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BJP slams Kerala Minister for supporting Ayesha

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Consumer anxiety at highest levels

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Priyamani on being trolled for her skin colour, weight

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HC reinstates Ashok's MANSAS post

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a major setback to the state government, the Andhra Pradesh High Court on Monday junked orders issued by the YSRC Government in March 2020, replacing Ashok Gajapati Raju with his niece Sanchaita Gajapati Raju for the post of chairperson of Maharaja Alak Narayan Society of Arts and Science (MANSAS) Trust in Vizianagaram district and Simhachalam Devasthanams Trust Board.

The ruling brings Ashok Gajapati Raju back in the post as chairman of MANSAS Trust and Simhachalam Devasthanams Trust Board after more than a year.

Acting on a writ petition filed by Ashok Gajapati Raju, the High Court ruled that as per the Trust norms, the appointment of Sanchaita

Govt should respect the law, says Ashok

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Soon after the AP High Court order replacing the chairperson of MANSAS Trust and Simhachalam Devasthanams Trust, former Union minister and TDP senior leader Ashok Gajapati Raju said that the State government should respect the Law of the land and the

Gajapati Raju as chairperson of MANSAS Trust and Simhachalam Trust Board was illegal.

It said Ashok Gajapati Raju would continue to be the chairman of both the Trusts and related institutions.

Sanchaita Gajapati Raju, daughter of Ashok Gajapati Raju's elder brother Ananda Gajapati Raju, who had not been active in the past, suddenly came to the limelight when she was appointed chairperson of the Trusts established by her grandfather PVG Raju.

Will appeal against HC order: Velampalli

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Endowments Minister Velampalli Srinivas Rao on Monday said that he was confident that justice would be done in the MANSAS Trust case.

Reacting to the AP High Court dismissing the GO pertaining to replacement of chairman of MANSAS Trust and Simhachalam Devasthanams Trust, the Minister made it clear that the Government would file an appeal against the order.

Guv's nod to CM's picks for Council

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan on Monday approved the recommendation of the Chief Minister and nominated former MLA Thota Trimurtulu, YSRC state general secretary Lella Appi Reddy and leaders Ramesh Yadav and Moshen Raju to the Council.

The decision was conveyed to Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy when called on the Governor at the Raj Bhavan in Vijayawada on Monday.

The Governor's office described it as a courtesy visit as

The Governor's office described it as a courtesy visit as the Chief Minister was accompanied by his wife Bharati.



the Chief Minister was accompanied by his wife Bharati. Jagan and Bharati interacted with the First Couple for about 40 minutes.

Raj Bhavan came in the backdrop of the nomination of four YSRC Congress Party leaders as members of the Legislative Council.

The Chief Minister's visit to the



File photo

Jagan to release sop for auto, taxi drivers

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy will release financial assistance of Rs 10,000 under the third phase of YSR Vahana Mitra scheme on Tuesday for eligible auto rickshaw and taxi drivers one month in advance. He will be crediting a total of Rs 248.47 crore into the accounts of 2,48,468 beneficiaries.

With the ongoing pandemic

crisis, the state government decided to extend a helping hand to the auto and taxi drivers by providing YSR Vahana Mitra scheme one month in advance. As many as 42,932 beneficiaries have newly applied for the scheme this year, where a total of 2,48,468 will be receiving the aid and over two lakh persons have benefitted in the previous year.

Kin of Covid-victim health workers get compensation

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The State government on Monday issued a GO announcing ex gratia to the dependents of the deceased employees of various categories of the Health and Family Welfare Department who were exposed to Covid-19.

Principal Health Secretary Anil Kumar Singhal issued a GO to this effect on Monday.

Accordingly, the bereaved fam-

ilies of Medical and Health Department staff will get relief.

Kin of a deceased doctor will get ex gratia of Rs 25 lakh, kin of a staff nurse will be given Rs 20 lakh

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Jyeshtha & Shukla Paksha Panchangam

Tithi : Panchami: 10:56 pm

Nakshatram : Ashlesha: 09:42 pm

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

Rahukalam : 03:32 pm - 05:09 pm

Yamagandam : 09:01 am - 10:38 am

Varjyam : 09:59 am - 11:40 am

Gulika : 12:16 pm - 01:54 pm

Good Time : (to start any important work)

Amritakalam : 08:01 pm - 09:42 pm

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

Significant drop in positivity rate in the state, confirm officials

CM unveils Annual Credit Plan

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy launched the state Annual Credit Plan of 2021-22 with a total outlay of Rs 2,83,380 crore at the 215th State Level Bankers' Committee (SLBC) meeting held at the camp office here on Monday.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister said unforesseen situations arise around the world, and restrictions like curfew were imposed to contain Covid.

WPI inflation hits record high of 12.94 pc in May on costlier fuel

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The wholesale price-based inflation accelerated to a record high of 12.94 per cent in May, on rising prices of crude oil and manufactured goods.

Low base effect also contributed to the spike in WPI inflation in May 2021. In May 2020, WPI inflation was at (-) 3.37 per cent.

This is the fifth straight month of uptick seen in the wholesale price index (WPI)-based inflation. In April, 2021, WPI inflation hit double digit at 10.49 per cent.

"The annual rate of inflation, based on monthly WPI, was 12.94 per cent for the month of May, 2021 (over May, 2020) as compared to (-) 3.37 per cent in May 2020.

"The high rate of inflation in

Inflation in fuel and power basket spiked to 37.61 per cent during May, against 20.94 per cent in April. In manufactured products, inflation stood at 10.83 per cent in May, against 9.01 per cent in the previous month

May 2021 is primarily due to low base effect and rise in prices of crude petroleum, mineral oils viz. petrol, diesel, naphtha, furnace oil etc. and manufactured products as compared to the corresponding month of the previous year," the Commerce and Industry Ministry said.

Inflation in fuel and power basket spiked to 37.61 per cent during May, against 20.94 per cent in April. In manufactured products, inflation stood at 10.83 per cent in

May, against 9.01 per cent in the previous month.

However, inflation in food articles eased marginally to 4.31 per cent in May, even as onion prices spiked. Inflation in onion stood at 23.24 per cent in May, against (-) 19.72 per cent in April.

The RBI in its monetary policy earlier this month kept interest rates unchanged at record lows and committed to maintain an accommodative policy stance to support growth.

Rs 100/litre petrol in Hyderabad

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Hyderabad on Monday became the second metro city in the country to see petrol price crossing Rs 100 per litre mark after fuel prices were raised yet again.

Petrol price was hiked by 29 paise per litre and diesel by 30 paise, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel

retailers. The hike -- 24th in six weeks - pushed fuel prices across the country to new historic highs.

In Delhi, petrol hit an all-time high of Rs 96.41 a litre, while diesel is now priced at Rs 87.28 per litre. Fuel prices differ from state to state depending on the incidence of local taxes such as VAT and freight charges.

Vaccines don't prevent Covid but help in keeping symptoms mild: Sangita

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Vaccines don't prevent coronavirus infections but will help in keeping the symptoms mild, Apollo Hospitals Joint MD Sangita Reddy said on Monday.

In a series of tweets, Reddy also said she was going home today after being hospitalised for coronavirus infection.

"After 500 days of dodging #COVID19 I tested +VE on June 10th My initial reaction was of shock & dismay - Why me? I was careful & vaccinated. Hospitalized with high fever I took the cocktail #Regeneron therapy within the early window period & it has made

a dramatic difference," she said.

Highlighting the role of vaccines and timely diagnosis and treatment, she said, "The imp point 2 remember- vaccine dont prevent #COVID BUT help keep symptoms Mild. Timely diagnosis & treatment r key 2 quick recovery". "As I go home 2day & continue #self isolation under Med sup via #telemedicine My heartfelt gratitude 2 R #Nursing, Doc & #scientific com," she noted. Reddy has been emphasising that the government should move quickly to ramp up the availability of the COVID vaccine in the country by enhancing domestic production as well as increasing procurement from abroad.

Former TS minister Eatala joins BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Telangana health minister Eatala Rajender joined the BJP on Monday in the presence of Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan.

Rajender has already tendered his resignation as the Huzurabad MLA and has also relinquished his membership of the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS).



Welcoming him into the party, Pradhan said the BJP would form

the government in Telangana after the next assembly elections.

Rajender was a senior leader of the TRS and has held top portfolios such as finance and health in the K Chandrashekar Rao-led successive TRS governments in the state.

He was shunted out of the Cabinet over accusations related to land-grabbing.

AP extends India Cements lease

SNV SUDHIR ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a controversial decision, the YS Jaganmohan Reddy government has extended the mining lease held by India Cements Ltd to mine limestone in an extent of 1,611.37 acre spread in Gurajala and Dachepalli mandals in Guntur district till the year 2037.

Accordingly, the limestone mined from the quarries in Guntur district will be used for India Cements' manufacturing plant located in Telangana.

India Cements managing director N Srinivasan is one of the accused in Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy's quid pro quo cases probed by both the CBI and Enforcement Directorate (ED).

The said mining lease was first granted in 1987 for a period of 20 years till 2007. Though India



Cements filed an application for first renewal of mining lease on March 31, 2006, it could not be processed within the stipulated time due to various reasons, including an ongoing case in the High Court.

Meanwhile, India Cements obtained dispatch permits from the

then government for a quantity of 59,64,370 metric tonnes (MT) of limestone for the period from 2014-15 to 2020-2021 which was up to June 26, 2020. Now, the existing lease period has been extended till 2037.

Monsoon covers two-third of India, a fortnight early

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's annual monsoon rains have covered two-third of the country, nearly a fortnight ahead of the normal schedule, a weather department official said on Monday, adding that conditions are favourable for further advancement into the north-western parts this week.

The early arrival of monsoon rains in central and northern India will help farmers accelerate sowing of summer-sown crops such as paddy rice, cotton, soybean and pulses, and may boost crop yields too.

"Monsoon has already covered some parts of Punjab. Usually, it enters Punjab in the last week of June," said an official at the India

Meteorological Department (IMD), who declined to be named.

Monsoon arrived in the southern state of Kerala on June 3 against the usual June 1, but has advanced quickly since.

Since the start of the season, the monsoon has delivered 25% more-than-normal rainfall, boosted by higher rainfall in the central India region, data compiled by IMD showed.

Monsoon is crucial for India's \$2.7-trillion economy, as it delivers nearly 70% of the rain needed by farms, besides replenishing reservoirs and aquifers.

Sowing of summer-sown crops such as cotton, rice, soybean, corn and pulses has already started in

southern and western states, and could start in central and northern India this week, said a Mumbai-based dealer with a global trading firm.

"Farmers are interested in rice and oilseeds due to higher prices. We might see higher area under soybean and paddy," the dealer said.

India is the world's biggest exporter of rice and top importer of edible oils such as palm oil, soyoil and sunflower oil.

Nearly half of India's farmland gets no irrigation and is dependent on the annual rains from June to September. Farming accounts for nearly 15% of the economy but sustains more than half of a population of 1.3 billion.



G-7 summit was perfect platform for Modi to make India shine

If proof was needed, last week's three-day G-7 summit was proof that the charisma of Narendra Modi, respect for him and his impact on the world stage remain intact.

Modi got the opportunity to address the leaders of the G-7 nations thrice during the virtual summit and his message to the leaders of participant nations to work democratically, transparently and unitedly left them mesmerised. Modi called upon them to show solidarity and work together so that no pandemic would ever recur.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said that he would have personally invited Modi to visit the UK, but because of the pandemic situation, he felt as though he had lost an opportunity to extend an invitation to Modi.

Modi had attended the 2019 summit held in France

at the invitation of the French President.

He would have attended last year's summit to be held in the USA responding to an invitation by Donald Trump, the then President, but the conclave was cancelled on account of the pandemic.

At the recent summit, India's ministerial working group took active part in the discussions.

Why was Modi's address to the global leaders so attractive?

Covid-19 has exposed the disparities between the rich and poor nations as far as medical infrastructure is concerned. While top nations are able to wriggle themselves from the pandemic situation, the poorer ones are ruined. The wealthy nations have state-of-the-art medical facilities and infrastructural amenities, which the poorer nations don't, leading to more deaths in such coun-

Covid-19 has exposed the disparities between the rich and poor nations as far as medical infrastructure is concerned. While top nations are able to wriggle themselves from the pandemic situation, the poorer ones are ruined. Modi's desire is to eliminate these differences.



Y SATYA KUMAR
BJP National Secretary

tries.

Modi's desire is to eliminate these differences as far as medical amenities are concerned.

That was why, addressing the summit on Saturday, Modi laid emphasis on building strong medical and health systems with the idea of 'one world, one health'. He called for joint efforts to achieve this.

Modi led governments, industries and civil society to work together as he felt that this would encourage the entire world to fight against

Covid-19. That was why India was able to mitigate the impact of the second wave in less time than it could gain control over the first wave.

Besides the G-7 nations, many other countries have been supporting India. Modi thanked them for their support and called for improving health administration. He expressed his preparedness to share India's Covid experience with other nations.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, South African President Cyril

ramaphosa supported Modi's contention that restrictions on Intellectual Property Rights should be lifted on Covid related technologies. The USA also extended its support to Modi, which is an important development.

The World Trade Organisation and the UNO Secretary-General also identified the issue as impor-

tant.

As one of the biggest democracies in the world, India is a natural ally to G-7 nations.

Modi announced at the summit that the participants share more or less the same views on issues like dictatorship, terrorism, violent extremism and spread of wrong information.

Referring to technological companies, he called for a safe cyber atmosphere to evolve an open and transparent society.

If a pandemic-like crisis surfaces, is it possible to resolve it without the contribution of India, Modi questioned, reflecting his bold leadership style.

Modi need not draw lessons from anyone on how to enhance the image of the country on the global fora.

Whatever is the forum, his novel ideas lend greatness to him and the G-7 summit was no different.

In fact, when Covid-19 second wave was sweeping across the country, Modi used his ties with global leaders and tried to bring the country out of the difficult situation.

Unmindful of the criticism of the Opposition, Modi took measures to solve problems of the people.

The PMO benefited thousands of people, including journalist Rubika Lyaquat, information commissioner Uday Mahurkar, a Sangh activist in Jamshedpur, during the turbulent times of Covid.

The PM called up many people to enquire about their health. Modi helped the editor of a magazine, who was critical of the PM, and ensured that he received proper treatment.

Modi yearns to speak with those who are in suffering, to ensure that all receive the vaccine, to ensure that there should be proper medicare in hospitals. If anyone criticises Modi, there is no bigger atrocity than this.

Ask anyone in the PMO how Modi spent sleepless nights when Covid was at its peak.

Those who spread rumours about differences between Modi and Yogi, should be construed as that they do not know how the BJP functions. Modi reviewed the development programmes in UP for over 1.5 hours.

Because of such a constructive approach, there is no doubt that the BJP will romp home in the elections to be held next year under the leadership of Modi and Yogi to the bewilderment of their critics.



Justice will always triumph: Naidu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Leader of the Opposition N Chandrababu Naidu on Monday welcomed the Andhra Pradesh High Court order scrapping the GOs issued by the YSRCP Government with regard to the MANSAS Trust and the Simhachalam Devasthanams in the past two years.

In a statement here, the TDP supreme asserted that once again, it was proven that justice would eventually triumph over the unjust forces "even though they would issue any number of arbitrary GOs".

"It's clear that chaotic policies would have no place in a vibrant democracy like ours. The High Court order would be a new lease of life for thousands of students and employees who were benefitting from the generosity of the Pusapadu clan for many generations," Naidu said.

He said that the MANSAS employees would get a big relief from the hard days as "the vested interests have also stopped their salaries".

"Jaganmohan Reddy's ulterior plans to smear the royal family of the Gajapathi Rajus were eventually nullified. It should be an eye-opener for each and everyone that the law and justice machinery would not remain silent if anybody issues reckless GOs in gross misuse of their authority," the former chief minister said.

Meanwhile, TDP national

general secretary Nara Lokesh asserted that final victory would go to justice, dharma and the laws of the land. "The HC order dealt a severe blow to the Jaganmohan Reddy Government that issued midnight GOs with total disrespect for the Constitution and the country's robust democracy. The High Court order has further brought grace and glory to the large hearted philanthropic efforts made by the Pusapati family," Lokesh said.

TDP AP president K Atchan naidu recalled how Ashok Gajapati was unjustly removed as chairman of MANSAS with a pre-planned conspiracy to loot the 13,000 acres of prime lands lying under the control of the Trust. The reappointment of Ashok Ganapathi Raju would mark the triumph of good over evil, Atchannaidu said.

HC reinstates Ashok's...

Continued from Page 1

Earlier, she was running an NGO and later joined the Bharatiya Janata Party. However, her appointment as the chairperson of the Trusts was strongly opposed by the state BJP leaders. MANSAS Trust is a charitable trust under the Endowments department. It runs 12 educational institutions, including a medical college. The Raju family has donated more than 13,000 acres, spread over four districts, to the Trust.

Govt should respect the law, says Ashok

Continued from Page 1

He said that there is a need to examine the condition of the temples under Simhachalam Trust thoroughly. He further added that one has to wait and see how far the government would cooperate in this matter. Ashok Gajapati Raju recalled that the donations sent to Ramatheertham temple were returned. He said that allegations were levied that irregularities had taken place during

AP extends India Cements lease

Continued from Page 1

India Cements Limited has two more mining leases in Telangana besides the lease in Guntur which are captive to the cement plant located at Vishnuapuram in Wadapally village of Nalgonda District.

"Setting up of captive units within the state is not applicable to the lessee company as the mining lease is granted for captive requirement of the existing cement plant located at Wadapally," said mines secretary Gopala Krishna Dwivedi in the order issued by the government.

India Cements has been accused of investing about Rs 140 crore in Bharathi Cements and Jagathi Publications, owned by Jagan's family, allegedly for getting additional water allocations,

limestone mining leases for its units in Andhra Pradesh between 2008 and 2009.

The cement major was allocated 13 million cubic feet of water from Kagna River in Ranga Reddy district. Besides, permission was given to draw 100,000 gallons of water a day from the Krishna river in Nalgonda district.

The company has also received limestone mining lease for 25 years in Kadapa district. A CBI charge sheet said that the then government headed by Jagan's father YS Rajasekhara Reddy issued three GOs between 2008 and 2009, that had benefited India Cements.

Most recently, the ED, in an affidavit filed countering the quash plea filed by Srinivasan in the Telangana High Court

last February, said that the investments, which were made into Bharathi Cements, Jagathi Publications and Caramel Company Ltd in 2007-2008, by India Cements were a bribe for the benefits that the company allegedly unduly received from the government of erstwhile Andhra Pradesh, of which YS Rajasekhara Reddy was the Chief Minister.

The original mining lease in Survey Nos. 132,133 and 840, 841 in Dachepalli and Gurajala mandals respectively of Guntur district was accorded to Raasi Cements Ltd in 1987.

Subsequent acquisition of Raasi Cements, the mining lease was also transferred to India Cements in the year 2000.

Diesel price goes past Rs 100 in Hyderabad

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With the latest fuel price hike, the price of petrol in Hyderabad crossed Rs 100 per litre mark on Monday.

The oil companies on Monday hiked the prices of petrol and diesel by 29 and 30 paise per litre, respectively.

With the latest hike, the price of petrol in Hyderabad has jumped to Rs 100.20 while petrol of diesel also crossed Rs 95. The new retail price of diesel in Telangana capital is Rs 95.14 per litre.

The price of premium petrol, had crossed Rs 100 last week.

Number of Black fungus cases rises to 2,357 in AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The number of mucormycosis (Black fungus) cases in Andhra Pradesh increased to 2,357 on Monday, Principal Secretary (Health) Anil Kumar Singhal said.

A total of 162 persons succumbed to black fungus, including five in the last 24 hours, he said. Of the total infected, 1,000 had recovered so far, leaving 1,357 active cases. "We have so far performed 700 surgeries to treat the black fungus patients. Another 538 patients are on Amphotericin treatment and 577 on Posaconazole," the

Kin of Covid-victim health workers get compensation

Continued from Page 1

While the kin of a deceased doctor will get ex gratia of Rs 25 lakh, kin of a staff nurse will be given Rs 20 lakh, kin of MNO/FNO will get Rs 15 lakh and all other staff Rs 10 lakh.

The ex gratia shall be sanctioned to the dependents of the deceased regular employee who died due to Covid-19, which is in addition to the benefit under PMGKP Insurance Scheme (Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package). "Dependants in receipt of any other benefit under any other scheme are also eligible for the ex gratia," the GO said.

"Ex gratia will be given to the kin of health department employee he/she dies due to Covid 19 while

CM unveils Annual Credit Plan

Continued from Page 1

He said though curfew was extended, stipulated targets were crossed in loan disbursement. Jagan said that 105 percent of targets were achieved in priority sectors and 114.16 percent in agriculture sector.

He emphasised that the role of banks in achieving this growth rate was commendable. The Chief Minister said that banks have exceeded the stipulated targets in loan disbursements and that their efficiency needed to be increased in certain areas like agri infra, other agriculture allied sectors, housing and education.

The Chief Minister said schools and hospitals are being revamped under Nadu Nedu scheme and focus is laid on developing infrastructure facilities in the agriculture sector.

He said English is introduced as a medium of instruction in government schools and also CBSE affiliation is completed and added that children are coming back to government schools.

Jagan said schools are being revamped under the second phase of Nadu Nedu scheme. He said there are no tier -1 cities in Andhra Pradesh and people are going to Bangalore, Hyderabad and Chennai for treatment for tertiary care.

He said medical infrastructure is being developed from village clinics to teaching hospitals across the state and added that 16 new medical colleges are being set up in the state and the government was moving forward to ensure a teaching hospital in every par-

Guv's nod to CM's picks for Council

Continued from Page 1

Four sitting MLCs, nominated during the previous Telugu Desam Party regime, retired on June 11.

The TDP objected to the nomination of Trimurtulu and Appi Reddy alleging that they were facing criminal charges.

It said Ramesh Yadav too had faced criminal charges in the past.

"Candidates recommended (for the Council) under Governors quota should have a clean and unblemished record and good reputation in society," TDP general secretary V Ramaiah said in a letter to the Governor.

Trimurtulu was a legislator of the TDP till 2019 and joined the YSRC last year.

AP reports 4,549 new Covid cases, 59 deaths

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh recorded 4,549 fresh Covid-19 cases, 10,114 recoveries and 59 deaths in the 24 hours ending 9 am on Monday, the latest bulletin said.

The number of active cases fell to 80,013. The cumulative positives in the state now stood at 18,14,393, recoveries 17,22,381 and toll 11,999.

The overall infection positivity rate came to 8.8 percent after 2.05 crore tests, according to the bulletin.

The recovery rate climbed back to 94.61 percent, while the mortality rate increased marginally to 0.66 percent.

In 24 hours, all 13 districts reported less than 900 fresh Covid cases each, with Chittoor logging the highest 860 and SPS Nellore the lowest 182.

Chittoor, however, reported 12 more fatalities in a day. Prakasam had eight, West Godavari six, Anantapur, East Godavari and Srikakulam four each, Guntur, Kurnool and Vizianagaram three each, Kadapa and SPS Nellore two deaths each.

Government data revealed that while the pandemic spread slowed down in urban areas, it has been on a steady rise in the rural areas.

From about 56 percent during the first couple of weeks in May, the percentage of Covid-19 cases in rural areas shot up to 63 by the last week while that in the urban centres fell from 44 to 37.

It has now shot further up to 69 percent in rural areas.

Even the fatalities showed a sharp rise from 50.4 to 57.5 in rural areas while declining to that extent in the urban centres during May.

In June, the Covid-19 mortality percentages were 39.1 and 60.9 percent in urban and rural areas, respectively.

Principal Secretary (Health) Anil Kumar Singhal said as many as 3,540 'Secretariat' areas (in villages and urban wards) now had zero cases of the infection while another 2,637 had just one case (each).

"Of the 15,000 Secretariats in the state, only 15 areas under them have more than 50 Covid-19 cases, 18 have between 40 and 49 and another 40 have cases between 30 and 39. Under 1,147 Secretariats, there are 10-19 cases now," the official said.

The Principal Secretary said about 2,440 ICU beds, 12,417 oxygen beds and 11,031 general beds were vacant in 449 notified Covid-19 hospitals in the state.

In 134 Covid Care Centres, 73,286 of the total 81,084 patients got cured and discharged.

"With only 7,798 inmates, we have 45,383 beds vacant in the CCCs," the official added.

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	₹ 600
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Without Skin	₹191
Broiler at Farm	₹116
EGG RATES ₹/100	
VIJAYAWADA	524
HYDERABAD	519
VISAKHAPATNAM	557
RETAIL PRICE	₹5.24

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH ROADS AND BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT

'e' Procurement Notice

'e' NIT No. 6/1-110/PM works/MD, APRDC/2021-22 Dt. 10.06.2021

1) Online tenders for 26 works in first call (3 works in Srikakulam, 1 work in Vizianagaram, 5 works in Visakhapatnam, 2 works in East Godavari, 5 works in West Godavari, 2 works in Krishna, 1 work in Prakasam, and 1 work in Ananthapuram, 6 works in Nellore Districts) and 33 works in 2nd call (7 works in Srikakulam, 4 works in Visakhapatnam, 5 works in East Godavari, 8 works in West Godavari, 2 works in Krishna, 1 work in Guntur, 4 works in Prakasam, 2 works in Kurnool Districts) and for 51 works in 3rd call (8 works in Visakhapatnam, 8 works in East Godavari, 6 works in West Godavari, 7 works in Krishna, 5 works in Guntur, 6 works in Prakasam, 8 works in Nellore, 1 work in Chittoor, 2 works in Kurnool Districts) 2) The last date of receipt of tenders is 05.07.2021 upto 3.30 P.M. 3) Tenders can download the tender schedules and other details from e-market place i.e., www.approcurement.gov.in

CHEF ENGINEER (R&B) SH & MANAGING DIRECTOR, APRDC

Significant drop in positivity rate in the state, confirm officials

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Referring to data from June 6 to 12, officials of the health department told Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Monday that the number of cases in the state has dropped significantly.

They said the positive cases rate had decreased to 6.58 percent while it was 25.56 percent on May 16 and added that the positivity rate in all districts is less than 17.5 percent.

They said the positivity rate in seven districts was less than nine percent and it's between 10-19 percent in six districts. They said active cases were reduced to 85,637 and the recovery rate was increased to 94.61 percent. They said five lakh calls were made to '104' call centre from April 15 and 6,41,094 outgoing calls were made and added that 2,700 calls were being made at present.

They also said 2,303 black fungus cases were registered till June 14 of which 157 were



dead. The officials further said they have released a GO as per the directions of the Chief Minister to support the families of health department staff who succumbed to Covid.

The Chief Minister direct-

ed the officials to ensure they receive financial assistance soon and said to plan to provide financial assistance to health staff of private hospitals who were treating Covid patients and succumbed to the virus.

Focus on health hubs, protecting children: Jagan directs officials

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh has started preparations to face the possible third wave that is expected to show impact on children. Medical and health officials are making arrangements to increase ICU and oxygen beds to treat children.

The medical and health officials who participated in a high level review meeting held on Covid on Monday, informed Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy about treatment facilities to children in government hospitals.

They explained the action plan on increasing ICU beds and providing oxygen to infants and children and added that they have prepared a plan to increase ICU beds to 1,600 and oxygen beds to 3,777 for children.

They said plans are on to recruit paediatricians, staff nurses and other support staff. Reacting to this, the Chief Minister instructed them to complete the recruitment process within a month. He directed the officials to be prepared for all eventualities and to provide training to nurses and staff in paediatrics issues.

The officials said children are facing post Covid health problems related to lungs and kidneys. The Chief Minister asked officials to provide treatment to these problems under Arogyasri.

The Chief Minister directed officials to fix rates under Arogyasri considering the realistic situations so that hospitals won't suffer and added that Arogyasri bills are being paid to network hospitals within three weeks.

Parties must support govt reclaim encroached lands: Minister

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Promising strict action against those involved, Tourism Minister Muttamsetti Srinivas on Monday said that all parties must come together in support of the state government in reclaiming the encroached lands that are in the hands of TDP leaders.

Speaking to the media in Vizag, the Minister said that TDP leaders, with the support of former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu, have grabbed huge chunks of land in Visakhapatnam during the TDP rule.

"It is the responsibility of the government to keep Visakhapatnam safe. Other parties should come in support of the government in reclaiming the encroached lands," Muttamsetti said.

He said that TDP leaders encroached valuable government lands using the loopholes of abolished Estate and Inam Acts. "Whoever is involved will be strictly punished as Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy does not discriminate between him, us, the party and caste. Soon,



the SIT report on Vizag land scam will be made public and action will be initiated against all those involved in the land scam and the YSRC government will not spare any encroachers," the Minister said.

He said that Naidu doesn't have any hold over his own party, hence TDP leaders have been involved in the land scams with the tacit support of the former chief minister. "All that Naidu is bothered about is to conspire and intrigue against the government to destabilise it. While the government was

reclaiming encroached lands, the TDP chief and his son Lokesh have been levelling false allegations that the YSRC leaders were grabbing lands," Muttamsetti said.

The Minister said that Visakhapatnam's brand image has been tarnished with the corruption of TDP leaders and the Chief Minister was trying to rebuild it by making it an Executive Capital. He said that the Chief Minister is determined to develop all three regions equally with his concept of decentralisation.

Vaccines don't prevent Covid but help in keeping symptoms mild: Sangita Reddy

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Vaccines don't prevent coronavirus infections but will help in keeping the symptoms mild, Apollo Hospitals Joint MD Sangita Reddy said on Monday. In a series of tweets, Reddy also said she was going home today after being hospitalised for coronavirus infection.

"After 500 days of dodging #COVID19 I tested +VE on June 10th My initial reaction was of shock & dismay - Why me? I was careful & vaccinated. Hospitalized with high fever I took the cocktail #Regeneron therapy within the early window period & it has made a dramatic difference," she said.

Highlighting the role of vaccines and timely diagnosis and treatment, she said, "The imp point 2 remember vaccine dont prevent #COVID BUT help keep symptoms Mild. Timely diagnosis & treatment r key 2 quick recovery". "As I go home 2day & continue #self isolation under Med sup via #telemedicine My heartfelt gratitude 2 R #Nursing, Doc & #scientific com," she noted. Reddy has been emphasising that the government should move quickly



to ramp up the availability of the COVID vaccine in the country by enhancing domestic production as well as increasing procurement from abroad. In a tweet on May 17, Reddy said, "The challenge of India's vaccination strategy is not admin as much as supply. I urge R #govt to move quickly on ramping up domestic prod, enhance intl procure, seek Intl aid in the form of vaccine & establish a dist network of all Pub & Pvt hospitals 2 accelerate the pace of inoculation."

Naidu is synonymous with corruption: Gudivada Amar

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Asserting that the government is determined to protect the lands in Visakhapatnam, Anakapalli MLA Gudivada Amarnath slammed Leader of the Opposition N Chandrababu Naidu on Monday, terming him as synonymous with corruption.

About 430 acres of government lands worth almost over Rs 4,000 crore have been reclaimed in the last two years, the MLA said.

Speaking to the media in Visakhapatnam on Monday, the MLA said that the government would take possession of all those reclaimed lands from encroachers and shall use it for public welfare.

He said a majority of land grabbing cases took place during the previous government by the TDP leaders with the tacit support of Naidu. The YSRC MLA accused Naidu of encouraging his party leaders



to grab more lands and led them towards corruption. He asserted that no one is above law and strict action will be initiated against those found guilty.

The MLA said that Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy promised the people of Visakhapatnam that every single inch of encroached land will be reclaimed and shall be brought to public use. "In fact, people have repeatedly appealed to the government to take over the occupied lands in the city and welcomed the government move of constituting SIT to probe on land encroach-

ments. The previous TDP government had not made public the report submitted by the SIT it constituted, fearing public outburst. But the current government shall make the report public and spare no one including YSRC leaders," Amarnath said.

The MLA stated that GITAM University run by the close kin of Naidu encroached over 40 acres of government lands, and the government immediately took action and reclaimed all those valuable assets. He said Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy was according priority to people's interests rather than political interests to develop Visakhapatnam as an Executive Capital, as the city has all the required facilities to compete with other Tier-1 cities in the country.

He clarified that the state government is not being vindictive towards any party, but was just being responsible.

Yanamala blames Jagan for poverty

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former minister and TDP Politburo member Yanamala Ramakrishnudu on Monday demanded the YSRC Government to explain why other States fared better than Andhra Pradesh in reducing poverty levels and in achieving their development goals in spite of the severe Covid-19 pandemic crisis.

Yanamala said it was only due to the mismanagement of resources and diversions of funds by the Jaganmohan Reddy regime that the poor became poorer in AP and the middle classes also sank into poverty. "Whereas a select few henchmen of the ruling YSRC became the neo-rich. The socio-economic inequalities rose sharply in just two years. Apparently, the Covid



contribution to this crisis was very little as far as AP was concerned," the former finance minister said.

Addressing a press conference here, the TDP leader deplored that price rise and reduced expenditures in education and health infrastructure had greatly hurt the State economy. "The incomes of over 97 percent of households came down drastically. Poverty rose to 24 percent in rural areas and to 29 percent in urban areas. AP came to stand in fifth place in poverty and as far as hunger is concerned, it is at the 14th place in the country," Yanamala alleged.

He said that the Jagan regime spent 46.10 percent of total budget during 2019-20 against 46.80 percent during 2018-19, a nearly 0.7 percent less when compared to the TDP rule.

WPI inflation hits record high of 12.94% in May

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The wholesale price-based inflation accelerated to a record high of 12.94 per cent in May, on rising prices of crude oil and manufactured goods.

Low base effect also contributed to the spike in WPI inflation in May 2021. In May 2020, WPI inflation was at (-) 3.37 per cent.

This is the fifth straight month of uptick seen in the wholesale price index (WPI)-based inflation. In April, 2021, WPI inflation hit double digit at 10.49 per cent.

"The annual rate of inflation, based on monthly WPI, was 12.94 per cent for the month of May, 2021 (over May, 2020) as compared to (-) 3.37 per cent in May 2020.

"The high rate of inflation in May 2021 is primarily due to low base effect and rise in prices of crude petroleum, mineral oils viz. petrol, diesel, naphtha, furnace oil etc. and manufactured products as compared to the corresponding month of the previous year," the

Commerce and Industry Ministry said.

Inflation in fuel and power basket spiked to 37.61 per cent during May, against 20.94 per cent in April. In manufactured products, inflation stood at 10.83 per cent in May, against 9.01 per cent in the previous month.

However, inflation in food articles eased marginally to 4.31 per cent in May, even as onion prices spiked. Inflation in onion stood at 23.24 per cent in May, against (-) 19.72 per cent in April.

The RBI in its monetary policy earlier this month kept interest rates unchanged at record lows and committed to maintain an accommodative policy stance to support growth.

RBI pegged retail inflation at 5.1 per cent in this fiscal ending March 2022, with upside risks from higher commodity prices and re-emergence of higher supply constraints amidst the current phase of lockdowns.

Retail inflation data for May is scheduled to be released later in the day.

Need to implement YSR Crop Insurance scheme: Collector

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Krishna district collector J Nivas has instructed officials to complete work on Rythu Bharosa centres, YSR Health Clinics and village and ward secretariat buildings within the stipulated time in the district.

Nivas on Monday reviewed the progress of the works with the officials of Panchayat Raj, Rural development, DWMA and other departments at the Collector's camp office. He made it clear that the construction works of RBCs, health clinics and ward and village secretariats must be completed within the stipulated time. Nivas advised officers of the various departments to ensure regular supply of cement, iron and other construction materials.

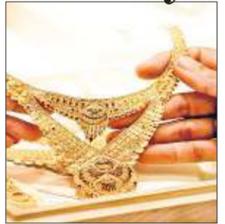
Only hallmark Gold from today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union government will enforce mandatory hallmarking of gold jewellery and artefacts from today. As per the new guidelines, jewellers across India will now be allowed to sell gold items of only 14, 18 and 22 carats from June 15, 2021 onwards.

Hallmark is a purity certification for gold. Currently, only 40 percent of gold jewellery sold in India is being hallmarked. Furthermore, only 35,879 of India's approximately 4 lakh jewellers are currently BIS (Bureau of Indian Standards) certified, according to the World Gold Council.

As per the government, hallmarking centres have grown by 25 percent in the last five years. With the existing capabilities at certification centres, India has the capac-



ity to hallmark around 14 crore articles per year.

Under Hallmarking scheme of Bureau of Indian Standards, Jewellers are registered for selling hallmarked jewellery and recognised testing and Hallmarking centres.

BIS Hallmark will be for three categories - 14 carat (14K585), 18(18K750) carat and 22 (22K916) carat with A&H centre's identification mark/number and jewellers identification mark/number.

No Modi, no Amit Shah, only Pradhan at Eatela BJP joining

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In all fairness, Eatela Rajender may be forgiven for being a tad bit disappointed on Monday, after the brouhaha that had been the norm ever since he parted ways with the TRS.

Much had been made of his entry into the BJP, with everyone inclined towards saffron saying that he was a prize catch for the BJP, and would lead the party to its destiny - capturing power in Telangana.

Such was the buzz that Eatela may be forgiven for believing that he would be accorded the grandest of welcomes when he landed in Delhi.

It was perhaps this belief that he took a chartered flight to the national capital, and accompanied by 220 of his



supporters flew to Delhi where he was welcomed by Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and BJP Telangana state affairs in-charge Tarun Chugh. No Modi, no Shah, no other bigwig was present at the ceremony to welcome Eatela into the BJP fold.

In fact, the hype around his joining the BJP fizzled out to

such an extent that BJP national president JP Nadda wasn't the one to induct him into the party fold by handing over the saffron shawl. Perhaps Eatela's disappointment came to be known, since Nadda did drape him with the shawl later when the former minister called upon him at his residence.

All employees issues will be addressed, promises RTC MD

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Reminding that after they were absorbed by the state government the responsibility of the APSRTC employees was to discharge their duties with commitment, APSRTC vice-chairman and managing director Ch D Tirumala Rao on Monday assured that all employees' problems will be addressed.

Tirumala Rao visited the bus depot at Vidyadharapuram in Vijayawada and the zonal workshop, tyre treading division, training academy and zonal training college as part of his extensive tour on Monday. He also visited the RTC hospital in the depot.

The APSRTC MD was welcomed by Vidyadharapuram depot manager Rupasri and



other officials. He planted saplings on the depot premises and later visited departments such as the depot garage, office, traffic, cargo transport and advance reservation wings.

Addressing the depot staff on the occasion, the RTC MD said that after they were absorbed by the state government, more responsibility lies on the employees to discharge duties with commitment.

He said that it was the duty of the employees to provide all facilities to passengers as the

future of the Corporation depends on the passengers.

Tirumala Rao said that he would visit all the depots in the days to come and would take measures to address the problems faced by the employees.

He said that all the department staff should discharge their duties with commitment for the development of the organisation. Tirumala Rao said that all the employees under him would be taken care of. Most importantly, the health issues of the employees will be addressed to achieve better results, he said.

Later, Tirumala Rao appreciated the bus drivers who could secure good mileage and conductors with good IPK and appreciation letters were handed over to them on the occasion.

Monsoon covers two-third of India, a fortnight early

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's annual monsoon rains have covered two-third of the country, nearly a fortnight ahead of the normal schedule, a weather department official said on Monday, adding that conditions are favourable for further advancement into the north-western parts this week.

The early arrival of monsoon rains in central and northern India will help farmers accelerate sowing of summer-sown crops such as paddy rice, cotton, soybean and pulses, and may boost crop yields too.

"Monsoon has already covered some parts of Punjab. Usually, it enters Punjab in the last week of June," said an official at the India Meteorological



Department (IMD), who declined to be named.

Monsoon arrived in the southern state of Kerala on June 3 against the usual June 1, but has advanced quickly since. Since the start of the season,

the monsoon has delivered 25% more-than-normal rainfall, boosted by higher rainfall in the central India region, data compiled by IMD showed.

Monsoon is crucial for India's \$2.7-trillion economy, as it

delivers nearly 70% of the rain needed by farms, besides replenishing reservoirs and aquifers.

Sowing of summer-sown crops such as cotton, rice, soybean, corn and pulses has already started in southern and

western states, and could start in central and northern India this week, said a Mumbai-based dealer with a global trading firm.

"Farmers are interested in rice and oilseeds due to higher prices. We might see higher area under soybean and paddy," the dealer said.

India is the world's biggest exporter of rice and top importer of edible oils such as palm oil, soyoil and sunflower oil.

Nearly half of India's farmland gets no irrigation and is dependent on the annual rains from June to September. Farming accounts for nearly 15% of the economy but sustains more than half of a population of 1.3 billion.



Fishermen all set to enter sea as two-month ban ends

DHV SAMBASIVA RAO
KAKINADA

The State government has announced a two-month ban on fishing in the sea this year as it does every year. The ban expires at midnight on Monday. The ban is enforced annually as it is the season for the fish to spawn.

The government has provided assistance with the aim of

providing employment to fishing families who go hunting due to the ban on fishing. About Rs 10,000 was deposited in the personal bank account of fishermen registered with the Fisheries Department last month. In East Godavari district, 5,200 boats were confined to the shore due to hunting ban in U Kottapalli, Kakinada Urban, Kakinada Rural, Polavaram, Tallarevu,

Katrenikona, Uppalagupam, Allavaram, Sakhinetiipalli and other mandals. With the resumption of fishing from Tuesday, fishermen would pay homage to their deity Ganga and set out into the sea. Everything is ready for fishing and thousands of fishermen are all set to go hunting.

Fishermen are happy to enter the sea as they have been left without taking up any other

work during the fishing holiday on account of the Corona pandemic. While vehicles from other States have arrived at Aminabad port, fishermen will be seen heading towards harbour from Tuesday.

Meanwhile, the authorities have warned Covid protocols like wearing mask and maintaining physical distance must be observed during purchase of fish at the port.

Covid-19 paediatric ward at govt hospital opened

PNS ■ GUDIVADA

Kodali Srivenkateswara Rao (Nani), Minister of State for Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs, has said that Covid-19 paediatric ward is being set up at Gudivada Area Government Hospital.

Speaking to mediapersons here on Monday, Kodali Nani said that the government was fully prepared for the third wave of Coronavirus. He said CM Jagan Mohan Reddy was holding review meetings with the authorities on vaccination as well as control and prevention of Covid-19 in the State.

Govt Hospital Superintendent Dr S Indira Devi said that a 20-bed paediatric ward is being set up at Gudivada Government Hospital. Ten 10 beds would be allotted to the ICU and another 10 for Covid and general treatment.

Red sanders smuggler, two followers arrested

PNS ■ ONGOLE

An interstate red sanders smuggler Magunta Viswanath Reddy and his two followers - Uttam Kumar and Mattaiah - have been arrested by the Prakasam police. Vishwanath Reddy is the accused in 32 cases related to red sanders smuggling and has been evading the police for the past six years.

Ongole DSP KVVN Prasad disclosed the case history and told the media on Monday that a total of 52 red sanders logs worth Rs 85 lakh and a car were seized from the accused so far. He also said that Magunta Viswanath Reddy was earlier involved in red sanders smuggling case in Tanguturu area. In that case, the Tanguturu police arrested one accused Kandakunta Siva Kumar who disclosed the involvement of Viswanath Reddy.

He also said that the trio were taken into custody in a



tin shed at Kurnool Industrial Park.

According to DSP Prasad, Magunta Viswanath Reddy was selling red sanders in capital Delhi and other countries through a middleman named

Nazir from Kurnool. Singarayakonda C.I U Srinivasa Rao, Tanguturu SI Naib Rasool and station staff, who cracked the case, were appreciated by SP Siddhartha Kaushal, he said.



Khaini, gutka worth Rs 1 cr seized, 6 held

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Guntur Rural SP Vishal Gunni has said that about Rs 1 crore worth of banned khaini and gutka have been seized in raids across the rural district area. Disclosing this to the media here on Monday, he said that the largest operation in AP was carried out in the last 48 hours. During a thorough search at Chilakaluripet, Tenali, Narasaraopet, Vinukonda and Savalyapuram stations, a large quantity of khaini, gutka and counterfeit cigarettes were found, he added. He further said that six persons were arrested in connection

with the case. Sidhu of Subrahmanyeswara Traders, a resident of Bangalore, was found to be supplying the products to eight districts in the State. Koppurapu Manikantha of Ongole and Nakala Anjaneyulu of Darshi were arrested for allegedly supplying the banned products to the area. A man, identified as Sidhu, was involved in money laundering and smuggling of illicit goods from Bangalore and Rajasthan to Palnadu and Dacheppalli via parcel service, he said. The SP appreciated the police teams for their efforts in arresting the accused and busting the illicit racket.

Farmers protest for paddy arrears

PNS ■ ELURU

Paddy growers hit the road on Monday for arrears. A dharna was held in front of the local Eluru Collectorate under the auspices of the district committees of the Andhra Pradesh Farmers Association and Andhra Pradesh Tenant Farmers Association demanding immediate payment of Rs 1,450 crore of Rabi paddy arrears. They raised slogans threatening to commit suicide if the payment is not done immediately. Farmers and tenant farmers, who came from different parts of the district, took part in the protest following Covid rules.

Andhra Pradesh Farmers' Union district secretary K Srinivas said that the payment of amounts for Rabi paddy procured from farmers and tenant farmers in the district were pending for the past two months.



He said that there were many problems in the online process and the cash would not be credited to the bank accounts of farmers and tenant farmers even after two months and 21 days.

The government should release the arrears of Rs 1,450 crore to thousands of farmers in the district. He also said that the farmers and tenant farmers were unable to obtain loans for Kharif crops as they were not in a position to repay the loans taken for the Rabi crops.

He warned that the agitation would be intensified if the government failed to pay paddy arrears.

KVPS district president K Ravindra expressed solidarity with the farmers' agitation.

Rythu Sangham district assistant secretary Katta Bhaskara Rao, Tenant Farmer Union District Co-convenor Kornu Appa Rao, District Committee members Veju Sriramachandramurthy and farmers from different mandals participated.



COURTESY VISIT

Lella Appi Reddy, who was elected as a member of the AP Legislative Council in Governor quota, formally met Advisor to the Government, Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy on Monday night. Among those who met Ramakrishna Reddy along with him were Skill Development Corporation Chairman Challa Madhusudana Reddy, Guntur City Mayor Kavali Manohar Naidu and GDCC Bank Chairman Laluparam Ramu.

MRPS lodges complaint against health official

PNS ■ NELLORE

Leaders of the Seemandhra Madiga Reservation Porata Samiti (MRPS) on Monday lodged a complaint with the District Collector alleging that Health Officer of the Nellore Municipal Corporation, Venkataramana was harassing sanitation workers, maistries and ward sanitary secretaries belonging to Madiga and ST communities.

State executive president of MRPS Podinti Subbaiah told the media on Monday that NMC Health Officer Venkataramana had been harassing the sanitation workers for the past few days. Subbaiah alleged that the Health Officer was not leaving even the woman sanitary secretaries. He demanded that action be taken against Venkataramana.



Development, welfare two eyes of CM, says Sucharita

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Home Minister Mekathoti Sucharita has said that development and welfare in villages are the two eyes of Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy. She said the CM has taken the initiative to deliver the fruits of welfare programmes directly to every household in the State.

The Home Minister took part in a slew of development

programmes in Guntur Rural mandal on Monday. She said that the services provided by the village secretariats were yielding good results. The welfare schemes introduced by CM Jagan Mohan Reddy are being followed by other states in the country.

The Home Minister clarified that more than 39 lakh people had benefited from various welfare programmes in the Prathipadu constituency in

the past two years. Sucharita laid the foundation stone for the new Secretariat and Milk Unit Centres at Mallavaram village.

Former MP Modugula Venugopal Reddy, Mallavaram sarpanch Padmavati, Turakapalem sarpanch Suryaprakasa Rao, MPTC candidate Anji Reddy, Tahsildar Mohan Rao, MPDO Sujatha and other officials and leaders were present on the occasion

Rationalist body flays govt over Anandaiah drug

PNS ■ NELLORE

Nellore district unit president of the Andhra Pradesh Rationalist Association, Srinivasa Rao, in a statement on Monday condemned the government's decision to allow Anandaiah's herbal medicine to be distributed to people. He said that the efficacy of herbal medicine made by Anandaiah has not been scientifically proven.

Vice-president Rajapalem Raghu said that Anandaiah's disciple had tested positive to Corona and claimed that more than 70 people were admitted to the Nellore government hospital after taking the herbal concoction. But Anandaiah was in denial mode, he added.

The Andhra Pradesh Rationalist Association, however, demanded that the Government immediately announce to the people that the herbal medicine would not work on Corona patients



Outsourced sanitation staff to stay away from strike

PNS ■ GUDIVADA

Outsourced sanitation workers serving in Gudivada Municipality have distanced themselves from the strike following an assurance by Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Minister Kodali Srivenkateswara Rao (Nani).

The workers on Monday called off a dharnas proposed to be staged on June 14 and 15 in response to the call given by the AP Municipal Workers and Employees Federation (CITU) seeking a solution to the problems of municipal sanitation contract workers. Gudivada Municipal

Contract Workers Union Honorary president Addepalli Purushottam said that all the 175 members of the Union were not participating in the strike. He also said that the union has full confidence in Minister Kodali Nani.

Kodali Nani said that he would respond immediately and work to find a solution for any problem brought to his notice in the Gudivada constituency. Gudivada Municipal Contract Workers Union leaders Gullapalli Sreenu, Dhanala Bujji, Kaggadurga Rao, Anand, R Keshava, M Rajesh, Ch Rajesh, Anjaneyulu, Narayana and others were present.

Special Sahasra Kalasabhishekam on June 20

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

The annual Special Sahasra Kalasabhishekam will be performed on June 20 commemorating the consecration of Bhoga Srinivasamurthy in Tirumala.

About 14 centuries ago, Pallava Queen Samavai Perundevi has presented a foot tall Silver idol of Bhoga Srinivasamurthy which is considered as the replica of the main deity of Venkateswara Swamy.

The TTD has been observing this fete since 2006 celebrating the historical occasion. On June 20 Special Sahasra Kalasabhishekam will be observed in Ekantam (privacy) in Vendi Vakili between 6 and 8.30 am.



2 men kill uncle dispute over land

PNS ■ KURNOOL

Old rivalry over a disputed land claimed the life of a man at Koyilakonda in Sirivella mandal of Kurnool district on Monday. According to police, a dispute arose between two brothers - Pedda Nageswara Rao and Chinna Nageswara Rao after their father Gurrappa divided 14 acres of land between them.

The two brothers often quarreled over a 1.5 acre fertile farm which was not distributed to anyone one of them. While one of the brothers harvested the crop, the other used to destroy it. In this backdrop, younger brother Chinna Nageswara allegedly murdered Pedda Nageswara



on April 5, 2020. A murder case was registered against Chinna Nageswara Rao at Sirivella police station.

Meanwhile on Sunday, Chinna Nageswara Rao, who was on the farm on Sunday, was allegedly attacked and killed with an iron rod by Chinna Gurrappa and Pedda Nageswara Rao.

he murder of Chinna Nageswara Rao created a sensation in the village.

Collector flags off blood donation vehicle

PNS ■ KAKINADA/ONGOLE

Red Cross president and also East Godavari District Collector D Muralidhar Reddy has called upon the youth to come forward to donate blood to help those suffering from thalassemia who are struggling to find blood during the Corona crisis.

On the occasion of "World Blood Donor Day" on Monday, a blood donation camp organized by the Red Cross Mobile Blood Donation Vehicle was inaugurated at the Municipal Corporation premises.

Earlier in the day, Municipal Commissioner Swapnil Dinkar Pundkar, Municipal Health Officer Prithvi Charan and Manager K Satya Narayana donated blood at the blood donation camp.



East Godavari District Collector D Muralidhar donating blood on the occasion of the World Blood Donation Day in Kakinada on Monday

On the occasion, the Municipal Commissioner announced that as part of the Blood Donation Week celebrations, a blood donation drive would be held at all the ward secretariats and collector awards would be presented to the first

three secretariats in donating maximum amount of blood. Red Cross representatives stated that through the Red Cross, 143 children with thalassemia were given free blood transfusions every Tuesday and Friday. Additional Municipal

Commissioner Naga Narasimha Rao, Dr P Durga Raju and others were present on the occasion. District SP Adnan Naem Azmi said that of all donations, blood donation was great as it can save many lives. He inaugurated a blood

donation camp at Yuva Sena Blood Bank at Kakinada Glass House Centre on the occasion of the 'World Blood Donation Day' on Monday.

As many as 40 persons, including police personnel and auto workers, from Kakinada donated blood. Frist Urban CI, T Ramamohana Reddy, their station HCs and PCs also donated blood.

Additional SP Karanam Kumar, Kakinada DSP V Bhima Rao and Kakinada Traffic DSP Murali Krishna Reddy were present.

On this occasion the SP said that the blood reserves in all the blood banks were reduced during this corona and asked the donors to donate blood and give life to those who were ill.

At a similar programme in Prakasam district, Collector

Praveen Kumar has called upon the people to donate blood. Inaugurating the National Blood Donation Day programme at the new Indian Red Cross building in Ongole on Monday, the Collector said there was a need for blood for emergency surgeries and for those injured in the accident in the district. The World Health Organization (WHO) has taken steps to organize the World Blood Donation Day to promote blood collection from the public, he said. People should be encouraged to come forward voluntarily and donate blood, he added.

He said steps would be taken to set up blood donation camps at Ongole, Markapur, Kandukur and other places in the district. About 20 youths donated blood on the occasion.

BJP, RSS have made Ram temple a 'medium of business': Rajbhar

PNS ■ BALLIA (UP)

Backing the demand for a central agency probe into the alleged corruption in the purchase of land for the proposed Ram temple in Ayodhya, SBSP chief Om Prakash Rajbhar on Monday said the BJP and the RSS have made the shrine a "medium of business".

He also asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath when action will be taken against the accused.

Rajbhar's remarks came a day after the Samajwadi Party (SP) and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) alleged that Shriram Jannabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust general secretary Champat Rai bought 1.208 hectares of land in Ayodhya's Bag Bjaasi village worth Rs 2 crore at an inflated price of Rs 18.5 crore for the Ram temple with the help of trust member Anil Mishra.

Terminating a case of money laundering, SP leader Pawan Pandey and AAP leader Sanjay Singh sought a probe by the



Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) into the matter. Rai strongly refuted the allegations.

Speaking to reporters here in Rasra, Rajbhar said, "The temple is a symbol of faith for common people but the BJP and the RSS have made it a medium of business."

The Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party chief claimed the said piece of land was purchased for Rs 2 crore on March 18 for the construction of Ram temple and five minutes later,

it was bought by the Ram Mandir Trust for Rs 18.50 crore.

The SBSP leader also sought a probe by the CBI and the ED into the "scandal".

Targeting Modi and Adityanath, Rajbhar, a former BJP ally, said, "Both the leaders claim zero tolerance (for corruption). Modi ji and Yogi ji should make it clear as to when a case will be registered against the trustee of the Ram Mandir Trust and when the accused persons will be sent to jail."

Trust must clarify if money collected in name of faith misused: Raut

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Amid charges of corruption in the land purchased by the Ram Jannabhoomi Trust in Ayodhya, Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut on Monday demanded "clarification" from the Trust and other leaders, saying the construction of the temple is a matter of faith for the saffron party and the common people. Talking to reporters here, Raut said Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MP Sanjay Singh spoke to him on the issue this morning and the "evidence provided by him is shocking". "Lord Ram and the fight for the Ram mandir is a matter of faith for us. For some, it is a political matter. The Trust formed for the construction of the temple should clarify if the allegations are true or false. The temple's 'bhoomipujan' ceremony was also attended by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat. They should also speak out. Ram temple is a matter of

faith. People have made donations out of faith. Even Shiv Sena had contributed Rs one crore to the Trust," Raut said. If the money collected out of faith is misused then what is the use of having faith? he asked. "We need to know what is happening. We need to know whether the allegations are true or false," the Sena leader said. The allegation that the land worth Rs 2 crore was bought at an inflated price of Rs 18.5 crore by Shriram Jannabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust general secretary Champat Rai for the Ram temple premises was made by AAP's Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Singh and a former minister in the Samajwadi Party government, Pawan Pandey. The allegation was strongly refuted by Rai. Termination of a case of money laundering, Singh and Pandey had sought a probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation and the Enforcement Directorate.

LJP MPs join hands against Chirag Paswan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Five of the six Lok Janshakti Party MPs in the Lok Sabha have joined hands against their leader Chirag Paswan and elected Pashupati Kumar Paras in his place, causing a big churn in Bihar politics.

Paras on Monday lauded Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar as a good leader and "vikas purush" (development-oriented man), highlighting the deep fault lines within the party as his nephew Chirag Paswan has been a strong critic of the JD(U) president. "I have not broken the party but saved it," Paras, MP from Hajipur, said, asserting that 99 per cent of LJP workers were unhappy with the turn of events in Bihar as Paswan led his party against the JD(U) and fared poorly in the 2020 assembly polls. Paras said his group will continue to be part of the BJP-led NDA and said Paras can remain part of the organisation. The group of five MPs has conveyed their decision of electing Paras as the LJP leader in Lok Sabha to the Speaker.



Chirag Paswan has reaped what he had sown: JD(U)

PNS ■ PATNA

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's JD(U), which bore the brunt of Chirag Paswan's brinkmanship in the assembly polls last year, on Monday said the LJP president was reaping what he had sown. JD(U) national president RCP Singh reacted with a sense of vindication to the developments in the party founded by late Ram Vilas Paswan, whose son has been

left cornered in a revolt led by the former's younger brother Pashupati Kumar Paras and supported by four other MPs, including nephew Prince Raj. "It is a well known adage that as you sow, so you reap. Chirag Paswan was heading a party which was with the NDA. Yet, he adopted a stance that damaged it in the assembly polls. This led to a sense of unease within his own party," Singh told reporters here.

Misuse of donations is insult to faith: Priyanka Gandhi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid charges of corruption in the land purchased by the Ram Jannabhoomi Trust in Ayodhya, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Monday said misuse of donations by devotees is a sin and an insult to their faith. "Crores of people made their offerings at the feet of God out

of their faith and devotion. Misuse of those donations is unrighteous and is a sin and an insult to their faith," she said in a tweet in Hindi.

The Congress on Sunday alleged that scams are happening by taking donations in the name of Lord Ram after two opposition leaders accused Shriram Jannabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust general secretary

Champat Rai of buying a piece of land at an inflated price for the Ram temple premises.

The allegation that the land worth Rs 2 crore was bought at an inflated price of Rs 18.5 crore was made by AAP's Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Singh and a former minister in the Samajwadi Party government, Pawan Pandey. The allegation was strongly refuted by Rai.

Tagging a tweet on Rai refuting the allegation, Congress' chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala had said on Sunday, "Lord Ram, what kind of days are these? Scams are happening by taking donations in your name. Shameless robbers are intoxicated with arrogance like Ravana and are selling faith." "The question is how the land bought for Rs 2 crore was

sold after 10 minutes to 'Ram Jannabhoomi' for Rs 18.50 crores?" he asked.

"Now it seems... Kans are ruling, Ravana is everywhere!" Surjewala had said in a tweet in Hindi. Termination of a case of money laundering, Singh and Pandey had sought a probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation and the Enforcement Directorate.

All centrally protected ASI monuments to reopen from June 16

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Taj Mahal and all other centrally protected monuments, museums and sites, closed for around two months due to the Covid pandemic, will be reopened on June 16, an Archaeological Survey of India order issued on Monday said.

These include 3,693 monuments and 50 museums across India.

An ASI official said visitors will be able to book entry tickets online.

However, no offline booking facility will be available, the official added.

According to the ASI order, the opening of the monuments will be in strict compliance with the executive orders, if any, issued by the state, district or the disaster management authority.

"Today @MinOfCulture GoI has given @ASIGoI approval to duly open all the monuments of India from 16 June 2021. Tourists can visit the monuments following the Corona rules. Good luck to all," tweeted Union Culture and Tourism minister Prahlaad Patel.

Appropriate guidelines and SOPs issued by Union and states governments, ministries and departments will be scrupulously followed while regulating the flow of visitors, the order said.

In an order on April 15, the ASI had shut these monuments till May 31.

INDIA CORNER

Chhattisgarh: Two trampled to death by elephant

A 59-year-old woman and a four-year-old girl were injured in separate incidents of attacks by elephants in Chhattisgarh's Jashpur district on Monday, officials said. Prakash Ekka (55) and Dayamani Tirki were trampled to death by a pachyderm when they were visiting their fields located in the forest and collecting forest produce in Jamuna village under the Tapkara police station area, a forest official said.



Forest personnel have been trying to chase away the elephant from the spot to retrieve the bodies, he said. In another incident that occurred in the Kunkuri area near Janglekona village, a four-year-old girl was attacked by an elephant when she was collecting Mahua fruits with her parents. The girl was admitted at a hospital in Kunkuri, he added. "With the latest incident in Jashpur, a total of 19 people have been killed in separate incidents of elephants' attacks in the district over the last one year", the official said. On June 7, a woman was trampled to death by an elephant in Bagicha forest range.

Stepson kills all of family, then dies by suicide: Police

A married couple and their two sons were found dead at their home in Dhanbad town in Jharkhand on Monday morning, police said. Munna Yadav (45), his wife Meena Devi (35), and sons Rahul (20) and Rohit (14) were found dead at their rented accommodation in Gandhi Road in the Dhanbad police station area, they said.



It is suspected that Rahul, who is Meena's son from her previous marriage, stabbed the others to death and then slit his throat with a sharp weapon, police said after the initial investigation. The neighbours first spotted the bodies after seeing blood coming out from the house. All the four were found lying in a pool of blood after police broke in as the door was locked from inside, an officer said. Two sharp weapons were recovered from the room, police said. Additional Superintendent of Police Manoj Swargyari said the incident appears to be the result of a family dispute. "The bodies were sent for post-mortem. An investigation is underway," he told reporters.

61 people arrested from Noida pool party for Covid norm violation

The Noida Police has arrested 61 people, including 15 women, for allegedly partying at a farmhouse here in violation of restrictions imposed to combat COVID-19, officials said on Monday.



The arrests were made following a raid on the property in Sector 135, under the Expressway police station limits, on Sunday night, they said. "A pool party was being held at the Green Beauty farmhouse in the Yamuna floodplains area in Sector 135 in violation of the COVID-19 protocols. A total of 46 men and 15 women were arrested," a police spokesperson said. "All accused were bathing in the swimming pool in violation of the pandemic protocols. They were without face masks and some of them were even spitting at various places in the open premises of the farmhouse," the spokesperson said.

HC asks IMA chief not to use platform to propagate religion

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court Monday refused to stay an order of a trial court directing IMA president J A Jayalal not to use the organisation's platform to propagate any religion and cautioning him that loose comments cannot be expected from a person chairing the responsible post.

Justice Asha Menon said the court will not pass any ex-parte order as nobody appeared on behalf of the person on whose complaint the trial court had passed the order on June 4.

The high court issued notice on the appeal filed by the Indian Medical Association (IMA) chief challenging the trial court's order and listed the matter for further hearing on June 16.

It said the high court will have to look into the order passed by the trial court and cannot take a superficial view. The trial court had passed the order on a plea filed

against Jayalal for allegedly starting a defamatory campaign against the Hindu religion "by way of promoting Christianity, in the garb of proving superiority of Allopathic medicines over Ayurveda in treatment of COVID-19 patients".

Complainant Rohit Jha had alleged before the trial court that Jayalal was misusing his position and misleading the nation and its citizens in order to convert Hindus to Christianity.

The trial court had said no injunction is required based on the assurance given by Jayalal that he will not indulge in such kind of activity and had noted that the plea seemed to be an offshoot of a verbal duel with respect to Allopathy vs Ayurveda.

Challenging the trial court's, advocate Tanmaya Mehta, representing Jayalal, claimed that the IMA chief never gave such an assurance to the trial court since he has not done anything wrong.



India natural ally of G7 in defending democracy : PM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said India is a natural ally for the G7 and its partners in defending democracy, freedom of thought and liberty from a host of threats stemming from authoritarianism, terrorism, violent extremism and economic coercion.

The prime minister made the remarks in a virtual address at an outreach session of a summit of the Group of Seven (G7) richest democracies which was held in the British seaside resort of Cornwall.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said that Modi, as the lead speaker at the session titled 'open societies and economies', highlighted India's civilisational commitment to democracy, freedom of thought and liberty.

"As the world's largest



democracy, India is a natural ally for the G7 and guest countries to defend these shared values from a host of threats stemming from authoritarianism, terrorism and violent extremism and infodemics and economic coercion," he said.

The prime minister also highlighted the revolutionary impact of digital technologies on social inclusion and empowerment in India

through applications such as Aadhaar, Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) and JAM (Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile) trinity. While underscoring the vulnerabilities inherent in open societies, the prime minister called on tech companies and social media platforms to ensure a safe cyber environment for their users, additional secretary (economic relations) in the MEA P Harish said at a press conference.

'Vaccines help in keeping symptoms mild'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Vaccines don't prevent coronavirus infections but will help in keeping the symptoms mild, Apollo Hospitals Joint MD Sangita Reddy said on Monday.

In a series of tweets, Reddy also said she was going home today after being hospitalised for coronavirus infection.

"After 500 days of dodging #COVID19 I tested +VE on June 10th My initial reaction was of shock & dismay - Why

me? I was careful & #vaccinated. Hospitalized with high fever I took the cocktail #Regeneron therapy within the early window period & it has made a dramatic difference," she said.

Highlighting the role of vaccines and timely diagnosis and treatment, she said, "The imp point 2 remember- vaccine dont prevent #COVID BUT help keep symptoms Mild. Timely diagnosis & treatment r key 2 quick recovery".



"As I go home 2day & continue #self isolation under Med sup via #telemedicine My

heartfelt gratitude 2 R #Nursing, Doc & #scientific com," she noted.

Delhi: 1 held for hoax call about bomb on plane

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A 22-year-old man onboard a Delhi-Patna flight was apprehended on Monday for allegedly making a hoax call to Delhi's Police Control Room saying that there was a bomb on the plane, officials said.

The man has been identified as Akash Deep. He is "mentally disturbed", the police said.

After boarding the flight with his father, Deep made the call to the PCR saying that there was a bomb on the plane, a senior police officer said.

BJP slams Kerala Minister for supporting Ayesha

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The BJP in Kerala on Monday came out against state Education Minister V Sivankutty for promising support to filmmaker Ayesha Sulthana, against whom the Lakshadweep police had recently slapped sedition charges over her alleged comment against the spread of COVID-19 in the archipelago. Senior BJP leader and former Mizoram Governor, Kumanam Rajasekharan termed the minister's act as "highly condemnable" and "unconstitutional".

He said legal measures had been initiated against the woman filmmaker for her remark that allegedly amounted to disrupting the communal



harmony and unity of the country. Sivankutty had told her over phone that she could save herself from Lakshadweep police if she met him and Chief Minister Pinarayi

Vijayan, the BJP leader alleged. "It is unconstitutional for a minister, holding the constitutional position, to intervene in a case registered in another state," Rajasekharan said.

Accusing Sivankutty of being silent over the alleged corruption and violence in his home constituency Nedom, the BJP leader said the minister's motive behind supporting such persons was understandable.

Senior CPI(M) leader and education-labour minister Sivankutty last week had called Sulthana over phone to express his solidarity with her in her fight against alleged dictatorial and fascist policies of the Lakshadweep administrator.

In a statement issued later, the minister had said Sulthana was not alone in her fight and the entire democratic community of the country was with her.

Meanwhile, criticising the Lakshadweep police for slapping sedition charge against the

woman filmmaker, state Assembly Speaker M B Rajesh had said the apex court had already ruled that only acts that cause public violence or disorder fall within the ambit of 124-A. "International law and civilised society regard freedom of expression as paramount. At this time Ayesha Sulthana was charged with treason for making a remark against the Lakshadweep administrator during a television discussion," he said in a Facebook post.

Stating that it is high-time to redefine 'patriotism' and 'sedition', Rajesh said true patriots cannot accept that 124-A, an instrument of colonial oppression, is still being imposed on the people of a country, years after it had become independent.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Caution ahead

Considering the third wave, would it be more prudent to slow down the lockdown lifting process?

India is opening up gradually. The States have set their schedules and pace for lifting the lockdown. There is a general sigh of relief that the second wave of COVID-19 has nearly abated. Most States are bound to lift the lockdown completely by the third week of June. Call it a coincidence, but that is around the same time the UK Government originally proposed to remove all legal limits of social contact. However, it has since decided to delay the process by a few weeks in view of infections from the Delta variant of Coronavirus, the B.1.617.2 Variant of Concern (VoC) first identified in India, again rising in the country. The VoC designation — assigned by the WHO — means the variant may be more transmissible or cause severe disease, not succumb to medical treatment or evade immune response. The British Health Secretary has said that over 90 per cent of the new cases comprise this variant which is 40 per cent more transmissible. The United States says Delta has a “wild type” transmission and is beginning to get worried about its presence in the country. The Delta variant is also the one that kick-started the second wave in India, which was at its worst in April and May when life became an agony for millions of infected people. India entered May reporting nearly 400,000 cases, coupled with scarcity of medicine, oxygen and beds and even spaces in crematoria.



However, now that the wave has nearly dissipated, India is beginning to open up. Is it the right decision to have a goal of eventually lifting all restrictions when faced with four questionable situations? One is the re-think within the UK Government itself on lifting the lockdown because of the same Delta variant. Two, everybody in India, including scientists and doctors, have predicted a third wave three or four months from now. Three, the Delta variant the UK and US talk about originated in India and there is no evidence that it has died out. In fact, reports from the UK suggest that it has mutated into a more virulent version called AY.1 or Delta+. Four, while India followed the UK when it came to increasing the gap between vaccine jabs to three months, it is deciding not to when it comes to moving towards lifting the lockdown. Considering India's terrible experience with the second wave, would it not be prudent to slow down the lockdown lifting process? The States have the option of reducing the pace of opening up to ensure in the meantime that the vaccination process finally gets streamlined, that vaccine unavailability and hesitancy both stand resolved and that virologists and the National Task Force obtain proof that the vaccines are effective in reducing hospitalisation and deaths. Importantly, it needs to be ascertained that the current rate of infection does not suffer a spike after the easing of restrictions because of sudden, inevitable laxity in following COVID-19 protocols in public places.

decision to have a goal of eventually lifting all restrictions when faced with four questionable situations? One is the re-think within the UK Government itself on lifting the lockdown because of the same Delta variant. Two, everybody in India, including scientists and doctors, have predicted a third wave three or four months from now. Three, the Delta variant the UK and US talk about originated in India and there is no evidence that it has died out. In fact, reports from the UK suggest that it has mutated into a more virulent version called AY.1 or Delta+. Four, while India followed the UK when it came to increasing the gap between vaccine jabs to three months, it is deciding not to when it comes to moving towards lifting the lockdown. Considering India's terrible experience with the second wave, would it not be prudent to slow down the lockdown lifting process? The States have the option of reducing the pace of opening up to ensure in the meantime that the vaccination process finally gets streamlined, that vaccine unavailability and hesitancy both stand resolved and that virologists and the National Task Force obtain proof that the vaccines are effective in reducing hospitalisation and deaths. Importantly, it needs to be ascertained that the current rate of infection does not suffer a spike after the easing of restrictions because of sudden, inevitable laxity in following COVID-19 protocols in public places.

PICTALK



Life-size elephant sculptures at Green Park as part of the CoExistence Campaign, in London

The fall and rise of Oli as Nepal PM



RISHI GUPTA

Though he is likened to a ‘Prime Minister of no substance’, Oli is trying every trick in the book to remain in the saddle

A desperate Prime Minister KP Oli is leaving no stone unturned in consolidating his position. In doing so, he is making compromises that were once the exact opposite of his ultranationalistic outlook. After failing the confidence vote in Parliament on May 10, 2021, due to withdrawal of support by archrival Pushpa Kamal Dahal ‘Prachanda’-led Maoist party, Oli had to resign. However, benefitting from the nexus with President Bidya Devi Bhandari, Oli was once again appointed as the Prime Minister considering his Communist Party of Nepal (UML) was still the largest party in Parliament. While the Opposition had requested the President to allow them to form the Government, Bhandari was in a hurry to appoint Oli.



Oli, on the other hand, appointed senior leader Rajendra Mahto as the Deputy Prime Minister, who is leading a faction of JSP and extended support to Oli. Mahto's appointment comes as a surprise as he had opposed Oli's anti-Madhesh ideology and criticised him for stopping the first amendment of the Citizenship Act. As a proud Khas-Arya (high caste hill people), Oli had vehemently opposed any amendment to the Citizenship laws which prevented Nepali citizenship to the children of a Nepali mother married to a foreigner. After Mahto supported the Government, Oli had recommended Citizenship Ordinance on May 23, which was promulgated within minutes. The ordinance will allow the issuance of citizenship by descent to all those children born to Nepali mothers whose fathers' whereabouts are unknown before September 20, 2015.

The ordinance is seen as part of the horse-trading pact between Oli and Rajendra Mahto to appease the Madhesh. Oli's long-term critic CK Lal claims that accommodating Mahto must not have been easy for a “populist demagogue to ignore xenophobia, swallow his jingoistic pride and accept Rajendra Mahto as the Deputy Prime Minister”. Meanwhile, the legality of the ordinance remains in question as it

requires approval by Parliament within 60 days. Since Parliament has been dissolved on May 21, the apex court has stayed its implementation as it could lead to long-term implications. A five-member Constitutional Bench has also issued show-cause notices to the offices of the PM and President to clarify on House dissolution on May 21 and shuffling of the Cabinet.

Feuds Within: To suppress the rising opposition within the UML, Oli has appointed party leader Raghuraj Mahaseth as the Deputy Prime Minister. Mahaseth is also appointed as the Minister of Foreign Affairs despite having no experience in the field. Another UML heavyweight, Bishnu Poudel, has been appointed Deputy Prime Minister and continues as the Minister of Finance. At the same time, Oli has removed Deputy Prime Minister Ishwar Pokhrel and a total of 13 Ministers, including Health Minister Hridayesh Tripathi and Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali, who carried out ill-intended foreign policy decisions towards New Delhi during the border row. In the past, Oli had suspended party leaders for speaking against him. However, in the present circumstances, more suspensions

may lead to a credible opposition to Oli within the UML.

Misunderstanding resolved: Within a year of issuing a controversial map of Nepal showing India's territory as its own in the Kalapani region, accusing India for COVID-19 spread in Nepal, claiming that lord Ram was born in Nepal's Birgunj. In an interview to the BBC, Oli said: “Yes, there were misunderstandings at one time, but now those misunderstandings are gone. We should not be stuck in past misunderstandings but move forward looking at the future.” He also requested India to supply COVID-19 vaccines as a good neighbour. Although Oli did not clarify on what he meant by “misunderstanding”. With such remarks, Oli is again trying to reach out to New Delhi with his Madhesh card.

At present, almost 50 per cent of the Oli Cabinet consists of Madheshi leaders, which is a complete U-turn from his long-standing prejudice against the idea of Madhesh and Madheshi people. Knowing that the Khas-Arya may come after Oli for compromising with the Madhesh, Oli has no alternative to keep the premiership safe until new elections in November.

While Oli's rapprochement towards India is short-term and politically motivated, in the hindsight it showcases the strong cultural and people-to-people links between Nepal and India. It is also a strong answer to China's deep-pocketed diplomacy in Nepal. For decades, China has been trying to create artificial people-to-people ties with Nepal. However, Beijing often forgets that it was Tibet with whom Nepal had cultural ties and Tibet's forced annexation in 1950 did not transfer cultural claims to China. Therefore, Beijing needs to learn that political relations with Nepal are a result of a short-term compromise in Kathmandu. India has always supported the democratic aspirations of the people of Nepal and stands alone as the top development partner. China's expansionist outlook will sustain neither in Nepal nor in South Asia. Nevertheless, it will be difficult for India to fully trust Oli.

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



AT PRESENT, ALMOST 50 PER CENT OF THE OLI CABINET CONSISTS OF MADHESI LEADERS, WHICH IS A COMPLETE U-TURN FROM HIS LONGSTANDING PREJUDICE AGAINST THE IDEA OF MADHESH AND MADHESI PEOPLE

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SLOW SPEED OF VACCINATION A WORRY

Sir — The speed of vaccination in India is very slow. Seeing the large number of population, it becomes hard to run universal inoculation drive for the vast diversity of Indian nationals. The Government's data reveals that only 3.5 per cent of the population is fully vaccinated so far. The inoculation drive has enrolled more persons than who reach the centres for taking the jab. Many are technologically challenged and thus they cannot register themselves for registration at the CoWin app.

Can anyone imagine how fast the slots get booked in the evening for the following day's jab registration? People are struggling to get at least one dose of either of the vaccines. The elderly and the poor are the most vulnerable. It is good to hear that scientists predict that the third wave of COVID-19 in India is likely to be less severe than compared to the second wave. Thankfully, we can use this as an opportunity for improving the data and ensuring more and more people to get vaccinated. We have successfully suppressed the second wave, and the third wave is expected to peak soon. The gap period is not to waste but to plan the duration's usage to the maximum so that more and more people can benefit with the vaccination at the end of the day.

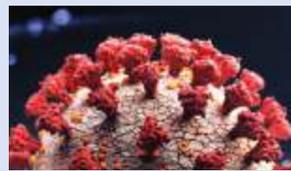
Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

ZOOONOTIC DISEASES AND PREVENTION

Sir — As the human cases of COVID-19 show a declining trend in India, zoonotic diseases are on the rise with several incidents of animals falling prey to it. Recently, nine Asiatic lions in the Chennai Vandalur Zoo got infected and one of them succumbed; besides, many elephants, tigers and leopards have died in Tamil Nadu and in other States.

Since India has a huge population, there are greater chances of transmission from animals to humans. According to a paper published in the Indian Journal of Community Medicine in March 2020, of the 1407 human pathogens detected, 816 were found to be zoonotic, which means these were capable of being transmitted naturally between animals and humans, which

The origin of Coronavirus



It has been 18 months since the outbreak of COVID-19. But the truth about the origin of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, the causative agent of the disease, still eludes the world. Even though how to end the pandemic has now become more important than knowing how it began, the interest in knowing the origin of the Novel Coronavirus has not waned. The accusation against China of a massive cover-up and the call for new investigation into the origin of the virus made by G7 leaders, including US President Joe Biden, have fuelled the debate over whether the virus occurred naturally or it was bioengineered in a lab in Wuhan. Some scientific leads support the theory that the virus may have jumped from ani-

mals to humans, probably in a wet market in Wuhan that sold seafood and exotic animals for human consumption. There is also the theory that someone in the Wuhan lab boasting a large collection of bats for culture of virus may have been accidentally infected with the Novel Coronavirus.

There is a general consensus among scientists that COVID-19 is a zoonotic disease. The WHO still sticks to its stated position that the escape or leak of the virus from the Wuhan Institute of Virology was “highly unlikely”. It may be pointed out here that genetically designing and creating a virus in a lab and unleashing it as a bio-weapon on the world is a futuristic idea to discredit China with conspiracy theories, no matter what one's perception of that country is.

The issue has been politicised so much that to counter the US' lab incident hypothesis, Beijing has said that the US military hatched the virus and released it in China. We can all agree that science, scientific inquiries and investigations and scientific findings should prevail over geopolitics and geopolitical considerations.

G David Milton | Kanyakumari

points to the increase in zoonotic diseases globally. These zoonotic infections' surge like H1N1, SARS, Ebola, Nipah, Zika can be attributed to the human-animal conflict through wildlife trade and increasing practice of injecting the livestock with antibiotics and steroids to enhance their production, narrowing the scope of natural livestock breeding.

The animal to human transmission of diseases is a threat to both the economy and the human species. A comprehensive strategy with a renewed focus on genome sequencing and carrying out testing, besides tracking on a large scale the animals, will be of immense benefit to humanity to tackle the crisis.

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Nainital

GOVT HAS HONOURED PEOPLE'S RIGHTS
Sir — This refers to ‘Opening Up’ (June 14). The historic decision by the Government to declassify the history of the wars and oper-

ations of national importance, so as to provide a transparent viewpoint to the citizens, is welcoming. After all, people have full right to know this declassified, compiled and published history of these historic moments.

Until the new policy for declassification came into picture, the war history remains a secret for everyone. But with the new policy's introduction, one can expect more clarity over war secrets and tactical approach adopted by the armed forces during the tough times of war and secret operations. The new policy brings more clarity over certain issues of wartime. The section of history lovers would now get excited to decode more information, as well as the facts that are still unknown to them about historic events of the previous wars and operations.

Dimple | Kanpur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

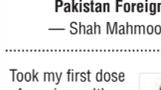
As you complete your successful tenure as the Prime Minister of the State of Israel, I convey my profound gratitude for your leadership.



Prime Minister — Narendra Modi



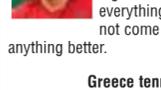
Pakistan Foreign Minister — Shah Mahmood Qureshi



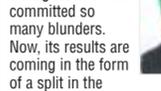
Actor — Kirati Kulhari



Greece tennis player — Stefanos Tsitsipas



Chirag Paswan has committed so many blunders. Now, its results are coming in the form of a split in the party.



JD(U) national president — RCP Singh

The G7 world

How equipped is the grouping to tackle the changing world realities and the new challenges?

The three-day parleys at the G7 Summit in Carbis Bay ended at a positive note even as the world grapples with the Corona pandemic which has far-reaching economic consequences. COVID-19 indeed figured prominently at the G7 meet but the fervour was perhaps missing. The G7 looked desperate to show how united they were. The G7 is an informal grouping of strong economic powers. It unveiled the US-led plans to counter China in infrastructure funding for poorer nations. It also came up with an accord to prevent future pandemics. The G7 leaders said they would offer a “values-driven, high-standard and transparent” partnership. Their “Build Back Better World” (B3W) project is aimed to counter China's trillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative. The world realities are changing fast and throwing up new challenges to this elite club which is mostly European and American grouping, after the departure of Russia. The membership of Russia was suspended in 2014 after it annexed Ukraine's Crimea region. Due to internal divisions, the relevance of G7 is under the scanner.



Moreover, the share of the G7 nations' GDP is constantly falling. The aggregate GDP of the G7 members has slid to 45 per cent of the global economy from nearly 70 per cent three decades ago. This naturally reduces its hold on the world economy as well as politics.

Besides, China has emerged as a big challenger, if not a threat, to the supremacy of the G7. G20 is more potent than the G7 today. For its shrinking clout, the G7 is itself to blame. G7 meets annually to discuss issues of global economic governance, international security and energy policy. Its follow-up on its declarations has been rather lacklustre. Its membership often completely ignores the emerging trends. For instance, it did not take China's emerging power into consideration and is oblivious to India. It has deep-rooted differences over trade and climate policies. President Joe Biden has pledged to restore the US' historical commitment to multilateralism. But G7 did not show unity or firmness in Russia's role in Syria, and Russian interference in the US and European elections. In 2017, divisions emerged within the G7 over a proposal to impose fresh sanctions on Russia. If G7 is to survive as a dominant force, it will have to renew its commitment to democracy and building a world order based on equitable and just world order.



FIRST COLUMN

WHEN VILLAGERS TURN TO QUACKS

Not to glorify them, but a handful of quacks in Bihar's countryside are helping out the villagers

AMRITANJ INDIWAR

Last week World Health Organization reported a 13 per cent decrease in new COVID-19 cases in India. However, the number of new infections in the country remains the highest in the world. Rural areas with no proper health infrastructure are bearing the brunt, forcing the villagers to turn to quacks for treatment. Lack of information about government hospitals, PHCs, medicine and vaccinations has affected regulation of the virus in rural areas. Worse, there are hardly a few or no doctors in government hospitals. Thus, quacks have ironically assumed a larger role in several villages across States. The situation in Bihar's Muzaffarpur district is no better. It had the highest number of reported cases in the country. Nearly 208 Covid-19 deaths were reported in 50 days since April 1. Around 315 people were cremated at one crematorium alone in this period. The rural areas of Sikanderpur, Mothijheel, Town Thana, Khabda, Ramdayalu, Patahi, Bhagwanpur, Bhikhanpura and Mushahariblocks were most affected. Ragini, a resident of Alkapuri colony in Muzaffarpur, said: "Those who test positive are isolated in rooms. However, because the virus is highly stigmatized, the infected person is not treated well by the public." Ankush Singh, resident of Manika village in Mushahariblock, said that even after he recovered from the virus, no one was concerned about his well-being. He also complained about unprofessional behaviour and indifference of the block hospital doctor. Chemists and quacks showed better concern than the doctors, he said in a bitter voice.



In the Paru block, dispensary employees and quacks were treating people. Accepting that quacks were the first line of defence against COVID-19, District Councillor Devesh Chandra said they were a lifeline for more than 50,000 people in the block. These quacks have no medical degrees, but practice medicine based on their practical experience. Quacks Balam Shah, Umesh Prasad, Ganesh Pandit, Asharfi Bhagat, Parmeshwar Prasad, and others in Paru Block had decided to come forward and assist the villagers. "Whatever medical experience we have gained over the years, the villagers are benefiting from it. The situation was such that people were scared and unwilling to get vaccinated and, therefore, we decided not to leave them under such circumstances. We are likely to get infected in the process, but helping people is the need of the hour," said these quacks. The Block Medical Officer, on the other hand, stated that trained healthcare workers are going to villages for inspection, vaccination, and medicine on a regular basis. The situation in Bihar's Vaishali district is similar. Basant Kumar, a homeopathic practitioner said: "I went to the block health centre to get the rapid antigen test done. The centre was crowded with no guidelines being followed. Although I had registered myself, due to the huge crowd I had to return without getting tested. Two days later, I received a message on my mobile number informing that I had tested negative. I was shocked to receive that message." Others got such reports too and people are hesitant to visit government hospitals and are relying on quacks. The purpose of this article is not to glorify quacks, but it is equally important to note that if properly trained in pandemic protocols, these quacks can play a critical role in reaching out to villagers. They already share a relationship with them and can create awareness about preventive measures and vaccination in these hard-to-reach areas. The West Bengal government has already ordered training and tagging quacks with health workers to help survey rural areas and identify patients so that the treatment can start early. If successful, other states should also follow suit.

(The author represents Charkha — The Development Communication Network. The views expressed are personal)

Some answers nation wants to know

The Government wants us to believe that while it took about three months to administer 1.91 crore vaccine doses, it will administer 20 times higher doses in less than half the time



VEERAIIAH KONDURI

After much persuasion and the Supreme Court along with more than 10 High Courts taking the Central government to the task, Prime Minister Narendra Modi allowed the nation a peep into his idea on the question of vaccination. This latest address left me perplexed with several unaddressed questions. Let me list out some of them.

The address began with Prime Minister confessing the fact that the country is still coming to terms with COVID-19 second wave. But to our surprise, Home Minister Amith Shah told the media few days ago, "India managed to control the second wave of COVID-19 in a very short time" and attributed this success to the visionary (?) leadership of Modi. This double-speak once again confirms that even after such castigation, the Central government made its best attempt to live in its make-believe world. The Prime Minister continued with untruths for the next few minutes with regard to augmenting medical infrastructure facilities for the anti-virus fight-back. The Supreme Court had castigated the Centre on this very issue. The funniest part of the speech is his stress on the observance of COVID-19 protocols.

The Prime Minister also referred to Mission Indradhanush, the immunization program for children below six years and lactating mothers to bolster his government's capacities of mass immunisation campaigns. According to the 2011 census, population falling under the age group of 0-6 years stands at 13.59 per cent (16.45 crore). Even after launching Mission Indradhanush, according to the Prime Minister, it took five years to vaccinate additional 40 per cent of child population, that is, roughly seven crore. If the government took five to six years to inoculate the additional numbers, we can imagine the time required to inoculate the total adult population in the first place.

The Prime Minister claimed that India developed two Made-in-India vaccines within a span of one year which is not true and does not require any proof. India rolled out the vaccination drive on January 16, 2021. Surprisingly, the Finance Minister in her 2021-22 budget speech, which was presented barely a fortnight later, told the nation that India exported vaccine to about 100 countries. If we were to believe what Prime Minister told the nation, it is a deemed fact that the finance minister committed a breach of trust and violated parliamentary protocols by presenting untruths on the floor of the House for which, in normal times, she would have been served a privilege notice.

The Prime Minister himself launched the first phase vaccination drive on January 16, 2021 for three crore frontline health workers. As on April 19, only 37 per cent got full vaccination and an additional 91 lakh their first dose. In his address to the nation, Modi once again said that by the time he speaks to his fellow countrymen again, about 23 crore of doses have already been administered. The government wants us to believe that while it took about three months to administer 1.91 crore vaccine doses, it will administer 20 times higher doses in less than half the time? That means the government administered dosage at the rate of 46 lakh doses per day!

Doubts arose over the Prime Minister's assertions about funding research and development of vaccine by the Central government. The things are not matching between what the Prime



IF THE CENTRE PLAYS SMART AND SUCCEEDS IN TRANSFERRING THE COST OF VACCINATION OVERTLY OR COVERTLY ON TO THE STATE GOVERNMENTS, THERE WILL BE A HOLE IN STATES' RESOURCES TO THE TUNE OF A MINIMUM OF ₹55,000 CRORE. THUS, THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT'S VACCINATION POLICY IS LEAVING THE NATION WITH TWO SETS OF OPTIONS, EITHER TO CUT DOWN OTHER SOCIAL EXPENDITURE AND DIVERT MONEY FOR VACCINATION OR WATCH THE INCREASE IN NUMBER OF DEATHS DUE TO COVID-19

The author is former CWC member, All India Agricultural Workers Union. The views expressed are personal.



Minister said and what was submitted by the government's law officers to the Supreme Court. The affidavits filed by the government in response to its May 2 order said that no governmental aid, assistance or grant was given for research and development of COVID vaccine. The affidavit also states that the Indian Council of Medical Research spent about ₹ 44 crore for clinical trials and government paid about ₹2520 crore by way advance to purchase vaccine on May 10, 2021. Discarding government's own affidavits the Prime Minister told the nation that they funded thousands of crores for development of vaccine. We do hope that in the next submissions, the trusted Attorney General will correct his statements and let the country know about the thousands of crores the Prime Minister spent for development of vaccine program.

The Prime Minister in an attempt to defend the un-defensible, said his government's new path for the future was criticised by several forces including some state governments. This is totally baseless and an out of context contention.

Not only economic and health experts in India but those across the globe also criticised the Central government's unitary decisions

during first phase of COVID-19 spread. As we all know, the lockdown was declared in hours without even visualising what would be the impact on lives and livelihoods. The lockdown was extended for months leaving the state governments without any option but to implement the same grudgingly.

Towards the end of this speech, Modi made it clear that the state governments need not spend a single pie to vaccinate the population. But the question that slipped through his master oratory skills is about the allocation for health in the 2021-22 budget. According to the ministry of finance, the amount required for fully vaccinating the country would be to the tune of ₹91,000 crore whereas the total budget earmarked for Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for the year 2021-22 is ₹71,268.77 crore only. The secretary, Department of Expenditure in his post-budget press conference stated that "the budget allocation is just part of what will be spent as state governments and corporates will also allocate sums for vaccination drive". However, only ₹35,000 crores are announced and that too failed to get a listing in expenditure under Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Covering up this fact, the finance minister said that the amount earmarked towards

transfers to state governments will be counted as part of the ₹35000-crore vaccine funding. The expenditure department assesses that the allocations are enough to vaccinate 50 crore of the population.

This presents us with few dangerous possibilities. If the Central government mobilises ₹35,000 crore from its own resources, and wishes to honour the Prime Minister's assurance to the world, it will fall short by ₹56,000 crore. As the finance minister stated, if this ₹35,000 crore too is to be chipped in by diverting funds from amounts earmarked under Transfers to States, in addition to what is budgeted orally by Finance Minister, even then there will be short fall of nearly ₹20,000 crore, assuming that the cost estimated by secretary, Department of Expenditure is not breached. Or if the Central government plays smart and succeeds in transferring the cost of vaccination overtly or covertly on to the state governments, then there will be a hole in states' resources to the tune of a minimum of ₹55,000 crore. Thus, the Central government's vaccination policy is leaving the nation with two sets of options, either to cut down other social expenditure and divert money for vaccination or watch the increase in number of deaths due to COVID-19.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

MUKUL (ROY) IS OUR OLD MEMBER. HE WAS NOT IN A GOOD CONDITION IN THE BJP BECAUSE THEY CREATED PRESSURE ON HIM THROUGH AGENCIES.

—TRINAMOOL CHIEF MAMATA BANERJEE



HE BEHAVED LIKE MIR JAFAR, BUT I AM NOT AT ALL SURPRISED. HE IS A BETRAYER. HE HAS NOT MADE ANY CONTRIBUTION TO THE PARTY.

—BARRACKPORE BJP MP ARJUN SINGH

Stop bank sales, empower the middle class instead

If nationalised banks are sold instead of taking corrective steps, it would mean social assets would decline leading to further economic chaos

The middle class, the backbone of the economy, is shrinking and the government announces sale of two major public sector banks, Central Bank of India (CBI) and Indian Overseas Bank (IOB). Should India privatise critical assets when it needs the finances most? The sales instead would be used for one-time financing of budgetary deficits.

Both the banks like many other public sector banks (PSB) have shown improvement in their balance sheets. On June 8, shares of CBI and IOB soared seven and 14 percent, respectively after Niti Aayog announced their privatisation. Both lenders are currently under the prompt corrective action (PCA) imposed by the Reserve Bank of India and have shown marked



SHIVAJI SARKAR

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improvements. This shows that the market is ready to lap up assets worth ₹9.7 lakh crore - CBI ₹3.56 lakh crore and IOB ₹2.44 lakh crore. Another asset of United Insurance is ₹3.7 lakh crore - a good sum for a race to a multi-trillion dollar economy.

The bank health is mysteriously linked to the growth of the middle class. Since 1969 nationalisation of banks for development purposes has helped both banks and depositors, largely from the middle class. But as the middle class got a jolt after the 2008 Lehman Brothers meltdown, it started taking the hit.

Moreover, a low-interest, high prices and high-tax-on-deposit regime marginally buffed up revenue figures, but caused impoverishment of the middle class. They are paying income

tax on a skewed higher income as interest and was not considered as hedging against inflation but unwisely as 'income'. This erodes savings.

Pew research, looking into the pandemic lockdown, says 33 million people in the last one year have slid into poverty from the supposed 99-million strong middle class. Poverty rate rose by 9.7 percent in 2020, up from January, 2020 forecast of 4.3 percent and are projected to have reached 134 million. If the food dole is a standard the pandemic has hit 80 crore people. Lower incomes and lesser consumption capacity define this class now. If instead of corrective steps nationalised banks are sold, it would mean social assets would decline. It is often said that PSBs are unable to cope up with pri-



private banks. This is a misnomer. India's private banks Axis, ICICI, HDFC and others have a record

of being eroded by their own bosses. Axis has asset quality problems, ICICI was moth-eaten by its chief executive Chanda Kochhar and HDFC was fined ₹10 crore for wrongfully selling third-party non-financial products to its auto loan customers. By privatizing big financial institutions would they be forced to go the unethical, chaotic way?

The CBI has 33,481 employees in 4,685 branches and IOB 26,334 in 3,400 branches. Once privatized, one-third or more employees would lose jobs.

Despite the PCA curbs, both lenders have managed to grow their loan books. Central Bank's gross advances rose nearly three percent between March 31, 2020 and March 31, 2021 to ₹1.77 lakh crore. IOB's advances stood at ₹1.37 lakh crore as on

December 31, 2020, up two percent year-on-year. Central Bank's deposits grew over five percent in a year to ₹3.3 lakh crore as on March 31, 2021 and IOB's deposits also increased to ₹2.34 lakh crore as on December 31, 2020.

Since nationalisation, the Indian banking sector expanded at an unmatched level but it made banks prone to political interference for many purposes including the 2008 incentivisation of the rich corporate or Jan Dhan accounts that raised operational costs. Largely the financial woes of the PSBs are not due to corruption and nepotism alone.

Many loans of banks like Bank of India, Punjab National Bank, Bank of Baroda, Axis bank and IDBI Bank were writ-

ten off to shore up balance sheets. The quantum of PSB loan stood at ₹32,853 crore higher than recoveries of ₹23,894 crore. Such figures are gradually coming down.

This also does not justify the process of privatization. Even the United Insurance is preferred to most private insurers as its claim settlement process is more realistic and ethical.

It is not easy to create ₹10 billion assets. It might now go to a defaulter? Retaining the asset would help government boost economic activities and jobs. An empowered middle class with lower taxes and TDS exemptions on deposits can do wonders. Mere change in approach could strengthen the economy and open up many avenues for the government.

Sensex, Nifty scale fresh peaks

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark Sensex rose 77 points to close at its all-time high on Monday, tracking gains in index majors Reliance, Infosys and TCS amid positive cues from global markets.

The 30-share BSE index ended 76.77 points or 0.15 per cent higher at 52,551.53.

Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty advanced 12.50 points or 0.08 per cent to its fresh record of 15,811.85.

Reliance Industries was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, rising around 1.5 per cent, followed by Bajaj Finance, ONGC, Infosys, PowerGrid, L&T and IndusInd Bank.

On the other hand, Kotak Bank, NTPC, HDFC, Sun Pharma, Bajaj Auto and Maruti were among the lag-

gards.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Tokyo and Seoul ended on a positive note. Markets in China and Hong Kong were closed on account of a local holiday.

Equities in Europe were trading with gains in mid-session deals.

International oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 0.94 per cent higher at USD 73.37 per barrel.

Meanwhile, the rupee declined 22 paise to close at 73.29 against the US dollar.

India recorded a single-day rise of 70,421 new COVID-19 cases, the lowest in 74 days, taking the country's infection tally to 2,95,10,410, while the count of active cases fell below 10 lakhs after over two months, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Monday.



New Income Tax e-filing portal continues to face tech glitches

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A week after the Income Tax Department's much publicised new e-filing portal went live, users continued to face technical glitches ranging from longer than usual logging time, inability to respond to notices and not all features functioning yet, chartered accountants said on Monday.

The new portal, "http://www.incometax.gov.in/www.incometax.gov.in", was launched last Monday (June 7), which the tax department said was aimed at making compliance more taxpayer-friendly.

But users complained of technical issues facing the site from the very first day and not everything has been fixed even after a week, chartered accountants (CAs) said, adding that taxpayers are unable to view past e-filed returns and many features/ facilities continue to be marked 'coming soon'.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman herself had asked Infosys - the vendor which cre-



ated the portal - and its Chairman Nandan Nilekani to fix the technical glitches.

A day after the launch of the Income Tax Department's new tax filing portal, social media users had flagged glitches in the new e-filing portal to the finance minister.

Following that, Sitharaman took to Twitter and asked Infosys and its chairman to fix the problem.

Replying to the tweet, Nilekani had said Infosys is working to fix the glitches.

Infosys was in 2019 awarded a contract to develop the next-generation income tax filing system to reduce processing time for returns from 63 days to one day and expedite

refunds.

Nangia & Co LLP Partner Shailesh Kumar said starting from the struggle to login to the portal to important features such 'e-proceedings' tabs being unavailable with a message displayed 'coming soon' is creating anxiousness among the taxpayers and tax professionals with respect to orders being passed and non-compliance of notices without getting a sufficient opportunity to present a case.

"The taxpayers could face penalty consequences for reasons beyond their control. Also, taxpayers are facing a major challenge for remitting funds abroad as they are unable to issue Form 15CA/ CB.



Shriram Transport raises nearly Rs 2,000 cr via QIP

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Non-banking finance company Shriram Transport Finance (STFC) on Monday said it has raised Rs 1,998.98 crore through its qualified institutional placement (QIP) issue.

The issue, which was launched on June 7, 2021, received 6.3 times oversubscription, a company release said. Several foreign institutional investors (FIIs) and domestic institutional investors (DIIs) participated in the QIP issue.

It was priced at Rs 1,430 per share, representing a discount of 0.23 per cent to the SEBI floor price of Rs 1,433.32.

The company said its board also approved on June 7, 2021 a preferential issue of Rs 500

crore, equally split between equity shares and convertible warrants to the promoter, Shriram Capital Limited, at the issue price of Rs 1,440 per security.

"The QIP proceeds will augment the company's long-term resources for funding requirements of business activities, financing future growth opportunities and general corporate purposes," the company's Vice Chairman and Managing Director Umesh Revankar said in the release.

The book running lead managers (BRLMs) to the QIP included Axis Capital Ltd, Citigroup Global Markets India Ltd and HSBC Securities and Capital Markets (India) Private Ltd.

'Higher incentives on EVs to reduce price gap with CVs'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The enhanced demand incentives for electric two-wheelers under the FAME-II scheme by the government will significantly reduce the upfront price gap with the internal combustion engine (ICE)-based counterparts and thus drive up demand, according to ratings agency ICRA.

In the latest modifications to the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles in India scheme (FAME II), the government has increased demand incentive for electric two-wheelers (e2W) by 50 per cent to Rs 15,000 per kWh, from 10,000 per kWh earlier.

The maximum cap on incentive for e2Ws was also increased to 40 per cent of vehicle cost from 20 per cent earlier, as per the modifications.

"A 50 per cent increase in



demand incentive (in the form of higher subsidy) will significantly reduce the upfront price gap between an e2W and internal combustion engine (ICE)-based 2Ws and thereby increase the demand for e2Ws," ICRA said in a statement.

ICRA Vice-President and Group Head Shamsher Dewan said, "As per ICRA's estimates, the initial cost of ownership for high-speed e2Ws will incrementally reduce by a minimum 10-12 per cent, (when

comparing currently available popular models) and result in a lower payback period." Prior to this, he said, "The payback period was estimated to be four years (in terms of total cost of ownership), which now stands reduced to three years," ICRA, which recently estimated that e2Ws are likely to achieve 8-10 per cent penetration in terms of new vehicle registrations by 2024-25, further said, "The recent changes will help in achieving those targets."

Zydus Cadila gets USFDA tentative nod for Brivaracetam

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Zydus Cadila on Monday said it has received tentative approval from the US health regulator to market epilepsy treatment drug Brivaracetam tablets.

Zydus Cadila has received tentative approval from the USFDA to market Brivaracetam tablets, in the strengths of 10 mg, 25 mg, 50 mg, 75 mg, and 100 mg, Cadila Healthcare said in a regulatory filing. Zydus Cadila is a part of the Cadila group. Brivaracetam is used to treat partial-onset seizures.

Zydus Cadila said the drug will be manufactured at the group's formulation manufacturing facility at Ahmedabad.

MONEY MATTERS

Tata Motors to raise up to Rs 500 cr via securities

Tata Motors on Monday said its board has approved a proposal to raise up to Rs 500 crore through the issue of securities on a private placement basis. A meeting of the duly authorised committee has approved subscription, on a private placement basis, up to 5,000 rated, listed, unsecured, redeemable, non-convertible debentures (NCDs) of face value Rs 10 lakh each, aggregating up to Rs 500 crore, the auto major said in a regulatory filing. The Mumbai-based company, however, did not share details as to how it plans to use the capital. Shares of the company were trading 1.03 per cent down at Rs 347.15 apiece on the BSE. Tata Motors, a USD 35 billion organisation, is a leading global automobile manufacturer of cars, utility vehicles, pick-ups, trucks and buses. Part of the USD 113 billion Tata group, the company is India's largest automaker with operations in India, the UK, South Korea, Thailand, South Africa, and Indonesia through a strong global network of 103 subsidiaries, 10 associate companies, 3 joint ventures and 2 joint operations as on March 31, 2020.



Sebi tweaks delisting rules to make process efficient

To enhance transparency and efficiency of the delisting process, Sebi has said independent directors will have to give reasoned recommendation on such proposal, while the promoters need to disclose their intention to delist the firm through an initial public announcement. To give effect to this, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has amended delisting rules, according to a notification dated June 10. This comes after the board of Sebi approved several amendments to delisting norms in March to make the process more transparent and efficient. Under the new rules, timelines for completion of various activities forming part of the delisting process have been introduced or revised to make it more efficient. Sebi said the committee of independent directors will be required to provide their reasoned recommendations on the delisting proposal. Promoter or acquirer will be required to disclose their intention to delist the company by making an initial public announcement.



Paytm launches vaccination slot booking feature on app

Fintech major Paytm on Monday said its users will now be able to book vaccination appointment on the app apart from finding available slots. Paytm users can now search, discover & also book their vaccination slots for both Covaxin and Covishield at the nearest centre through the Paytm app. The service would help Indians seamlessly book vaccination slots and gain immunity, helping in fighting the ongoing pandemic. Paytm said in a statement. CoWIN head R S Sharma had recently said over a dozen entities, including large digital companies like Paytm, MakeMyTrip and Infosys, are looking at approval for offering vaccine bookings. The government had, last month, released new guidelines for the integration of CoWIN with third-party applications, easing the way for such apps to offer vaccine bookings. Previously, giants like Facebook and Google to startups such as HealthifyMe have introduced a slew of tools to help people find slots for vaccination appointments.



Amara Raja to invest in lithium-ion batteries, expand current biz verticals

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amara Raja Batteries on Monday said it has decided to invest in green technologies, including in lithium-ion batteries, to capitalise on fast-evolving trends in the energy and mobility sectors.

The company's board has decided to expand its lead-acid batteries business and set up a new 'Energy SBU' encompassing lithium cell and battery pack, EV chargers, energy storage systems, advanced home energy solutions and related products and services, the company said in a statement.

The vital role played by lead-acid technology across a variety of applications provide significant growth opportunities in both domestic and international markets, it added.

On the other hand, the emergence of lithium as an alternative energy storage tech-



nology opens up new and exciting growth opportunities, the company noted.

"After a careful review of the global business opportunities, the company board has decided to future-proof our business by repositioning the firm as an energy and mobility player. The board believes that the company has to invest in a portfolio of businesses to maintain its technological and business leadership," Amara Raja Batteries Vice Chairman Jayadev Galla said.

Meanwhile, the company said that its Founder Chairman Ramachandra Galla, who steered the company for 36

years, has expressed his decision not to seek reappointment.

He will continue as Director and Chairman till the conclusion of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in August and thereafter Vice Chairman Jayadev Galla would assume the role of Chairman, the company said.

The company's board has also appointed S Vijayanand as President - New Energy (business vertical).

Amara Raja is one of the largest manufacturers of lead acid batteries for both industrial and automotive applications in the country.

It produces automotive batteries under the brands Amaron and Powerzone and supplies to various original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) like Ashok Leyland, Ford India, Honda, Hyundai, Mahindra & Mahindra, Maruti Suzuki, and Tata Motors.

Rupee falls for 5th straight session, settles 22 paise down

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The rupee declined by 22 paise to end at 73.29 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, marking its fifth straight session of fall as rising crude oil prices weighed on investor sentiment.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened on a negative note at 73.21 per dollar as against its previous close of 73.07.

"The Indian rupee started the week on the back foot following a stronger dollar and higher crude oil prices. The greenback earmarked the short covering and the expiry of large positions ahead of this week's FOMC meeting," said Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities.

BHEL shares tumble after quarterly earnings

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of engineering firm BHEL tumbled 19 per cent on Monday after the company's consolidated net loss widened to Rs 2,699.70 crore in the financial year 2020-21. The stock declined 17.91 per cent to Rs 62.55 on the BSE.

At the NSE, it tanked 19 per cent to Rs 61.65.

The earnings were announced post market hours on Friday.

For the quarter ended March, state-owned BHEL's consolidated net loss narrowed to Rs 1,036.32 crore, mainly on the back of higher revenues.

The company's consolidated net loss had stood at Rs 1,532.18 crore in the quarter ended on March 31, 2020, according to a regulatory filing.

Total income during January-March 2021, rose to Rs 7,245.16 crore, from Rs

5,166.64 crore in the year-ago period.

However, in the full financial year 2020-21, the company's consolidated net loss widened to Rs 2,699.70 crore as compared with Rs 1,468.35 crore in 2019-20.

Its total income during 2020-21 dropped to Rs 17,657.11 crore, from Rs 22,027.44 crore in 2019-20.

The nationwide lockdown, consequent to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic globally, caused disturbance and slowdown in the economic activities. It impacted the group operations during 2020-21, which recouped progressively, the company explained.

Based on internal and external information up to the date of approval of these financial statements, the company expects to recover the carrying amount of its assets, investments, trade receivables, contract assets and inventories, it added.

JSW enters construction chemicals business

PNS ■ BENGALURU

JSW Cement said on Monday it has entered the construction chemical sector with the launch of a green product range in the category. The range comprises 'Enduro Plast' readymix plaster, 'Krysta Leakproof' integral crystalline waterproofing compound and 'Duraflor' floorhardener, it said in a statement.

JSW Cement has established a 0.3-million-ton manufacturing facility in Ballari in Karnataka to produce its construction chemical product range. It has begun the roll-out of these products and will

cover key markets across Karnataka. "With the exponential growth seen over the years in the construction chemicals category, JSW's focus on dry-mix mortar market is expected to reach a contribution often per cent for JSW Cement's consolidated revenues within the next 4-5 years," the statement said.

JSW Cement Business Head - Construction Chemicals, Mubin Hussain said the construction chemicals and drymix industry sector is roughly Rs 12,000 crore with an expected compound annual growth rate of ten per cent over the next few years.

Consumer anxiety at highest levels

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Consumer anxiety is at the highest levels since the outbreak of coronavirus pandemic in India with the less affluent most skeptical about economic outlook while a majority of consumers think their income in the next six months will be lower than the pre-COVID levels, says a latest study.

As per the COVID-19 consumer sentiment research by global management consulting firm Boston Consulting group (BCG) conducted between May 23 and May 28, 2021, covering around 4,000 respondents across metros, tier I, II, III, IV and rural India, 51 per cent of consumers expected their spends over the next six



months to be lower. In the last round of survey conducted from July 20 to August 2, 2020, the figure stood at 40 per cent.

As many as 83 per cent of the respondents agreed that coronavirus posed a high level of threat to their jobs or busi-

nesses, while another 86 per cent felt that there would be an economic recession due to the pandemic.

In terms of income outlook, 58 per cent of the respondents expected a decline in income in the next six months, the study said adding the decline in income sentiment is the steepest among less affluent/small towns.

It found that 76 per cent of respondents in the 'struggler/next billion' category expected income lower than the pre-COVID level, while the same was also true for 60 per cent in the 'aspirer' segment. However, only 49 per cent 'affluent/elite' expected decline in income in the next six months.

The less affluent were also

the most skeptical about economic outlook, although health concerns were prevalent across consumer profiles. The impact of the pandemic on daily lifestyles were felt more in urban/affluent India, the study said.

Consumer spending sentiment for essentials, health, at-home entertainment has remained stable or showed minor decline. On the other hand, the expected cutbacks on travel, out of home entertainment and vehicle purchases are high, it added.

Commenting on the findings, BCG India Managing Director and Partner Nimisha Jain said, "There is an impending sense of uncertainty, however, we have observed certain positive messages too."

Am I doing it right? This is a question that many parents are asking themselves in the new environment of lockdowns and quarantines. Long before the pandemic, words like 'stress, worry, guilt, fear' have been part of the emotional lexicon as a working parent. With remote working, social distancing, health and wellness issues, and all the uncertainty of the pandemic, everything feels like it's ten times harder than before.

Most parents I know would agree that while working from home has its pros and cons, a year into it, we all are still struggling with the dilemma of how best to juggle a full-time job, be present as a parent, and find some time for ourselves.

One of the much-touted benefits of remote working is the flexibility it offers in one's work schedule. Work-From-Home (WFH) is perhaps the biggest disruption to the concept of the formal workspace since its advent in the 1800s. The rigours of a 9 to 5 job have been replaced with a work 'where you are, when you can' approach. Most of us save a lot of time and energy in a day, now that we don't have to battle the great urban commute.

Ideally, it is supposed to enable people to live a more stress-free life. For example, take a virtual meeting in the morning, help the kids set up for their online classes, do some more work, take a break to do chores around the house, spend time with the kids, do some more work, have family meals together, etc.

While this sounds quite utopian, the reality is far from it. If you appreciate dark humour, you'll see what I mean when I say that one is always 'dashing' these days — dashing off because your kids need you in the middle of work and dashing off because your work needs you when you're with your kids. It feels like one is doing more work than ever before — both as a professional and as a parent. There's a sense of guilt that one is not doing justice to either.

The lines between work



The dilemma of parenting in a work-from-home world

and home have become so blurred that we're all used to seeing the insides of our colleagues' houses, and it's almost normal when someone must take a break to deal with a domestic crisis in the middle of work. The routines that you spent most of your adult life setting up, have been thrown out of the window. The new normal doesn't feel normal at all. So, how does one regain one's balance again?

The bad news is that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to this dilemma. The good news also is that there's no one-size-fits-all solution! If there's no right answer,

then at least, you're not going to be wrong.

I feel that it comes down to finding a 'rhythm' more than a balance. Instead of trying to replace routines and schedules, I think it helps to think of it as finding a fluid rhythm to one's day. Instead of making strict plans, I find that it helps to factor in all the major priorities of the week, and then to move things around that. This would create enough wiggle room to do things when they're needed. For example, it's one of those days where your kids are in a happy place, and they want to spend more time with

you. Instead of sticking to your routine and then feeling guilty or sad all day that you couldn't be with them, try moving things around so you have a couple of hours to spend with the kids and then catch up to your schedule later on.

Similarly, suppose you have some work that needs you to be absolutely focused, or it's one of those days when you feel inspired and would like some alone time to work distraction-free, it's a good idea to trade 'do not disturb' time with your partner or a family member so that they can be in charge while you work. You could do the same for them as well. Instead of a strict routine that you feel you must live and die by, allow yourself to try a softer, more fluid rhythm where you can make the best of each moment. I find that the best part about this approach is that it allows you to address your needs and wants in the present, taking away that feeling of missing out, or not

doing enough. The act of moving things around to suit what best needs to be done in each moment will also give you a sense of control and help you feel less overwhelmed in the long run.

One of the things that has helped me find my daily rhythm is to think of things in terms of the things I 'must' do, and the things I 'can' do, instead of worrying over all the things I 'should' do. Another strategy that I'd espouse is to do multiple tasks, but not multi-task. For example, you could have a variety of different things you need to do in a day, but you do them one at a time. 'Trying to be mindful and present in every moment really helps to keep the stress away. Be your own best friend. Be compassionate to yourself and above all, be kind to yourself. You are doing the best you can, and that really is enough.'

(The writer, Neerja Birla, is the Founder and Chairperson, Mpower)

Keep away from these foods

Diet plays a major role in a good night sleep. Shivani Sikri lists foods that one should avoid eating at night

The pandemic and work from home for more than a year for most of us has already deeply hampered or rather knocked down the sleeping patterns. Most of the people are not able to follow the right orthodox sleep timings thereby shattering physical and mental health. Here are some foods that should be simply avoided for quality sleep at night.

Alcohol:



Alcohol is a false friend of sleep. Certainly, as it causes relaxation of muscle tone, it helps to fall asleep but this same muscle relaxation promotes snoring and the occurrence of respiratory disorders during sleep (apnea) thus making sleep unstable and causing arousals during the night.

Dark chocolate:



Why should you avoid consuming dark chocolate at night? Because it contains stimulants (tyrosine, theobromine, anandamide) which activate the heart and increase the heart rate. Not ideal before bed if you want to fall asleep easily.

Cold cut meats:

Cold meats like sausages, ham, salami and also sauces or even chips should be strictly avoided at night. This cold/frozen



meat options and other fatty foods require a lot of energy and time to be digested during sleep. Prolonged digestion can lead to restless sleep. They are therefore to be avoided in the evening.

Japanese and Chinese dishes:



Chinese and Japanese foods should be avoided in the evening because they are rich in sodium glutamate, an amino acid which accelerates the metabolism and provides a boost of energy. Sodium glutamate is also found in industrial ready meals, sauces etc.

Spicy dishes:



Spicy foods are contraindicated in the dinner because they can cause heartburn and bloating, and lead to poor quality sleep. Spice also increases body heat, another factor leading to poor sleep.

Ice cream:

Ice creams are super high in sugars which stimulates the brain and can keep the body awake for hours. For the same reason, we also avoid cakes, pastries and mithais in excess.

Cheeses:

Cheese have high fat



content. They are hence hard to digest after dinner. It is always recommended to eat cheese during the day. With this rationality, it is also prudent to shy off consuming hard legumes like chickpeas, lentils, split peas, etc. in the dinner time as they ferment in the intestines and take time to be digested.

Tomato:



Certain vegetables should be avoided in the evening like tomatoes for example. It releases tyramine, an amino acid that causes the production of norepinephrine. This has an impact on digestion, increases brain activity and prevents easy and rapid falling asleep. The same is also the case with brinjal because it is the vegetable that is richest in nicotine resulting in increased heart rate and BP.

Red meat:



The strong proteins of red meat take a long time to digest. Eating red meat in the evening or at dinner may interfere with falling asleep and cause nighttime awakenings. In general, at dinner, it is better to prefer light proteins like chicken, turkey, yogurt etc. (The writer is Chief Nutritionist and Co-Founder, Nutri4Verve)

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



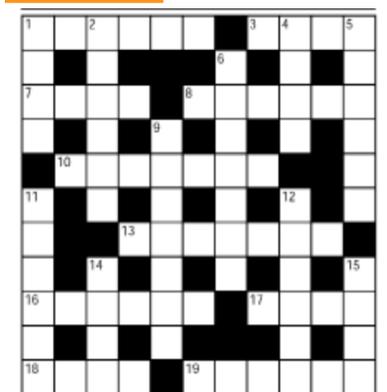
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

ACROSS

- 1 Begins
- 3 A worshipped statue
- 7 Keep a pet bird in this
- 8 Yells
- 10 A citizen of Israel
- 13 Took no notice of
- 16 People invited
- 17 A large public building for meetings, functions
- 18 One third of twenty-seven
- 19 A pie's covering

DOWN

- 1 Unwell
- 2 A month
- 4 A musical instrument played with sticks
- 5 Use your ears
- 6 Opposite of deep
- 9 Badly behaved
- 11 We need this gas to stay alive
- 12 Leave
- 14 Very unkind
- 15 Potters use this

SOLUTION

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

THE INFAMOUS SCIENCE OF MIND IN SPORTS!

Danish football star Christian Eriksen's collapse at the Euro 2020 match and South African cricketer Faf du Plessis' 'slight memory loss' after a nasty collision with teammate, sure affected their teammates badly. Anand Chulani, India's leading success coach and mental fitness expert talks to *The Pioneer's* SHIKHA DUGGAL on the importance of sports stars' mental health.



It's important to talk about mental health all year round! In large part, this is connected to the societal stigma that has plagued mental illnesses even in the sports fraternity. But this topic is about more than just disorders, amidst the pandemic, mental health has increasingly been in the spotlight, especially when it comes to sport. Several sports stars have shared their mental health struggle. Not very long ago, a budding wrestler like Ritika Phogat committed suicide. Times have not been great mentally for sports stars. Mental health is a crucial part of overall health, yet it is often a hushed topic of discussion even on-field. In fact, even Abhinav Bindra revealed earlier this year that he was depressed and lost after winning India's first only individual gold medal at the Beijing Olympics. Talking more about mental health in sports, we have Anand Chulani — India's number one success coach and a leading mental-cum-emotional fitness expert who has worked closely with champions like Nikhil Nanda, Jos Buttler, Ben Stokes, etc. He

says, "There is an urgent need to normalise mental health conversations in sports too. When we utter the phrase 'mental health', instinctively people tend to acclaim that there is something wrong with the individual which is unpleasant. A community of sports persons in good mental health will create a more productive and collaborative environment for the nation. We must take athletes off the so-called pedestals — they aren't Gods. Some of them have still not figured out their lives despite being so successful, they are prominent athletes with eminent skills but are still in a learning phase, so let them be. When I support, say, Ben Stokes, I ain't supporting the popular cricketer but the human life that's approached me for evolving. Their mind, heart, and spirit need to be uplifted too! Even the best of the best sportsmen face mental health issues, it's a fact. It's my job to look at them holistically and I do that." More and more countries are implementing a rest and rotating policy for mental health as well as physical, especially in the arena of sports. There is a sudden pause in most sports-related activities, and there's also social isolation and bio-bubbles. Cricketer Mitchell Marsh recently pulled out of the IPL citing an inability to spend long times inside the bio-secure bubble! "The problems that I usually wit-

ness in athletes are failures, insecurities, the feeling of 'am I good enough', sense of displacement, self-doubt and racism while performing in another country. I always ask them to filter the opinions screaming from outside because every belief isn't gospel truth! A critical aspect could be for them to build an inner-certainty, not from the playground they play on but themselves. Self-worth always brings fruitful successes! An amazing set of skills will allow them to be a part of a recognised team but a better-mental side to themselves will help them enhance those set of skills for a long run — the mental muscle is the strongest muscle," adds

Anand who more recently supported Ajinkya Rahana while he was captaining for the Indian Test Team and helped him score a century that led to India having its greatest comeback in the history and winning the Border-Gavaskar trophy (2020-21)! The Australian cricket team travels with a full-time sports psychologist, it is essential that other teams and sports too have an



psychologist who can conduct team-building activities, keep the athletes motivated and focused for their matches. The silver lining of the pandemic is that athletes and coaches have finally started to openly talk about mental health and discuss the importance of a sports psychologist! Anand is currently writing his book, *Absolute Champion*, shares tools and guidance on how to be an absolute champion through a five-step process. He also sheds light on how sports psychology is progressing in our country. Sports psychology is a relatively young field with the first-ever sports psychology lab set up in 1920 in

Berlin. It grew in popularity through the 1970s and 1980s and acquired a more scientific approach to understanding the relationship between psychology and sports performance. Today, the subject draws from multiple disciplines such as biomechanics, kinesiology, physiology, and psychology to assist athletes and their coaches and supporters with the strategies required for optimal sports performance. "Earlier mental health of an athlete was taken for granted. Athletes are used to pressure, some even thrive on it, but sometimes success becomes a hindrance to delicate minds. Don't look at them as medal-winning machines," he shares, adding that it's very important that they have hobbies and social life. "It's time for us to let them get away from the predicted achiever's model and focus on an absolute champion model — the very notion of my upcoming book too. Echoed by my dear friend Abhinav Bindra who felt lost after winning the gold medal as he didn't know what's next.

He later realised happiness is his gold medal! This proves we need to review the very definition of success," he tells us. There were also reports of four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka not taking questions from the press at the French Open, saying the nature of news conferences puts an undue burden on players' mental health. Indian men's cricket team captain Virat Kohli too revealed his battle with depression back in 2014! Experts reveal that there may not be enough mental health professionals in India who can provide therapy and treatment to sportspersons but Anand Chulani is on a mission to inspire and activate the unlimited potential to be absolute champions, to be happy with themselves, unstoppable, and have the inner strength to achieve sustainable success and triumph in all areas of their lives — personal, relationships, family, education, career, and business, he is on a mission to create global champions of tomorrow!

Actor Mukul Chadda gave up on his lucrative job as a banker in the United States of America to pursue his dream of becoming an actor. Ever since moving back to India, his career graph in showbiz has been spiralling upward journey. After starring in the Indian version of the American show, *The Office*, he will be seen in the forthcoming web series, *Sunflower*. Additionally, he is shooting with Vidya Balan for *Sherri*. We caught him in between a break for a quick telephonic interview. Excerpt:

What drew you to be a part of *Sunflower*?

Right from the word go, I was intrigued by the character of Dr Ahuja, the role I had to portray in the show, as it was very different from the characters I have played in the past. Some of the scenes I was instructed to enact during the audition had me hooked and by the time I got to read the entire script, I think I was completely invested in the project. I found myself chuckling and laughing while I flipped through the pages. As far as scripts go, there are good parts and bad parts but this one was very good and it kept getting better. So, once I read the script, it was a no-brainer. I was very keen to do this project for the script as well as the role of Dr Ahuja.

What was your experience of working with Vikas Bahl?

Vikas is an extremely experienced director who is very calm on set. During tricky moments and difficult scenes, his expertise was evident. The way he handles situations on the set and actors, he puts his experience to good use. Both directors, he

and Rahul Sengupta, never seemed to be flustered or stressed and I think that is very helpful in an environment where you are trying to be creative and create. I am sure there was some pressure or the other, but it didn't trickle down to affect us, the actors. We had a good time putting this show together in that fun atmosphere.

How did you prepare for the character?

Actors have their ways to go about preparing for characters, and it might differ from one role to the other. One of the things that comes to mind for, Dr Ahuja's portrayal, was how I was in constant touch with the writers to develop a particular aspect that caught my eye during a reading with the entire cast before we started shooting. I wondered whether we should take that trait a little further and put immense emphasis on it. I am afraid I cannot share any spoilers right now (chuckles, before continuing) but they were very receptive and welcomed my input by incorporating those suggestions. Apart from that, there are some details you add as an actor that you feel will work for this character. Some work on the back story always helps, as does some time and effort on the body language et al. Again, these might be very subtle and nobody may catch on, but as an actor, it gives you the confidence to believe that what you are doing sounds and looks as authentic as possible.

There's a surge of grey roles now. People don't like to put the characters in a box. Do you think yours in *Sunflower* is one such too?

Absolutely, Dr Ahuja's character is definitely grey by any definition of grey and

Actor Mukul Chadda tells *The Pioneer* that people have moved beyond the masala offered by Bollywood to appreciate more authentic real-life roles



that certainly is one of the exciting parts about playing this character. Your question is very well-phrased. As your question itself mentions, people don't like characters to be put into a box since, in reality, none of us are people who can be put into a box. Nobody's character is monochromatic. It's not like you are either good or bad. We all have shades to ourselves. I mean real life is grey. We all have different sides to our-

selves and different sides get activated at different junctures. So, that is reality and it's wonderful that more and more shows and films are now bringing out the multi-dimensional aspect of characters. There is so much more to it than what meets the eye. It should go without saying that you cannot define a character with just a couple of sentences. Also, as an actor, I think

it's wonderful to try and sometimes understand when you talk about grey or dark characters. Why does this person do what they do? Or what makes them do what they do? Is that something that can happen to any of us? And that is what fascinates me. When you see a character who is seemingly on the darker side of grey, you can't help but wonder what makes a normal person become like

that? And in case something like that happened to me, would I turn out to be just like this character? It is a very thought-provoking process for viewers, ruminating over such characters and the circumstances surrounding them. I think that is part of the attraction of playing such roles. Recently, fellow actor Pankaj Tripathi said in an interview, "We would like our characters to be very simple in real life but very complicated on-screen because it gives you so much meat and so much to play with. The contradictions of such a character make it exciting for viewers as well as the one who is performing as such a character." That was a very well articulated thought, one must say.

Amid this flood of good and realistic content, what do thrillers have to offer? Do you think they still appeal to the audience?

I think there is space for all kinds of genres. There are so many kinds of stories out there. The medium of storytelling has changed over the centuries but its essence hasn't. There are people who love thrillers and let's face it, who would not love a good story where you are guessing

what happens next right up to the end? I think a well-made show or a story well told is always going to work with the audience, irrespective of the genre. If this question is in context to *Sunflower* being a thriller, I don't think it can be pinned down to any one particular genre. Sure, there is a lot of suspense but there is a good amount of comedy as well that is mixed in with other elements in the background.

We heard you would also be starring alongside Vidya Balan in *Sherri*. Can you provide some inside scoops on your character in the eponymous drama?

Okay, now this is something I can help you with. (laughs unabashedly) I play a character called Pawan who seems like an ordinary guy with the standard corporate job on the surface. However, Amit Masurkar (the director) had certain ideas about how he wanted the character to be played. The character isn't entirely as he would seem. There are layers to him, his personality and his relationship with Vidya.

Have the characters you essayed helped you evolve as an actor and a person in real life?

Yes, of course! There's so much one could learn about acting through the experience one attains in this industry. The more you push yourself as an actor and enact roles that are different from the parts you've played in the past, you expand your range. With such experiences, one grows not just in terms of skill but also with the confidence gained with each new project. It also helps sharpen processes because each role you prepare for, you end up doing slightly different things each time. While some of the

processes that work for you can be used more often than not, there are others which you are supposed to unlearn. I often make notes for myself while I am preparing for a role and at times I revisit the notes I had prepared for a previous role for some fresh perspective.

But has it helped me as a person in real life? Hmm... (we hear him thoughtfully scratching his stubble) This is a much harder question, one that I haven't heard often but whenever I have, it always beats me because I think it is very difficult to analyse one's own self as I don't think we are very good judges of ourselves. We might be really accomplished at judging others but to possess a certain level of self-awareness and examine yourself is somewhat, if not extremely, difficult. However, what I can tell you is that being an actor, playing different parts does help one to develop a sense of empathy towards different kinds of people. When you portray a certain role you are that person for a certain period. So, the way they think, the situations they are in, you have to deal with them, because that is the essence of an actor — to slip into the shoes of that character. I can't help but be empathetic after doing that for a long time.

You left the corporate life to embrace the joys of performing arts. Have you ever experienced any lows which made you wish you would not have changed paths?

I definitely have had many low phases during this journey as an actor, but I have to say that I have never regretted my decision, and this reinforces the belief that it was the right one. So, I am actually living my dream right now.

WHAT A SCHICK SHOW

Patrik scores brace including one from the halfway line in Czech's 2-0 win over Scotland



AFP ■ GLASGOW

Scotland's long-awaited return to a major International tournament was ruined by Patrik Schick's slick finishing as the Czech Republic won 2-0 at Hampden on Monday to move top of Euro 2020 Group D. Schick's header just before half-time opened the scoring, but it was his stunning strike from

just inside the Scotland half after the break that will live in the memory as one of the all-time great European Championship goals. After a 23-year wait to qualify for a major tournament, Scotland's hopes of making more history by getting out of the group for the first time now look slim. Steve Clarke's men face

England next on Friday at Wembley before hosting World Cup finalists Croatia at Hampden on June 22. Playing in front of fans at Hampden for the first time since November 2019 with 12,000 in attendance, Scotland made a nervous start. The hosts were desperately missing the driving runs and

poise on the ball normally provided by Kieran Tierney on the left side of a back three. Without the Arsenal defender, Liverpool's Andy Robertson was his side's biggest threat with a series of rampaging runs. A cagey game of few chances burst into life after Schick's towering leap put the visitors in front three minutes before half-time. Scotland were slow to react after initially clearing a corner and the Bayer Leverkusen forward rose highest to flick home Vladimir Coufal's cross. Marshall was called into action to make two quick saves from Schick and Vladimir Darida in an explosive start to the second-half. But twice Scotland were inches away from levelling when Jack Hendry's dipping effort came back off the crossbar before Vadik clawed away a mishit clearance from Tomas Kalas. However, the home side were stunned by a moment of brilliance from Schick on 52 minutes as he spotted Marshall off his line from halfway and bent in an incredible shot from just inside the Scotland half.

Dramatic win for Dutch

Dumfries late header helps Oranje return to big time with 3-2 success

AFP ■ AMSTERDAM

Denzel Dumfries scored a dramatic late winner as the Netherlands marked their long-awaited return to a major tournament with a 3-2 victory over Ukraine in a remarkable Euro 2020 game in Amsterdam on Sunday. Dumfries, the PSV Eindhoven full-back, headed in a cross from substitute Nathan Ake to complete a madcap second half after the home side eased into a two-goal lead and then threw it away. Captain Georginio Wijnaldum and Wout Weghorst both scored before the hour mark in front of a raucous crowd at the Johan Cruyff Arena, only for Ukraine to silence the home supporters as Andriy Yarmolenko and Roman Yaremchuk netted to briefly restore parity. Frank de Boer's side got there in the end and the victory will provide a major lift to the Netherlands after what was their first game at a major competition in seven years. They will now hope to build on it on Thursday against Austria, who beat North Macedonia earlier in Bucharest in the same Group C. It was a brilliant game, and a crowd of around 16,000 created an atmosphere fit for the occasion at the home of Ajax, where supporters held up banners with messages of support for Christian Eriksen following the Denmark star's cardiac arrest on Saturday. Eriksen made his name at Ajax before moving to Tottenham Hotspur in 2013. After failing to qualify for Euro 2016 or the 2018 World Cup in Russia, the Netherlands were playing their first game at a major competition since beating hosts Brazil 3-0 to claim third place at the 2014 World Cup. They had not won a game at a Euro in almost exactly 13 years, since Klaas-Jan Huntelaar and Robin van Persie netted in a 2-0 win over Romania at Euro 2008.



Brazil start Copa defence with win

AFP ■ BRASILIA

Star forward Neymar netted a penalty and created a second as hosts Brazil eased to a 3-0 victory over a coronavirus-depleted Venezuela on Sunday in the opening match of the 2021 Copa America. Centre-back Marquinhos opened the scoring through the first half and Gabriel Barbosa sealed the Group B win a minute from time. In a tournament already delayed a year and moved from its original hosts Argentina and Colombia due to the pandemic, it was fitting that the coronavirus should take centre-stage right up to the tournament kick-off. Played in front of an empty Mané Garrincha stadium due to Covid-19 restrictions, Brazil made light of the continent's minnows, who arrived with a makeshift side missing eight players ruled out after testing positive for coronavirus the day before. Venezuela called up 15 emergency replacements but could still only name seven out of a possible 12 substitutes due to a lack of available players. Brazil took the lead on 23 minutes when Richarlison flicked on a Neymar corner that deflected into Marquinhos's path inside the six-yard box, allowing the centre-back to bundle home. Richarlison had a goal ruled out for offside while Neymar incredibly fired wide from 12 yards out as Brazil threatened to put the game to bed before half-time. It was more of the same after the break as substitute Alex Sandro from distance and Richarlison with a header both shot over the bar. Neymar somehow failed to turn home a cross-cum-shot from Gabriel Jesus from three yards out but on 64 minutes he doubled the lead from the penalty spot. Yohan Cumana clumsily brought down Danilo in the box and Neymar sent Graterol the wrong way on 12 yards. The hosts took their foot off the gas but Neymar kept probing and was denied a second by Graterol following a crazy run and shot from inside the box. Neymar then created the third, rounding Graterol before crossing for Gabriel Barbosa to chest home from barely a yard out. "He's developed the ability to create. Right foot, left foot, he's become an unpredictable player," Brazil coach Tite enthused about Neymar. In the second match, Edwin Cardona scored the only goal of the game as Colombia held on under second half pressure to begin their Group B campaign with a 1-0 win over Ecuador — who thrashed them 6-1 the last time the sides met in a World Cup qualifier in November. Colombia's goal was a thing of beauty with Cardona taking a short free-kick to Juan Cuadrado, who chipped the ball into the box for Miguel Borja to head down into the path of Cardona to volley home. It was initially disallowed for offside but a VAR review showed that while three Colombian players were beyond the defensive line, Cardona and Borja were inside.

Chhetri targets record feat against Afghanistan

PTI ■ DOHA

Goal-machine Sunil Chhetri will look to add to his tally and enter the all-time top 10 scorers' list as a buoyant India meet Afghanistan in the joint 2022 World Cup and 2023 Asian Cup qualifiers here on Tuesday. While the Indian team needs just a draw from their final game against Afghanistan to secure a place in the third round of AFC Asian Cup qualifiers after Oman defeated Afghanistan 2-1 on Friday, a hat-trick for Chhetri will see him equal the iconic Pele in terms of numbers of goals scored in the International arena. Chhetri is also just one goal off entering the all-time top-10 list of goal-scorers, something he can easily achieve against

Afghanistan, if not a hat-trick. A Chhetri-inspired India ended their winless run in International football when the captain struck a brace against Bangladesh in their previous outing. The talk since then mostly centred around the Indian striker surpassing the legendary Lionel Messi as International football's second highest scorer among active players. A veteran in top-flight at 36, Chhetri played down the comparisons with the Argentine global superstar, but he will certainly look to put his best foot forward come the next match and add to his tally of 74 goals. If the Blue Tigers can avoid defeat in the upcoming match, they will finish third in their group, an improvement over



the fifth-place result during the last campaign. India are already out of con-

tion to progress further in the World Cup qualifying campaign, and is now looking to secure a

India vs Afghanistan
Live from 7:30 pm IST
STAR SPORTS NETWORK

ing the supply chain flowing. India are currently placed on six points after seven matches in comparison to Afghanistan's five points from seven games. Form and past record both favour India and anything less than a victory for the Blue Tigers will be seen as an upset. As far as Afghanistan are concerned, they will take heart from their spirited performance in their previous outing against India, who were held to a stalemate at home by their lower-ranked opponents in 2019. But the recent defeat against Oman means Afghanistan are not among the top fourth-placed teams in the World Cup qualifiers and a failure to win against India would send them to the playoffs just to get into the third round of Asian Cup qualifiers.

shortpasses

HASAN ALI TO REMAIN IN PSL
ABU DHABI: Islamabad United fast bowler Hasan Ali has decided to stay for the rest of the Pakistan Super League after resolving a family matter. Hasan was due to fly back home on Sunday, but will now remain in Abu Dhabi and complete Pakistan's premier Twenty20 league.

RAHIM WINS ICC AWARD
DUBAI: Former Bangladesh captain Mushfiqur Rahim and Scottish all-rounder Kathryn Bryce were on Monday adjudged the ICC Players of the Month for May in the men's and women's categories respectively. Mushfiqur played one Test and three ODIs against Sri Lanka, where he helped Bangladesh win their first ODI series against Sri Lanka by scoring 125 in the second game in Dhaka last month.

TITMUS NARROWLY MISSES WR
ADELAIDE: A sizzling Ariarne Titmus clocked the second fastest 200m freestyle in history on Monday, narrowly missing the 12-year-old world record, while Kaylee McKeown swam the year's quickest 200m medley as they ramped up Olympic preparations.

MALVIKA WINS CROWN
KAUNAS: India's Malvika Bansod defeated Rachael Darragh of Ireland 21-14, 21-11 to clinch the women's singles crown at the RSL Lithuanian International badminton tournament here.

FARAH TO TRY FOR OLYMPICS
LONDON: Two-time Olympic 10,000m champion Mo Farah will make a last-gasp attempt to qualify for the Tokyo Games at the British Athletics Championships in Manchester on June 25.

1.6M \$ FOR WTC FINAL WINNERS
DUBAI: The winner of the upcoming World Test Championship final between India and New Zealand will walk away with a prize money of \$1.6 million along with the Test Championship Mace, the International Cricket Council said on Monday.

INDIA SEEM MORE FEARLESS
BRISTOL: The Indian women's team has become more 'fearless' than ever, feels England's newly-appointed vice-captain Nat Sciver, who is hoping that the conditions will favour her team against the opponents' heady mix of experience and youth in the upcoming Test here.

Rahane offers Test batting tips to Mithali & Co

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Playing close to the body, working on mindset and setting small targets are some of tips that Indian men's Test team vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane gave to Mithali Raj & Co ahead of their first red-ball game in seven years, against England. According to sources in the know of developments, Rahane, a Test specialist with 73 games and over 4500 runs under his belt, was requested by women's team head coach Ramesh Powar for a session, primarily with the batters before they left for England. "Ramesh and Ajinkya have been teammates. Since our girls are playing Test match after seven years, the coach thought that it would be a good idea to have a session where one of the best in the business will talk about Test match batting. "It was a 50-minute zoom session that was arranged when both teams were in quarantine in Mumbai," a senior official privy to the development said. The match is starting on Wednesday. It is learnt that skipper Mithali, her deputy Harmanpreet Kaur, Smriti Mandhana and all the batters, along with senior pacer Shikha Pandey, spoke to Rahane about the long-form batting. In India also, there has only been 50 and T20 national competitions for the past few years. "Apparently, Ajinkya told them not to play the drive too much during the initial part of the innings as the ball moves around a lot in the UK. He told the batters to concentrate on playing as close to the body as possible. "He believes that with late swing, there would always be the lure to play the cover drive but his best to avoid the stroke initially with Dukes ball being used," the source said. Rahane believes that the foundation of a Test innings should be based on short targets and not on the ultimate goal. "He told the batters that it

We're mentally prepared for England: Harman

PTI ■ BRISTOL

Indian women's team vice-captain Harmanpreet Kaur on Monday said the squad is mentally prepared to take on mighty hosts England in its first Test in seven years, especially after 'picking the brains' of red-ball specialist Ajinkya Rahane. India and England will play a one-off Test here from Wednesday, which will start the visitors' full-fledged tour of the UK, where they will also feature in ODI and T20 series. "I have not played much of red-ball cricket, I have played just two Tests. This time we got a chance to speak to Ajinkya Rahane, he picked his brains on how to bat in the longer format, mentally we are prepared," Harmanpreet said during a virtual press conference. The swashbuckler has made a name for herself in white-ball cricket and is



now looking to stamp her class in the traditional format. She added, "Even in the nets, we try to be in the right frame of mind. When you are happy, you play good cricket. We try to play to our strengths. "We had an easy and

friendly talk with Rahane, he is very experienced, we had a chance to talk to him and we did exactly that." Elaborating on the interaction with Virat Kohli's deputy in the men's Test team, she said, "Rahane has so much

experience, he shared them with us, offered us tips on how to bat, what kind approach should we have to batting because it's long format, how to break your batting in parts..." Asked about teen batting sensation Shafali Verma's chance of making her Test debut, Harmanpreet said the team management doesn't prefer tinkering with her game. "Shafali is someone we always want to play, she is someone who can dominate the opposition. "We never tried to tinker with Shafali's game as she is a natural player, it's not a great idea to talk too much about technique and game planning with her. "All of us are trying to create a very nice situation for her so that she doesn't feel the pressure and enjoys her cricket. She was looking great in the nets, and I hope, if she gets a chance to play, she will do better."

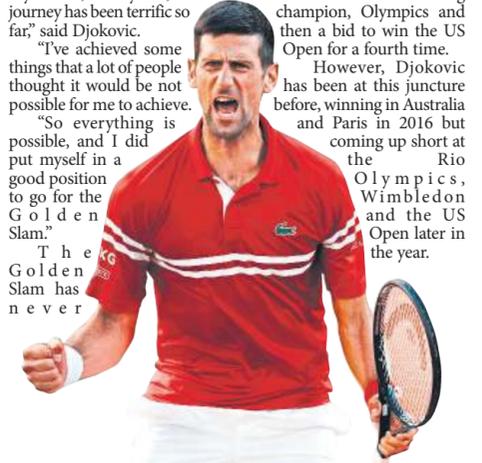
Both the teams have high quality pace bowlers and Lee wants them to be in the game at all times. "Pace just makes red-ball cricket exciting, I'm a cricket fan and I want to produce a pitch where the cricket lovers have to watch every ball in case they miss something, be that some class batting or an amazing piece of bowling. "A maiden over can be quite exciting if it's a battle of skill between both bowler and batter. So, yeah, if we can get some pace and bounce in the pitch, but not too one-sided towards seam movement, we'll be happy," he said.

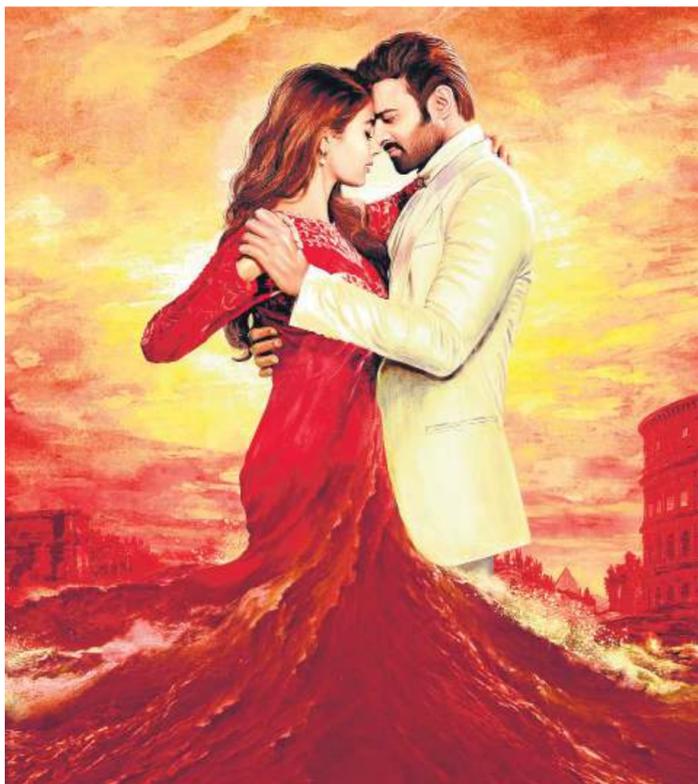
Djokovic eyes Golden Grand Slam

AFP ■ PARIS

Novak Djokovic has set his sights on the Golden Grand Slam of all four majors, and the Olympic title, insisting: "Everything is possible." The world number one captured a second French Open and 19th Slam with a 6-7 (6/8), 2-6, 6-3, 6-2, 6-4 win over Stefanos Tsitsipas on Sunday. It allowed him to become the first man in the Open era, and only third in history, to claim all four Grand Slam titles on multiple occasions. Now he has targeted being the third man to complete a calendar Grand Slam after Don Budge in 1937 and Rod Laver in 1962 and 1969. On top of that, he also wants the Olympic Gold medal to complete the Golden Grand Slam. "Everything is possible. Definitely in my case I can say that what I've been through in my career, in my life, this journey has been terrific so far," said Djokovic. "I've achieved some things that a lot of people thought it would be not possible for me to achieve. "So everything is possible, and I did put myself in a good position to go for the Golden Slam." The Golden Slam has never

been achieved by a man while, in the women's game, only Steffi Graf in 1988 has swept all four majors and Olympic Gold in the same year. In Graf's case, Olympic Gold came in Seoul. For Djokovic, the opportunity will come in Tokyo later this summer. "Obviously his goal and our goal is to win the Olympics and then win the Grand Slam. That would be the absolutely top of this year," said Djokovic's long-time coach Marian Vajda. "But it's still far away from us. We have to still focus on the next one. But overall he's set up for this year. "His priority is Wimbledon, Olympics and US Open. I think that says all." Djokovic is already halfway to a calendar Slam having secured a record ninth Australian Open in February. Next up is Wimbledon, where he is the defending champion, Olympics and then a bid to win the US Open for a fourth time. However, Djokovic has been at this juncture before, winning in Australia and Paris in 2016 but coming up short at the Rio Olympics, Wimbledon and the US Open later in the year.





Prabhas to resume *Radhe Shyam* this month

Prabhas and Pooja Hegde-starrer *Radhe Shyam*, a romantic drama, has been making headlines since its launch. Being helmed by Radha Krishna Kumar of *Jil* fame, the film has been in the making for the last two years. Prabhas plays the role of Vikramaditya in this film. Owing to the pandemic, the film's shoot was brought to a halt. According to the latest update, Prabhas has decided to join the sets of *Radhe Shyam* from the last week of June month. And with this brief shoot schedule, the entire shoot of Radhe Krishna Kumar's directorial venture will be wrapped up. The upcoming schedule will take

place at a specially-assembled set in Hyderabad, in which both Prabhas and Pooja Hegde will participate.

Radhe Shyam also has Bhagyashree, Priyadarshi Pulikonda, Sachin Khedekar, Murli Sharma, Kunaal Roy Kapur, Riddhi Kumar, Sasha Chettri and Sathyan in crucial roles.

After wrapping up the shoot of *Radhe Shyam*, Prabhas will resume *Salaar* with *KGF* fame Prashant Neel immediately. Prabhas is also expected to commence shooting for *Adipurush* in the next two months. After these movies, Prabhas will also be seen in Nag Ashwin's magnum opus which is touted to be a science fiction drama.

Priyamani on being trolled for her skin colour, weight

National award-winning actress Priyamani is currently basking in the glory of her recently released web drama *The Family Man 2*, co-starring Samantha Akkineni and Manoj Bajpayee.

The actress recently opened up about trolls who called her names and would attack her for her colour and weight. The actress mentioned that the wicked abuse on the social media ranged from people calling her 'black', 'fat', 'aunty'. She added that some netizens even went to the extent of calling the actress a 'pig'!

The Yamadonga actress shared, "My weight increased to 65 kilos and I did look bigger than what I am right now. So a lot of people have said, 'You look fat, and big.' Now they are saying, 'Why you looking thin, we liked you when you were fat.'"

When they said 'She's 'looking black.' I said, 'Look, what is wrong, even if I am a dark-skinned person. Don't call anybody black, because black is beautiful.'

Priyamani who made her debut in Tollywood with *Evare Atagaadu* won many hearts with her performance in the south. She later entered the Hindi film industry with the movie *Raavan*, helmed by Mani Ratnam. The actress also appeared in a special song in *Chennai Express* and *Ateet*.



Chiru donates blood, urges fans to help save lives

Megastar Chiranjeevi on the occasion of Blood Donation Day on June 14, along with his wife Surekha Konidela, donated blood at the Chiranjeevi Eye and Blood Bank, Jubilee Hills in the city.

The actor and philanthropist urged his fans and the public to save lives through simple actions like donating blood.

Sharing a picture on his Twitter, the actor wrote, "On this #WorldBloodDonorsDay congratulating all Blood Donors & particularly

my #BloodBrothers & Sisters who help save lives. It's a great fortune that we can save precious lives thru such simple actions & form a bond for life wid fellow humans, through blood #DonateBloodSaveLives." (sic)

Recently, the Megastar set up an oxygen bank to reach out to those who are in need of critical medical care amid the pandemic.

On the work front, the actor is currently working on his upcoming film *Acharya*, that also has his son Ram Charan Tej playing a crucial role in it.



PRIYADARSHI: WANT TO MOVE OVER THE 'COMEDIAN' TAG

Actor Priyadarshi of *Pelli Choopulu* fame says that he wants to get out of the so-called image of a comedian and be known as an actor who can do whatever he is offered.

"As an actor, you want to come out of that comfort zone. I want to discover the endless possibilities through these characters, entering into worlds that are more challenging and scarier. The so-called image I have of a comedian, I also wanted to get out of that. The image is for the people to give me but I would rather not have an image associated with me and become an actor who can do whatever is asked of him," he shares.

Priyadarshi is known for his roles in films like *Arjun Reddy*, *Mallesham*, and, more recently, *Jathi*

Ratnalu. He will soon be seen in a crime thriller series titled *In The Name Of God*, where he portrays a complex and dark character.

"To discover these dark areas as a human being, my character Adi was the anchor that helped me to go into myself and discover those grey areas. That was a good exercise for me as an actor and something new to work for. I haven't done anything of this sort so far. This has been the most excruciating and rewarding journey for me," shares the actor.

"He has high aspiration and little of everything — of greed, love, lust — and puts himself in an inconvenient position. Somehow, he tries to seek redemption from all of this," the actor adds about his character. The series is scheduled to drop on the streaming platform *Aha* from June 18.



Anantapur accent in *Narappa*?



Venkatesh is starring in the remake of Dhanush's super-hit film *Asuran*. The film titled

Narappa is progressing at a brisk pace under the direction of Srikanth Addala.

Srikanth Addala according to sources has made a lot of changes in the original script keeping in view the Telugu sensitivities. Reports have it that the Telugu remake has an Anantapur backdrop and the entire cast will speak in an Anantapur accent.

Srikanth Addala for the realistic feel roped in lan-

guage experts and trained the entire cast in Anantapur accent. He is also taking due care while the artists are dubbing for their characters in the studio.

Priyamani is playing the role of Venkatesh's wife in the film for which music is scored by Manisharma. D.Suresh Babu and Kalaipuli Thanu are producing the film in a prestigious manner on Suresh Productions and V Creations banner.

The film also stars Karthik Ratnam, Prakash Raj, Murali Sharma, Sampath Raj in important roles.

LIGER TO WRAP IT UP IN HYDERABAD?



Director Puri Jagannath has planned to launch Vijay Devarakonda in a sensational manner in Bollywood with his high-octane action entertainer *Liger*. However, coronavirus put paid to all his dreams. But Puri is not backing off though all the plans of shooting the film lavishly in the exotic foreign locations are not happening.

According to the sources, the makers are planning to wrap the shoot of *Liger* in Hyderabad. The makers erected a beautiful set in Hyderabad and will soon

resume shooting once permissions are granted. Vijay Devarakonda is playing the role of a boxer in the sports-based entertainer and is sharing a screen presence with Ananya Pandey.

The film which comes with the tagline 'Saala Crossbreed' is releasing in the month of September. The film is made in Hindi, Telugu, Malayalam, and Kannada and is produced by Puri Connects, Dharma Productions. The film stars Ramya Krishna, Ronit Roy, Ali, Makarand Deshpande, in important roles, and music is scored by Manisharma and Tanishk Bagchi.