Zealand, they have outperformed us throughout the game." Matt Henry was named player of the match following overall figures of 6-114. South Africa-born opener Devon Conway was named New Zealand's player of the series after he followed a remarkable 200 on Test debut at Lord's with 80 in the first innings of this match.

Birmingham: India is dangerous on all fronts, New Zealand vice-captain Tom Latham on Sunday said of their challengers for the World Test Championship crown, describing the Virat-Kohli unit a "completely different side" from vanquished England. In the absence of injured Kane Williamson, Latham led the team to a memorable 1-0 Test series triumph in the two-match rubber against hosts England, their first in the UK since 1999. Asked where does he see the biggest danger from India coming, Latham said, "All around the board." "They've got a fantastic set of bowlers, a lot of quality batsmen that have scored runs in different conditions all around the world. They were over here a few years ago and played really well, so we know we'll have to play well to beat them."



While the team celebrated a fine series triumph, Latham said the focus will shift to India in two days' time. "The preparation has been great but it's important that we do shift our focus

and adapt to a completely different side," he said at the post-match press conference. Latham said that India's performances on their tour of England in 2018 — albeit in a 4-1 series defeat — showed that they would be tough to beat at the Ageas Bowl. The inaugural WTC final is scheduled to be held in Southampton from June 18-23. With the match finishing in under four days, the Kiwis will get a day extra to rest and prepare for the India challenge. "Great to put the feet up for a day, big challenge coming up but looking forward to celebrating, haven't won here since 1999, so celebrate tonight and then look forward," Latham said. "Great support from Kiwis, the English and also back home. Atmosphere was amazing."

Balayya confirms film with Anil Ravipudi



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

Speaking there, the Legend actor first con-

firmed his film with Gopichand Malineni, followed by a film with Anil Ravipudi.

In the zoom meeting, the actor also expressed his interest to work with young directors and that he would be giving more chances to young directors henceforth.

It is learnt that Anil Ravipudi met Balayya and narrated a strong mass story and that the actor was impressed with his script and gave his nod for the film. This film is expected to roll early next year.

Meanwhile, we have reports coming in that

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



Despite turning to be a hit, the second season of *The Family Man* has had its fair share of obstacles.

Manoj Bajpayee, who plays the lead, has, for the first time, responded to the controversies.

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

The *Family Man 2* received a good response but also faced the ire of certain sections before and after the release, over allegations that it depicted Tamils in an "objectionable manner". Manoj Bajpayee, who plays the lead role Srikant Tiwari, feels the series has worked, and that proves people know the story isn't about hurting sentiments.

"We as a team — our directors, writers — are very sentimental to each and every person and state. We are sensitive to culture. We would never do

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

Information Technology, Manoj Thangaraj, had written a letter to the Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Prakash Javedkar, on May 24, calling for a ban of the web series.

In his letter, Thangaraj said that "the series had depicted the Eelam Tamils in a highly objectionable manner and that if allowed to stream it would be prejudicial to the maintenance of harmony in the state".

The Family Man 2 has Samantha Akkineni in her debut OTT role, as a Sri Lankan Tamil suicide bomber named Raji, and also brings back

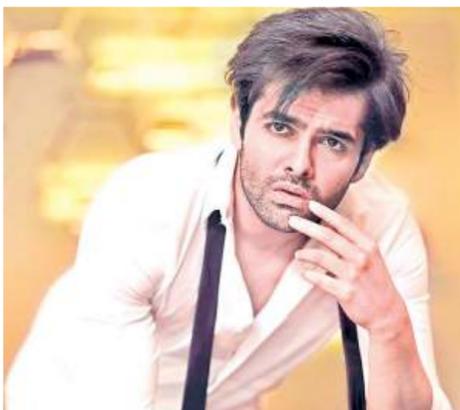
Priyamani, Sharib Hashmi, and Sharad Kelkar in familiar roles.

On pre-release expectations, Bajpayee said, "You don't expect the extent of response. You are confident that people will like it but to what extent they will like it is unpredictable. It has taken us by surprise and we are overwhelmed with the response. The show is going to be there forever and I have read that many people are watching it a second time. It is not only flattering but it makes you feel so indebted and grateful."

The series created by Raj and DK streams on *Amazon Prime Video*.



Madhavan not part of Ram-Linguswamy film



Recently numerous reports surfaced that R Madhavan will have a key role to play in Ram Pothineni and Lingusamy's project. But Madhavan took to Twitter to clear the air about the report. He tweeted, "I would love to work with the director Lingusamy and recreate the magic on the screen because he is a wonderful and loving man but unfortunately no truth in the news doing the rounds recently (sic)."

He clarified that he was not approached for a role in the Ram Pothineni-starrer. Uppena fame Kriti Shetty has been roped in as the female lead and Devi Sri Prasad will render the tunes.

Ram Pothineni was last seen in action-drama *Red*, the remake of the Tamil film *Thadam*.

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

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

Raashi Khanna to play a psycho killer?

It is already reported that Raashi Khanna is going to work with Ajay Devgn in an upcoming web drama *Rudra*. Ajay Devgn is foraying into the OTT space and is making his web series debut with the show, *Rudra - The Edge Of Darkness* on *Disney+ Hotstar VIP*, which is a remake of the British show, *Luther*.

Rudra will be Raashi Khanna's second OTT outing in Hindi after Raj and DK's web series alongside Kabir Singh fame Shahid Kapoor. Recently, the *World Famous Lover* actress revealed that with two big and exciting projects in her kitty, she is looking forward to seeing her on-

screen! Now according to the latest update, Raashi Khanna is playing the role of a psycho killer, who has a fluctuating mindset, in Ajay Devgn starrer web drama *Rudra*.

Sources say that the makers of psychological crime thriller drama *Rudra* are looking to take the project on the floors by July 21, which is next month. Produced by Applause Entertainment in association with BBC Studios India, the *Hotstar Specials* series will be shot across iconic locales of Mumbai.

On the other side, Raashi Khanna was last seen playing the female lead in Vijay Deverakonda-starrer romantic movie *World Famous Lover*, which did average business at the box office.



Mahesh's children in Sarkaru Vaari Paata

role of his subordinate in the film which is all about various banking scams happening in the country.

In the meantime, we hear that *Sarkaru Vaari Paata* will have Mahesh Babu's family in it. It is known that Mahesh Babu is delighting fans by sharing videos of his children Sitara and Gautam Krishna on social media.

Insiders tell us that Mahesh Babu is planning to cast Sitara and Gautam



Krishna in *Sarkaru Vaari Paata*. Son Gautam Krishna

already made his debut on screen in Mahesh Babu's *1-Nenokkadine* and Sitara has become the brand ambassador for a 3D animated web series for children *Fantastic Star*.

The prospect of watching Mahesh Babu's children Sitara and Gautam in *Sarkaru Vaari Paata* is exciting for all his fans. Mahesh, apart from *Sarkaru Vaari Paata*, will soon star in the direction of Trivikram Srinivas and Rajamouli.

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

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