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Terror, radicalisation
world's gravest threats

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Sensex, Nifty fall
from record highs

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TS Gov lauds
Chiru for his deeds

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In brief

Ronaldo's Coca-Cola snub followed by \$4 bn drop in its market value

With a deadpan face and the slightest tinge of derision, star footballer Cristiano Ronaldo picks up two glass bottles of Coca-Cola, mutters the company's name and sets them aside before holding up a bottle of water. Not long after, the Euro 2020 sponsor saw its market value drop by \$4 billion. The captain of the Portugal football team is a well-known fitness enthusiast. At a press conference in Budapest before Portugal went up against Hungary at Euro 2020, Ronaldo made it well known what he feels about carbonated drinks.

ED issues summons to Khammam TRS MP Nama

The Enforcement Directorate has issued summons to Khammam MP and TRS Parliamentary Party leader in the Lok Sabha Nama Nageswara Rao to appear before it for an inquiry on June 25 in a case of diversion of loans availed from banks. The ED issued summons to all the accused in the Madhucon case, along with Nama Nageswara Rao. The ED conducted searches recently at Madhucon's corporate office and at the residences of the group's directors. It is learnt that the ED authorities seized cash and documents during the searches and they have been studying the documents, bank accounts, and contents of the hard discs recovered during the searches.

Japan to set 10,000 spectator cap ahead of Olympics

Japan is planning to set a cap of 10,000 fans at sports events ahead of the Olympics, a cabinet minister said Wednesday, as organisers weigh how many domestic spectators can attend the Games. The proposed measure would come into force after a Covid-19 state of emergency in Tokyo and other parts of the country ends on June 20, and would last until the end of August, said Yasutoshi Nishimura, the minister in charge of virus measures. It would limit spectators to 50 percent of a venue's capacity or 10,000 people, whichever is smaller, he said.

Republicans introduce Bill to fire Anthony Fauci

Several Republican lawmakers, eager to blame a US government official for the response to the coronavirus pandemic, introduced a bill Tuesday to fire Anthony Fauci, the face of American efforts to combat Covid-19. Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene led a handful of colleagues in announcing the so-called Fire Fauci Act, which would reduce the famed infectious disease expert's government salary to zero and require the Senate to confirm someone to fill his position. Fauci, who has advised seven US presidents, had become a trusted figure in the government's Covid-19 response, beginning with his work during Donald Trump's administration.

Centre, experts differ over vax dosage gap

WHO, experts say 8-12 weeks; govt okay with 12-16 weeks

NAVEENA GHANATE
HYDERABAD

Across the globe, there are concerted efforts to standardize vaccination and treatment protocol for Covid-19; yet, instead of adopting global benchmarks and standards, the Centre, by electing to differ with expert views, has only created confusion. For instance, in May the Union government increased the permissible gap for Covishield vaccine from 6-8 weeks to 12-16 weeks.

This was not done in line with any recommendations of the World Health Organization or other experts. The Central Government said it went by the advice of the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI) Covid working group.

However, the members of the organization have since told a new agency that 12-16 weeks' duration is something that the government had come out with, while the NTAGI had backed only increasing the dosing interval to 8-12 weeks -- echoing WHO view.

But now the government has turned the tables on the group members, saying no dissent was expressed by the members of NTAGI on increasing the gap. The MOHFW, in an official statement said, "This COVID-19 Working Group considered a proposal for a change in dose interval for Covishield used under the National Vaccination Policy."



India fought second wave using outdated drugs

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

India fought the second wave of Covid-19 with almost outdated science. It was in November 2020 that the World Health Organization (WHO) recommended against the use of Remdesivir in COVID-19 patients; yet, in the second wave, there was 'shortage' of this medicine. The country not only ramped up the production, but also got it as aid from other countries. A total of 34.5 lakh Remdesivir vials were allocated to the states and UTs from April 21 to May 9. While AP got 1.42 lakh vials of Remdesivir, TS

got 93,800 vials in this duration. WHO had last year issued a conditional recommendation against the use of Remdesivir for hospitalised patients, regardless of disease severity, as it could not find any conclusive evidence that the drug improves chances of survival and other outcomes among patients.

Not just Remdesivir, several drugs and therapies which the world has stopped using are still in vogue in India. The crisis was fought with outdated science; yet, it led to black-marketing of even those drugs!

Don't expect zero cases, prepare for 3rd wave: Jagan tells officials

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Pointing out that the partial curfew imposed across the state from May 5 has yielded good results with the number of Covid positive cases declining, Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Wednesday told officials not to expect the number of cases to ever reach zero.

"Focus should be laid on vaccination, also on following Covid protocols," the Chief Minister said. Jagan discussed the Covid situation with district collectors and SPs and also a wide range of other issues during the Spandana video-conference here.

The Chief Minister congratulated the entire health staff for the efforts in controlling Covid-19 and said that the number of cases have been decreasing for the past few days, which was a good sign.

"Masks, sanitisers and social distancing should continue to be a part of our lives," he said. It may be mentioned here that Jagan was the first politician to be pragmatic about the pandemic, saying that it was now part of our lives.

With regards to testing, Chief Minister instructed the authorities to conduct only RT-PCR tests on those with Covid symptoms and get them treated immediately. He also stressed on conducting fever surveys every week across all the villages for early tracing and treating.

The Chief Minister congratulated the district collectors for their efforts in implementing YSR Aarogyasri without burdening the poor, as 89 percent of people have taken Covid treatment under the health scheme. As on date, over 16,000 people are undergoing Covid treatment in the state of which more than 14,000 people are being treated under Aarogyasri.



Prepare action plan, officials told

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

During the Spandana meeting on Wednesday, Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy directed the authorities to be prepared for the third wave to face when it comes.

Since studies are showing that children could be primarily affected in the third wave, officials were instructed to be prepared with a good action plan, especially considering the treatment for children.

The Chief Minister informed that three state-of-the-art hospitals are being set-up for paediatric treatment — one each in Visakhapatnam, Krishna-Guntur area and Tirupati — and directed the Collectors to identify the land required in this regard.

He directed the officials to prepare an action plan at district level for the next two months and implement it.

He told the officials to check on the quality of ICU beds in teaching hospitals and provision of medical care to infants and ensure that oxygen beds are available at CHCs and area hospitals.

Further, the Chief Minister directed the officials not to deviate from the prescribed vaccination policy. He stated that the vaccine production in the country is very low and there is a need to increase the capacity to efficiently vaccinate people.

Although 3.5 crore people have to be vaccinated, so far only 26,33,351 have received two doses of vaccine, and 6,90,710 have received a single dose of vaccine. "There is a long way to go," said the Chief Minister.

IMA: Covid 2nd wave claimed 730 doctors

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 730 doctors have succumbed to coronavirus infection during the second wave, according to data available by the Indian Medical Association (IMA).

Bihar saw the maximum number of 115 deaths, followed by Delhi at 109, Uttar Pradesh 79, West Bengal 62, Rajasthan 43, Jharkhand 39, and Andhra Pradesh 38, the data showed.

According to the IMA, 748 doctors died in the first wave of the pandemic.

"Last year 748 doctors across



India succumbed to Covid-19, while in the current second wave, in a short period we have lost 730 doctors," a doctor associated with the IMA said.

Most drugs for treating adult Covid patients not for kids: Govt guidelines

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Drugs such as ivermectin, hydroxychloroquine, favipiravir and antibiotics like doxycycline and azithromycin prescribed for adult COVID-19 patients have not been recommended for treating children, according to a government guideline issued on Wednesday.

In anticipation of likely intermittent surges in the number of COVID-19 cases, the government has come out with guidelines for operationalising Covid-care services for children.

The recommendations include augmenting existing Covid care facilities to provide care to children with acute coronavirus infection.

HC suspends Group-1 interviews for 4 weeks

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh High Court on Wednesday ordered that the Group-1 interview process be suspended for four weeks. Notices were sent to the Secretary of the Andhra Pradesh Public Service Commission (APPSC) and the Secretary of General Administration Department to this effect.

The High Court on Wednesday issued interim orders after hearing a petition challenging the digital evaluation of Group-1 Mains exam answer scripts.

The interviews were scheduled to start from Thursday, but the stay order issued by the High Court has further delayed the process. It is learned that eight petitions have been filed in the High Court alleging irregularities in the conduct of



Govt notifies four new Members to Council

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The State government on Wednesday issued order notifying the nomination of four YSRCP leaders to the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council under the Governor's quota.

Two days ago, Governor Biswabushan Harichandan had approved the list forwarded by the government.

The notification came in the wake of the term of office of four members of the TDP — Janardhan, Samanthakamani, Beeda Ravichandra and Gownivaari Sreenivasulu — expiring on June 11. These four TDP leaders were nominated by the Governor to the Legislative Council.

UP Police books Twitter, others for circulating video

PNS ■ GHAZIABAD

Police here have booked Twitter, a news portal and six people for circulating a video in which an elderly Muslim man says he was thrashed and asked to chant 'Jai Shri Ram', claiming that it was done to create communal unrest.

The FIR was lodged at the Loni Border police station in Ghaziabad around 11.30 pm on Tuesday on the basis of a complaint lodged by a local policeman.

It names Twitter Inc, Twitter Communications India, news website The Wire, journalists Mohammed Zubair and Rana Ayyub, Congress leaders Salman Nizami, Masqoor Usmani, Dr. Sama Mohammad and writer Saba Naqvi.

"These people did not verify the truth of the matter and shared it online with a communal angle with an intention to disrupt public peace and create a divide between religious groups," the FIR states.

In the video clip, which surfaced

on social media on June 14, the elderly Muslim man, Abdul Shamad Saifi, is heard saying he was thrashed by some young men and asked to chant 'Jai Shri Ram'.

However, the Ghaziabad police has ruled out a communal angle. It said the accused were unhappy about a 'tabeez' (amulet) he sold to them.

A police official said on Wednesday that three people -- Kallou Gurjar, Parvesh Gurjar and Adil -- have been arrested for assaulting Saifi. Police are also looking for four others -- Polly, Himanshu, Arif and Murshid.

The FIR against Twitter and others states that the Ghaziabad police had issued a clarification statement with facts of the incident but despite that, the accused did not remove the video from their Twitter handles.



Six Maoists killed in encounter in Vizag

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Six members, including three women, of the outlawed CPI (Maoist) were killed in an alleged exchange of fire with the elite Greyhounds of Andhra Pradesh Police in Visakhapatnam district on Wednesday, while a fierce gunbattle took place between security forces and Maoists in neighbouring Odisha's Malkangiri district.

The deceased included the district committee commander Sande Gangajiah, they said. The remaining Maoists were identified as Ashok, Ranadev, Paik and Lalita. The identity of another woman Maoist was still to be established.

"So far, five of the deceased Maoists have been identified while the identity of a woman cadre is yet to be established," said Visakhapatnam SP B Krishna Rao.

He said the exchange of fire took place in the dense forest at Teegalametla under Mampa police station limits.



about 30 Maoists gathered in the forest area to conduct a clandestine meeting. They were said to be causing trouble to the local tribals. We sent our forces for a combing operation in the forest area," Krishna Rao said.

The SP said the Maoists opened fire at the police from a hillock and "refused to surrender despite repeated requests".

"In self-defence, our men returned the fire and surged ahead.

We then found the bodies of six Maoists in the forest. An AK-47, an SLR, a carbine, three .303 rifles and a tapancha (country pistol) were recovered from the spot," the SP added.

Police sources said the combing operations were continuing in the densely forested area. Additional forces were being deployed to the site of the incident.

Three Maoist couriers arrested, Rs 10 lakh seized

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Chintoor police on Wednesday arrested three persons at Gollagudem village in Chintoor mandal of East Godavari district on a tip-off that they were moving cash to Maoists.

Police seized Rs 9.93 lakh in cash from the trio, apart from three cell phones and two two-wheelers.

According to sources, all the three arrested were couriers of beedi contractors in mandal.

Chintoor DSP Khadar Basha has been investigating the involvement of others in arranging cash for Maoists by cooperating with the accused.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Jyeshtha & Shukla Paksha Panchangam

Tithi : Sapthami: 09:59 pm

Nakshatram : Purna Phtalguni: 10:13 pm

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

Rahukalam : 01:54 pm - 03:32 pm

Yamagandam : 05:45 am - 07:23 am

Varjyam : 06:14 am - 07:50 am, 12:00 am - 06:48 am

Gulika : 09:01 am - 10:39 am

Good Time : (to start any important work)

Amritakalam : 03:49 pm - 05:25 pm

Abhijit Muhurtham : 11:51 am - 12:43 pm

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Mostly cloudy

Temp: 34/27

Humidity: 59%

Sunrise: 05:42 am

Sunset: 06:52 pm

Current Weather Conditions Updated JUNE 16, 2021 5:00 PM

Petrochemical complex eludes State due to deadlock over VGF

SNV SUDHIR
VIJAYAWADA

Close to five years after it was first mooted, the proposed petrochemical complex at Kakinada remains a non-starter in investment-starved Andhra Pradesh. The project has been stuck between both the union and state governments over the Viability Gap Fund (VGF).

While the Centre wants the AP government to provide VGF, the state government is not forthcoming due to the financial crunch. The deadlock over the VGF has delayed the project that can bring around Rs 37,000 crore of investments besides providing employment to thousands along with many ancillary units.

VGF for Petrochemical Complex prominently figured during Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy's meeting with Union Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan last Monday in Delhi. The issue was followed up by the State Industries Minister Mekapati Goutham Reddy who met Pradhan on Wednesday.

Due to poor market conditions, the Union government scrapped the Petroleum Chemical Petrochemical



Investment Region (PCPIR) planned between Vizag and Kakinada and instead mooted Petrochemical Complex in 2016.

The Petroleum Ministry was keen on setting up the petrochemical complex instead of a greenfield oil refinery planned, earlier as an anchor company of PCPIR.

Due to the emerging market for petrochemical products, the Ministry was of the opinion that investors will also show interest in coming to this region. Setting up a petrochemical complex will need less investment when compared to an oil refinery.

It was in the last leg of the previous Chandrababu Naidu regime that the State government wrote to Pradhan seeking reduction in Internal Rate of Return (IRR) threshold for the proposed petrochemical cracker unit in the state.

HPCL and GAIL had come forward to set up the cracker unit provided the State government assured VGF based on the estimated IRR.

The State government requested the Centre to consider to reduce IRR of the proposed greenfield petrochemical complex to around 10 percent to 12 percent from the current IRR threshold of 14

percent on the lines of HPCL's Barmer refinery cum petrochemical complex, in Rajasthan for which the viability gap funding has been reduced from Rs 3,736 crore to Rs 1,123 crore per year by adjustment of IRR to 12 percent.

The detailed feasibility study for the petrochemical cracker unit with an investment of Rs 37,433 crore at Kakinada was done by Engineers India Ltd (EIL). Based on the preliminary financial appraisal by SBI Caps, with a debt-equity ratio of 2:1, the project will yield an IRR of 9.8 percent as against the hurdle rate of 15 percent.

In order to bridge this gap, the project proponents sought viability gap funding in the form of an interest-free loan of Rs 1,438 crore per year to be provided for a period of 15 years beginning from project zero date.

The interest-free loan of Rs 1,438 crore per annum will be repaid by GAIL/HPCL Joint venture Company commencing from the 16th year onwards and ending in the 30th year after project zero date, free of any interest.

Later, after several discussions the VGF was revised to Rs 975 crore.

As the Centre has asked for

Rs 975 crore per annum under VGF for 15 years, Jagan requested Pradhan to cut down the VGF since the state could not bear such a burden in the present circumstances.

Jagan also said that members have already been nominated for the Working Group on behalf of the state government to discuss the project modalities and asked the Centre to issue immediate directions to start the project.

"The Union Minister responded positively. As a result of the discussions, a working group has been constituted under the Chairmanship of Joint Secretary (Refineries), Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Government of India with the state government officials," said Mekapati Goutham Reddy.

He said that Engineers India Limited and SBI Caps were advised to re-work the financials in view of the recent regulatory changes in Corporate Tax and Interest Rates to take forward the strategic project in Andhra Pradesh. "Apart from direct employment there will be indirect employment that runs into lakhs with the kind of ancillary units that will come up once the petrochemical complex is set up," he said.

AP records 6,617 fresh Covid cases, 57 fatalities

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh's coronavirus caseload increased to 18,29,751 as 6,617 fresh cases were added in the 24 hours ending 9 am on Wednesday.

Recoveries rose to 17,43,176 after 10,228 patients got cured during the period, the latest bulletin said. With 57 more succumbing in a day, the overall Covid-19 toll climbed to 12,109, the bulletin said.

The state now has 71,466 active cases.

East Godavari district's total cases touched 2.50 lakh and Anantapur's 1.50 lakh on Wednesday. East Godavari now has the highest number

of 15,757 and Anantapur the lowest 1,611 active cases.

While other districts continued to show a declining trend, East Godavari remained the main hotspot, registering 1,397 fresh cases in a day.

West Godavari added 829 and Chittoor 780 new cases, while the remaining 10 districts registered less than 600 cases each. Chittoor and Guntur districts reported nine fresh Covid-19 fatalities each, Anantapur, East Godavari, Krishna and Srikakulam five each, Visakhapatnam and West Godavari four each, Kurnool three, Kadapa, SPS Nellore, Prakasam and Vizianagaram two each.

HC suspends Group-1 interviews for 4 weeks

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The interview of the Andhra Pradesh Group 1 service exam (2018) was slated to begin on June 17, the state public service commission, APPSC had notified earlier. The interview was to be held from 10 am to 5 pm on all working days from Monday to Friday in the Commission's office in Vijayawada. A total of 326 candidates were shortlisted for the interview based on the marks obtained by them in the main written exam which was held from December 14 to December 20, 2020. A total of 169 vacancies in various departments are to be filled through this exam.

Centre, experts differ over...

Continued from Page 1

It recommended that based on the real-life evidences, particularly from the United Kingdom (UK), the COVID-19 Working Group agreed for increasing the dosing interval to 12-16 weeks between two doses of Covishield vaccine was recommended.

It is important to note here that none of the three studies supposed to have been done reportedly looked at the results of a 16-week dose gap.

The Ministry added that this recommendation of the COVID-19 Working Group was further taken up for discussion in the 31st meeting of the Standing Technical Subcommittee (STSC) of NTAGI held on 13th May 2021 under

the joint chairpersonship of Secretary, Department of Biotechnology and Secretary, DHR & DG, ICMR". The STSC said, as per the COVID-19 Working Group recommendation, a dosing interval of minimum three months between two doses of Covishield vaccine was recommended.

Even after this claim by the government, one of the group members took a stand that there was no recommendation to increase the dose to 16 weeks.

The central government has been pointing to Spain and Canada which had increased the gap, and keeps stating that its own decision to increase the gap has nothing to do with shortage.

It may be mentioned here

that with CoWIN app, people cannot track when they can take their second dose. Consequently, even if someone wants to take a second dose based on actual evidences, they cannot.

Citizens of India need to follow rules made by the government and integrated with the app. These confusing guidelines will only push citizens to look for alternative means where they can just get vaccinated without being tracked. Already vaccine scams are being reported across the country, especially of cases in which the details are not being uploaded via the portal. Several doctors have been pitching for bringing back the vaccination interval to 8-12 weeks.

Most drugs for treating adult Covid...

Continued from Page 1

According to it, once vaccines are approved for children, those with comorbid conditions having more severe manifestations of COVID-19 and poorer outcomes should be a priority group for immunisation.

About the treatment of children, the guidelines by the Union Health Ministry said most drugs used in adults such as ivermectin, hydroxychloroquine, favipiravir and antibiotics such as doxycycline or azithromycin have not been tested on children for prevention or treatment of Covid infection among them.

"Therefore, these are not recommended in children." The guidelines stated it is anticipated that there may be intermittent surges in the number of coronavirus cases.

"A combined effort from the private and public sector is needed to handle any surge (in cases) in the future after the withdrawal of the lockdown, school reopening or as a third wave over the next three to four months. The basic principles of equity and dignity of care should be followed," it said.

The guidelines said estimates for additional bed capacity for paediatric care may be calculated based on peak daily cases in different districts dur-

ing the second wave of the COVID-19 infections. From this, projections for paediatric cases and the number of admissions required can be derived, it said.

"It is desirable to augment the existing Covid-care facilities to provide care to children with acute Covid. This will need additional paediatric-specific equipment, infrastructure and paediatric formulations.

"Also, an adequate number of trained manpower -- both doctors and nurses -- should be provided. The health authorities should initiate capacity building programmes for appropriate paediatric care. In standalone paediatric hospitals, separate arrangements, for example, separate beds for paediatric Covid care need to be set up," the guidelines said.

It is desirable to designate specific areas in the Covid facilities for paediatric care and parents should be allowed to accompany the child there.

"For children with Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome who test negative for acute Covid, care has to be provided by the existing paediatric facilities. These facilities also need augmentation especially HDU and ICU services," it said.

The document provides

guidance about additional requirements for infrastructure, equipment and manpower.

Noting that a majority of children have asymptomatic or mild illness and can be managed at home by parents, it said treatment for symptomatic patients include paracetamol for fever and monitoring conditions such as measuring respiratory rates, difficulty in respiration, oral intake and oxygen saturation.

"In a community setting, ASHA and MPW should be involved for management of children at home and also monitor to assess the need for referral and admission," the guidelines said.

The document stressed on imparting training to community health workers for picking up the red flag signs. Also, all stakeholders, including the community, should be educated by the information education communication.

For improving the quality of care and for capacity building, the guidelines recommended hand-holding of district hospitals and other facilities by medical colleges.

"A few centres may be designated as regional centres of excellence for Covid care and research. These centres can provide leader-

ship in clinical management and training. Telemedicine could be harnessed for reaching out to a large number of facilities," it said.

To ensure data collection at all levels and transmission from community to higher centres, the document recommended that a national registry be launched for paediatric Covid.

"There is a need to encourage and facilitate research in the area of paediatric Covid and this could cover various aspects of management. Similarly, issues of optimal treatment for MIS-C need to be addressed by clinical trials, such as comparison of low dose with high doses steroids, comparison of steroids with IVIG and others," it added.

The guidelines said that based on sero-surveillance reports, COVID-19 infection in children above 10 years of age occurs in a similar frequency to that of adults, even though among the confirmed cases less than 12 per cent are individuals less than 20 years of age.

"Children have less severe disease than adults. In the majority, the infection is asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic. It is uncommon to have moderate to severe Covid among healthy children," it noted.

India reports 62,224 cases, 2,542 deaths

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A single day rise of 62,224 new coronavirus infections were reported taking India's total tally of COVID-19 cases to 2,96,33,105, while the active cases were recorded below nine lakh after 70 days, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Wednesday.

The COVID-19 death toll climbed to 3,79,573 with 2,542 fresh fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed.

The active cases further declined to 8,65,432 comprising 2.92 per cent of the total infections, while the national COVID-19 recovery rate has improved to 95.80 per cent.

A net decline of 47,946 cases has been recorded in the COVID-19 caseload in a span of 24 hours.

Also, 19,30,987 tests were conducted on Monday taking the total cumulative tests conducted so far for detection of COVID-19 in the country to 38,33,06,971.

The daily positivity rate dropped to 3.22 per cent. It has been less than five per cent for nine consecutive days, the ministry said, adding the weekly positivity rate has declined to 4.17 per cent.

Recoveries continue to outnumber daily new cases for the 34th consecutive day. The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 2,83,88,100, while the case fatality rate stands at 1.28 per cent, the data stated.

Cumulatively, 26,19,72,014 COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered so far under the Nationwide Vaccination Drive.

Don't expect zero cases, prepare for...

Continued from Page 1

He instructed the authorities to focus on private hospitals and ensure that they strictly follow the rules and regulations put by the state government and not charge more than the rates fixed by the

Government.

Collectors should take action against those who violate the rules, charge more than the prescribed amount and not hesitate to shut down such hospitals, said the Chief Minister and added that penalties should be imposed

for making a mistake for the first time, if repeated cases should be filed.

It has been decided to give lands as an incentive to set up 16 private multi and super specialty hospitals in each district centre and each corporation, where Rs 100 crore

should be invested over a period of three years in setting up a hospital. "These private hospitals should be located in various cities and towns rather than in one place and get them empanelled with Aarogyasri," the Chief Minister said.

VIJAYAWADA BULLION RATES

GOLD	₹ 49,470 (10 gm)
SILVER	₹ 76,200 (1kg)
	₹ 160
	₹ 300

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG

Dressed/With Skin	₹180
Without Skin	₹205
Broiler at Farm	₹124

EGG RATES ₹/100

VIJAYAWADA	519
HYDERABAD	519
VISAKHAPATNAM	557
RETAIL PRICE	₹5.19

Six Maoists killed in...

Continued from Page 1

The sources added that a helicopter has been pressed for aerial survey over the encounter spot to track the fleeing Maoists, who are said to be top leaders of the banned outfit.

Krishna Rao said they have information that some other Maoists suffered injuries in the exchange of fire.

"If any such Maoists surrender to us, we will ensure better medicare for them. In the past we had admitted a woman Maoist, who was injured in a similar encounter, to hospital and extended treatment. So, they could come and surrender without any apprehensions," the SP said.

In Odisha's Malkangiri district, over 200 km from Visakhapatnam, a gunbattle broke out when the Special Operations Group of the Odisha police and

members of the district voluntary force, acting on intelligence inputs, began an operation in the Kulabeda forest area.

"As a combing operation was underway near Kulabeda village, the Maoists began sudden unprovoked firing. The forces also retaliated after appealing to them to surrender," said Rishikesh Khilari, superintendent of police of Malkangiri.

However, the Maoists managed to flee taking advantage of the terrain, he said.

Following the gunbattle, a large number of arms and ammunition, including an INSAS rifle, were recovered from the spot, the officer said.

The second wave of Covid had not only severely impacted the general public but also Maoists. Since over a year, the outlawed Maoists had been facing Covid

fatigue without access to proper medical care and also decline in the monthly money collection from their usual regular sources due to overall economic slowdown.

In the given scenario sensing that the ultras on a weak wicket Greyhounds have intensified the combing in the Maoists infested areas specially on Andhra Odisha Border (AOB) areas since a month.

The encounter took place during one such intense combing operation on Wednesday.

The outlawed Maoists who had suffered during the first wave of Covid had announced a ceasefire in April last year. However, breaking its own ceasefire they recouped and attacked the security forces in Chhattisgarh in April first week in which 22 security personnel died in Sukma district.



Three Maoist couriers...

Continued from Page 1

According to the DSP, accused Sheikh Shashuddin (45), Sadi Raju (22) of Abhicharla village in Kunavaram mandal and Sonde Mudaraju (40) of

Murumuru village in Etapaka mandal were arrested during routine vehicle inspections while there were moving about suspiciously at Gollagudem junction in Chittoor mandal.

It was revealed that Rs 9.93 lakh was being taken to fund the banned Maoists. Khadar Basha said that a case has been registered against the Maoist couriers and they have been arrested.

Govt notifies four new...

Continued from Page 1

With the seats falling vacant, the Governor nominated the four person chosen by the YSRCP under sub-clause (e) of clause (3) read with clause (5) of Article 171 of the Constitution of India.

A GO issued on Wednesday said: "In pursuance of Section 74 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 (Central Act 43 of 1951), the Government of Andhra Pradesh notified four names of the members so nominated: Thota Thrimurthulu, Lella Appi Reddy, Koye Moshenu Raju and Ramesh Yadav Rajagolla".

Hike in property tax nothing but injustice to all, protests CPM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Leaders of the Left parties on Wednesday took part in a protest against the State government decision to abnormally increase property tax at the ward secretariat near Besant Road.

Demanding the state government to roll back the property tax hike, the protesters said that it is an unwanted burden on the people, especially during the Covid crisis.

Addressing the protesters, CPM State Executive Committee member Ch Babu Rao found fault with the State and Central governments for increasing property taxes and garbage tax during the pandemic time instead of extending support to the poor.

Babu Rao said that the Modi government has totally failed to save lives of people from Covid and has increased property tax which was nothing but injustice. "The YSRCP, that came to power to safeguard the interest of the people, has surrendered to the conditions of the Central government," he stated. Babu Rao said that the State and Central governments were jointly doing injustice to the people living in urban areas and turning civic services into business entities.

He ridiculed the taxes on



Tax based on property values unacceptable, says Butchaiah

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

drinking water, drainage and garbage collection, stating that these were being decided by the Central government and not at the local level, which was against the Constitution of India.

The CPM leader said that it is ridiculous that BJP leaders in the state were taking part in protest against the government, raising the issue of a hike in property tax.

"The BJP leaders should protest in front of Modi's house in Delhi and demand scrapping of the dangerous conditions of taxes," he said. Babu Rao said that Municipal Minister Botsa Satyanarayana was misleading the people by saying that the house tax burden will not exceed 15 per cent and not more than Rs 186 crore.

Telugu Desam Party senior leader and MLA Gorantla Butchaiah Chowdary on Wednesday strongly objected to the YSRCP Government's "adamant attitude" to go ahead with the new property tax system despite all round protests from the public and civil society organisations.

Butchaiah Chowdary termed it as laughable on the part of Municipal Minister Botsa Satyanarayana to say that the new property tax hike was only about 15 per cent or so. "Contrary to the Minister's claims, the people from all parts of the State

were lodging their severe protests. The State Government was not at all listening to the grievances of the public so that it could correct its mistake," he said.

In a statement here, the TDP MLA asked how the YSRCP regime could cancel the age-old system of calculating property tax based on the rental values. "Quite arbitrarily, the new system was introduced to calculate tax based on the values of the property concerned. This was placing a heavy burden on the people. The house owners in the urban areas were greatly disturbed at this new taxation," he said.

Butchaiah Chowdary

demanded the Government to reconsider its decision before the people step up to take their protests to the next level. "The ardent pleas from various sections of society were falling on deaf ears in the present Jagannathan Reddy rule," he said.

The TDP MLA deplored that the YSRCP Government has been on a mission to break the backs of middle classes and poorer sections in the State since it came to power. "A select few in the ruling party were becoming richer while all other sections were becoming poorer and more disadvantaged," he said.

CII AP distributes face shields to hospitals

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

CII, Andhra Pradesh Chapter, on Wednesday distributed high end face shields at the Government, Railway and Mahatma Gandhi Cancer hospitals in Visakhapatnam as part of Covid related initiative. These masks are meant for the utilisation of frontline work forces such as doctors, nurses and hospital staff.

These high-end face shields have been identified as an effective option to secure the working conditions of doctors and staff of the hospitals from spread of virus through aerial means.

CII Andhra Pradesh, with the help of Siva Kumar Gunturu, past chairman-CII-AP, acquired the face masks from Maskon.org, USA. Maskson's volunteers generously donated these face shields through Sanjay Vakhli and Latha Mangipudi, state representative from Nashua, New Hampshire USA.

Andhra Medical College principal PV Sudhakar, Dr MK Ramakrishna, Chief Medical Superintendent, Divisional Railway Hospital, Dr V Murali Krishna, Convenor, CII AP Healthcare and Wellness Panel, KVV Raju, Past Chairman, CII Vizag zone were present.

TDP: Lease extended to influence witnesses

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP AP president and MLA K Atchannaidu on Wednesday questioned the propriety and legality of extending the lease period for the mines held by India Cements by 50 years by the Jagannathan Reddy Government, describing it as "blatant misuse of power and authority".

Atchannaidu said that a similar arbitrary extension of lease was already given for Saraswati Cements immediately after Jagannathan Reddy came to power. "Obviously, the Chief Minister was bent on giving permissions to his co-accused in his CBI and ED cases to loot the natural resources. The ongoing mining benefits were only aimed at influencing the witnesses in the illegal assets cases," he alleged.

In a statement here, the TDP leader deplored that not a single paisa of development took place in the past two years of the YSRCP regime.

"No new industries came and no new jobs were created. The living standards of people declined alarmingly low and touched rock bottom. However, huge benefits were being given to the Chief Minister's co-accused and their companies. Also, officers involved in Jagannathan Reddy's illegal assets cases were given top positions in the Government," he alleged.

Atchannaidu accused the Chief Minister of resorting to historic corruption by plundering public resources worth thousands of crores during the quid pro quo - 1 under his father YSR rule. "Now, Jagannathan Reddy has himself come to power and unveiled an even more exploitative 'quid pro quo-2'. The State's natural wealth and resources were being handed over on a golden platter to all those who were hand in glove with the Chief Minister in his massive corruption," he alleged.



Govt releases annuity for Amaravati farmers

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The YS Jagannathan Reddy government on Wednesday released Rs 195 crore as annuity payment for the farmers who had surrendered their lands under the land pooling scheme for the development of Amaravati.

The annuity was supposed to be paid in May every year as per the agreement between the farmers and the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh Capital Region Development Authority (APCRDA).

This year, however, the payment was not made till the second week of June and farmers approached the High Court on Monday.

Last year, too, the annuity payment was delayed till August and the farmers had to move the High Court, besides staging dharna at the APCRDA office.

As per the agreement signed with the APCRDA in 2015, each farmer has to be paid a yearly amount of Rs 30,000 per acre for dry lands to Rs 50,000 per acre for wetlands for a period of 10 years.

Vets thank Appala Raju for affecting promotions

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Veterinarians of the Andhra Pradesh Animal Husbandry Officers Services Association on Wednesday met Minister of Animal Husbandry Seediri Appala Raju in his chambers and thanked him for addressing the long pending issues of promotions to assistant directors and deputy directors.

Felicitating the Minister, Dr T Sai Gopal, vice-president of the Association expressed his gratitude on behalf of the members. He said that 18 veterinary doctors waiting for promotion were promoted as joint directors and 30 as deputy directors due to the initiative taken by Appala Raju. Dr Gopal said that for the last three years there are many administrative hurdles and the



Minister took personal interest to clear the issues.

He said that the Association expressed its gratitude to the Minister and reiterated their commitment to fulfil the aspirations of Chief Minister YS Jagannathan Reddy.

He said that the Minister

assured that all the employees' issues will be solved and the Jagannathan Reddy government was committed to their welfare.

State association president Dr Jayachandra, joint director Dr Vidya Sagar and other office bearers were present.

TDP won't allow Class X, Inter students to lose a year, warns Lokesh

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP national general secretary and MLC Nara Lokesh on Wednesday warned of dire consequences if the Class X and Intermediate students of Andhra Pradesh lost a full academic year because of the 'irresponsible' decisions of the Jagannathan Reddy Government.

Lokesh asserted that the TDP would not remain silent but would start one more legal struggle to save the academic year of the students under any circumstances. With his confusing statements, the Education Minister was creating turmoil and uncertainty with regard to the conduct of the exams, he said.

Addressing a virtual meeting with experts on 'Government's thoughtless



decisions and loss of an academic year', Lokesh demanded the Jagannathan Reddy regime to remove uncertainties regarding the exams.

The Minister made contradictory statements that the exams would be held in July and there would be one more

postponement if the exams could not be held, he said.

Lokesh said that going by the Government's decisions, it would take at least October to complete the exams and announce results. "One more month would take to take up admissions for next academ-

ic year. Then, just four months would be left for the students to complete one year's syllabus in just a quarter. It was perplexing why the ruling YSRCP was not considering the concerns of the students at all," he said.

Condemning the Government's reckless attitude, Lokesh recalled how all States in India except AP and Assam have cancelled exams. The CBSE and the ICSE exams have already been cancelled all over the country. In Telangana, they were giving admissions into undergraduate courses solely based on EAMCET performance by removing weightage to Intermediate marks. But the government was making false excuses instead of finding such solutions to protect the students' interests, he alleged.

One arrested for sharing morphed image of MLA

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

One person was taken into custody by the Hussainiwalam police on Tuesday night on charges of sharing a morphed image of Charminar AIMIM legislator Mumtaz Ahmed Khan on social media platforms.

A complaint was made

against the Facebook account by AIMIM party workers on Tuesday, following which the police identified the person and detained him. The man had found a video which used morphed images of the MLA circulating on social media platforms and shared it on Facebook, police said.

Sathya Sai Seva extends helping hand Covid affected

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Volunteers of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva across Andhra Pradesh have been extending yeoman services to the needy throughout the state during the pandemic.

The organisation has been proactive in helping the needy with the ideology of 'Love All-serve All', 'Maanasevaye- Madhava seva'. Thousands of devotees have been rendering exemplary service ever since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, the organisation said in a release on Wednesday.

Dwaram Swamy, state in-charge of Sri Sathya Sai Seva, said that some of the services being rendered by the organisation are telemedicine services, medical helpline services comprising 109 doctors. The alumni of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning are also actively participating in these services, he said.

The organisation provides oxygen and has saved the lives of many patients infected with Covid and needed immediate oxygen support.

Dwaram Swamy said that medicines were provided to the needy besides providing protein rich food and dry fruits to boost the immunity system. They distributed essential items to the poor along with masks and sanitisers, he said.

Bharat Biotech supplies Covid vaccine to 16 states

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Bharat Biotech dispatched its Covid-19 vaccine Covaxin to nine states through the government of India and to 16 states through the respective state governments.

Company's co-founder and joint managing director Suchitra Ella on Wednesday tweeted that Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Delhi, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Telangana were supplied the vaccines through government of India from June 8 to 14.

The Hyderabad-based vaccine

maker also made supplies to 16 states during the same period. The states are Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Tripura, Uttarakhand and West Bengal. She also tweeted that vaccine doses were also dispatched to private hospitals in 27 cities across the country from June 8 to 14. These include Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Bangalore and Hyderabad. A total of seven cities in Telangana and Andhra were dispatched the vaccine under this

category. "Our mission is to deliver Covaxin to your towns-cities & states. Pls register & vaccinate @govt or pvt hospitals near you," tweeted Suchitra Ella.

The company had Monday defended differential pricing policy for the central and state governments and private sector. It said that the supply price of Covaxin to the government of India at Rs 150 per dose, is a non-competitive price and clearly not sustainable in the long run. Hence a higher price in private markets is required to offset part of the costs, it said in a statement.

Twelve arrested for kidnap and assault of driver

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Gandhinagar Police with the assistance of the Hyderabad Task Force (South) arrested twelve persons for kidnapping a driver and assaulting him on Tuesday night.

P Vishwa Prasad, DCP said the gang had kidnapped Ali Patel while he was on his way from Bholakpur to Balanagar. The gang confined him throughout the night, assaulted him and threatened him with dire consequences.

RGLA to enhance passenger safety

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Rajiv Gandhi International Airport on Wednesday announced that it has implemented Queue Management Systems combining IoT security cameras and AI video analytics that help improve passenger experience by reducing waiting time at passenger touch points.

The airport operator which has pioneered many technological initiatives for a passenger friendly journey has collaborated with technology partner AllGoVision Technologies, in this implementation.

Ensuring Covid pandemic protocols are adhered at the airport for the safety of passengers and for the safety of staff has become critically



important for airport operations in the present pandemic times. Queue management at various touch points of the airport such as entry, check-in, security, immigration, and reducing passenger wait time are key to enhanced passenger experience and safety, GHIAL said.

The advanced video analytics platform analyses the video feed from various cam-

eras and uses Deep Learning based Artificial Intelligence (AI) models to accurately estimate passenger statistics over time. In addition to Queue Management analytics, GHIAL is also using the technology for enhanced security such as camera tampering, loitering, parking violation, object classification, wrong way detection and left object detection.

Ashok visits Simhachalam temple

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Days after he won a legal battle and was reinstated as the chairperson of Maharaja Alak Narayan Society of Arts and Science (MANSAS) and Simhachalam Devasthanams Trusts, Ashok Gajapathi Raju on Wednesday visited the Simhachalam temple in Visakhapatnam and offered special silk robes (sesha vastram) to the deity and received prasadam.

Speaking to the media persons after visiting the temple, Ashok Gajapathi Raju alleged that he was not given due respect by the temple authorities, which was an age-old practice.

"The temple authorities are not following courtesies or pro-



toocol these days and I have to visit the deity as a common devotee," an upset Ashok Gajapathi Raju said.

He questioned the temple authorities about protocol and was told that they were following Covid protocol and did not

welcome him as per the traditional practice of purnakumbhamam.

He said that one should go with the traditional practices followed by ancestors. "One has to worship as per faith, and respect the religion of others but now it seems to be lacking," Ashok Gajapathi Raju said, making it clear that he was deeply hurt. It is recalled that on Monday, the AP High Court scrapped the GO issued by the YSRCP government in March 2020 replacing Ashok Gajapathi Raju with his niece Sanchaita Gajapathi Raju as the chairperson of MANSAS and Simhachalam trusts.

After more than a year, Ashok Gajapathi Raju was reinstated by the High Court.

Relief to people as Corona cases come down in East Godavari dist

DHV SAMBASIVA RAO
KAKINADA

In a major relief to the people, Corona impact has come down in East Godavari district, resulting in a substantial fall in the mortality rate. However, seasonal fevers have started bothering the people of the district.

The highest number of Corona cases began in May across the district. Every day, over 3,000 positive cases of Corona were reported. The number has been decreasing steadily since the beginning of June. So far, 2.49 lakh people have been infected with the virus. A total of 1,059 people have died. Most of the deaths that occurred were related to the cases that were recorded last month.

Patients remained in home isolation and the fear among the masses has gone. This reduced the number of deaths. In the past many, many people died due to fear and there was a dearth of oxygen. Now, the need for ventilators has gone and beds are available in all government and private hospitals.

Meanwhile, seasonal diseases have started in the district at present due to the onset of monsoon. The recent spells



of rain have led to an increase in common fevers including malaria and typhoid.

Speaking to The Pioneer, Dr. Srinivasa Nayak, Divisional Medical Officer, Kakinada, District Medical & Health Department, said that if a week-long course will cure the seasonal diseases. He also said that the rains can cause minor ailments such as

fever, headaches and diarrhoea, and there is no need to worry about them.

If the fever information is given to volunteers, Asha workers and ANMs who come to their homes for a fever survey, they would undergo a medical examination. Covid cases have been reduced due to fever surveys in the district. The beds here are in the budget range of common people. The number

Details of Corona cases in East Godavari district in June

Date	Positive cases	Death toll
June 09	1,980	7
June 10	1,416	6
June 11	1,271	5
June 12	1,167	6
June 13	1,199	7
June 14	619	4
June 15	831	6

of hospitals providing private medical care to Corona has been reduced. Better medical treatments are being provided at the government hospitals.

The number of cases registered in the district has come down drastically in the last three days. It is believed that Corona case will come down further if the curfew, which will be in force till the June 20, is enforced more vigorously. The authorities and the people now heave a sigh of relief as the pandemic shows signs of decline.

AP steeped in debts, Raghurama writes to PM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Narasapuram MP Raghurama Krishnam Raju has written a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi saying that Andhra Pradesh is in a hurry to take debts beyond its capability and eligibility. He said in his letter that in the year 2020, an amount of Rs 9,226 crore was borrowed on an average every month. Raghurama revealed that Rs 13,000-crore loan was taken for free schemes alone. The State took debts beyond the FR BM range.

As a result, an amount of 35,000 crore has to be paid for debt servicing alone. He explained that government assets were being transferred to Andhra Pradesh State Development Corporation (APSDC) and they are being mortgaged and borrowed. He pointed out that APSDC has already taken loans of Rs 10,000 crore from various banks. Another Rs 3,000 crore is being sought for implementation of free schemes.

Girl set afire by parents, brother over love affair with relative

PNS ■ KADAPA

In a ghastly incident, a girl was set afire by her parents by dousing her with petrol for refusing to marry a boy they suggested to her. The incident took place in the Kottapalli area of Rayachoti town in Kadapa district on Tuesday night. The girl is now battling for life in hospital.

According to Rayachoti CI G Raju, Pathan Tejseem, 25, daughter of Pathan Mohammad Sharif of Kottapalli in Rayachoti town, fell in love with a young man named Imran, their close relative. She told her parents that she would not marry anybody other than Imran.

As a result, the parents put pressure on their daughter to get married to the person they recommended, forgetting her love affair.

As she refused to obey them, her parents, Pathan Mohammad Sharif, Bibi and younger brother Tajuddin poured petrol on her and set her on fire.



Her sister and locals came and provided first-aid to Tejseem at a private hospital in Rayachoti and later shifted to RIMS Hospital in Kadapa for better treatment.

Based on the statement given by the victim, the police registered an attempt to murder case against her parents and younger brother and started investigation.

Meanwhile, Rayachoti DSP R Vasudevan said all the three accused in the case were arrested and were produced in court.

Balineni couple distributes Anandaiah herbal medicine

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Minister for Power, Forests, Environment and Science and Technology Balineni Srinivasa Reddy has said that steps have been taken to distribute Anandaiah medicine to the people in the district.

Srinivasa Reddy, along with his wife Sachidevi, distributed the Anandaiah Corona herbal medicine to the people of the city on Wednesday.

Speaking on the occasion, the minister said that the Corona drug had already been distributed twice to the people of Ongole constituency. He said the herbal medicine was distributed in Ongole constituency to 10,000 people on Wednesday.

Srinivasa Reddy said the people had faith in Anandaiah's herbal medicine and added that steps would be taken to dis-



tribute the Corona drug to the people in other constituencies after completion of distribution in Ongole constituency in the district.

He said steps would be taken to distribute it door-to-door through the secretariats in all

villages of the district.

The programme was attended by Ongole Municipal Corporation Mayor Gangada Sujatha, Deputy Mayor Vemuri Suryanarayana, City YSRCP president Shingaraju Venkata Rao, corporators and others.

Rs 25 L compensation paid to kin of deceased doctor

PNS ■ KAKINADA

East Godavari District Collector D Muralidhar Reddy has said that Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has been implementing a special programme to provide all possible assistance to the families of the medical and health personnel who die of Covid in the line of duty. He handed over a cheque for Rs 25 lakh on Wednesday to the relatives of deceased doctor from the district Dr. Kandikanta Roji.

Dr. Kandikanta Roji of Mori village in Sakshinipalli mandal of the district was diagnosed with the virus after completing her MBBS at the ASRAM Medical College in Eluru, where she was a house surgeon and served Covid patients. She died at a hospital in Mori on June 1.

The Collector handed over



the cheque for Rs 25 lakh to her brother Rakesh.

Joint collectors Dr. G Lakshmi Shah, Kirti Chakuri, G Rajkumar, Assistant Collector Geetanjali Sharma, DRO Ch Sattibabu and others participated.



DSC-1998 qualified teachers protest at minister's house

PNS ■ GUNTUR

The DSC-qualified candidates of 1998 batch only, ignoring 1998 and 2012 batches. Somasekar questioned the minister's special interest in recommending to the Chief Minister that contract posts should be given to candidates of only the 2008 batch.

He recalled the promise made by the CM during padayatra to the DSC-98 batch and appealed to him to fulfil the promise.

Bal Reddy from Prakasam district, Manohar Jnana Prakash, Mohan Rao, Vishwaroop from Guntur district, Nancy Komala and Swati from Krishna district took part in the protest.

The Mangalagiri police arrested the protesters.

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Gurukul school principal suspended

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Balayogi Gurukulam Principal EVR Giri Kumari at Karampudi in Guntur district has been suspended by Balayogi Gurukul Principal Secretary Sunita. A few days ago, it was accused in the social media that the principal was not providing proper food to students. Following this, district social welfare officials visited the school, conducted an inquiry and sent a report to the State-level authorities. Principal Secretary of the department Sunita issued orders suspending principal Giri Kumari after the charges made against her were found to be true. Venkateswara Rao, a senior lecturer working in the school, has been given additional responsibilities as in-charge principal.



Contract medical staff stage protest for health insurance

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Contract medical employees have expressed concern over the lack of insurance cover for nursing and Asha workers who are frontline workers in the Medical and Health department.

They demanded the withdrawal of a GO that says health insurance does not apply to contract employees. Contract employees staged a protest at the Guntur Government General Hospital on Wednesday as part of the protest across the State.

They wore black badges and raised slogans against the government with placards. In Guntur district, 3,200 Asha workers and 1,800 ANMs have been working on contract basis. They explained that 90 per cent of government hospitals employ nursing staff, paramedics and lab staff as contract employees. The relatives of those who died of Covid are waiting for insurance.

APNS State secretary Victoria said the State government should recognize the services of nursing officers who are saving the lives of patients.

Who tried to spoil broth for 2 MLCs?

MARTHI SUBRAHMANYAM
AMARAVATI

Internal squabbles within the ruling YSRCP have come to the fore with the party reportedly initiating a probe into who has written a letter to the Governor opposing the candidature of two MLCs.

Discussions have now started in the party circles that YSRCP leaders have complained to the Governor about the selection of Lella Appi Reddy from Guntur district and Thota Trimurthulu from East Godavari district. As a result, the party leadership hoped that the list sent by the government is put on hold by the Governor without immediate approval. According to sources, the party leadership is now trying to figure out as to who has written the letter to the Governor over the issue.

In fact, Trimurthulu, who had earlier contested on behalf of the TDP from Ramachandrapuram in East Godavari district, joined the YSRCP shortly after the election. Subhash Chandra Bose, the current MP and Chennuboina Venugopala Krishn have long been his political enemies. Trimurthulu belongs to Kapu category while Bose and enu



belong to BC communities. Bose and Venu factions have, for days, blocked Trimurthulu's attempts to join the YSRCP after the electoral defeat. However, in the end, the party leadership did not heed their word and not only included the Trimurthulu in the party, but also gave the post of Amalapuram Parliamentary Party president and Mandapeta Assembly in-charge mandate to the displeasure of the YSRCP seniors working in the party from the very beginning.

Meanwhile, Bontu Rajeshwara Rao, who contested from Razole and lost in the 2014 and 2019 elections, was also hoping for the post of MLC under Governor quota from East Godavari district. However, the party favoured Trimurthulu in the end and this did not go down well with these groups.

As soon as the Governor announced the name of Trimurthulu in the quota, the

propaganda that these groups were united and complained to the Governor has been going on in the party circles.

Trimurthulu's opponents were reported to have mentioned in the letter to the Governor the pending SC/ ST atrocities case against him.

Now by complaining to the Governor about the pending case, the desire of Trimurthulu's detractors have come to the fore even as the Governor had accepted the Government's recommendation, though they wished to prevent him from getting to the MLC.

In the Chilakaluripet constituency of Guntur district, YSRCP senior leader Marri Rajasekhara, who belongs to the Kamma community, was not given a ticket in the last elections as it was offered to Vidudala Rajini, who came from the TDP. Marri's followers publicly protested against it. However, Jagan

Mohan Reddy had said in the last election campaign that he would give the MLC post to Marri Rajasekhara and sit next to him. So far, he has not been given any post. Moreover, discussion is going on openly about the blessings of a prominent figure in the government over Chilakaluripet MLA Rajani, helping him. There is also a talk in party circles that if Marri Rajasekhara was given the MLC seat, his influence is likely to be big and hence that prominent figure in the government himself indirectly helped the MLC by stepping into the fray and giving the seat to Lella Appi Reddy.

In this context, the announcement of the MLC seat for Lella Appi Reddy from the same Guntur district and the details of the criminal cases against him going to the Governor in the form of a complaint was the reason why the leadership was late in learning that there were rivals to Lella Appi Reddy and Thota Trimurthulu. With that, CM Jagan himself had to step into the field and meet the Governor to request him to approve the list.

It is learnt that the party leadership has started an inquiry into who had complained to the Governor.

2 siblings in clutches of rare debilitating disease

A CHANDRA SEKHAR
ONGOLE

They look healthy like normal children. They play and sing around perfectly well as other children of their age. But they suddenly fall to the ground while sitting and cannot hold on to anything.

This is the pathetic condition of two siblings Dande Lasith Ayyan and Dande Mokshit, his younger brother Gaddalagunta in Ongole city. They are afflicted by a rare debilitating disease called Type II of Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA). And, the agony of their parents Vinay Kumar and Vedavati is unsurmountable.

Ayyan underwent genetic tests at a private hospital after



he showed no sign of movement for six months since his birth. It was then that doctors discovered that he has been

suffering from Type SMA. However, the doctors say there is no treatment for the disease and that the children should be

taken care of as long as they survive.

Vinay, who ekes out a living in Hyderabad as an interior designer, and his wife were shocked to know that their second son Mokshit too was born with a similar condition. However, Mokshit suffers from a milder version.

According to medical experts, the disease affects the muscles of the spine and causes severe symptoms such as muscle weakness and inability to sit, walk and stand on a regular basis. The injections required for treatment cost about Rs 3 crore a year, doctors said.

Speaking to The Pioneer, Vinay said that in December 2017, a company called Biogen in the US launched a drug

called Spin Raj for the disease. However, the cost of five injections in the first year is Rs 5 crore and another Rs 3 crore would have to be spent every year subsequently. Vinay said that in 2019, some companies had launched an oral drug called Residiplum, but doctors said that the drug, which costs Rs 80,000 a day, should be taken every day, but the drug is not available in India.

Vedavati said that one of the American companies had made an injection for 5-year-old children and they were trying to give the drug to her youngest son Mokshit. She said the one-time injection would cure the disease, which costs Rs 16 crore and that the US-based Direct Relief Fund

organization was ready to give free medicine to 360 infected children across the globe, including their youngest son Mokshit, which would be coming soon. She said they were worried over the fate of their elder son.

Vinay said they appealed to the Chief Minister and the Prime Minister for financial assistance and had also approached the management of Cloud Funding Impact Guru. They have also started fundraising efforts through the Ongole-based Asif Anvesh Smile Again organization. They appealed to the donors to contact their phone numbers 77993 73777 and 8977274151 to support saving their children's lives.



Ganja worth Rs 60 L seized, 2 held

PNS ■ ELURU

Eluru DSP Dilip Kiran said two ganja peddlers were arrested and Rs 60 lakh worth of the contraband was seized from them on Wednesday. Addressing the media, the DSP said that on a

tip-off they intercepted a lorry going to Hyderabad from Vishakapatnam. Two persons Rasananda Padan and Suboda Padan, both from Orissa, were arrested, he said and added that a case was registered against the accused.

Terrorism, radicalisation gravest threats the world faces: Rajnath

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Terrorism and radicalisation are the "gravest threats" to peace and security in the world and a collective approach is required to combat the challenges, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Wednesday.

In a virtual address at the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus), Singh also highlighted India's concerns over maritime security challenges while noting that developments in the South China Sea attracted attention in the region and beyond, an oblique reference to China's aggressive behaviour in the critical waterways.

The defence minister called for ensuring a free, open and inclusive order in the Indo-Pacific based on respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations, peaceful resolution of disputes through dialogue and adherence to international rules and laws.

Delving into the coronavirus crisis, Singh said India is just emerging from a second wave of the infection that pushed the



country's medical response to the "limit" and called for a concerted global approach like making available patent-free vaccines, unhindered supply chains and ensuring greater medical capacities to defeat the pandemic.

Referring to the threat of terror networks, Singh called for strong action against those encouraging, supporting and financing terrorism and providing shelter to terrorists, remarks seen as directed at Pakistan.

"Terrorism and radicalisa-

tion are the gravest threats to peace and security that the world is facing today," he said.

The defence minister said India, as a member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), remained committed to combating financing terrorism.

"India shares global concerns about terrorism and believes that in an era when networking amongst terrorists is reaching alarming proportions, only through collective cooperation can the terror organisations and their net-

works be fully disrupted, the perpetrators identified and held accountable," he said.

ADMM-Plus is a platform comprising 10-nation ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and its eight dialogue partners -- India, China, Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russia and the United States.

Talking about the Indo-Pacific, Singh said India has strengthened its cooperative engagements in the region based on converging visions and values for the promotion of peace, stability, and prosperity in the region.

"Premised upon the centrality of ASEAN, India supports utilisation of ASEAN-led mechanisms as important platforms for implementation of our shared vision for the Indo-Pacific," the defence minister said.

He said the sea lanes of communication are critical for peace, stability, prosperity and development of the Indo-Pacific region.

"Maritime security challenges are another area of concern to India. The sea

lanes of communication are critical for peace, stability, prosperity and development of the Indo-Pacific region," he said.

"In this regard, developments in the South China Sea have attracted attention in the region and beyond. India supports freedom of navigation, overflight, and unimpeded commerce in these international waterways.

"India hopes that the Code of Conduct negotiations will lead to outcomes that are in keeping with international law, including the UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea) and do not prejudice the legitimate rights and interests of nations that are not a party to these discussions," he said.

China claims sovereignty over all of the South China Sea, a huge source of hydrocarbons. However, several ASEAN member countries, including Vietnam, the Philippines and Brunei, have counterclaims.

On the coronavirus pandemic, Singh said its disruptive effect is still unfolding.

India's exports up 46 pc to \$14 bn during June 1-14

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's exports rose by 46.43 per cent to USD 14.06 billion during June 1-14 on account of healthy growth in shipments in sectors such as engineering, gems and jewellery and petroleum products, according to preliminary data of the commerce ministry.

Imports too rose by 98.33 per cent to USD 19.59 billion during the period, the data showed.

Exports of sectors such as engineering, gems and jewellery and petroleum products are recording healthy growth rates.

The exports grew by 52.39 per cent to USD 7.71 billion



during the first week of this month and by about 40 per cent to USD 6.35 billion during the second week of this month, according to the data.

Exports during Apr-May this fiscal year jumped to USD 62.89 billion, as against USD 29.41 billion in the same period last year.

Wild elephant rescued from open well

PNS ■ KOCHI

A wild elephant that had fallen into an open well in a tribal settlement under Neriamangalam forest limit was rescued on Wednesday, forest officials said.

The incident was reported from Pinavoor kudy tribal settlement under Valara forest station this morning, they said.

According to the officials, the 18-year-old female elephant was rescued from the 12-foot well after a three-hour-long operation, they said.

A pathway was created by breaking the side of the well using an earthmover and after coming out of the well, the jumbo went into the forest, the officials said.

Officials said the elephant might have fallen into the well in a private rubber plantation on Tuesday.

She added, "Had the SP been even a bit honest towards these suspended MLAs, it would have not kept them in lurch. The SP knows that if these MLAs join their party, then there will be a rebellion and disunity in SP, whose leaders are eager to cross over to the BSP."

"The SP has always been anti-Dalit and they do not want to improve. This is why

'BSP MLAs joining SP an illusion'

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A day after reports of some suspended BSP MLAs meeting with SP chief Akhilesh Yadav surfaced, BSP chief Mayawati on Wednesday said it is an illusion.

In a series of tweets, she attacked the Samajwadi Party (SP) accusing it of being an expert in "narrow politics".

"The Samajwadi Party, which is an expert in narrow politics of despicable manipulations, malice and casteism, is publicising through the media that some BSP MLAs are breaking away to join the SP. This is an intense illusion," she tweeted in Hindi.

The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief said that those MLAs were suspended from the party long back for colluding with the SP and an industrialist during the Rajya Sabha elections for defeating a Dalit candidate.

"BSP has emerged as a party to fulfil the aspirations of the people in Uttar Pradesh and it will continue to do so," she tweeted.

On Tuesday, at least five MLAs suspended by the BSP last year met Yadav, triggering speculation that they may join his party.

Handia legislator Hakimlal Bind said he, along with Chaudhary Aslam Ali, Mujtaba Siddiqui, Hargovind Bhargav, Aslam Raini and Shushma Patel met the SP chief.



the SP government had stopped the welfare works undertaken by the BSP. Bhadohi was not made a new district as Sant Ravidas Nagar, which is extremely condemnable," Mayawati said in another tweet.

She alleged that the "drama" of publicising the meeting of suspended BSP MLAs with Yadav is a new "stunt" by the SP ahead of the upcoming zila panchayat elections.

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Chirag targets JD(U) for split, rejects Paras' decisions

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lok Janshakti Party leader Chirag Paswan on Wednesday blamed Janata Dal (United) for engineering the split in his party and rejected the decisions taken by the faction headed by his uncle Pashupati Kumar Paras, saying the party's constitution does not authorise them any such power.

In his first interaction with media after the split in the party, he struck a combative note by describing himself as "sher ka beta" (lion's son) and asserted that he will fight for the cause of the party founded by his father Ram Vilas Paswan.

While blaming the JD(U) for the split, he steered clear of questions regarding the role of the BJP in the development and added that what has hap-



pened is also an internal matter for which he will not target others.

It is going to be a long battle, he said, as the group headed by him fights the faction of five other party MPs, led by Paras, to claim ownership of the LJP.

The JD(U), he alleged, had been working to cause a split in the party even when his father was alive.

"A conspiracy was hatched behind my back while I was ill," Paswan claimed.

LS Speaker urged against notification in favour of Paras

NEW DELHI: Lok Janshakti Party leader Chirag Paswan has contested Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla's decision to name Pashupati Kumar Paras as the leader of the party in the House, saying it is "contrary" to provisions of his organisation. In a letter written on Tuesday, Paswan also informed Birla of the party's decision to expel five MPs, who have joined hands against him, and urged the Speaker to review the earlier decision and issue a new circular naming him as the LJP leader in the Lok Sabha.

Renganar first village to complete first dose vax

PNS ■ RAIPUR

Renganar, a remote village in Chhattisgarh's tribal-dominated Dantewada district, has become the first village in the state where all eligible people have been administered the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine, officials said on Wednesday.

"The village has set an example in the fight against the pandemic. It became possible due to constant efforts of healthcare personnel and awareness teams," a public relations department official here said.

Renganar, located around 420 km away from the state capital, has a population of 310 adults and of them, all 294 eligible persons, in all categories, have been inoculated with the first jab, he said.

Unlike in urban areas, 100 per cent vaccination was not easy due to the limited availability of smartphones and internet in remote

areas that helps in the registration process. But the enthusiasm of villagers and healthcare workers bore fruit, he said.

Local health workers and awareness teams played an instrumental role in making the villagers aware about the vaccines. They convinced them that vaccine is one of the most effective ways to avoid coronavirus infection, he said.

Initially, several vaccination sessions were organised by the Dantewada district administration in Kuankonda for the villagers of Renganar and others, but due to misconceptions and lack of awareness, only a few people showed interest in getting vaccinated, he said.

Sarpanch (village head) of Renganar, Sanmati Telami said awareness teams went door-to-door in the village like a mission and persuaded people to get vaccinated by explaining its benefits.

Conditions still not favourable for monsoon: IMD

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Atmospheric conditions are still not favourable for further advance of monsoon into Rajasthan, remaining parts of Gujarat, Punjab, Haryana and Delhi, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Wednesday.

It said a cyclonic circulation lies over east Uttar Pradesh and neighbourhood and there is also a western disturbance.

These conditions are not favourable for the advance of monsoon, IMD Director General M Mohapatra said.

"Large-scale atmospheric conditions are not favourable for further advance of monsoon into Rajasthan, remaining parts of Gujarat, Punjab, Haryana and Delhi," the IMD said.

Tourists delighted after Taj Mahal reopens after 2 months

PNS ■ AGRA

A 40-year-old woman from Brazil was one of the early tourists to step inside the Taj Mahal premises as the monument reopened on Wednesday after being closed for around two months due to the Covid pandemic.

Melissa Dalla Rosa shared with PTI that it was a "special moment for her to see the Taj Mahal during sunrise and being totally alone at the wonderful place".

The Archaeological Survey of India had announced the reopening of all centrally protected monuments, sites and museums from Wednesday. However, the Agra administration capped the number of visitors at the Taj Mahal to 650 people at a time.

Melissa, who was on a nine-week Yoga tour in India when the lockdown was announced, said, "I came to Agra yesterday from Lucknow only to explore the city as I knew monuments were closed due to the pandemic. But I got information



from locals that Taj Mahal will be reopened from Wednesday so I rushed to book my entry ticket."

"I managed to book a ticket by afternoon and today, I came here very early and was the first tourist who stepped inside the premises," said Melissa.

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Ayodhya land deal: Priyanka demands probe

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Wednesday demanded a Supreme Court supervised investigation into allegations of corruption in a land deal of the Ram temple trust.

In a statement posted on her Facebook page, Priyanka Gandhi said any attempt to find an "opportunity in faith" is an assault on the faith of crores of Indians and a "big sin".

The Shriram Jammabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, she said, was formed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and has people close to him as trustees.

"It is the responsibility of the prime minister that every penny of the offerings by the devotees in the name of Lord Ram should be used in the collective work related to faith and



not in any scam," the Congress general secretary said in her statement in Hindi.

Noting that the trust has been formed on the instructions of the Supreme Court, Priyanka Gandhi said she demands on behalf of the people of the country that "the Supreme Court should get the entire scam investigated under its supervision".

Refuting the allegations of corruption and financial misconduct, trust general secretary Champat Rai on Monday had asserted that the organisation is committed to full transparency.

"We are applying full transparency in the purchase of land," he said, adding that the money is transferred online into the bank accounts of the

sellers. The trust is in charge of the construction of the Ram temple.

Countering him, Priyanka Gandhi said that according to reports there is a "scam" in the purchase of land by the Shriram Jammabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust.

"On March 18, 2021, two people bought land in Ayodhya for Rs 2 crore. It is worth noting that this land is not for temple construction, but is away from the temple premises," the Congress general secretary in charge of Uttar Pradesh said.

This land of Rs 2 crore was bought after just five minutes by the Trust set up by the prime minister for Rs 18.5 crore, Priyanka Gandhi alleged.

Which means that the price of land increased at the rate of Rs 5.5 lakh per second, she pointed out.

India for rule-based order in Indo-Pacific region

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Flagging India's concerns over security challenges in the maritime sphere, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday called for a rule-based order in the Indo-Pacific and underlined the need for ensuring freedom of navigation, overflight and unimpeded commerce in the international waterways including the South China Sea.

In a virtual address at the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus), Singh said the developments in the South China Sea have attracted attention in the region and beyond, seen as an oblique reference to China's aggressive behaviour in the critical sea lanes.

The defence minister also said that terrorism and radicalisation are the gravest threats to global peace and security



and pitched for collective efforts to fully disrupt the terrorist organisations and their networks.

The ADMM-Plus is a platform comprising 10-nation ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and its eight dialogue partners -- India, China, Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russia and the United States.

Referring to the challenges in the maritime domain, Singh

said India stood for a rule-based order in the Indo-Pacific based on respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations, peaceful resolution of disputes through dialogue and adherence to international rules and laws.

He said India hoped that the code of conduct negotiations will lead to outcomes that are in keeping with international law, including the UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea) and will not

prejudice the legitimate rights and interests of nations that are not party to these discussions.

Without naming China or any other country, Singh said new challenges to international peace and security are emerging and they cannot be addressed with outdated systems that were designed to deal with "trials of the past".

"Maritime security challenges are another area of concern to India. The sea lanes of communication are critical for peace, stability, prosperity and development of the Indo-Pacific region," he said.

"In this regard, developments in the South China Sea have attracted attention in the region and beyond. India supports freedom of navigation, overflight, and unimpeded commerce in these international waterways," the defence minister said.

Talking about the Indo-

Pacific, Singh said India has strengthened its cooperative engagements in the region based on converging visions and values for promotion of peace, stability, and prosperity in the region.

"Premised upon the centrality of ASEAN, India supports utilisation of ASEAN-led mechanisms as important platforms for implementation of our shared vision for the Indo-Pacific," the defence minister said.

Referring to the threat from terror networks, Singh called for strong action against those encouraging, supporting and financing terrorism and provide shelter to terrorists, in remarks seen as directed at Pakistan.

"Terrorism and radicalisation are the gravest threats to peace and security that the world is facing today," he said. The defence minister said

India, as a member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), remained committed to combat financing of terrorism.

"India shares global concerns about terrorism and believes that, in an era when networking amongst terrorists is reaching alarming proportions, only through collective cooperation can the terror organisations and their networks be fully disrupted, the perpetrators identified and held accountable," he said.

Delving into the coronavirus crisis, Singh said India is just emerging from a second wave of the infection that pushed the country's medical response to the "limit" and called for concerted global approach like making available patent-free vaccines, unhindered supply chains and ensuring greater medical capacities to defeat the pandemic.

Crash course for Covid frontline workers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch a customised crash course programme for COVID-19 frontline workers on Friday through video conferencing, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said.

The launch will commence the programme in 111 training centres spread over 26 states, the PMO said.

Prime Minister Modi will launch "Customized Crash Course programme for COVID-19 Frontline workers" on June 18 at 11 am through video conferencing, it said.

The launch will be followed by the prime minister's address. The Union minister of skill development and entrepreneurship will also be present on the occasion.

The programme aims to skill and upskill over one lakh "Covid warriors" across the country, the PMO said.

The training will be imparted to them in six customised job roles namely home care support, basic care support, advanced care support, emergency care support, sample collection support, and medical equipment support.

The programme has been designed as a special programme under the central component of the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 3.0, with total financial outlay of Rs. 276 crore, the PMO said.

The programme will create skilled non-medical healthcare workers to fill the present and future needs of manpower in the health sector, it said.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Jab gap rethink

As confusion abounds, India still lacks a comprehensive outlook on tackling the virus

The latest UK medical study says the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine against the Delta variant of COVID-19 is 92 per cent effective against hospitalisation after two doses and suggests that it is "vital to get both doses as soon as they are offered to you, to gain maximum protection against all existing and emerging variants". That has made the Indian Government experts rethink on reducing the gap between the doses that now stands at 12-16 weeks. Should the Government be doing a rethink every time a study surfaces? Each has its own definition of the efficacy of the vaccines and doses. Percentages differ. Criteria also vary. Demographic situations in countries are starkly different. Each study has its own, internal purpose. The UK-based studies are analysing symptomatic infections. India is looking for effectiveness against severe disease. That leads to the question: Where is the real-world data in India? Take the



job gap issue, for instance. Independent virologists say there is no real-world data in India to establish the most effective jab gap. The Government on May 13 increased the gap to 12-16 weeks from six-eight weeks, reportedly based on a UK study even though the UK itself reduced the gap from 12 to eight weeks much before data was available on vaccine efficacy. The country merely went by the criterion of greater infectiousness of the variant. Now, there is a rethink in India about the gap. Members of the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation say they only recommended a gap of 8-12 weeks because they had no data about efficacy of a gap beyond 12 weeks.

They say the 12-16 weeks idea came from the Government. Dr NK Arora, chairman of the COVID working group on vaccines, has no reply other than that there is no dissent within NTAGI. So, whom to believe? Secondly, Dr Arora quotes two Indian studies from PGI, Chandigarh, and CMC, Vellore, to say that irrespective of dose interval, "both the doses are having similar protection against the Delta variant (B.1.617.2) and Alpha variant (B.1.1.7)". But the Vellore study says: "Our study corroborates these studies that vaccination is protective, although we did not look at the variants responsible for the massive second wave." So, whom to believe? The issue is, India still lacks a comprehensive outlook on tackling the virus. Vaccination, medical care and safety protocols that make up the outlook are seen more in isolation than unison. The basic nature of the vaccine is it will not stop the infection, but only reduce the severity. That means medical facilities for COVID-19 positive patients are as important as vaccination. That also means the Government has to strictly enforce safety protocols. In reality, however, the availability of vaccine is erratic, there is no informed stand on jab gap, new cases continue to be reported and the States are eager to lift the lockdown substantively, if not fully, well aware that people are throwing caution to the wind, prompting fears of a relapse.

PICTALK



A boatman rows on a relatively clean Khushalsar lake in the middle of the old city in Srinagar

The lost cause of ingenuous tribals

The poor forest dwellers are at the mercy of no one, despite being the best caretakers of the forested greens and the environment



GYANESHWAR DAYAL

The recent upsurge in Maoist violence puts the focus back on tribal issues, rarely discussed in the mainstream. Even though the tribal population is nine per cent, they live as invisible Indians. Their presence is felt only when they make headlines for the wrong reasons, for obstructing traffic with their protests, for instance, and thereafter again fade into oblivion.

These are the people who have been on the frontline of India's war of independence and the ones to have suffered the most. The British branded 150-odd tribes as "criminal tribes" by imposing the Criminal Tribes Act, starting in 1871. It took the Nehru Government five years to de-notify these tribes and replace the derogatory law on April 31, 1952. *Adivasis* now celebrate April 31 as the alternative Independence Day.

Even today, tribals live on the sidelines of the Indian political landscape. They are indeed the marginalised entities in India's political life. The *adivasis* have lived in forests at peace with nature for ages. But they have been castigated, charged, blamed and demonised, often stripped of their basic human rights, their right to life and property included. They are evicted from their dwelling places in the name of conservation and national interest. To use the conservationist lingo, their habitat is shrinking. It is being usurped legally. Despite some sops here and there, the condition of tribals has not improved even after Independence. They remain on the margins, their life and livelihood constantly under the threat. The neo-colonial mindset has replaced the older one. Conservation is one big plank that is a legit and subtle way to evict tribals from their land.

The Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006, for the first time recognised the rights of tribal communities to forest resources. Hitherto, Government Acts and policies did not recognise the symbiotic relationship of the forest dwellers with the forests. This, ironically, was always present in their dependence on the forest as well as in their traditional wisdom for the



conservation of forests. The path-breaking law gave three generations of tribals the right to live on their land. But they were asked to prove their ownership, which most of them can't and that is the biggest stick to beat them up with. Though the authorities want them to show papers of the inheritance, they have lived on the land even before paper was invented! Even so, they have been branded a "danger to forest land and wildlife".

The *adivasis* have managed their environment better than neo-conservationists. People in Gosaba, Sunderbans, are killed by the Bengal Tigers. There is a village in Gosaba named Vidhwapalli, a village of widows whose husbands were killed by tigers. The very same people feed the tigress who takes shelter in the village when she is about to deliver her cubs! Now think about the Delhi ridge or Mumbai's Aarey forest constantly waning each passing year. Nearly 80 per cent of biodiversity in the world is in areas inhabited by tribals. They have conserved the forests pretty well. They take from it what they need, without making permanent damage and giving time and chance to nature to recuperate and grow.



THERE IS A VILLAGE IN GOSABA NAMED VIDHWAPALLI, A VILLAGE OF WIDOWS WHOSE HUSBANDS WERE KILLED BY TIGERS. THE VERY SAME PEOPLE FEED THE TIGRESS WHO TAKES SHELTER IN THE VILLAGE WHEN SHE IS ABOUT TO DELIVER HER CUBS

Their religious practices forbid them to even enter the core areas. The modern conservation programmes would have these forests as open zoos for the inspection of tourists.

While tourists and other outsiders are welcome, the *adivasis* are not. They are aliens in their own homes. Even if they venture inside, they are beaten up, tortured, even killed by rangers. Their houses are burnt and properties vandalised. Not very long ago, a 13-year-old boy was shot in the Kaziranga for wandering inside the protected area. The park has a shoot-at-sight policy. The Jenu Kuruba, tribals living in the Nilgiri in Karnataka, are frequently shot while collecting mushrooms. Over 50 people have been shot dead by the guards in the last five years. Of course, you haven't heard or read about them. They were seldom reported!

Another aspect of tribal persecution is the Maoist violence in forested areas. It is often reported from Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Jharkhand, and others. The security forces are up against the armed resistance in the forests. However, not all tribals are supporters or sympathisers of Maoists. Most of them face

pressure both from Maoists as well as the security forces. They are routinely rounded up and made to suffer.

It is indeed a problem that refuses to go away. The Government, for its part, has never tried to find the root of the problem and solve it politically. The Maoists draw cadres from the wronged people. Since the exploitation doesn't end, they never run out of cadres. The basis of the problem is indeed economic being addressed with force. Since 2010 when it was at its peak, it has come down. It is now confined to around 30 districts, but there is a long way to go. The gains of security forces are no guarantee that the problem is over. Maoism is a problem born out of the social and economic milieu of the region and lack of development. The Government gives them enough fuel and exploitation that oils this war machine.

If the current rate of exploitation of nature continues, we may lose the forests and forest dwellers. And, with them, their wisdom to survive without harming nature.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

UNSCRUPULOUS ELEMENTS PREY ON MISERY

Sir — As per reports, a housing society in Mumbai's Kandivali area has complained to the police that it was cheated by some persons who organised a COVID-19 vaccination camp by claiming to represent a private hospital, and the vaccine administered could be spurious. The society, Hiranandani Heritage Residents Welfare Association, has now sought investigation into the matter.

A vaccination camp was arranged by the residential complex on May 30. But later it found that the Co-WIN portal did not have any record of the people who participated and they received certificates in the name of different hospitals, it said. "If the vaccine is found to be spurious, the people who got vaccinated will have a medical emergency to deal with. Therefore, there is an urgent need to investigate the whole episode so that such fraudulent activities are not repeated at other places," the complaint stated.

The HHRWA had organised the camp through a person who claimed to be a sales representative of a private hospital in Andheri. As many as 390 members received the jobs at ₹1,260 per person. They were shocked to receive vaccination certificates in the name of Nanavati Hospital, Lifeline Hospital and NESCO COVID Camp, among others. Nanavati Hospital denied any involvement and said they're themselves a victim of the situation.

There are even doubts whether the residents were actually given Covishield or if it were just glucose or expired/waste vaccine. Meanwhile, the BMC, from this week, has made signing of a Memorandum of Understanding mandatory between private vaccination providers and housing societies if such camps are organised.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

THE REAL FACE OF THE G7 SUMMIT

Sir — The group of seven largest industrial and developed nations was founded in 1970 with a focus on economic issue and to resolve global problems. The 47th G7 Summit was held in the city of Cornwall, the United Kingdom. The western media focused only on the

Police high-handedness must stop



Within a fortnight of a Supreme Court (SC) Bench of Justices UU Lalit and Vinet Saran quashing a sedition FIR against veteran journalist Vinod Dua in Himachal Pradesh for his criticism of the Narendra Modi Government's handling of COVID-19 and the use of the Pulwama attack and Balakot airstrike to seek votes, the SC Bench upheld citizens' "right to criticise or comment upon the measures undertaken by the Government and its functionaries". Dua's March 30, 2020, statements had neither incited people to violence against the Government nor created disorder, it added.

Or what the Allahabad High Court said when it released Dr Kafeel Khan: "A complete reading of the speech *prima facie* does not disclose

any effort to promote hatred or violence. It also nowhere threatens peace and tranquillity. The address gives a call for national integrity and unity among the citizens." Now, the three orders by the Delhi High Court were delivered by Justices Siddharth Mridul and Anup Jairam Bhambhani, perhaps the first instance of a court calling out alleged misuse of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) against individuals in cases that do not necessarily fall in the category of "terrorism" cases. The Bench's observation came while granting bail to JNU's Devangana Kalita and Natasha Narwal, along with JMU student Asif Iqbal Tanha, and gave the Delhi Police a dressing down for "casually" invoking provisions of anti-terror laws.

This is not only a slap to the Delhi Police, which is run by Amit Shah's Home Ministry, but also to the Delhi Government for giving prosecution sanction against the students. Actually, the High Court has rightly reminded us of the basic tenet. The police, who often slap outrageous charges on protestors, should heed it.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

THE MISSING SPIRIT OF RAJA FESTIVAL

Sir — Raja, the famous festival of Odisha, was badly hit by the COVID-19 second wave. Due to the rising cases, the Government imposed lockdown in most of the state. During this festival in the pre-pandemic times, people used to wear new clothes, moved around having fun, enjoyed savouries and involved themselves in "Raja Mauja" for various games and activities.

But this year, the evergreen and colourful Raja witnessed no colours due to the second wave of the pandemic. People, being in a state of fear and negative mindset, were adverse to letting their hair down. Maybe the State Government should start a show that will add some colour and flavour to the life of the Odia people.

Sarmistha Pradhan | Cuttack

SOUND BITE

Till the end, I tried my best to keep the family and the party united. I even went to my uncle's house. But all went in vain.



LJP leader

— Chirag Paswan

At the moment, it doesn't look like this particular disease of a zoonotic origin came from a lab.



UK Prime Minister

— Boris Johnson

Taking Mom home in Shimla after two years. She has stayed indoors all this time. Now vaccinated with both jabs.



Actor

— Anupam Kher

I will try to achieve the time of 11.15 seconds in the upcoming Indian Grand Prix IV in Patiala on June 25.



Ace sprinter

— Dutee Chand

Congress president Sonia Gandhi and respective PCC presidents will write condolence letters to the next of kin of those who passed away due to the pandemic.



Congress general secretary

— KC Venugopal

Blood money

The closed case of the Italian marines is mired not only in legality but in morality, too

More than nine years after they shot dead two fishermen off the Kerala coast, the Supreme Court has quashed the criminal charges against Massimiliano Latorre and Salvatore Girone, the two Italian marines on board the *Enrica Lexie* and accepted the compensation of ₹10 crore deposited by the Government of Italy. The Division Bench directed the Governments of Italy, India and Kerala to coordinate in respect to disbursement of the compensation, which is to be deposited with the Supreme Court Registry. With this, all legal proceedings initiated against the marines stand cancelled. Doramma, the widow of Valentine, and the sisters of younger victim Ajeesh Pink are to



get ₹4 crore each. The owner of the damaged boat, *St Antony*, would get ₹2 crore. This is over and above the *ex gratia* amount of ₹1 crore each paid to the parties. The long-drawn case has already vanished from the public mind, especially after the legal heirs of the deceased fishermen withdrew their affidavits and submissions to the Kerala High Court in April 2012. The fate of the case was sealed then and there, according to a Kochi-based marine law expert.

The incident dates back to 2012 when Kerala was ruled by Oommen Chandy and the Union was headed by Manmohan Singh. However, the Catholic Church's role in the issue hasn't been in the public domain. For

one, there has been Cardinal George Alencherry, head of the Catholic sect in Kerala, who was quoted in the immediate aftermath of the mariners' arrest as boastfully saying that he would remain in "close contact with the Catholic ministers of Kerala who would help pacify the situation". Meanwhile, the take of Jayapalayan, president of the South Indian Fishermen's Federation, is that the blood money concept is alien to India. Similarly, VM Shyam Kumar, the counsel for the sisters of Ajeesh Pink, asked: "Italy could afford to pay the compensation. Had the ship belonged to a poor country, what would be the consequences?" Those who question the legality of blood money in the *Enrica Lexie* case should bear in mind that many Indians accused of murder have been saved in West Asia after paying blood money. Last week saw MA Yousuf Ali, a Gulf-based businessman, paying ₹1 crore to save Becks Krishna, a Thrissur youth, from the gallows for killing a Sudanese youth in the UAE. It should be two-way traffic, isn't it?

Aman Jaiswal | New Delhi

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

ITALY'S EXIT WILL HIT CHINA'S PLANS

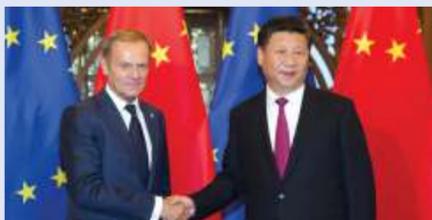
Europe took a long time to see through Chinese strategy of gaining control of strategic assets



GAURIE DWIVEDI

From football teams to strategic infrastructures like ports and airports, China's influence in Europe has grown exponentially in under two decades. Chinese companies own four airports including Frankfurt-Hahn Airport in Germany, six ports and a dozen European soccer clubs. By the time Europe started screening Chinese investments in 2019, Beijing's clout had risen manifold. And Italy's endorsement of Xi Jinping's flagship project Belt and Road Initiative gave it the legitimacy it needed. A G-7 European country endorsing a global program did more damage to European unity than any other recent event. The statement of Mario Draghi, Italy's Prime Minister, indicating the possibility of Rome undoing its biggest geo-political blunder in decades, could derail a lot of China's European plans, which were stitched on the back of its seemingly large wallet.

To deepen its access inside Europe, Beijing had focused on Greece and Italy both of whom were struggling with high debt levels. Heavily-indebted Athens felt it would be better off encashing Chinese cheques than following EU's prescription to cut costs any more. Greece also upgraded its relationship with China a year after the Chinese had gained control of the



Greek port of Piraeus. Under Chinese ownership, Piraeus emerged as the second-biggest container port in the Mediterranean and Europe's biggest passenger port. Piraeus' elevation sparked major fears of loss of trade in Rome, causing it to embrace China and the BRI. China successfully exploited the several fault lines that existed in Europe; the one between industrialised North and relatively weaker South. Add to this, the desperate fund crunch of stagnant Southern economies like Italy and Greece which made large Chinese cheques even more appealing. Europe took a long time to see through the Chinese strategy of gaining control of strategic assets, building inroads into prominent think tanks and exploiting the continent's vulnerabilities to build political leverage.

Beijing engaged with each of countries on the European continent. First, China identified weaker economies like Greece and Hungary to break the EU's solidarity. Beijing engaged with non-EU countries like Serbia that were in dire need of capital. It continued to build trade ties with large economies like Germany and the UK. But China never lost sight of its geo-political ambition. The EU failed to speak in a single voice after Beijing lost the case regarding its acquisition of the Scarborough Shoal in international tribunal UNCLOS in 2016. Greece, Hungary and Croatia had thwarted EU efforts to name China despite Manila's unequivocal win at the tribunal. Recognising the need to act against China's lop-sided economic model, ahead of the EU-China summit in 2018, 27 of the 28 EU country ambassadors to China signed a report charging the BRI with pushing "the balance of power in favour of subsidized Chinese companies". Nine months later, however, Italy formally joined the BRI.

In a post-pandemic world order, an increasingly isolated China is seeing the world coming together against it. With America's renewed push to forge trans-Atlantic cooperation to take on Beijing, Draghi's decision could prove to be the biggest reset on the continent. An EU veto on Chinese investments and a revisit on the EU-China investment deal can put intense pressure on Beijing. BRI holds the key to China's power, in Europe and elsewhere. Italy's decision could begin the unwinding.

(The author is a senior journalist and Visiting Fellow at the United Services Institution of India. The views expressed are personal.)

Why it is difficult to make things happen



ANIL SWARUP

No matter how good an idea is, it will get converted into a policy only if the ultimate decision-making authority, a politician or a group of politicians, puts its stamp on it

Things don't happen easily in the government. And, if they do happen, it is difficult to sustain them. I had been of the view that for anything to happen and sustain in the government it had to be politically acceptable, socially desirable, technologically feasible, financially viable, administratively doable and judicially tenable. This in itself was quite a handful. However, the unexpected agitation against the Farm Bills has compelled me to add another dimension: "Emotionally relatable".

There is a feeling outside the government that not much happens in the government. Not only that, each one of them will have an idea on how to make-things-happen. However, if the six-fore-mentioned aspects are not taken into consideration, the idea will perhaps not travel much distance on the ground. Let us consider each one of them.

No matter how good an idea is, it will get converted into a policy only if the ultimate decision-making authority, a politician or a group of politicians, puts its stamp on it. For example, many would argue that reservation in government jobs is adversely impacting governance. If there is a referendum, perhaps the majority will vote against it. But can we dispense with it now or at any time in the future? Perhaps not, because it will never be politically acceptable. That is why decision making in democracies takes much longer than in countries like China. A lot of time gets spent in consensus building. This is not to say that democracies are worse than autocracies because political acceptability, as an underlying principle of democracy, has its own merits.

Social desirability of an idea is equally important even if it may not appear to be so. It is important in the context of implementation of an idea that may be politically acceptable. A number of schemes announced by the government, hence politically acceptable, fail on the ground because while formulating the scheme, the social context is not taken into consideration. Thus, the infamous Family Planning effort of the government during the dark days of Emergency not only met with failure but led to the fall of the government. This may be an extreme example but many schemes and ideas face enormous problems if they are not socially desirable. Understanding the needs of the stake holders is critical for the success of any scheme.

Technology is changing by the day. Hence, the feasibility of technology becomes an important determinant in the implementation of an idea and sustaining it. Many of those that have not travelled to various parts of the country advocate the use of internet to reach out to children during COVID-19 times for schooling. They are perhaps unaware of the fact that internet has not reached out as yet to a large part of the country. The situation may change over a period of time but as of now, it may not be possible to reach out to all the children through the net.

The most critical part in implementation of an idea is the availability of funds to back such an idea. Till a couple of years ago, number of railway lines were announced by successive Ministers for Railways in their budget speeches (fortunately this has ceased now) without the funds to back them. These railway lines were socially desirable and technologically feasible.



SOCIAL DESIRABILITY OF AN IDEA IS IMPORTANT EVEN IF IT MAY NOT APPEAR TO BE SO. IT IS IMPORTANT IN THE CONTEXT OF IMPLEMENTATION OF AN IDEA THAT MAY BE POLITICALLY ACCEPTABLE. A NUMBER OF SCHEMES ANNOUNCED BY THE GOVERNMENT, HENCE POLITICALLY ACCEPTABLE, FAIL ON THE GROUND BECAUSE WHILE FORMULATING THE SCHEME, THE SOCIAL CONTEXT IS NOT TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION

The author is a former IAS officer. The views expressed are personal.



They were obviously politically acceptable as well. But they never happened on the ground. Similar apprehensions are raised about the recently announced National Education Policy (NEP). The Policy recommends allocation of six per cent of GDP to Education Sector. This is nothing new. It was recommended long ago by Dr Kothari in his Report as well. But the money never came despite a cess levied by the government to raise resources. In fact, during the period from 2014 to 2018 the budgetary allocation to school education actually came down in real terms. Without requisite money to back ideas, such ideas will not travel a long distance.

Even if we have the requisite money, if the desired human resources are not available, the idea will not work on the ground. One of the reasons of failure in delivery of health care in rural areas is the shortage of doctors. Health care is politically acceptable and socially desirable. There is reasonable amount of money available. But shortage of human resource is a major constraint. School education in the country is another example where there is an acute shortage of human resources. There is an additional

problem relating to their management as well. This management of the teachers who are the pivot of school education, has left a lot to be desired. The biggest mafia in school education is the one that provides pre-service training, the B.Ed and D.El.Ed colleges. A large number of them exist only on paper but they can give you a degree. The selection of teachers to government schools is another racket. One former Chief Minister is behind the bars for manipulating selection. What can be expected of teachers who have come through such a process? Human resource management is the key to the success of any programme.

Finally, no matter what the government does, the final arbiter is the judiciary. It can undo all that may have been attempted. The over-indulgent judiciary can make matters worse.

The Farm Bills appear to be fine on all these dimensions mentioned above. Even those who are opposing it on account of political considerations were themselves pushing for such reforms when they were in power. Most of them would privately agree that the Bills would benefit the farmers and will free them from the

clutches of "middle-men". However, opposition to the Bills was still so huge. It reflected the inability of the proponents to make this idea "emotionally relatable" to the farming community. The Bills are indeed socially desirable but the government which has otherwise demonstrated to be so skilful in communicating messages, has apparently been unable to do so in the present instance. Hence, the Bills that are so beneficial to the farmers are not perceived as such. There is, therefore, this problem of perception and a large number of farmers are not able to relate emotionally with the Bills.

The listing of these limitations does not mean that things don't happen in the government. The success of *Ayushman Bharat*, the Coal Block auctions and unprecedented increase in coal production during 2014-16, the successful management of Covid-19 fallout in Mumbai and many districts of the country and the like prove that it can happen. These programmes/schemes/efforts understood these limitations and worked around them. There is indeed a lot to learn from how they made-it-happen for others to make-it-happen.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

YOU NEED TO TRAIN DIFFERENTLY AND ADAPT TO THE CHANGE. IN ENGLAND, THE LENGTH IS FULLER BECAUSE OF THE SWING. — INDIAN BOWLER ISHANT SHARMA



INDIA ARE A WORLD-CLASS OUTFIT WHO POSSESS MATCH WINNERS ALL THROUGH THEIR LINE-UP. WE ARE UNDER NO ILLUSION. — NEW ZEALAND HEAD COACH GARY STEAD

Iran: giving up on Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action

An immediate end to US sanctions and a quick rollback of Iran's deviations from strict adherence to the treaty's terms might have done the trick

Lifting Trump's sanctions, @SecBlinken, is a legal & moral obligation, NOT negotiating leverage. Didn't work for Trump - won't work for you," tweeted Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif late last month. But what if US Secretary of State Antony Blinken (and President Joe Biden) have just decided that reviving the 2015 nuclear deal is a lost cause?

There are quite a few people in the Biden administration, and particularly in the State Department, who can count to twenty without even taking their shoes off. So they must have realised that there was going to be an election in Iran next Friday (18 June). Many of them would even have known that this time the



GWYNNE DYER

The author's new book is 'Growing Pains: The Future of Democracy (and Work)'. The views expressed are personal.

Iranian election has been rigged so that the 'hard-liners' are bound to win it.

Joe Biden therefore only had five months to reverse Donald Trump's deliberate wrecking of the 2015 treaty that prevented Iran from working on nuclear weapons. After the June election, the wreckers would be in power in Tehran, and they would sabotage the talks.

So why didn't Blinken's people move faster?

It was the Trump administration that unilaterally pulled out of the JCPOA treaty (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) and slapped crippling economic sanctions on Iran in 2018. Since then, Iran has repeatedly said that if the US just cancelled Trump's sanctions and rejoined the treaty, all would be well. Now



it's probably too late.

Iran did nothing for more than a year, waiting and hoping that the other signatories (Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China) would find ways to help Iran get around the American sanctions.

The other countries all agreed that Iran was not violating the terms of the treaty in any

way, but none of them wanted to get into a showdown with Trump by breaking the US sanctions. So when Trump tightened the sanctions further in May 2019, crushing Iran's remaining oil exports, Tehran began to go beyond the treaty limits - a little bit. It didn't leave the treaty, but it began to enrich its uranium a

bit beyond the treaty limit of 3.67% (far below weapons-grade). It allowed inspections to continue, it kept nothing secret, but every three or six months it moved the enrichment up another notch to create some counter-pressure on the other signatories to sort their American problem out.

Finally, Trump lost the 2020 election, Biden replaced him in the White House last January, and it became possible to repair all the damage. However, the new secretary of state, Antony Blinken, then announced that Iran would have to roll back all its post-2019 increments to the enrichment process BEFORE the US lifted its sanctions.

The shoe is clearly on the wrong foot there. It was the United States that showed itself

to be untrustworthy by quitting the treaty. The Iranian economy paid the price, starving in the gutter for three years.

The question of who goes first is fundamentally childish if there is trust, but America has forfeited the right to demand that Iran trust it. Biden and Blinken must know that demanding Iran go first dooms the negotiations, and that a rigged election in Iran will shortly close the door on the deal for good. It would break them off, because Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has arranged for his faithful supporter Ebrahim Raisi to win the election by banning more open-minded candidates from running at all.

Both men are fiercely anti-Western ultra-conservatives, but

they wouldn't have got away with rigging the election like this four years ago, when the treaty was new and popular hopes were still high in Iran. The despair created by Trump's renewed sanctions killed those hopes. Biden may be wrong to let the JCPOA treaty die. An immediate end to US sanctions and a quick roll-back of Iran's deviations from strict adherence to the treaty's terms might have been done the trick. Even a new hard-line government in Iran would have found it hard to unpick that sort of done deal.

But it would have been a gamble, and Biden seems to have decided that he couldn't afford to risk his political capital that way. It will be years before we know if this was a fatal mistake (and who it was fatal for).

Cabinet nod to hike in DAP fertiliser subsidy by Rs 700

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved a Rs 700 per bag hike in subsidy for DAP fertiliser and the increase will result in an additional cost of Rs 14,775 crore to the exchequer.

The hike is part of the government's effort to ensure that farmers get the key soil nutrient at old rates despite rise in global prices.

After urea, Di-ammonium Phosphate (DAP) fertiliser is the most widely one in the country.

Last month, the Centre decided to increase subsidy on DAP fertiliser by 140 per cent. The decision was taken at a high-level meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Briefing the media, Minister of State for Chemicals and Fertilisers Mansukh Mandaviya on Wednesday said the Cabinet has approved increasing the subsidy amount for DAP fertiliser for the benefits of farmers.

"Farmers will continue to get DAP at the old rate of Rs 1,200 per bag," he said. One bag has 50 kilograms of the fertiliser.

According to him, the subsidy for DAP fertiliser has been increased to Rs 1,200 per bag from Rs 500 per bag to provide relief to farmers.

The minister also said the additional subsidy burden on the exchequer will be Rs 14,775 crore. Last year, the actual price of DAP was Rs 1,700 per bag, on which the central government was giving a subsidy of Rs 500. The companies were therefore selling the fertiliser to farmers for Rs 1,200 per bag.

With rise in global prices, the actual price of DAP reached Rs 2,400 per bag. In order to ensure that the farmers get DAP at the old rate of Rs 1,200 per bag, the Centre has decided to increase the subsidy to Rs 1,200 per bag.

Mandaviya said that in the case of urea, the MRP (Maximum Retail Price) is fixed while the subsidy amount keeps changing. On an average, he said the government is providing Rs 900 per bag subsidy on urea.

However, he said the government provides a fixed amount of subsidy on non-urea fertilisers, including DAP.



Sensex, Nifty fall from record highs, investors eye Fed meet

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty retreated from record high levels on Wednesday following intense selling in Reliance and HDFC twins as investors turned cautious ahead of the outcome of the US Federal Reserve's policy meeting. The 30-share BSE index ended 271.07 points or 0.51% lower at 52,501.98.

It had closed at an all-time high of 52,773.05 on Tuesday. The

broader NSE Nifty retreated from a record and declined 101.70 points or 0.64 per cent to 15,767.55.

PowerGrid was the top laggard in the Sensex pack, shedding around 2 per cent, followed by IndusInd Bank, Reliance, L&T, UltraTech Cement and Bajaj Finance. On the other hand, Nestle, NTPC, ONGC, Bajaj Finserv Hindustan Unilever and Infosys were among the gainers. Investors kept an eye on the two-day US Federal Reserve meeting, which is set to conclude

on Wednesday.

Lack of fresh trigger from overseas markets also weighed on the local stocks as Asian markets closed mixed. Bourses in Shanghai, Hong Kong and Tokyo ended on a negative note, while Seoul settled with gains. Equities in Europe were trading mixed in mid-session deals. International oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 0.14 per cent higher at USD 74.09 per barrel.



MONEY MATTERS

Altgreen partners with EV fleet operator MoEVing

Electric vehicle maker Altgreen on Wednesday said it has partnered with EV fleet operator MoEVing to deploy its vehicles in Delhi-NCR. Under the partnership, cargo electric three-wheeler Altgreen NEEV is being introduced, the company said in a statement. Altgreen Propulsion Labs CEO Amitabh Saran said there is a growing demand for sustainable last-mile services in Delhi-NCR, owing to environmental concerns and increased operational costs of ICE (internal combustion engine) vehicles. "We believe that Altgreen NEEV provides an ideal, robust, long-term solution that is tailor-made for Indian road conditions. The partnership with MoEVing will help both the companies achieve their vision of deploying environment-friendly mobility solutions in the region," he added. MoEVing Founder and CEO Vikash Mishra said, "At MoEVing, we have deployed multiple Altgreen NEEVs across Bangalore and Delhi-NCR. We look forward to deploy more NEEV EVs across all our cities pan India".



HMSI drives in 2021 Gold Wing Tour, price starts at Rs 37.2 lakh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India (HMSI) on Wednesday said it has launched an updated version of its superbike Gold Wing Tour in the country.

The new version of the bike makes its way to the Indian market through the CBU (completely built-up) route from Japan.

The seven-speed dual-clutch transmission with airbag trim is priced at Rs 39,16,055, while the six-speed manual transmission variant is tagged at Rs 37,20,342 (ex-showroom Gurgaon).

I-T dept notifies cost inflation index

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The income tax department has notified the cost inflation index for current fiscal beginning April 2021 for calculating long-term capital gains arising from sale of immovable property, securities and jewellery.

The cost inflation index (CII) is used by taxpayer to compute gains arising out of sale of capital assets after adjusting inflation.

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) on June 15 notified the cost inflation index for the current fiscal (2021-22).

"The Cost Inflation Index for FY 2021-22 relevant to AY 2022-23 & subsequent years is 317," the Central Board of Direct Taxes said while notifying the CII number.

Tax experts said this inflation



index of 317 seems reasonable for the computation of capital gains in the case of sale of jewellery and real estate properties.

"Covid pandemic led to the economy's contraction, high revenue deficit, widening fiscal deficit, even then overall inflationary graph never spiked

like what it used to be before 2013. All this led to a very nominal increase of 16 points in the cost of inflation index over the last financial year, and the inflationary impact of Covid could not be seen on the same," AMRG & Associates Senior Partner Rajat Mohan said.

This CII number would help taxpayers to compute the long-term capital gains on which they are liable to pay income tax.

Nangia & Co LLP Partner Shailesh Kumar said for calculation of taxable income in nature of 'long term capital gain', original cost of capital asset (including immovable property, shares, securities, jewellery, etc.) is indexed to level of cost inflation in the year of sale as compared to cost inflation index in year of purchase of asset.

Fuel demand rebounds in India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's fuel demand rebounded in the first half of June as easing of coronavirus lockdowns helped sales but the consumption was still lower compared to last year.

While petrol sales rose by 13 per cent during June 1-15 over the same period of last month, diesel consumption was up 12 per cent, according to data compiled by state fuel retailers. Fuel demand had recovered to near-normal levels in March before the onset of the second wave of Covid-19 infections led to the reimposition of lockdowns in different states, stalling mobility and muting economic activity.

Rupee slips 1 paisa to close at 73.32 against US dollar

The rupee on Wednesday fell by 1 paisa to end at 73.32 (provisional) against the US dollar ahead of the outcome of the US Federal Reserve meeting. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 73.29 per dollar as against its previous close of 73.31. It hovered in the range of 73.26 to 73.38 during the day. The domestic currency has lost 52 paise in the seven trading sessions to Wednesday. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.04 per cent to 90.50. "The USDINR spot remains in the mid-range ahead of the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) announcement. If the FOMC pushes back tapering talk, it will dismiss the uptrend in spot. Otherwise any hint over the timing of tapering will continue the dollar rally, pushing the USDINR spot higher towards the crucial resistance of 73.50," said Rahul Gupta, Head Of Research- Currency, Emkay Global Financial Services.



Singapore's population growth slows down to 1.1% in '10-'20 decade

PNS ■ SINGAPORE

Singapore's population grew at its lowest pace in the 2010-2020 decade at 1.1 per cent every year, a slowdown from 2.5 per cent annually in the preceding decade, according to a media report on Wednesday.

The population data was released by the Department of Statistics (DOS) in its first statistical release from the 2010-2020 census, the Channel News Asia reported.

"It tells us where we were, where we're at now, and identifies some of the things that we need to address going forward," said Minister in the Prime Minister's Office Indraneel Rajah, who oversees the National Population and Talent Division.

Though some of the data will be affected as the survey was done amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Rajah said the census captures "broad trends over the decade ... notwithstanding the blips over the last one and a half years".

The total population increased from 5.08 million in 2010 to 5.69 million in 2020. Within this, the citizen population grew from 3.23 million to 3.52 million, while the permanent resident population remained "stable" at around 0.5 million, it added.

The number of non-residents rose from 1.31 million to 1.64 million. Twenty per cent of Singapore residents had no religious affiliation in 2020, a slight increase from the 17 per cent a decade before, according to the census.

Power consumption grows 9.3 per cent

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Power consumption in the country grew by 9.3 per cent in the first half of June to 55.86 billion units (BU), indicating a slow recovery in commercial and industrial electricity demand, according to power ministry data.

Power consumption was recorded at 51.10 BU in the first half of June last year (June 1 to 15), the data showed.

According to experts, the recovery in power consumption and demand was slow in the first half of June despite the low base of last year, which indicates a slow recovery in commercial and industrial

demand. In the entire June last year, power consumption slumped by nearly 11 per cent to 105.08 BU from 117.98 BU over the same month in 2019, mainly due to fewer economic activities amid COVID-induced restrictions.

Experts are of the view that the recovery in power demand and consumption in the rest of June is not likely to be robust because of the early onset of Monsoon.

In the first fifteen days of May (from May 1 to 15) this year, power consumption was 55.23 BU despite lockdown restrictions imposed by many states amid the second wave of



COVID-19. Thus, a month-on-month comparison indicates that power consumption grew marginally by 1.14 percent in the first half of June.

Peak power demand met or the highest supply in a day wit-

nessed a growth of over 6.6 per cent in the first half of June at 174.09 GW (recorded on June 9), compared to 163.30 GW on June 11 last year.

Peak power demand met in the first half of June 2019 was 182.45 (recorded on June 14). The peak demand in the entire June (2020) slumped to 164.98 GW from 182.45 GW in the same month in 2019.

Experts believe robust recovery in commercial and industrial power consumption as well as demand is likely from July onwards as many states are easing local restrictions amid a decline in number of daily new positive cases of COVID-19.

UK inflation up more than expected amid fluctuations

British consumer prices rose by more than expected last month as fuel and clothing costs surged following the easing of COVID-19 restrictions. Inflation accelerated to 2.1 per cent in the 12 months through May from 1.5 per cent in April, the Office for National Statistics said Wednesday. That was higher than the 1.8 per cent rate economists had forecast. While the inflation rate topped the Bank of England's 2 per cent target for the first time since July 2019, economists said the bank's Monetary Policy Committee was unlikely to raise interest rates any time soon. A strengthening pound and adequate labour supply are likely to keep inflation under control, said Samuel Tombs, chief economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics in London. The inflation will probably peak at around 2.8 per cent later this year before returning to the 2 per cent target by the middle of 2022, he said in a note to clients.



Gold slips by Rs 48; silver up by Rs 340

Gold in the national capital on Wednesday dipped marginally by Rs 48 to Rs 47,814 per 10 gram amid muted global trends, according to HDFC Securities. In the previous trade, the precious metal had closed at Rs 47,862 per 10 gram. In contrast, silver rose by Rs 340 to Rs 70,589 per kg, from Rs 70,249 per kg in the previous trade. In the international market, both gold and silver were trading flat at USD 1,859 per ounce and USD 27.78 per ounce, respectively. HDFC Securities Senior Analyst (Commodities) Tapan Patel said, "Gold prices traded near four-week lows as traders and investors are awaiting outcome from the US FOMC meeting." Motilal Oswal Financial Services Vice-President (Commodities Research) Navneet Damani said, "Gold prices traded steady after a fall witnessed in the yesterday's (Tuesday) session, due to a stronger dollar and an uptick in US yields as investors look forward to the outcome of the US Federal Reserve meeting."



Youngest, oldest lose more jobs: Survey

PNS ■ MUMBAI

When it comes to losing a job permanently, the youngest and the oldest segments in the workforce have reported an increase in setbacks in the second wave of the pandemic, a survey of by a Fortune500 company has said.

The survey, conducted in April this year, covered 2,000 persons in India.

Six per cent of those over 55 years of age reported having permanently lost their job, as against 4 per cent last year.

In those aged under 24, the proportion reporting a permanent job loss has increased to



11 per cent from 10 per cent in the year-ago period, the survey done by financial technology company FIS said.

The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy in May estimated that over 1 crore Indians have been rendered

jobless because of the second wave of the pandemic and the unemployment rate had touched a 12-month high of nearly 12 per cent.

It said that across all the other buckets of age groups, there was a dip in the number of people reporting a permanent loss of employment in 2021 as compared to the year-ago period.

Apart from the permanent job loss, nine per cent of those aged 18-24 said they have faced temporary layoff as against 21 per cent last year, while in the case of those over 55, the incidence came down to seven per cent from last year's 13 per cent.

Meanwhile, the pandemic and its economic impact - the GDP contracted by 7.3 per cent - also seems to be driving up incidents of frauds with one third of those polled saying they experienced a fraud in the last 12 months.

Among the 18-24 year olds, 38 per cent said they witnessed fraud in the last 12 months while the same went up to 41 per cent in the case of those aged between 25 and 29.

"The financial frauds were mostly through phishing, followed by QR code/ UPI scams, but consumers were also victims of card scams and skimming," a company statement said



SBI report: RBI may maintain status quo in August policy

PNS ■ MUMBAI

With retail inflation witnessing significant uptick in May, the RBI is likely to maintain status quo in its August monetary policy review, according to a report.

According to the SBI's research report- Ecowrap, inflation may remain elevated in the coming months due to several global and domestic factors.

"We expect a status-quo in August. We believe RBI would still try to find a marriage of convenience of regulatory and developmental measures and monetary policy in August policy," the research report said on Wednesday. It further noted that "the die has been cast, but the RBI can still hold out with a firm message of ratcheting up inflationary pressures in the August policy statement."



physical contact. 'One to one interaction' between faculty and student, that helps in creative solutions and research outcome, will also need physical connect, though some part will take place online.

NEP 2020 envisage growth from 26 per cent to 50 per cent in Gross Enrolment Ratio(GER) in higher education. India have around 40,000 "brick-and-mortar" institution imparting undergraduate education. To double GER, a very layman calculation suggests establishing 40000 more undergraduate institutions! One may argue, that we could encourage existing institutions to expand, but would that extend our reach to every remote place across the country!

Land, faculty, finance and other resources to build required infrastructure, is fraught with challenges. India must use digital technologies to completely revolutionise traditional education content and delivery process. Going forward, we have to implement tech driven learning environment. Meaningful, innovative hybrid learning solutions of learning is what students will look forward.

For better learning and research, institutions will surely thrive to explore meaningful blend of digital and physical learning synergy. A well crafted hybrid- solution can reduce the cost of learning substantially and also help to overcome the problem of faculty shortage. Policy makers and institutions will see the merit of reducing, say engineering programme, from four years of physical contact sessions to three years by allowing students to complete the theoretical core courses online thereby reducing cost of imparting education. Many experimentation is already happening. We will experience more creative solution coming up. These solutions will go a long way in bringing into the learning ambit several more deprived students and at a much lower cost.

Covid acted as catalyst. It forced everyone to switch from physical classroom teaching to online teaching overnight. Reluctant students and teachers switched to virtual platform, quickly adopted and started appreciating certain values of online teaching and learning.

Thus, post-Covid will see a hybrid environment of coexistence of physical and virtual platforms, reinforcing one another. Traditional universities will have to transform into new kinds of entities, optimise their existing operations in a search to increased capability to impart quality education and also help achieve NEP target.

(The writer is Director, Great Lakes Institute of Management, Gurugram.)

Unlock new opportunities



The HR functions look pretty simple on the outside but in actuality it does not end with the recruitment of a candidate. A whole lot of work begins after the recruitment of an employee like on-boarding, resource allocation, resource management, compensation and benefits, performance management, promotions, employee engagement, and motivating strategies. All these tasks look and sound easy but are the opposites when performed at the organisational level and hence SAP HCM is the most widely used software across industries to streamline the HR processes.

SAP HR records all the data of an employee in an organisation from date of joining to date of leaving and stores all the important employee data such as designation, role, address, salary details, and more; thereby simplifying the HR's job. Owing to this, there is a huge demand for professionals with a degree or a certification in HR centric courses, with SAP HR or SAP HCM being one of them.

While there are multiple options available for the pursuit, here is a guide to make your choice a little simpler and quicker. The top five Online Certification Course for SAP HR.

Henry Harvin:

The SAP HR course also

known as Human Capital Management (HCM) offered by India's leading Ed-tech company — Henry Harvin takes you through the modules such as Personnel Administration (PI), Organisational Management (OM), Time Payroll, Time Management, Recruitment, Training and Event Management, and Travel Management.

This nine-in-one course is spread across 44 hours of live online interactive classroom sessions followed by regular bootcamps spread over the next 12 months and facilities to gain experience in organisational and time management, personal administration, payroll, travel management, and more. On successful completion, the participants are awarded a completion certificate by Henry Harvin.

SevenMentor:

Unlock new professional career opportunities with SevenMentor Online SAP HR Training which also provides in-depth knowledge of SAP HR (HCM). It provides the opportunity to learn new skills through interactive discussion and experiential learning which pushes one's thinking and gives the chance to put what you are learning into practice.

Spanning over a duration of 90 to 110 hours, the course covers modules which are vital when it comes to analysing the

performance of the HR functions for the organisation taught by professional trainers.

iClass Training:

iClass Training provides real-time and placement focused SAP HR training in India which includes both the basic and the advanced level. The content of the course is thoughtfully compiled as per the student's requirements to achieve their career goals. By undertaking this course by iClass Training, the applicant will learn sap HR module introduction, Organisational Structure, Enterprise Structure, Organisational Management, Recruitment, Personnel Administration, Time Management, Payroll, Personnel Development, Training & Event Management, SAP HR real time project and SAP HR placement training.

This tailor-made course is delivered by certified experts and experienced working professionals with hands on real time multiple SAP HR projects knowledge and is split over day time classes, weekend training classes, evening batch classes and fast track training classes.

Grey Campus:

SAP Human Resources (HR) has been designed and developed for managing people in a business organisation. In this course, one gains complete knowledge on all the modules of SAP HR, such as payroll and time management. These modules are used for generating and managing payrolls and managing time for time-sensitive jobs.

The primary objective of this Instructor-led Live Online Training is to help the aspirants in building SAP HR/HCM skills. Delivered by 100+ certified experts and professionals, this course gives one year access to class recordings to all the participants; thereby nurturing their skills for their dream jobs.

Multisoft Virtual Academy:

SAP ERP-HR online training by Multisoft Virtual Academy acquaints participants with the capabilities and functionalities of SAP ERP software for managing human resource activities. After introducing candidates to the Enterprise Resource Planning concept and the SAP® software package, learners go on to understand the various HR phases and how these are facilitated with the software.

A well-crafted solution can reduce the cost of learning substantially and also help to overcome problem of faculty shortage, says Dr Debasis Sanyal.

The education ecosystem has been going through major transformation for quite some time. Virtual education platforms have been making good inroads. It's not only complementing and supplementing classroom teaching, it independently has become an important platform for synchronous and asynchronous learning across wide range of users, from primary to higher education and training. This transformation is primarily due to (a) experimentation in virtual learning space and (b) change in demographic profile.

After 2007-08, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) became popular and many thought MOOCs will replace physical class room learning to a great extent. That did not happen though many of these courses have extremely rich content. The failure of MOOCs courses to maintain connect and excitement with the users over a sustained period have being held as the primary reasons behind the limited success.

Most students, after going through some initial modules, lost interest. Further users were less committed as it was free to those who did not opt for certificate or degree.

Things have changed with advent of AI, ML and other exponential technology. Continued

HYBRID IS THE WAY FORWARD

experimentations in recent years have made learning using virtual platform more interactive, simple, flexible, easy to comprehend and cost effective. Disregarding age the asynchronous learning modes have become very popular, from primary to higher education and training. As these modes also helps self-learners in problem solving and creative solutions, people are less dependent on formal sessions. Many short term physical training needs have thus reduced.

The new generations, Y and beyond, are much more technology savvy and also very independent in their thinking and behaviour. They demand more flexibility. Virtual learning platforms, specially asynchronous mode fits well to their behavioural framework.

These platforms, supported by AI, ML and other emerging technology helps users to get answer to their queries instantly. It allows

users to go back and forth while they are learning, providing both fast and slow learners the much needed flexibility.

Education institutions by and large are involved in three things; transfer of knowledge, peer to peer learning, and teacher-student one to one knowledge transfer.

A significant part of 'transfer of knowledge' aspect will move to digital platform, specially in higher education. In primary and tertiary too synchronous and asynchronous learning will keep becoming more popular as it provides the much needed flexibility. It fits perfectly to the desire of the new generation to learn 'at any time' and 'at one own pace'. Popularity of BYJU, Unacademy are cases in point.

However, peer to peer learning, which significantly contributes towards enhancing soft skills (team spirit, conflict resolution, leadership skills, etc.) will require

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



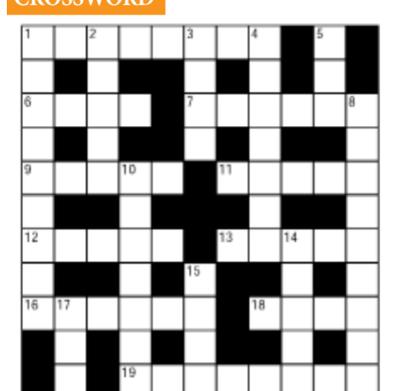
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution

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

- 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

- Without any bends
- Travel by horse
- Bigger
- A plant's underground parts
- Flying creatures
- Sweeten food with this
- Sit on this
- Be unalike
- Too
- Writer of music
- From Turkey
- Tell a fib
- A large store of water for supplying a town
- The movement of cars and people in the street
- A book of maps of countries
- Wheel a baby about in this
- Liquid in a pen

DOWN

- Started
- Listen to music on this
- A precious metal



While we have overcome the first wave of the pandemic, the second wave is giving chills to many industries due to lack of business and income. With the help of WEHub, startups have put the pandemic behind them. *The Pioneer's* K RAMYA SREE talks to women entrepreneurs to understand how they're overcoming the pandemic.



Pandemic: A teacher to several entrepreneurs

The second wave of the pandemic has only added to the already existing woes, with many diversifying their product offerings or pivoting their ideas to stay afloat. "The word entrepreneur is fulfilled only when an entrepreneur learns to face unexpected challenging times. Hence, WEHub is helping start-ups from various sectors by addressing their pandemic-related challenges, and then extensively mapping solutions for them with the prime goal of keeping their business afloat. Amid the lockdown, it is helping start-ups re-strategise and reconnect with the market after the pandemic is over. We've also seen many new budding entrepreneurs remodel their businesses and create successful growth amid the crises. Take for instance, one of our startups: Shree Latha Garments and Ladies Tailors from Nizamabad, Telangana. During the pandemic, Latha Nadukuda started getting

orders from local Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to make masks and PPE kits for the local government and private hospitals from parts of Telangana," informs Deepthi Ravula, CEO of WEHub.

With the growing reputation of the products crafted by Shree Latha Garments, more government orders came in, leading to the growth of the business. During the pandemic, all employees worked from home, and had a steady source of income, with some of them earning up to Rs 1.5 lakh per month.

As companies, big, small, and tiny, struggle to find their feet amid the Covid-19 mayhem, WEHub, is going about incubating differently — by helping start-ups fine-tune their business strategies to tap newer opportunities unfolded by the pandemic. "With the steps being taken by the state and central governments to contain the Covid scenario, we are extending our support to women-led enterprises to sustain and scale and be prepared for the post lockdown scenarios," she adds.

Shobana Uthayashankar, CEO and founder of Innogle, sharing with us her lockdown struggles, explains, "Start-ups have particularly been vul-



nerable, and still continue to face various distressing challenges both, from a business and operations' perspective. When we were about to normalising the first wave loss, the second wave hit us. We identified to overcome a few challenges by inventing technical methodology to overcome the second wave impact in terms of remote customer support and problem-solving. In the meantime, government and other

related bodies supported by providing funds/grants for startup sustainability."

How are the founders overcoming the challenges? "I would say, for the time being, scaling down the operation would be a safer option to have business sustainability and it depends on industry specifics and of course, founders are coming up with innovative ideas with different business models to sustain themselves. WEHub

supported Innogle to identify and bridge the gap to scale up the business in the areas of Business Internal gap analysis, connecting domain-specific experts and mentors to fulfill the real needs of the startup at the right time. Unlike other accelerators and incubation programs, we have seen evidential support and the guidelines from WEHub

and the team members."

Kanika Bansal, founder, and director of Designocare shares, "Our startup is in the R&D prototype phase of the ventilator. All our plans to do fabrication, testing, procuring material like electronics, etc., are heavily impacted as a majority of the industrial areas, suppliers of raw materials, etc., could function due to the lockdown, or were downsizing,

material couldn't reach Hyderabad/India, and the huge demand, rise in the R&D cost have all added to our financial burden. Testing of the product in hospitals was not a feasible option as doctors and hospitals are quite full. Our team and their families were affected, hence some of the key team members are unable to work. As our product involves a lot of hardware components, the team cannot work from home completely. Hence, the burn rate was high as the project pace slowed down."

She adds that as an entrepreneur, she was constantly worried about the team and their well-being during Covid. "Unlike corporate companies, we cannot provide health insurance. We were worried about our own family and suffered some personal losses, including losing some close family members and friends to the virus. We dealt with high levels of stress: taking care of the company, family, managing funds so all employees were paid salaries in full and on time, it was hectic. The first wave came as a thunderbolt from the sky, we were not pre-

pared at all. We were learning things on the go, worked on resolving one problem at a time. At the time of the first wave, we were in the designing phase of our ventilator hence, a majority of the activities could be done remotely. But in the second wave, we were more prepared and educated about the various precautions to be taken. Learning lessons from last year, our employees were also well prepared and could resolve issues related to infrastructure and remote working."

SulakshanaMandhadi, the founder of Shu Shu Babies, explains how the second wave of Covid impacted the founder as an entrepreneur. She shares, "Mentally it is draining, and especially when we stepped into the market when Covid was at its peak. On a positive note, it is good that I have learned the hardships at a very early stage. Financial and mental pressure mounted, but we learned to stay calm and believe in our product and mission. Rather than worrying about things that are out of my reach, I looked for solutions. That's why we started to concentrate on E-commerce sales, but the lockdown has brought down those sales because of shipping restrictions. Then we decided to concentrate on the Hyderabad and Telangana markets in particular, where we could deliver goods with no restrictions. We are also focused on Amazon sales as restrictions for shipping are minimal. To overcome financial pressure we are leaning on WEHub to guide us through loans and schemes for MSME businesses. This second wave made me realise that the entrepreneurial journey is not easy, but it is worth fighting for."

"Ever since my association with WEHub, the journey has been a little less bumpy. WEHub supported me in finding a mentor (the most important part of any entrepreneurial journey), guiding me through financial assistance in terms of schemes and loans (taking a little financial burden away from me), and supported me in finding the right digital partner (which is as well one of the keys for branding)," adds she. These tough times definitely did encourage founders to come out of this, stronger and wiser.

Optimistically it might be a good thing to happen as we get to see the downs at a very early stage and learn to survive. One might lose the fight but the experience gained is much more precious than the loss. Hang in there and don't lose hope!



increas-

ing delays in our testing. Supply chain and logistics also were badly hit. Raw material prices hiked overnight as well as a lot of

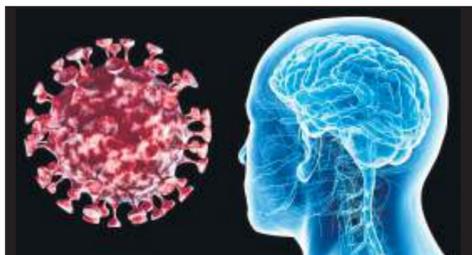
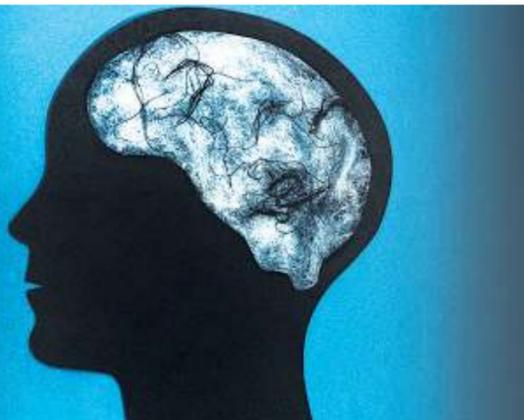


Chrissy Teigen apologises for "past horrible tweets"

In a blog post, US model and television personality Chrissy Teigen reflected on the crushing weight of regret for the things she has said in the past. Teigen published a series of tweets in May apologising to TV personality Courtney Stodden, who accused her of online bullying. Stodden accepted the apology but said it could just be an attempt to limit damage to Teigen's reputation. In her latest blog post, Teigen said she was privately reaching out to people she'd insulted in the past, though she did not say who. "There is simply no excuse for my past horrible tweets," wrote Teigen, who is married to singer John Legend. "I was a troll, full stop. And I am so sorry." "I took to Twitter to try to gain attention and show off what I at the time believed was a crude, clever, harmless quip. I thought it made me cool and relatable if I poked fun at celebrities," she continued. "In reality, I was insecure, immature, and in a world where I

thought I needed to impress strangers to be accepted," Teigen added. Teigen currently has 13.5 million Twitter followers and 35 million on Instagram — where she also shared a link to her blog post. She said she was not seeking sympathy, and that she was "no longer the person who wrote those horrible things" after getting married, having kids, and attending therapy. "We are all more than our worst moments," Teigen wrote. "I won't ask for your forgiveness, only your patience, and tolerance." In 2011 Teigen, who was aged 25 at the time, sent Twitter messages to then-16-year-old Stodden, urging them to take their own life. During that period Stodden rose to fame as the teenage bride of actor Doug Hutchison, who was aged 50 when they married.

COVID AND THE NERVOUS SYSTEM



Recent studies have found that Covid could affect your nervous system too. Researchers said that Coronavirus disease can cause severe inflammation in the central

nervous system. The study, led by a team of researchers from the University of Freiburg in Germany, showed that a severe inflammatory response can develop in the central nervous system of Covid-19 patients involving different immune

cells around the vascular system and in the brain tissue. "Even though there was already evidence of central nervous system involvement in Covid-19, the extent of inflammation in the brain surprised us," said lead author Henrike Salie, Faculty of Medicine at the University's Medical Center. "In particular the many microglial nodules we detected cannot usually be found in the healthy brain," added Marius Schwabenland, Faculty of Medicine, at the varsity. For the study, published in the journal *Immunity*, the team used a novel measurement method, imaging mass cytometry, and were able to determine different cell types as well as virus-infected cells and their spatial interaction in previous-

ly unseen detail. The immune changes are particularly detectable near small brain vessels. In these areas, the viral receptor ACE2 is expressed, onto which the coronavirus can dock, and the virus is also directly detectable there, the researchers said. "It seems plausible that immune cells recognise infected cells and inflammation then spreads to the nerve tissue, causing symptoms. It is possible that early immunomodulatory or immunosuppressive treatment could reduce inflammation," said Professor Bertram Bengsch, Section Head of Translational Systems Immunology in Hepatogastroenterology at varsity.

Hummels own goal helps Les Blues win opening game against Germany



FRANCE OFF TO WINNING START

AFP ■ MUNICH

French players Lucas Hernandez (21), Adrien Rabiot and Kylian Mbappe (10) celebrate after Germany's Mats Hummels, center, scored an own goal during the Euro 2020 group F match between Germany and France at the Allianz Arena in Munich on Tuesday night

Mats Hummels own goal was enough to hand France a 1-0 victory over Germany on Tuesday as the world champions made a winning start to their Euro 2020 campaign by controlling the game in Munich.

Hummels turned the ball into his own net in the 20th minute, which ultimately decided the contest.

France also saw Kylian Mbappe and Karim Benzema have second-half goals ruled offside, while Adrien Rabiot hit the post for Les Bleus.

"It was a clash that could have been a semi-final or a final, so to take three points was important," said France coach Didier Deschamps.

"We played a big game against a very good German team, but we were up to the level and this victory does us good."

The result leaves France second on goal difference in the early Group F table behind Portugal, after the holders' 3-0 win over Hungary earlier in

Budapest.

The home defeat piles the pressure on Germany ahead of their next game against Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal on Saturday, also at Allianz Arena.

"It was a brutally intense game," said Germany head coach Joachim Löw. "We fought until the end and I can't blame the team, we gave it everything we had. What was missing was a bit of penetrating power in the final third. We didn't do enough there."

He refused to blame Hummels for the own goal, saying: "There is no need to reproach Mats for the own goal. It was difficult for him to clear."

It was a heartbreaking night for Hummels, back to boost the German defence after a two-year exile from international football.

Seven years ago, it was Hummels' headed goal which knocked France out of the 2014 World Cup in the quarter-finals as Germany went on to win the title in Brazil.

Miranchuk reignites Russia's campaign

AP ■ ST PETERSBURG

A special goal by Aleksei Miranchuk allowed Russia to kickstart their Euro 2020 campaign with a 1-0 win over Finland in Saint Petersburg on Wednesday, but the game was marred by an injury to Mario Fernandes.

Miranchuk, of Serie A side Atalanta, produced a glorious finish in first-half stoppage time for the only goal of the game between the neighbours in Group B.

It blows open the section after Russia, one of nine participating nations at the Euro playing matches at home, had lost 3-0 to Belgium in their opening game at the weekend.

Finland, making their debut at a major international tournament, had beaten Denmark 1-0 in Copenhagen on Saturday, a game



Russia's Aleksei Miranchuk, front, celebrates after scoring his side's opening goal

completely overshadowed by Christian Eriksen's cardiac arrest.

Here it was Russia's Fernandes, the Brazilian-born CSKA Moscow right-back, who provided an injury scare.

The 30-year-old went up for a high ball in the Finland box in the first half and came down awkwardly, the back of his neck taking the full force of the landing.

He needed to be stabilised and was stretchered off before being taken to hospital.

The Russian team's Twitter feed said he was undergoing tests for a suspected spinal injury.

Russia went on to win the game without Fernandes, as Miranchuk turned on the edge of the box and played a one-two with skipper Artem Dzyuba before sending a glorious left-foot shot into the top corner of the net.

Depay hints Barca deal is close

AFP ■ AMSTERDAM

Netherlands star Memphis Depay has hinted that he is on the verge of sealing a move to Barcelona as he admitted his desire to team up again with former national team coach Ronald Koeman.

"Things will become clear with the transfer. I want to leave it at that for now," Depay said after being asked about his club future at a press conference ahead of the Netherlands' Euro 2020 game on Thursday against Austria.

"Everyone knows that I have been linked to Barcelona for a long time and that I want to play under Ronald Koeman. 'Let's wait and see.'"

Depay, 27, is a free agent after opting not to extend his contract with Lyon, for whom he scored 20 goals in the past Ligue 1 season.

Arnautovic banned for goal celebration

AFP ■ LAUSANNE

Austria forward Marko Arnautovic has been given a one-game Euro 2020 ban for insulting a North Macedonia player in his side's opening match at the tournament, UEFA said on Wednesday.

UEFA said Arnautovic had been punished for 'insulting another player' and the 32-year-old will miss his side's match against the Netherlands in Amsterdam on Thursday as a result.

European football's governing body had opened an investigation into Arnautovic following the incident in Sunday's 3-1 win over North Macedonia in Bucharest.

The former West Ham United player, who now plays for Shanghai Port in China, netted Austria's third goal in the game



Marko Arnautovic (7) celebrates after he scores against North Macedonia

and then launched into an ill-tempered celebration until his teammate David Alaba intervened to calm him down.

Media reports claimed he insulted Leeds United's Ezgjan Alioski, referring to the North Macedonia defender's Albanian heritage.

Coca-Cola take \$4 billion hit after Ronaldo's PC

Budapest: Portuguese superstar Cristiano Ronaldo removed Coca-Cola bottles placed in front of him at a Euro 2020 press conference here, which reportedly cost the global beverage giant a staggering \$4 billion.

A well-known fitness enthusiast, Ronaldo set aside two Coca-Cola glass bottles which lay in front of him during a press conference ahead of Portugal's opening Euro match against Hungary here on Monday.

According to media reports, the share price of Coca-Cola, one of the official sponsors of Euro 2020, slipped from \$56.10 to \$55.22 almost immediately after Ronaldo's gesture.

The market valuation of Coca-Cola went from \$242 billion to \$238 billion, a fall of \$4 billion.

On Tuesday, France mid-fielder Paul Pogba also removed a bottle of Heineken beer that had been placed in front of him at a Press conference. PTI

shortpasses

MURRAY IN TEARS AFTER WIN

LONDON: Former world No 1 Andy Murray defeated Benoit Paire 6-3, 6-2 at The Queen's Club grass-court tournament, dispatching the Frenchman in 65 minutes for his first matching victory in more than a year.

JAPAN WEIGHING 10K FANS CAP

TOKYO: Japan could allow up to 10,000 fans at sports events ahead of the Olympics, media reported on Wednesday, as organisers weigh how many domestic fans can attend the Games.

MAN CITY VS SPURS IN PL OPENER

LONDON: Premier League champions Man City will start the defence of their title away to Spurs after the fixtures for the 2021-22 season were unveiled on Wednesday.

CONCUSSED FAF OUT OF PSL

ABU DHABI: Former Proteas captain Faf du Plessis, who had suffered a concussion during a PSL match, was on Wednesday ruled out of the remaining matches of the T20 tournament.

WILCARD FOR MURRAY, VENUS

LONDON: Andy Murray and Venus Williams, who have seven Wimbledon singles titles between them, have been given wild card entries to this year's championships.

CELTIC VS MIDTYLLAND IN CL

LONDON: New Celtic manager Ange Postecoglou's first official game will be against Danish side Midtjylland in the second qualifying round of the Champions League. The Hoops will be at home for the first leg on July 20 or 21 before travelling to the MCH Arena a week later.

FEDERER SUFFERS SHOCK DEFEAT

HALLE: Roger Federer suffered a setback in his preparations for Wimbledon after crashing out of the second round of the ATP grass court tourney. He suffered a shock 4-6, 6-3, 6-2 defeat to Felix Auger Aliassime.

ROSE JOINS WATFORD FOR FREE

LONDON: Watford have confirmed the signing of defender Danny Rose on a two-year deal following his departure from Spurs.

MILKHA OUT OF COVID ICU

CHANDIGARH: Legendary Indian sprinter Milkha Singh is 'stable' and he has been shifted out of COVID ICU to another section of the PGIMER hospital, a statement from his family said on Wednesday.

BOPANNA-SHARAN IN QUARTERS

HALLE: India's Rohan Bopanna and Divij Sharan knocked out second seeds Lukasz Kubot and Edouard Roger Vasselin 7-6(11) 6-4 to move to the quarterfinals of the Noventi Open, here on Wednesday.

DUTTE AIMS TO REACH 100M FINAL

NEW DELHI: An Olympic qualifying spot within her grasp, national record-holding sprinter Dutee Chand said her target in the upcoming Tokyo Games is to reach the 100m final with an improved timing. Agencies

Gavaskar expects both Ashwin, Jadeja to play in WTC final

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Legendary opener Sunil Gavaskar believes that India will go in with both Ravindra Jadeja and Ravichandran Ashwin against New Zealand in the World Test Championship final as Southampton's 'boiling hot' weather is going to ensure that the pitch dries up progressively and assists spinners.

Gavaskar is part of the match's commentary panel and is currently in Southampton with first-hand knowledge about the pitch and conditions for the match starting June 18.

"In Southampton, it's been boiling hot over the last few days so the pitch will definitely be dry and help spin as the match progresses, so yes both Ashwin and Jadeja will play," Gavaskar said.

Southampton's maximum temperature has been over 25°C for the past few days but there is a forecast of rain from Thursday.

For Gavaskar, it's not just bowling but all-round abilities that give India the kind of balance they need going into a marquee match like this.

"That (Ashwin and Jadeja together) also gives depth to the batting as well as give a fine balance to the bowling attack. For the series later (vs England) much will depend on the weather and pitch conditions."

While New Zealand will be on a high after their series win against England, Gavaskar doesn't feel that the Indian team is under-prepared either just because it didn't get any practice matches.

"(In) today's tours there are barely one or two practice games before the Test series begins and the Indian team has had intra-squad matches so they have had that practice."

"The team is a good blend of youth and experience and most of the players have been to England several times so they know the conditions and what to expect," said the former India captain.

I've reached here because of criticism: Rahane

PTI ■ SOUTHAMPTON

Ajinkya Rahane doesn't mind a bit of 'criticism' but has never been too overtly bothered by what people think about his game as he goes on with his job of winning Test matches for the Indian team.

Despite his blow-hot-blow-cold form over the last few years, India's Test vice-captain with 1095 runs in 17 games is team's top scorer in the two-year World Test Championship cycle leading to the final against New Zealand.

"It feels special," Rahane said about emerging as the top scorer.

But what about the flak that he has faced because of poor run of scores?

"I'm happy to take criticism. I feel it's because of the criticism I'm here. I always want to give my best whether people criticise me or not."

"For me, it's important to give my best for my country and contribute each and every time be it as a batsman or a fielder," Rahane, who played a massive role as skipper during epic series against Australia, said.

Having played Test cricket for more than eight years, Rahane knows that public opinion is fickle and at



Indian Test vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane trains during team's practice session

best left alone with focus on controllables.

"I don't really think about criticism. If people criticise me, that's

their thing, and that's their job. I cannot control all these things. For me, I always focus on controllables, putting my best foot forward, working hard and following my process and the result follows."

Rahane feels that even if he scores 40 and it proves to be useful for the team's cause, he is more than happy.

"I will be playing my natural game. Winning is really important whether I score hundred or not. I don't want to put too much pressure on myself and even if my 30 or 40 is valuable for the team, I am happy."

The Indian vice-captain in 2019 had played for the Hampshire county and has a better idea about the ground where he has also played two Tests in 2014 and 18, both of which the visitors lost.

"I like to be in the present. I know the conditions. It's about being in the moment, adjusting to the conditions. Also me being the highest scorer doesn't matter now. It's past. I just don't want to put extra pressure and would want to play freely," said Rahane, who has three hundreds and six fifties in this inaugural cycle of WTC.

For Rahane, the WTC final is just another game and his mental make-

English Women's dominate Day 1

PTI ■ BRISTOL

Indian Women picked up the crucial wicket Tammy Beaumont (66) in the second session but England Women consolidated their position by reaching 162 for two at tea on the opening day of the one-off Test here on Wednesday.

After getting rid of Lauren Winfield-Hill (35) in the first session of the day, India Women toiled hard for most part of the post-lunch period before debutant off-spinner Sneha Rana picked up her maiden Test wicket.

She got rid of in-form of Beaumont, who was brilliantly caught by Shafali Verma at short leg.

Beaumont faced 166 balls and decorated her innings with six fours en route to her second Test fifty.

Skipper Heather Knight (47 not out) batted cautiously and remained unbeaten in the company of Natalie Sciver (11 not out) as England made 76 runs off 28 overs in the second session.



England batter Tammy Beaumont in action against India on Day 1

England vs India
Live from 3:30 pm IST
SONY TEN 1 NETWORK

Earlier, the hosts made a solid 86 for one in the opening session.

The Indian pace duo of veteran Jhulan Goswami and Shikha Pandey made a promising start, doing just enough to trouble the English batswoman

between second slip and gully to the boundary.

After a slow and cautious start, England picked up the pace. Winfield was the more positive of the two batters as she lofted Pandey over the mid-wicket to hit the first six of the innings and in the process brought up England's fifty in the 17th over.

An over later, Winfield hit another maximum, this time over backward square leg off Vastrakar.

Vastrakar eventually had the last laugh as she had Winfield caught by wicket-keeper Taniya Bhatia, giving India the breakthrough.

As many as five players made Test debut for India, including Verma, Deepti Sharma, Vastrakar, Rana and Bhatia, while for England Sophia Dunkley was the lone player to earn a Test cap.

Indian women team is playing its first Test match in seven years. It last played the traditional format of the game in November 2014 against South Africa in Mysuru.

7 Oz stars skip WI tour

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Seven top Australian cricketers who recently played in the IPL have pulled out of the country's white-ball tour of West Indies and Bangladesh.

The two tours are part of team's preparations for the T20 World Cup later this year.

David Warner, Pat Cummins, Glenn Maxwell, Jhye Richardson, Kane Richardson, Marcus Stoinis and Daniel Sams have requested not to be considered for the tours for various reasons while Steve Smith has been rested to fully recover from an elbow complaint which flared during the IPL. Cricket Australia said in a statement.

Cricket Australia on Wednesday named a 18-man squad for the twin tours. Australia play five T20Is and three ODIs between July 9 and 24. The five-match T20 tour of Bangladesh is yet to be confirmed.

Jason Behrendorff, Moises Henriques and Riley Meredith have all agreed to go for the tour despite also being part of the IPL contingent that recently left



hotel quarantine.

The squad is due to depart for the West Indies on June 28 for five T20Is in St Lucia followed by three ODIs in Barbados. If confirmed, the team will then play five T20Is against Bangladesh.

Squad: Aaron Finch (c), Ashton Agar, Wes Agar, Jason Behrendorff, Alex Carey, Dan Christian, Josh Hazlewood, Moises Henriques, Mitchell Marsh, Ben McDermott, Riley Meredith, Josh Philippe, Mitchell Starc, Mitchell Swepson, Ashton Turner, Andrew Tye, Matthew Wade, Adam Zampa.

Travelling reserves: Nathan Ellis, Tanveer Sangha.

KRITI'S SITA TO BE A DARING CHARACTER

Actress Kriti Sanon, who is playing the character of Sita in *Adipurush* starring Prabhas (who will be seen in the role of Lord Rama), is not going to play your regular Sita. The film, a directorial venture of Om Raut of *Tanhaji* fame, also stars Saif Ali Khan. Kriti Sanon says she is very excited about this project as she got the rare opportunity to play the role of Goddess Sita.

Sources close to the team of *Adipurush* revealed that the makers are going to present Sita as a daring girl and not a helpless woman. Kriti Sanon will not be seen crying helplessly when Ravan abducts her in Lanka! Saif Ali Khan plays the role of Lankesh - Ravan, the main antagonist while Sunny Singh will be seen in the role of Laxman, in *Adipurush*, which will hit the screens on August 11, 2022.

Adipurush went on floors in January this year but the shoot came to a halt after a massive fire broke out on the sets. The upcoming big-budget film will have VFX



technicians of international repute, who have worked on films like *Avatar* and *Star Wars*.

Prabhas and Kriti Sanon-starrer *Adipurush* is a period drama set 7,000 years ago. Earlier during an interview, the 1 — *Nenokkadine* actress had expressed confidence in *Adipurush* director Om, saying she is in safe hands.



TS Guv lauds CHIRU FOR HIS DEEDS



Praising the actor's efforts, Tamilisai Soundararajan wrote, "Living by example with exemplary services by celebrity Mega star donating blood, supplying oxygen to the needy amidst pandemic is highly laudable. Blood donors save lives." Chiranjeevi replied to her tweet by thanking Tamilisai for her kind words and noted that it enables him to work harder. "Thank you for your kind, encouraging words Madam Governor @DrTamilisaiGuvYour appreciation energizes me to work harder and serve the needy even better. Extremely grateful to you! Thank you once again! (sic)," the tweet read.

Similarly, Minister Kishan Reddy noted that Chiranjeevi's contribution is commendable and conveyed his wishes for Chiranjeevi and his team to continue their work. "Saving a human life is the noblest service for humanity. It is heartening to see the commendable and selfless work done by the superstar and former Minister Shri @KChiruTweets garu & his team during the #Covid19 pandemic which helped in saving many precious lives," the tweet read. Chiranjeevi tweeted, "Thank you for your kind words @kishanreddy-bipgaru. Just doing my little bit in this hour of crisis Sir."

Earlier, marking the occasion of world blood donor's day, the actor posted a tweet thanking donors for doing their bit. On the professional front, Chiranjeevi awaits the release of the upcoming Telugu movie *Acharya*, co-starring his son and actor, Ram Charan.

Telangana Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan, and Minister of State for Home Affairs G Kishan Reddy took to social media to heap praises on Tollywood star

Chiranjeevi for supplying oxygen and setting up blood donation camps amid the pandemic to help Covid-19 patients. Chiranjeevi, along with his son actor Ram Charan had set up oxygen banks in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. The oxygen banks have been functional since May 26. The oxygen bank came as an addition to the already existing Chiranjeevi Blood and Eye Bank, which is being run with the support of the actors' fans.



Mike Tyson gives his nod for *Liger*?

Young and happening actor Vijay Deverakonda, who is known for his roles in films like *Geetha Govindam* and *Arjun Reddy*, is currently busy playing the lead role in the Puri Jagannadh directorial venture

Liger. Bollywood actress Ananya Pandey plays the female lead in this film, which will also have *Baahubali* fame, Ramya Krishnan, playing Vijay Deverakonda's mom.

Not very long ago, there was a strong buzz that legendary boxer Mike Tyson will make a screen presence in this film and it looks like this is going to be true.

Sources tell us that the makers approached the team of Mike Tyson last year and negotiations weren't finalised until recently. But now, Mike Tyson finally gave his green signal for the Vijay

Deverakonda and Ananya Pandey-starrer which is a sport-based film. The *World Famous Lover* fame actor will be seen playing a boxer in the film.

The Hindi version of Ananya Pandey and Vijay Deverakonda-starrer *Liger* is presented by Karan Johar whereas its Telugu version is bankrolled by Charmee Kaur along with Puri Jagannadh.

There are a lot of well-known artists in *Liger* and the new release date is yet to be announced.

After Vijay Deverakonda is done with *Liger*, he is expected to team up with director Koratala Siva who is currently busy with his upcoming film *Acharya*, which has Megastar Chiranjeevi and Ram Charan Tej in the lead.



NANI STARTS MEET CUTE

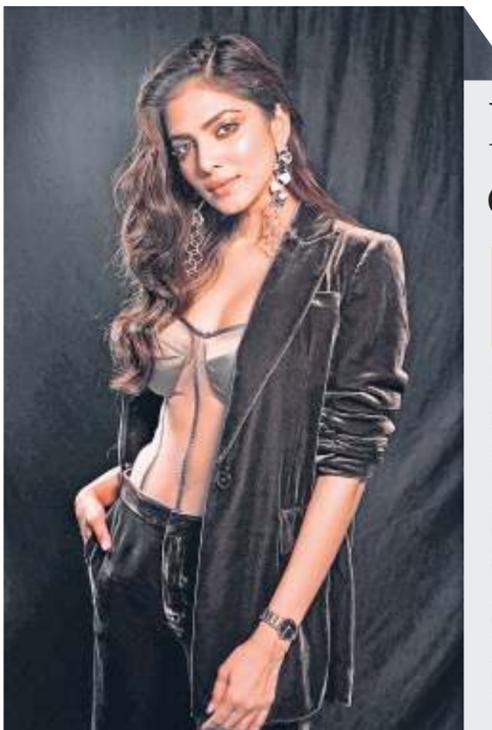


Nani is not only known for his realistic and natural performances on the silver screen but also is showing his taste for good films by turning producer. He is currently bankrolling *HIT* sequel, *HIT2* with Adivi Sesh as the hero. According to the latest, Nani launched his next film under his production.

Sharing the details he posted "Wall Poster Cinema Production No 4 #MeetCute. A new journey begins today. This one's special for." Nani also shared pictures showing the

commencement of the shooting.

Inside talk is Nani's sister Deepthi Gantha is also associated with the project. Satyaraj is playing an important role in the film and the project commenced with Nani clapping the soundboard and Satyaraj acting in the first scene. Nani is producing the film along with Prashanti Tipirneni on Wall Poster Cinema Banner. Nani is currently starring in *Shyam Singha Roy* under the direction of Rahul Sankarthy and *Tuck Jagadeesh* under the direction of Shiva Nirvana.



Ram Charan and Mahesh eyeing Malavika Mohanan?

Malayalee beauty Malavika Mohanan seems to be in high demand these days. Malavika who shared screen presence in Rajinikanth's *Petta* scored her first hit starring opposite Vijay in *Master*. She is now starring in a Bollywood film titled *Yudhra*. Now reports are coming that Tollywood filmmakers are eyeing Malavika and planning to introduce her in style. It is known that Ram Charan is doing a project with Shankar. The makers first planned to cast Alia Bhatt as heroine but now reports have it that Shankar is keen to cast



Malavika Mohanan opposite Ram Charan. The film is touted to be a pan-India entertainer. Similarly, the makers of Mahesh Babu-Trivikram Srinivas are also considering Malavika Mohanan for the high-profile female

lead. Both Shankar and Trivikram Srinivas are known to show female leads in a beautiful and powerful manner. Now all eyes are on Malavika Mohanan and whom will she be paired opposite, Ram Charan or Mahesh Babu?