

NATION 5

PAGD LEADERS WILL ATTEND MEETING ON KASHMIR FUTURE, SAYS FAROOQ

MONEY 8

NCLT APPROVES JALAN'S RESOLUTION PLAN FOR JET AIRWAYS

SPORTS 12

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE MADE POSSIBLE

VIJAYAWADA, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 23, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3



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MEHREEN IN BALAKRISHNA-GOPICHAND MALINENI FILM Page 12

IN FAKE TRP CASE, MUMBAI POLICE NAMES ARNAB GOSWAMI AS ACCUSED

The Mumbai Police has named senior television journalist Arnab Goswami as an accused in the alleged TRP rigging scam in its second chargesheet filed before a court here on Tuesday. The chargesheet was submitted before a magistrate's court by the police's Crime Intelligence Unit (CIU) probing the case. "Among others, Goswami and ARG Outlier have been named as accused in the chargesheet," lawyer of Goswami, the Editor-in-Chief of Republic TV, said. The alleged fake TRP scam came to light in October last year.



CENTRE NOT TO SEEK DISCLOSURE OF FLASH SALES FROM E-TAILERS

The Centre on Tuesday said it will not seek disclosure of flash sales from e-commerce players to regulate the fraudulent sale of goods and services but will take appropriate action as per the law on consumer complaints. Discount sales that benefit consumers will continue, but not fraudulent flash sales on e-commerce platforms, the government said. Ban on fraudulent flash sales, mis-selling and appointment of chief compliance officer/grievance redressal officer -- are among key amendments proposed to the Consumer Protection (e-commerce) Rules, 2020.



37 PERCENT EXCESS RAINFALL SO FAR ACROSS INDIA THIS MONSOON, SAYS IMD

India has received 37 per cent excess rainfall during the monsoon season so far, the IMD said on Tuesday. The country gauged 13.78 cm precipitation against the normal of 10.05 cm till June 21, it said. The cumulative rainfall during this year's Southwest Monsoon season till June 21 has been excess by about 37 per cent above Long Period Average (LPA)," the weather department said in a statement. It said that the southern peninsula received 133.6 mm rainfall, 24 per cent more than normal, while east and northeast India witnessed 253.9 mm rainfall against the normal of 224.8 mm.



LEGENDARY CARNATIC MUSICIAN PARASSALA B PONNAMMAL DIES AT 96

Legendary Carnatic musician and Padmashree awardee, Parassala B Ponnammal, who enthralled classical music lovers for the last eight decades through her incredible concerts, passed away at her home in Valiyasala here on Tuesday, family sources said. She was 96 and was suffering from age-related ailments for some time, they said. A doyen of Carnatic music, Ponnammal was a musician who had broken gender stereotypes in classical music and became the first woman student to enrol in the historic Swathi Thirunal College of Music here during the 1940s.



Why risk lives of students by holding exams, SC asks State

■ If there is any fatality, we will hold state govt responsible, warns apex court

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

"If there is any fatality, we will hold the state responsible," the Supreme Court told the Andhra Pradesh government on Tuesday on being informed of its decision to hold Class 12 board examination.

A bench of Justices AM Khanwilkar and Dinesh Maheshwari was informed that Andhra Pradesh and Kerala are the only two states which have till now decided to hold the Class 12 board examination.

"You will have to give very good reasons to hold Class 12 board examinations. If there is any fatality, we will hold the state responsible," the bench told counsel for Andhra Pradesh.

At the outset, advocate Mahfooz Nazki, appearing for the State, said the government has till now decided to hold the examination but the final decision will be taken in the first week of July.

The bench sought to know as to why the state was creating



uncertainty in the minds of students by delaying the final decision for the first week of July.

"You take a decision by Wednesday and we will take up the matter on Thursday," the bench told Nazki.

The top court is hearing a plea seeking directions to state governments to not hold board examinations in view of the Covid-19 pandemic.

It asked Nazki as to what makes the Andhra Pradesh government think that it can manage to hold the examination and whether the state has all necessary logistics keeping in mind pandemic.

Nazki said it has nearly five lakh students and as per his instructions 15 students will be made to sit in one classroom during the examination.

22 cases of Delta plus mutant found; not yet a 'variant of concern': Centre

NEW DELHI: Twenty-two cases of the Delta plus variant of the coronavirus have been detected in India, with 16 of them being reported from Maharashtra and the remaining from Madhya Pradesh and Kerala, the government said on Tuesday.

India is among the nine countries where the Delta plus mutation has been found so far, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said at a press briefing, underlining that it is currently a "variant of interest" and has not yet been classified as a "variant of concern".



Pawar hosts opposition leaders; NCP says 'not political meeting'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Leaders of several opposition parties including TMC, SP, AAP, RLD and the Left assembled at NCP chief Sharad Pawar's residence on Tuesday and discussed various issues facing the country, amid heightened speculation about the possibility of a third front against the ruling BJP.

Leader of the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) Nilotpal Basu, who attended the meeting, said it was not a political meeting but an interaction among like-minded people.

"Issues like Covid management, 'attack' on institutions and unemployment were discussed at the meeting," he said. The meeting lasted over two hours.

Earlier in the day, a senior NCP leader, on the condition of anonymity, said though Pawar is hosting the meeting, it has been organised by Yashwant Sinha who is the convener of the Rashtra Manch.

All eyes on parties in both Telugu states

SNCN ACHARYULU ■ HYDERABAD

The fast-changing political scenario at the national level has led to the inevitable question - what is the stand of the parties down south?

Efforts to form a Third Front that can stop the BJP in the next Lok Sabha elections have picked pace after NCP president Sharad Pawar has started inviting political parties and intellectuals to take part in discussions.

For starters, Pawar has invited 15 political parties apart from intellectuals and others to discuss the formation of a Third Front. However, no parties from the southern states figure in the

list of these 15 political parties - Pawar is expected to focus on the south in the next round of meetings.

It is also not yet clear whether he would approach the Congress.

However, even before Pawar turns his attention to AP and Telangana, all eyes are on the political parties in the two Telugu States.

While no one can accurately predict what will be their stand three years down the line, the present situation does offer an indication of how the Chief Ministers of both the Telugu states and TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu may react.

Jagan to invite Naveen Patnaik for Neradi barrage stone laying ceremony

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Welcoming the Vamsadhara Tribunal verdict permitting Andhra Pradesh to construct Neradi Barrage across the Vamsadhara river, Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Tuesday directed officials to focus on preparing to take up construction works as soon as the Gazette is released.

The Chief Minister said that the Tribunal verdict will be beneficial to both Andhra Pradesh and Odisha and instructed the officials to prepare an action plan for the construction work.

Jagan said he would invite his Odisha counterpart and other public representatives for the foundation stone ceremony of the barrage. "Our policy is to move forward with mutual cooperation," the Chief Minister said.

Jagan credits YSR Cheyutha 2nd tranche to 23,14,342 beneficiaries

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Tuesday released the second tranche of YSR Cheyutha crediting Rs 4,339.39 crore into the accounts of 23,14,342 women beneficiaries.

YSR Cheyutha provides financial assistance of Rs 18,750 per annum to women of SC, ST, BC and minorities in the age group of 45 and 60. The scheme directly benefits around 23 lakh women from the weaker sections. So far, the state government has spent Rs 8,943 crore on this scheme in the last two years.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister said that the government has signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) with multinational companies such as Amul, Allana, ITC, HUL, P&G and Reliance, as well as several banks to support the women entrepreneurs establish grocery stores, dairy farms and other businesses. Through this scheme, around 78,000 women have started grocery



stores, where the goods will be supplied below the market rate to help them earn an additional profit of around Rs 10,000. Similarly, 1.19 lakh women have opted for the dairy sector and getting an additional income of Rs 5 to Rs 15 on each litre of milk supplied to Amul.

Also, around 70,000 women have shown interest in rearing sheep and goat units to increase their family income.

The Chief Minister said that in the first year, the State government had provided financial assistance of Rs 1510 crore for beneficiaries of YSR Cheyutha through banks.

He said if any eligible beneficiary is left out of the scheme, she can apply at the village secretariat concerned and their applications will be verified immediately and the benefits will be provided.

Raju files petition against Saraswati Power lease

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A petition was filed in Andhra Pradesh High Court on Tuesday by YSRCP rebel MP from Narsapuram Raghuram Krishna Raja against some companies allegedly promoted by Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy.

In his petition, the MP challenged the extension of the mining lease to Saraswati Power Industries.

He mentioned in the petition that the CBI has confirmed that there were irregularities in the lease. "Without mentioning the

CBI case, permission for extension of the lease was sought," the petition said.

In the petition, Raju questioned how the lease could be extended to the company while it was facing a CBI case. The MP alleged that the authorities had given permission in violation of the rules as the company was owned by the Chief Minister.

The rebel MP named Saraswati Power Industries, Industries Department, Mining Department, Andhra Pradesh Pollution Control Board as respondents in his petition.

Cabinet meeting on June 30, Covid on agenda

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh Cabinet will meet at the Secretariat at Velagapudi on June 30.

With the Covid-19 second wave on the wane and reports about possibility of a third wave during September-October, preparations and contingency action plans are expected to be the main agenda of the Cabinet.

The last time the Cabinet had met was on May 20, when it approved the state Budget that was presented during a one-day special session.

HC sentences 2 babus to jail, revokes order

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh High Court on Tuesday sentenced two top bureaucrats to a week in jail for not implementing its order to regularise 36 employees with immediate effect. However, the court revoked the sentence after being assured that the order would be implemented.

The court, in an unexpected move, sentenced two senior bureaucrats - Chiranjeevi Chaudhary and Girija Shankar - who appeared before it on being summoned for not implementing its orders.

Earlier in April, 36 outsourcing employees had moved court seeking regularisation of their jobs. Hearing the appeal, the court issued orders to the government to regularise their services.

However, when the orders were still not implemented, the 36 employees moved court again. Outraged by the non-implementation of its orders issued in April, the High Court sentenced IAS officer Girija Shankar and IFS officer Chiranjeevi Chowdhary to one week in jail.

Business District to come up in Vizag IT SEZ

SNV SUDHIR ■ VIJAYAWADA

The State government, which has shifted focus on the upcoming executive capital Vizag, is drawing plans to develop a 'Business District' for the IT&ITES sector in Madhurawada IT SEZ on Joint Venture (JV) model with a private developer.

The state-run APIIC, which holds a vacant plot of 18.93 acres on Hill No. 3 of the Madhurawada IT SEZ, intends to develop the Business District in JV model with 26 per cent of equity share in lieu of the land value.

Already, a handful of IT companies are operational on the three hills of Madhurawada SEZ, in which a few thousand IT professionals work. The Millennium Towers that were developed by



File picture of the Millennium Towers in Vizag

APIIC and speculated to house a temporary state secretariat is also on Hill No. 3 where the APIIC now intends to develop the Business District.

The Business District project is envisaged to be developed on the

concept of International Financial Services Centre, including business towers for commercial offices and other support amenities like star category business hotels, facilities for Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE).

APIIC had issued Expression of Interest (EoI) calling prospective developers having a minimum net worth or financial capacity of Rs 250 crore to develop the project.

The developer is expected to create an international business hub for multinational companies while attracting the best-in-class companies in IT&ITES and financial services sector to have their offices in the envisaged Business District.

"In the JV model, APIIC shall have 26 per cent stake in the SPV created for implementation of the project. The remaining 74 per cent stake is to be taken by the developer or JV partner. Selection of JV partner would be done through a fair, transparent and competitive bidding process," said a senior APIIC official.

TODAY ALMANAC
 Month & Paksham: Jyeshtha & Shukla Paksha Panchangam
 Tithi : Trayodashi 06:59
 Nakshatram : Anuradha 11:48
 Time to Avoid : (Bad time to start any important work)
 Rahukalam : 12:18 pm - 1:56 pm
 Yamagandam : 7:24 am - 9:02 am
 Varjyam : 4:47 pm - 6:12 pm
 Gulika : 10:40 am - 12:18 pm
 Good Time : (to start any important work)
 Amritakalam : 1:20 am - 2:46 am
 Abhijit Muhurtham : Nil

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER
 Forecast: Partly cloudy
 Temp: 38/26
 Humidity: 59%
 Sunrise: 05:43 am
 Sunset: 06:53 pm
 Current Weather Conditions Updated JUNE 22, 2021 5:00 PM

Working with foresight on politically significant caste combinations

For any shrewd politician, foresight is essential to work on politically significant caste combinations. Likewise, a community that forms a sizeable chunk of the vote bank will definitely be the cynosure of all eyes at the time of elections. In this context, it becomes essential to woo the Kapu community in Telugu states.



East Godavari districts. It has considerable base in the Royalaseema region, though it is known there by another name - Balija.

AP Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy appears to be very calculative on these caste combinations.

He has been on the job and is following the formula of social engineering in allotting nominated posts and chairperson posts of urban and rural local bodies. Jagan has to consolidate his party's position with regard to the Kapu community to retain power in the 2024 elections.

Until recently, there were apprehensions among some of the political pundits that there could be simultaneous polls for the Lok Sabha and the legislative assemblies of all states in 2022. Now, it appears that the idea of 'one nation, one poll' has been ruled out.

Hence, every political party has to redraw its plans and

One does not need a psephologist to drive home the fact that the party that manages to win the hearts of Kapus would have the last laugh at the hustings! For, the community has strong presence in the central Andhra region, consisting of Guntur, Krishna, West Godavari and East Godavari districts.

have a relook at its calculations.

Keep aside things like allotting tickets, nominated posts and other unofficial opportunities to members of the Kapu community for a while, every party in AP has to first instill confidence in that community.

It is a known fact that the ruling party has kept itself away from committing on the issue of reservation for the Kapu community in the fields of education and employment by latching on to the view that any such quota can't be implemented at the

present juncture.

Wounds following the tussle between the Kapu community and Dalits due to the tussling of a Dalit person almost quarter century ago are still fresh in people's minds. Newly nominated MLC Thota Trimurthulu (YSR) was involved in that case, which is still pending in the court. Meanwhile, Trimurthulu got MLC post under the Governor's quota in the AP Legislative Council.

It is natural for the general public to see only clean persons as members in the Council. But Trimurthulu,



M D RATNA KUMAR Senior Journalist

facing criminal charges in the tussling case, is in the Council, courtesy Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy. So, political parties and people's organisations have advised Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan not to endorse the proposals sent to him by the state government.

But Jaganmohan Reddy has taken it as a serious matter and proposals concerning the nomination of four MLCs

were accepted by the Governor immediately after meetings with Jagan.

While some sections are saying that the ruling party will have to face the repercussions in this regard in the days to come, there is a feeling among the cadre that it is a strong effort in expressing the party's solidarity with the Kapu community.

The ruling party might be under the scrutiny of Dalits following its attitude that shows a tilt towards Trimurthulu.

There might be no immediate reaction from the Dalit community, though there would be considerable impact in the days to come.

Former IAS officer & Lok Sabha member from Amalapuram (SC) constituency KSR Murthy (Congress) took up the tussling case during the 1998 mid-term elections for the Lok Sabha.

There was a clear polarisation in favour of caste following which the Kapu commu-

nity turned against Murthy in that particular election. Some Congress leaders warned Murthy not to take up the tussling issue fearing that Kapus might turn against the Congress. Their apprehensions came true, resulting in the defeat of the Congress then. Now also the principal opposition may face the same issue. If they stand behind Dalits in the case, the Congress' experience might be repeated like in the case of the Telugu Desam Party in days to come.

Actually TDP had faced criticism in this case as Trimurthulu had been its legislator 25 years ago.

He was in jail for some period in that tussling case, which had found its echoes in the Assembly in 1997.

Then TDP government headed by N.Chandrababu Naidu faced embarrassing moments when jail authorities allowed Trimurthulu to address his supporters who had come in large numbers

to visit their leader. Subsequently Naidu got 'anti-Dalit' tag for some time.

Trimurthulu switched his loyalties to YSRC and then TDP heaved a sigh of relief. Jagan is believed to have given relief for Naidu from the pain of bearing such tag by selecting Trimurthulu for the Council under the Governor's quota. But it might bring political dividends in the form of support from the Kapu community.

The possible impact of Janasena party, headed by film star Pawan Kalyan, on the Kapu community might have driven the ruling party in this direction.

Whatever be the political compulsions, the Kapu community will show its impact in the elections. Therefore, political parties are unabashedly running after the community, bothering least about the sentiments of Dalits. Let us see what would happen in the future on the political arena of Andhra Pradesh.

YSR, Jagan are water thieves: TS Minister

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Minister Vemula Prashant Reddy has called upon people in the state to be prepared in case Telanana has to wage a war against AP, which he alleged has been constructing illegal projects.

He characterized former chief minister YS Rajasekar Reddy as "thief" and present Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy as "big thief" for illegally diverting Krishna waters.

Prashanth said, "YSR became a water thief by taking waters through Pothireddypadu. He was against Telangana. We thought his son (Y S Jagan) changed all that. But we realized that everyone in Lanka is a demon. Every Andhra person is against us."

AP reports 4,169 cases, 53 deaths

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh reported 4,169 fresh cases of coronavirus, 8,376 recoveries and 53 deaths in 24 hours ending 9 am on Tuesday.

The total positives have now gone up to 18,57,352, recoveries to 17,91,056 and toll 12,416, a health department bulletin said. The state now has 53,880 active cases, it said.

The two Godavari districts, East and West, reported the highest 743 and 659 fresh cases in 24 hours.

Chittoor added 472, Krishna 368, Prakasam 357 and the remaining eight districts registered less than 300



cases each.

For the second consecutive day, Vizianagaram reported the lowest 80 cases.

Chittoor reported seven fresh Covid-19 fatalities, East Godavari and Prakasam six

each, Krishna and Srikakulam five each, Anantapur, Kadapa and SPS Nellore four each, Visakhapatnam and West Godavari three each, Guntur, Kurnool and Vizianagaram two each in a day.

Enraged, Jagan condemns rape incident at barrage

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy said that he was enraged at the gang rape incident that took place on the banks of river Krishna near Prakasam barrage a few days ago.

Speaking at the release of the second tranche of YSR Cheyutha on Tuesday, the Chief Minister said, "The unfortunate incident that took place at Prakasam Barrage has enraged me and such incidents should not have happened."

He said that the government and the police department should do everything they can to prevent such incidents

from recurring. "I strongly believe that true freedom is achieved only when women can walk freely in the middle of the night without fear. As your protector, I will work hard to prevent such incidents from happening in the future," Jagan vowed.

Reiterating that the government gives priority to women welfare, he stated that the government had made laws to provide 50 percent reservation to women in all nominated posts and nominated works, which has never happened earlier in any state. "In the state Cabinet, the responsibility of Deputy Chief Minister and Home Minister are being han-

dled by women and the government has even brought Disha Bill which is yet to be approved by the Centre," Jagan said.

Special Disha police stations have been set up in each district to crack down crime against women and Public Prosecutors are also appointed to oversee Disha cases in each district.

He said that the government had brought Disha and Abhay apps for immediate help to the women in distress. Besides these, 900 mobile patrolling teams were also set up especially in those sensitive areas where crime is likely to occur and a woman police officer has been appointed in the village and ward secretariats.

Jagan credits YSR Cheyutha...

Continued from Page 1

In this regard, the government had set up YSR Cheyutha Call Centre 0866-2468899, 9392917899 to connect the beneficiaries with corporate companies and banks.

A command control centre has also been set up to monitor the call centre and provide training and assistance to the beneficiaries. The Chief Minister stated that about six lakh widows, single and specially-abled women in the said age group, who are already receiving monthly social pensions, are also entitled for the scheme.

The Chief Minister, however, added that there are no restrictions on the utilisation of the amount, where the beneficiary can use the amount as per her wish.

Why risk lives ...

Continued from Page 1

The bench further questioned Nazki whether the State has that many schools to accommodate the students during the examinations.

"Why don't you have schemes like CBSE and CISCE to assess the students," the bench said.

Nazki said that they have a kind of problem because grace marks are given in Class X in the state boards plus the internal assessment mechanism of students is not that strong.

The bench said, "You must come up with a very good reason, if you want us to allow you to hold the Class 12 board exams. You must take the decision by tomorrow and file an affidavit."

Advocate G Prakash, appearing for the Kerala government, said that they have filed an affidavit indicating the decision of the state government to hold

the examination.

The bench said that it will consider the affidavit of Kerala government on Thursday and asked a students' body of the state to file a counter affidavit to the state government's response.

On Monday, the top court was informed by the Assam and Tripura governments that they have cancelled their state boards of Class 12 board exam due to the pandemic.

Counsel for the Karnataka government had said it too has announced that class 12 board exam has been cancelled, but no final decision has been taken as far as Class 10 examination is concerned.

On June 17, the top court was informed that out of 28 states, six states have already conducted the board exams, 18 states have cancelled them, but four states (Assam, Punjab, Tripura and Andhra Pradesh) have not cancelled them as of now.

22 cases of Delta plus mutant found...

Continued from Page 1

Besides India, the Delta plus variant has been found in the US, UK, Portugal, Switzerland, Japan, Poland, Nepal, China and Russia.

The Delta variant has been detected in 80 countries, he said.

Cases of the Delta plus variant have been detected in Maharashtra's Ratnagiri and Jalgaon and parts of Kerala and Madhya Pradesh.

"Any variant's transmissibility and virulence decides whether it is a variant of concern or interest. Delta variant is found in 80 countries around the world, including India and it is a variant of concern," the government said.

"Delta plus variant has been detected in nine countries including India. In India, 22 cases of Delta plus variant have been found

and it is in the category of variant of interest, (and) yet not a variant of concern," Bhusan said.

He said the Health Ministry has released an advisory on the kind of public health response that Maharashtra, MP and Kerala should initiate to address this issue which "presently looks fairly small in terms of number but we would not want this to assume significant proportions".

He further said that INSACOG has 28 laboratories and they have sequenced 45,000 samples, of which 22 cases of delta plus variant have been found.

"The labs of INSACOG bring this information to the notice of the Health Ministry which then in a timely and prompt manner indicates to the concerned states the activities that have

to be initiated to curb the spread. The public health response is standardised for the variants," he said.

INSACOG, or Indian SARS-CoV-2 Consortium on Genomics, was set up to conduct genome sequencing of the Coronavirus.

Bhusan said, "Broadly speaking, both the Indian vaccines - Covishield and Covaxin - are effective against Delta variant but to what extent and what is the proportion of antibody titers they produce, that information we would very shortly share."

Speaking on the overall pandemic situation in the country, NITI Aayog Member (Health) VK Paul said there is a consistent improvement in the pandemic situation but stressed that people must continue to follow Covid-19 appropriate behaviour and avoid crowds and parties. Uptake of vac-

ination has to be increased, he said.

"The number of districts reporting more than 100 daily cases has shrunk to 135 from 531 (in the week ending May 20) which is reassuring and even with restrictions being eased we are able to maintain the declining pace.

But with the restrictions being lifted our responsibility increases...it is in our hands to ensure that pandemic remains localised and suppressed," Paul said.

Bhusan said there has been an almost 90 percent decline in India's daily Covid-19 cases as compared to the highest peak reported on May 7.

Also a sharp decline in weekly positivity rate - 84 percent decrease has been noted since the highest reported weekly positivity of 21.4 percent recorded between May 4 and 10.

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Pawar hosts opposition...

Continued from Page 1

Sinha formed the Rashtra Manch, a political action group, in 2018 that targeted the NDA government's policies.

Former finance minister and TMC leader Yashwant Sinha, Samajwadi Party's (SP) Ghanshyam Tiwari, Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) president Jayant Chaudhary, Sushil Gupta from the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Binoy Viswam from the Communist Party of India (CPI) were among those present at the meeting.

National Conference leader and former J&K chief minister Farooq Abdullah, former Congress leader Sanjay Jha and former Janata Dal (United) leader Pawan Verma also participated.

Continued from Page 1

TRS president K Chandrasekhar Rao has already initiated steps to form the Federal Front with non-BJP and non-Congress parties. KCR mat not have any objections to join hands with any Third Front mooted by Pawar, as long as the Congress is not part of the group. It may be remembered that KCR has said several times that the TRS will have "Constitutional relations" with the BJP-led Union government.

In contrast, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy has been openly supporting Prime Minister Narendra Modi on several issues. Recently, Jagan gave a call to all political parties to support Modi in fighting Covid-19. His cordial relations with the Centre are hardly a surprise though - Andhra



Pradesh is battling a severe financial crunch and the State government simply cannot afford to be on the wrong side of Modi. Not to mention the CBI cases against Jagan. Also, Jagan is anti-Congress, having parted with the party after being denied the Chief Minister's chair following the death of his father. If Jagan has to choose between BJP and Congress, he may be inclined towards the saffron party.

Coming to the third important regional party in the Telugu States - the TDP - the



position of its national president is pitiable, especially after his rout in the last Assembly and Lok Sabha elections.

Before the General Elections, Naidu tried to bring all anti-BJP parties under the Congress umbrella. But unfortunately for Naidu, both the Congress and TDP faced a rout. A better result could have seen him playing an active role in the formation of the Third Front.

After the General Elections, Naidu has been trying to get closer to the BJP, but has been



rebuffed at both the national and state level.

If Jagan stays away from any Third Front mooted by Pawar, Naidu will have no option except joining it. However, the Third Front leaders will prefer Jagan to Naidu, and if they manage to successfully woo the YSRC chief, the TDP national president may be left in the wilderness.

Also, the BJP may not want Jagan to snap ties as its leadership is well aware that the saffron party has no base in Andhra Pradesh.



Business District to come up in Vizag ...

Continued from Page 1

He said that the bid parameter for selection of JV partner will be the highest value quoted towards land price.

Out of the highest quoted bid amount, Rs 78 crore will be considered as APIIC's equity which is 26 percent of the project and balance will be paid by the JV partner.

"The project is structured in such a way that private sector participation is anticipated for developing the land parcel. The project will be developed and established under pre-specified performance standards," the APIIC official told this newspaper.

Land will be transferred to SPV to facilitate procurement of external infrastructure like power, water and approach road up to the boundary of project site.

The project site is said to be the land parcel that was surrendered by IBM after the IT major acquired a home grown IT company Kenexa.

Kenexa was allotted 25 acres of land in Plot 1A of Hill No. 3 of Madhurawada IT SEZ. After the acquisition of Kenexa, the US-based IT major IBM surrendered the unused land to APIIC while retaining the land in which the company building is spread in an approximate 4 acres.

"It's a welcome move. The current government should have taken up such IT related projects two years ago itself as Vizag has tremendous potential to develop IT sector. Better late than never," said Rushikonda IT Park Association (RITPA) vice president and Symbiosys Technologies CEO O Naresh Kumar told The Pioneer.

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH
LABOUR DEPARTMENT

Old Commissioner of Labour/Patrol's Pkide, Papatil Street, Y Roads, Seetharampeta, Vijayawada-02

Enquiry/RFP/Tender Notice Number: F/5083/2021 Tender ID: 416879/- AP e-Procurement Portal/Request for Participation (RFP) for providing accidental death/disability Indemnity coverage for Primary bread earners of BPL families in the state of A.P. ECW : Rs. 146,62,96,799/-, TenderType : Open -Short Tender

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Government is with, for and by farmers, say Ministers

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Assuring minimum support price to farmers, Panchayat Raj and district in-charge minister Peddiredy Ramachandra Reddy on Tuesday said that the government is procuring crops sown by the farmers through the Rythu Bharosa Centres (RBCs) in the State.

Participating in the Krishna district irrigation advisory board meeting organised at the irrigation office here, the Minister said the state government was trying to strengthen the agriculture sector. He said registration of names of farmers in e-crop portal will be beneficial to them because they will get access to benefits being given by the government. He advised farmers to enrol in the e-crop portal without fail.

Ramachandra Reddy said the state government has taken revolutionary measures to strengthen the agriculture



sector and asked the district officials to take steps to help farmers in the Kharif season.

He advised the officials to take steps to implement the decisions taken in the Irrigation Advisory Board meeting. Ramachandra Reddy assured the state government would consider the suggestions made by farmers, agri-

culture experts, officials, scientists, people representatives in the advisory board meeting and will be implemented in the Kharif season.

Civil supplies Minister Kodali Sri Venkateswara Rao said the government would supply seeds and fertilisers to farmers very soon in view of the beginning of the agricul-

ture season in one week. He advised officials to ensure all help to the farmers and protect their interests. Kodali Nani asked officials to create awareness on getting good output with low investment.

Transport Minister Perni Nani explained the schemes being implemented by the State government to strengthen the agriculture sector. He said 84,648 farmers have benefited in Krishna district under the crop insurance scheme last year.

Krishna district collector J Nivas said Krishna district is ahead of other districts in the implementation of YSR Rythu Bharosa, free crop insurance scheme, interest free loans to the farmers etc.

He said 80,000 quintals of seeds will be distributed to farmers free of cost in the Kharif season in the district. MLAs and officials from agriculture and other departments participated in the meeting.

IAS aspirants to get free coaching

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Sarat Chandra IAS Academy will offer free IAS coaching to poor meritorious aspirants who completed Intermediate and graduation. According to academy MD Tota Sarat Chandra, an entrance test will be conducted on June 27 from 10 am to 12 noon.

Sarat Chandra said that they have been conducting entrance tests for the past five years to encourage meritorious and poor aspirants who have completed their Class 12 / Intermediate or graduation can apply for the exam through <http://www.saratchandraraisacademy.in> or saratchandraraisacademy on Facebook and register, or visit the academy in person for details.

He said that every year, they have been conducting entrance tests and ten poor meritorious students will be given free coaching for IAS.

'104' remains popular even as Covid 2nd wave recedes

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

It's a well-known fact that the '104' call centre was among the most potent tools at the disposal of the State government during the Covid second wave. The '104' call centre was revamped on April 16 at HCL campus, Gannavaram and on May 13 at APIIC Building, Mangalagiri to take appropriate measures to handle the Covid situation.

As per the details disclosed by the command control centre, a whopping 1,389 calls were attended to by the call centre from Monday 4 pm to Tuesday 4 pm by 333 staff including 27 doctors working in three shifts at HCL and APIIC campuses.

The calls pertained to 125 test results, five registrations, 165 vaccine calls, four CVC location, 191 for Covid test, 798 Covid information and 101 hospital admissions. In all, a total of 5,15,982 calls



were reviewed by the call centre since April 1 - these include 71,523 calls for test results, 2,774 for registrations, 27,146 for vaccine, 2,941 for CVC location, 1,05,814 for Covid test, 2,10,372 for Covid information and 93,412 for the hospital admission.

Doctors were hired for remote tele-consultation remotely and to evaluate '104' callers for Covid-19 symptoms, to do virtual triaging and offer advice on the further course of action like testing, medical advice with or without

prescription and hospital admission etc.

The '104' tele-consultations is being implemented from May 1, when as many as 5,267 doctors were registered the service. This number includes 1,017 specialist doctors as on date. Training on Covid-19 protocols was provided to all doctors as well as '104' Tele-Consultation Mobile Application.

A total of 18,563 patients spoke to doctors through tele-consultation under various categories up to 4 pm on June 21.



Varla Ramaiah complains to Governor against CID ADG

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP senior leader Varla Ramaiah on Tuesday appealed to Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan to take immediate action against AP CID Additional DG PV Sunil Kumar for undermining the Constitution of India with his "highly objectionable activities".

In a letter to the Governor, Ramaiah stressed the need for filing a sedition case in order to prevent the senior police officer from further carrying out divisive activities. Along with Sunil Kumar, Krishna District Additional SP Moka Satti Babu was also making statements in support of such objectionable activities, he wrote.

Ramaiah expressed serious concern and said: "PV Sunil Kumar has been making derogatory statements that are unsuitable to the conduct of a civil servant. Further, his statements are against the spirit of unity in diversity and the very Constitution of India. He has established an organisation named as Ambedkar India Mission (AIM) and has been carrying out divisive activities under the banner of AIM."

The TDP leader drew the example of terrorists that hit the twin towers of the World Trade Centre in the United States of America with aeroplanes and accused Sunil Kumar of asking youth to emulate such commitment. "Further, he said that only a commitment to die will help," Ramaiah wrote.

The TDP leader told the Governor that in this backdrop, an appeal was submitted on June 17, 2021 to the DGP to initiate action. "However, for reasons best known to the DGP, there has been no action initiated till now," he wrote, appealing to the Governor to initiate action against the officers.

Jagan rule failed on all fronts in two years: Naidu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Leader of the Opposition N Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday said that the YSRCP government was found wanting when it came to controlling the rising infections and alleged that proper vaccination was not being done in the State.

"This was evident from how the AP Government did not administer vaccines for over seven days and tried to cover up this by holding a single day inoculation programme," Naidu said.

Addressing a meeting held with the party's important leaders, Naidu described Jaganmohan Reddy as a 'fake CM' who was trying to divert the attention of the public from his failures by spending hundreds of crores on the publicity campaigns.

"The Government was not



taking a proper decision when the students and parents pleaded for the cancellation of the Class X and Intermediate examinations," the former chief minister said.

Naidu said that irregularities took place in the Group-1 jobs in AP and the YSRCP leaders were not trying to protect the interests of the genuine

candidates. What the Chief Minister has released was a 'jobless calendar' which was creating a scare among the aspirants and unemployed youth, he claimed.

"The TDP supremo said that the Jagan regime should have to pay Rs 1.80 lakh to each woman during its five year rule.

"The Chief Minister promised to give Rs 3,000 pension to every woman aged above 45 years belonging to SC, ST, BC and Minorities. Now, an empty hand was being shown to them," the former chief minister said.

He said that just Rs 18,000 was being given to some women. "The Government was not giving this small benefit to all the deserving women. The DWCR women were cheated on the issue of waiving their loans," the TDP supremo alleged.

Raju: Naidu creating rift between people

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Housing Minister Cherkuvada Sriranganatha Raju on Tuesday accused Leader of the Opposition N Chandrababu Naidu of conspiring to create rift among castes in the state.

Speaking to the media at the party central office here on Tuesday, the Minister said Naidu has been trying to portray that there are conflicts between Reddy and Raju communities and using YSRCP rebel MP Raghurama Krishnam Raju to prove this.

He said Naidu has used the issue of classification of Dalits to create rift among members of the community and also between BC communities and Kapus by promising that the latter will be recognised as BCs. "Now, he has been trying to create a rift between Reddy and Kamma communities. He is using Raghurama Krishnam Raju to create conflicts between Reddy and Raju communities," the Minister alleged.

He lambasted Naidu for



writing a letter on behalf of Kshatriyas without mentioning any name on it claiming that the feelings of Kshatriyas were hurt in issues related to MANSAS trust. The Minister urged Naidu not to create rift among the Kshatriya community for his vested interests.

He also slammed Raghurama Krishnam Raju for not visiting his constituency for the last 15 months and said he has been staying in Delhi and Hyderabad and criticising the government unnecessarily for his personal interests.



BCs betrayed in the name of Cheyutha: Kollu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP leader Kollu Ravindra on Tuesday accused the YSRCP Government of making unrealistic promises during the elections only to grab power without thinking about the consequential expectations of the poor families in the State.

Ravindra said that the Jaganmohan Reddy regime has started blatant cheating of BC women in the name of the Cheyutha welfare programme. "The Chief Minister promised to extend all out support to BC women aged 45 and above by giving pensions. But now, Jaganmohan Reddy has come to stand as a care-of address for breach of trust," he alleged.

Associations in GVMC limits against property tax hike

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Various associations based in Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation limits wrote to the Chief Minister, GVMC Commissioner and the Chief Secretary on Tuesday against the proposed hike of property tax and demanded cancellation of notification published on June 3.

The Vizagapatnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry along with Vassiva, Laghu Udyog Bharathi, FAPCCI, Visakhapatnam Cine Exhibitors Association, Vizagapatnam Cloth Merchants Association, Taxpayers Associations and many other associations have sent representations against the property tax hike.

They mentioned that the GVMC proposed to introduce capital value for assessment of



property tax in place of rental value at rate of 0.15 percent for residential, 0.30 percent for non-residential / commercial and 0.05 percent for vacant plots and 8 percent library cess on tax value and oppose this proposal and submit a few objections.

The objections include introduction of property tax on capital value is against the interest of citizens; Registration department value as capital value should not be taken; few

bureaucrats decide market value without following any scientific method of calculation for the purpose of raising revenue. Automatic revision of property tax when the market values are revised is very detrimental to property owners. This will result in an annual and abnormal increase especially when the Government is increasing market values by 20 percent to 50 percent periodically (mostly annually, except election years).

Producer cheated by man promising Covid vaccine

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Leading Telugu filmmaker D Suresh Babu has been cheated by a man, who collected Rs 1 lakh from him for promising to arrange Covid-19 vaccination for employees of his production house.

The producer, who is actor Rana's father, through his aide, registered a complaint in Jubilee Hills police station on Monday against one Nagarjuna Reddy, who has already been arrested by the police for duping a television channel.

The man called up the producer and offered to arrange 500 Covid vaccine doses for people working in his Suresh Productions. The accused asked Suresh Babu to transfer

Rs 1 lakh to bank account of his wife. After withdrawing the amount, Nagarjuna Reddy switched off his mobile phone.

After realizing that he has been cheated, he lodged a complaint with the police through his aide.

Hyderabad Cybercrime Police had arrested Nagarjuna Reddy on June 14 on charges of cheating a TV channel in the guise of providing vaccination to its employees at a cheaper rate.

Nagarjuna Reddy called the entertainment TV channel and identified himself as a personal assistant of Telangana Minister KT Rama Rao and offered to arrange Covid vaccines for its staff members at Rs 100 per dose.

Three arrested for smuggling PDS rice

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad police nabbed three members of a gang involved in smuggling of PDS rice to Karnataka and seized 165 quintals of rice and three auto-rickshaws. Three others are absconding.

The arrested persons were Mohd Qadir, 33, Mohd Sami, 27, and Mohd Qadir, 27, all residents of Musheerabad. Three others, the prime suspect Mohammed Dawood, 25, a history-shelter from Musheerabad, Mohd Akbar of Bowenpally and Karim of Rasoolpura, are absconding.

According to the police, Dawood, who was involved in one murder case and other property offences, along with others was illegally procuring rice meant for distribution under the Public Distribution System.

Hyd woman urges MEA to bring back daughter

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Atiya Begum, a resident of Hyderabad, has written a letter to the Minister of External Affairs, S Jaishankar, urging for the rescue of her daughter Aliya Begum, who has been stuck in Qatar's Doha for the last 20 months.

Atiya Begum said, "My daughter Aliya Begum was in search of a job and was approached by a travel agent Muneer and offered a job to work as a beautician in a beauty parlour in Doha, Qatar. She went to Doha in November 2018 and worked in a beauty parlour for 14 months. Later the parlour was closed and she was asked to work in some other beauty parlour 'Black Saloon' where she worked for six months."

"She did not receive proper treatment, proper food and

accommodation and she was also not given her salary properly. During August 2020 she fell ill and was admitted to a government hospital but her employer foisted a case on her and she was sent to Al-Rayan Jail for six months," she added.

She further said that Aliya was released by her employer and asked to rejoin her job again as a housemaid at her home for two months as her beauty parlour was not open due to lockdown.

"During January 2021 she was asked to work at one Rosaa restaurant as a waitress, and her new employer Salma is harassing her a lot, beating her and not giving proper accommodation. Whenever we speak she is crying and wants to come back to India. She has been stuck there for the last 20 months," added Atiya Begum.

On Governor's alert, child labour rescued

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Guntur district Collector and officials of the District Women and Child Development Agency, police and labour department rescued 42 children (24 boys and 18 girls) hailing from Odisha, working as child labour in Bhavanam Spinning Mills Pvt Ltd, in Medikonduru of Guntur district on June 18 after intervention of Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan.

After receiving information from social activists from Odisha, Harichandan directed the district Collector to take immediate action and rescue the children and also to make necessary arrangement to send them back to their native places.

3 children found drown in water tank in Agiripalli mandal

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Three children hailing from Eedara village of Agiripalli mandal, Krishna district were found dead in a water tank near Sobhanapuram village on Tuesday.

Of the three, Kagga Sasank, 11 and Kagga Chandrika, 9 were daughters of Kagga Jyothi and Kagga Murali while Jagadish, was the son of Pagidamma. According to Agiripalli police, the three children went missing from their homes on Monday afternoon, following which their parents lodged a complaint

with Agiripalli police.

The police suspected that Murali, the estranged husband of Jyothi, could have kidnapped the children and started a probe in that direction.

Murali had separated from his wife and has been living in Vijayawada. Jyothi is living in Eedara village with two children. On Tuesday, locals noticed the bodies of the children in the tank and informed the parents.

Agiripalli police are collecting the CC footage as part of the investigation.

A case has been registered and investigation is on.

KL students develop e-bike with wireless charging

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Students from KL Deemed-to-be-University have developed a unique e-bike equipped with wireless charging technology. The innovative prototype was developed by a team of six like-minded third and fourth year students from the Electrical and Electronics Engineering Department of KL College of Engineering along with a few university alumni members.

The e-bike has futuristic features, including cell balancing and wireless charging, which are only available in a few places around the world. The team developed the initial concept and prototype utilising their free access to state-of-the-art labs and testing facilities provided by the University.

The team received mentor-



ship and constant feedback from experts and senior academicians of the university. The university has also offered a grant of Rs 1.4 lakh to the team to incubate this project idea as a start-up.

The e-bike developed by the team at KLU allows people to

travel at a maximum speed of 55 kmph and cover 85 to 100 km in standard riding conditions on a single charge. It takes five hours for the battery to get fully charged.

The charging technology is coupled with the programmable cell balancing feature that

releases maximum battery potential for a long-lasting charge. The team has retrofitted an existing bike and modified it into a prototype for e-bikes with wireless charging. The team carried out several variations in the design of the bike which include incorporating the BLDC motor (Brushless DC Electric Motor) to gear modules through the controller.

"We got interested in building prototypes and participating in competitions from the lab activities during our first year itself. The lab-based projects at the KL University provided a strong foundation on working with the components, measurements, machines, and power electronics. We want to thank Dr Jarupula Somlal, Head of the Department, and the entire faculty of the department of electrical and electronics engi-

neering (EEE) for supporting our energy and vision by granting us these incredible opportunities and resources," said M Satyadha Pravashik, who is a B. Tech EEE final year student.

Among other team members who were part of the project were Charan Sai Tiruvuri, A Sandeep, Kireeti Polasi, S Lokesh Babu, V Sai Praveen, students from B Tech EEE 2017 Batch, and K Yashwanth Sai who is alumni of EEE Department.

According to India Electric Scooter and Motorcycle Market Research Report from ResearchAndMarkets.com, the Indian electric scooter and motorcycle market is expected to reach sales volume of 10.8 lakh units by the end of 2025, exhibiting a CAGR of 57.9 percent between 2020 and 2025.

Intense lobbying for TTD chief post as on YVs tenure ends

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Intense lobbying is underway in the YSRCP for the post of Chairman TTD which is equal to a Cabinet rank minister as the two-year term of TTD Chairman Y V Subba Reddy ended on Monday.

He was the 50th chairman of the TTD Trust Board and saw many major developmental initiatives taken up during his term. They include construction of Rs 300 crore Balaji reservoirs to fulfil the water requirement of Tirumala, the abode of Lord Venkateswara for another 50 years, Rs 200 crore *Bhaktidamam* proposed at Alipiri, children's hospital, construction of 500 temples in SC, ST colonies and approval for introduction of electrical buses.

The TTD, which governs the Sri Venkateswara temple atop Tirumala in the State, consists of IAS officers, administrators and political appointees, who coordinate with 'archakas' (priests) and oversee the richest Hindu temple in the world, by functioning like a mini-government.

The Chairman's post comes with a lot of perks. Besides holding the state Cabinet rank, the appointee also gets to rub shoulders with top politicians and VIPs like governors, judges and businessmen. Tirupati MLA and former Chairman TTD Bhumana Karunakar Reddy and Mekapati Rajamohan Reddy, YSRCP senior leader in Nellore district and a close associate to late Rajasekhara Reddy are two names presently doing the rounds for the Chairman's post in the party circles if CM refuses to extend the term of



N Srinivasan, managing director of India cements who was nominated to the TTD trust board, also contributed to the temple body by extending a donation of Rs 3 crore for the construction of an additional 'boondi potu'

present Chairman YV Subba Reddy, who is likely to be accommodated in the Raja Sabha. Sources say that Subba Reddy is more interested in TTD than the Raja Sabha.

While various political equations will be at play when it comes to nominating new trust board members from other states, the chief minister may also evaluate the progress cards of a very few existing trust board members who are likely to get an extension based on their performance and delivery charts. It may be recalled that nearly three months after the appointment of former MP YV Subba Reddy as the TTD Chairman on June 22, 2019, the State government constituted a jumbo sized TTD trust board in September 2019, eventually taking the overall strength of the TTD trust

board to 37 members. When one thought with a jumbo-sized trust board in place, the overall performance of the TTD trust board would improve, the Covid-19 global pandemic has had an adverse impact on the overall functioning of the TTD trust board as even the trust board meetings which were otherwise held once in a month had to be held once in every three months only due to the lockdown impact coupled with Covid-19 curbs across the country since last year.

While a majority of trust board members could hardly make their presence felt during their 2-year tenure, only a very few trust board members continued to play a key role in the overall affairs of the TTD even during the Covid-induced lockdown and it is learnt that

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy is likely to hand over an extension to such trust board members who stood by the temple body even during the testing times. Reports say that J Sekhar, N Srinivasan and K Siva Kumar are three TTD board members who are in the race for extending their term. J Sekhar, special invitee to TTD trust board and Chennai LAC president who contributed to the TTD in various ways when the pandemic struck the temple body hard is likely to get an extension for one more term.

N Srinivasan, managing director of India cements who was nominated to the TTD trust board, also contributed to the temple body by extending a donation of Rs 3 crore for the construction of an additional 'boondi potu'. N Siva Kumar nominated to the TTD trust board from the Telangana State as a member trustee, who introduced the *Gudiko Gomatha* programme, has guided the temple body in spearheading the propagation of the Hindu Sanathana Dharma by promoting worship of the sacred cow across the country.

With the tenure of the present TTD trust board ending on June 22, the State government of Andhra Pradesh led by chief minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy is likely to constitute a new trust board anytime soon during the next one week.

Sources say if YV Subba Reddy prefers extension of his term, it would be the most difficult issue to handle for Jagan Mohan Reddy as he is the party's senior leader and also the YSRCP chief's maternal uncle.

No relaxation of curfew timings in EG

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Though Covid second wave has subsided, the highest number of positives in the State are still recorded in East Godavari district. While the curfew has been relaxed across the State from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., it is still being enforced up to 2 p.m. only in the district. This shows the impact the virus has in the district. However, the people are ignoring the Covid norms and started behaving normally.

Business and commercial activities as well as movement of people are allowed only between 6 a.m and 2 p.m up to June 30. But, traffic during daytime and at night has increased in the past one week and the government officials are lax in conducting checks.

In the past, the police used to set up checkpoints and checkpoints from 2 p.m to 6 a.m the next day and seize vehicles and impose fines, but now no such activity is

seen. Non-vegetarian hotels are also open until 10 p.m. The situation is much worse in rural areas. Young people are seen roaming on the roads until midnight.

However, the curfew is being strictly enforced in cities like Kakinada and Rajahmundry. The district administration is fully focused on the vaccination programme and 1.5 lakh doses were administered on Sunday. Chicken and mutton shops

were seen crowded in the district on Tuesday. People are not hesitant to celebrate weddings and other occasions without seeking permission from the government. As many as 335 positive cases were registered in the district on Monday alone. Prior to that, the district accounted for over 1,000 cases a day.

Medical experts warn that if the negligent attitude of the people continues, there is a possibility of outbreak of a third wave in the district.

5 critically hurt in bus-truck collision

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Five persons were grievously injured when an APSRTC bus collided with a truck on the National Highway at Buttaigudem in West Godavari district on Tuesday.

All the injured were rushed to Bhimadolu Area Hospital. They were identified as bus driver Surya Rao, conductor Durga Rao, passengers Koteswari, Divyasri and the lorry driver.

Deputy Chief Minister Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas (Nani) directed the medical and police officials to respond well to the incident and provide better treatment to the victims.

He asked the medical health officials to shift the injured to Eluru Government Hospital for better treatment, if required.



Ex gratia paid to rape victim's mom

PNS ■ GUNTUR

In a breakthrough in the gang-rape case on Krishna river bed at Sitanagaram in Guntur district, the police took into custody two suspects - Krishna and Venkatesh - based on cellphone signal on Tuesday.

According to sources, the victim has identified one of the accused being investigated. They were said to have attacked two lonely women in separate incidents in the past and relieved them of their gold jewellery.

The police said the accused had attacked the lovers, took their cell phones and mortgaged them to a pawnbroker at Tadepalli.

Home Minister Sucharitha visited the rape victim who has been undergoing treatment at the Guntur GGH. She handed over a cheque for Rs 5 lakh towards ex gratia to the victim's mother.

The Home Minister said that investigation into the case was under progress and that the two suspects were detained and they were being questioned by the police.

Meanwhile, TDP leaders Vangalapudi Anita, Gadde Anuradha, Nakka Ananda Babu,



Investigation into the case was under progress and that the two suspects were detained and they were being questioned by the police.

Tenali Sravana Kumar and Pilli Manikya Rao visited the victim at GGH.

They said women were being harassed during the YSRCP government. They wanted to know how many people were punished after the Disha Act came into existence with the Direction Act.

Man kills father for harassing wife

PNS ■ ONGOLE

A man has axed his father to death for sexually harassing his wife and tried to cover up his crime by making people believe that he died of Coronavirus.

The incident came to light only on Tuesday though it happened on June 19 at Dantepalli village of Giddalur mandal in Prakasam district.

It is learnt that the accused - Ranga Prasad - was married seven years ago. His father Modi Bhaskar sexually harassed his wife whenever he was away from home. Despite several warnings, Modi Prasad failed to mend his ways.

Frustrated over his father's heinous behaviour, Ranga Prasad attacked him with an axe on June 19 midnight, killing him on the spot. Later, he told his relatives that his father died of Coronavirus and asked them to cooperate in helping him perform his last rites. Growing suspicious about his swift moves, the village revenue officer (VRO) complained to the police who stopped the last rites being performed to the body.

Short takes



ABVP urges Home Minister to review job calendar

GUNTUR: Akhila Bharatha Vidyarthi Parishat (ABVP) Guntur unit leaders met State Home Minister Mekathoti Sucharitha on Tuesday and urged her to review the job calendar. They said that the APPSC should issue notification for all vacant posts immediately. Mega DSC should be conducted immediately and teacher posts should be filled. They also demanded that the government filled the vacant posts in the Police Department immediately. They demanded the release of the job calendar every year. The Home Minister said that she would take the issue to the notice of the Chief Minister.

Raghurama shoots off letters to two Union ministers

AMARAVATI: MP Raghurama Krishnam Raju on Tuesday wrote letters to the Union ministers asking them to co-operate in the dissolution of the AP Legislature Council and fulfil the decision taken by CM Jagan Mohan Reddy. He wrote letters to this effect to Ravi Shankar Prasad and Prahlad Joshi. Raju recalled that the State Assembly had decided to dissolve the Council and a copy of the resolution had been sent to the Centre in the past. He also wrote a letter to CM Jagan Mohan Reddy on Monday asking him to keep his promise made earlier regarding dissolution of the Council. On Monday, four new members were sworn in as MLAs.

30 tonnes of sand seized, 1 held

ONGOLE: Special Enforcement Bureau (SEB) officials seized 30 tonnes of sand being illegally transported in a truck from Nellore, at Nagarajukunta village in Konkanamitta mandal on Tuesday. Driver of the truck was arrested in this connection. Inspector Khaza Mohiddun said the lorry and the driver were handed over to the Konkanamitta police station for questioning. SEB SI Pattipati Rajendra Prasad, Head Constable K. Venkata Rao, constables Syed Sheikh, P Venkateswar and Ravuri Satyanarayana participated in the raid.

400 kg ganja seized, 5 held

ONGOLE: Ongole DSP K V V N V Prasad said here on Tuesday that 400 kg ganja was seized and five persons were arrested following raids on two vehicles at Tangutur toll plaza. Addressing a press conference, Prasad said a team, led by Singarayakonda CI Srinivasan, inspected the vehicles. He said five members of gang - Balli Jothi Sai Kumar, Sheikh Mainuddin, Makireddy Appala Naidu, Magapu Gangadhar and Uppalapati Anji- were taken into custody. They were transporting the contraband in two vehicles with the help of one Erresh in Visakhapatnam Agency area. He said a special team was formed to nab Erresh. He said the seized ganja was being transported to Tirupati from Visakhapatnam and all the five members of the gang were taken into custody.

S-I suspended for negligence

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Tirupati Urban district SP Venkata Appala Naidu on Monday suspended SI Giribabu on charges of negligence in duty.

According to sources, a man named Dilip of RC Puram allegedly sexually harassed a girl in the limits of MR Palke police station recently. Following the incident, the victim complained to local SI Giribabu, but he did not take it seriously.

When the case was taken to the notice of the CI, he reportedly told the victim that it was not his jurisdiction and that it falls under Thiruchanur. The victim was then reportedly threatened and verbally abused by the SI.

The victim then lodged a complaint at the Ramachandrapuram police station.

A case of POCSO Act was registered at RC Puram police station and Dilip was arrested on the same day.

The SP ordered a departmental inquiry and suspended SI Giri Babu after a report was submitted to him proving the charges leveled against the SI.

He later said the police should play a responsible role and respond to the complaints immediately and see that justice is done.



YSR Cheyutha: 2nd instalment disbursed to beneficiaries

PNS ■ GUNTUR

The second instalment of the YSR Cheyutha scheme was on Tuesday directly deposited into the bank accounts of beneficiaries across the state.

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy formally disbursed the financial benefit amounting to Rs 4,339 crore at his camp office in Tadepalli by pressing the button.

Home and Disaster Management Minister Mekathoti Sucharitha said the government was providing Rs 18,750 per annum through YSR Cheyutha to SC, ST, BC and Minority women in the age group of 45-60 years who are eligible under the scheme.

She was accompanied by Deputy Speaker Kona Raghupathi at a programme held at the Guntur Collectorate on Tuesday. MLAs Mustafa, Maddali Giri, Merugu Nagarjuna, Pinneli Ramakrishna, Namburi Shankar Rao, Guntur Mayor Kavati Manohar Naidu, Deputy Mayor Diamond Babu, Madya Vimochana Pracara Committee Chairman Laxman Reddy, Collector Vivek Yadav, JCs and other officials and leaders were present.

West Godavari District
State Minister for Women and Child Welfare Taneti Vanitha, District Collector Kartikeya Mishra, Joint Collector (Development) Himanshu Shukla, Dendulur MLA Abbaiah from West Godavari District Collectorate



MP Vanga Geetha and East Godavari District Collector D Muralidhar Reddy handing over the cheque for Rs 423,35, 43, 750 towards the second instalment of the YSR Cheyutha scheme to beneficiaries in Kakinada on Tuesday.

Cheques amounting to Rs 394.74 crore distributed to 2,10,529 beneficiaries under the YSR Cheyutha scheme by Home Minister Sucharitha.

as part of the second tranche launch of the YSR Cheyutha scheme.

East Godavari district
East Godavari district Collector D Muralidhar Reddy said that a total of 2,25,789 women, aged 45-60, from rural and urban areas in East Godavari district would benefit from the YSR Cheyutha scheme to the tune of Rs 423.35 crore.

Kakinada MP Vanga Geetha said that in East Godavari district, 60,858 SC beneficiaries, 12,129 ST beneficiaries, 1,49,095 BC beneficiaries and 3,707 Minority beneficiaries

were benefiting from the scheme.

The event was attended by MLC Pandula Ravindra Babu, Collector D Muralidhar Reddy, JC (Asara, Welfare) G. Rajkumari, beneficiaries and officials from various regions from the Collectorate Vivekananda Hall in Kakinada.

Prakasam district

Prakasam District Collector Praveen Kumar from Prakasam district briefed the Chief Minister about the implementation of the YSR Cheyutha Scheme in the district. The Collector said 1,39,417 people were benefiting from the second tranche. A total of 260 crore was transferred to their bank accounts, he said and added that women had improved their livelihood by setting up grocery stores and dairy units.

In Guntur district, cheques amounting to Rs 394.74 crore were distributed to 2,10,529 beneficiaries under the YSR Cheyutha scheme by Home Minister Sucharitha.

Be above board, SP tells Enforcement Bureau officials

PNS ■ ELURU

West Godavari district SP K Narayan Naik has directed the officials to carry out their duties in the Special Enforcement Bureau (SEB) without any irregularities or corruption.

Speaking at the crime review meeting at the District Police Office with Additional SP C Jaya Ramaraju and the newly appointed Special Enforcement Bureau officers in the district here on Tuesday, Naik said that tight surveillance should be arranged at at interstate and inter-district checkpoints to prevent smuggling of tobacco products khaini, gutka and

liquor from other states. Special Enforcement Bureau officials and local police officers should work together.

"Officers are required to conduct continuous inspections to prevent any irregularities in discharge of duties. Authorities should take strict action against those who charge more than the price fixed by the government at sand ramps and focus more on sand smuggling in coastal areas," the SP said.

He also called for strengthening the state-of-the-art technology system to curb smuggling of tobacco products and alcohol from other states, and for auctioning of vehicles seized in



cases of smuggling of liquor and sand.

The SP advised the officers to carry out their duties in a transparent manner without any suspicion. The enforcement officials said that the cooperation of local police officers was necessary to carry out raids.

Regular raids on shops, restaurants and terraces should be carried out to prevent any sale of illicit liquor and to gather information on smuggling of gutka, liquor and ganja, Naik said.

He said that corruption in the Special Enforcement Bureau

would not be tolerated and that strict action would be taken against the SEB personnel and officers and they should go about their duty adhering to the anti-corruption policy.

The officers should always take appropriate action by giving appropriate instructions to

the lower level personnel to prevent any irregularities in the EB, he said. SEB Asst Commissioner Jayaraju, Superintendent Ravi, SB CI, Ch Kondala Rao, CI Venkateswara Rao, S.Is Rizwan, Adinarayana, SEB inspectors, SEB sub-inspectors and other officers were present.

PAGD leaders will attend meeting on Kashmir future, says Farooq

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

The People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) will attend the all-party meeting convened by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi on Thursday, said alliance chairperson Farooq Abdullah.

The announcement came after PAGD leaders met at Abdullah's Gupkar Road residence here on Tuesday to discuss the Centre's invitation to leaders from Jammu and Kashmir.

"We have received the invitation from the prime minister and we are going to attend (the meeting)," Abdullah, who was flanked by other leaders of the alliance, told reporters after the meeting.

Fourteen leaders from Jammu and Kashmir have been invited to the meeting to be chaired by the prime minister to discuss the future course of action for the union territory.

The meeting is the first such exercise since the Centre announced the abrogation of Jammu and Kashmir's special status under Article 370 of the Constitution and its bifurcation into union territories on August 5, 2019.

The PAGD chairperson said the alliance was confident that it would be able to put its stand before the Prime Minister and



the Union Home Minister during the meeting at New Delhi.

"When the meeting ends, we will brief you here as well as in Delhi on what we did there, what we said and what was their response," the former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister and National Conference president said.

Asked what would be the stand of the alliance, Abdullah said, "You all know our stand and there is no need to repeat it." "Whatever our stand was, is still there and will be there," he added.

Various constituents of the PAGD have approached the Supreme Court with a petition asking for the restoration of Jammu and Kashmir's special status and its statehood.

The PAGD is a six-party alliance of mainstream parties

which came into existence after the Centre revoked the special status of Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370.

Abdullah said all those invited will attend the meeting. "(PDP chief) Mehbooba ji, me, (CPI-M leader) Tarigami sahab and all those who have been invited from us (the alliance), will go," he said.

As the invitation is to individual leaders of various parties "they all will go and all will speak there", the NC leader added.

Asked about the agenda of the meeting, Abdullah said "no agenda has been pitched from their side (the Centre)".

"We can talk about any issue there," he added.

The alliance's vice-chairperson and PDP president Mehbooba Mufti reiterated her

BJP welcomes PAGD's decision to take part in PM-led all party meet

PNS ■ JAMMU

J&K BJP president Ravinder Raina on Tuesday welcomed the decision of the Peoples Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) to take part in the scheduled all party meeting to be chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Delhi, saying "we all must unite in the interest of the nation and work for 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat'".

Raina also thanked the Prime Minister for convening the meeting and said he had always shown his big heart for Jammu and Kashmir by addressing developmental issues and providing justice to the deprived communities.

"Prime Minister has convened a meeting of J&K parties on June 24 and it is a proud moment for all of us. We will utilize this opportunity to raise the issues of public interest and talk about strengthening the nation to keep its flag flying high," Raina told reporters after an emergency meeting of the party here.

He said the Centre has extended the invitation to J&K parties with an open mind and heart and it is now the responsibility of the invitees to reciprocate and join the meeting.

"It is a very important meeting and when the PM is on the chair it has its own sanctity. All issues of public interest will be discussed," he said, adding "we will need to join hands to speak in one voice for our nation and the tricolor. We should strengthen the pledge of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat'".

He said Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India.

that it was a mistake and it was an illegal and unconstitutional act, without restoring which, the issue of J-K and the situation in J-K and peace in the whole region cannot be established," Mehbooba said.

party's stand and said that she would press for the restoration of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir along with statehood.

"We will talk on what has been snatched away from us,

Maha to finalise policy on door-to-door vax in a week

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Maharashtra government told the Bombay High Court on Tuesday that it will finalise within a week its policy on starting door-to-door COVID-19 vaccination drives for the elderly, disabled persons and those who are bedridden and unable to visit the inoculation centres.

The state's counsel, Geeta Shastri, submitted a draft policy before a bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice G S Kulkarni.

The state had constituted a special task force comprising experts and stakeholders to come up with such a policy, Shastri said.

While details of the policy could not be made public yet, the same will be finalised within a week and submitted before the court, she said.

The bench accepted Shastri's submissions.

It was hearing a bunch of PILs, including a plea filed by lawyer Dhruvi Kapadia seeking door-to-door COVID-19 vaccination for people above 75 years of age and specially-abled or bedridden persons.

During a previous hearing, the high court observed that the Centre had not imposed any prohibition on states from carrying out door-to-door vaccination for the elderly and disabled citizens.

It had also said the Union government's policy or the



Maha plans to hold monsoon session for 2 days: Fadnavis

Mumbai: The Maharashtra government has planned to hold the monsoon session of the state legislature for just two days, Leader of Opposition in the Assembly Devendra Fadnavis said on Tuesday and slammed the move.

Speaking to reporters after attending a meeting of the Business Advisory Committee (BAC), Fadnavis alleged the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) dispensation is trying to "run away" from the issues concerning the common people and

also from the democratic process.

"Today, we (BJP leaders) met the ruling coalition to decide the schedule for the monsoon session of the state legislature. We were surprised to see the government is planning to hold the session for two days only," he said.

The former Maharashtra chief minister said BJP leaders walked out of the BAC meeting in protest against the government's plan to hold the session for such a short duration.

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) on vaccination that did not provide for door-to-door drives was merely an advisory.

On Tuesday, the High Court bench had said, "Prima facie, we are of the opinion that the

task force is proceeding in the right direction. We, however, leave it to the task force to incorporate such measures which are beneficial for the health of the elderly and disabled citizens."

HC tells NIA to reply to bail plea

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Tuesday directed the National Investigation Agency to file its affidavit by July 3 in response to the bail petition of activist Sudha Bharadwaj, an accused in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case.

Bharadwaj was arrested on August 28, 2018 and has been in jail since then.

The case was registered against her and some other activists under provisions of the stringent UAPA.

Bharadwaj had sought default bail, contending the trial judge was not authorised to take cognisance of the 2019 charge sheet filed against her, as the judge was at that time not designated as special judge under the NIA Act to hear matters pertaining to the UAPA.

A division bench of Justices S S Shinde and N J Jamadar on Tuesday directed NIA's advocate Sandesh Patil to file an

affidavit in response to the petition and posted the matter for further hearing on July 3.

In her petition, Bharadwaj relied on documents received from the high court under the Right to Information (RTI) Act to demonstrate that the court of Additional Sessions Judge Kishor Vadane in Pune was not authorised to take cognisance of the 1,800-page supplementary charge sheet filed by the Pune police in February 2019.

"This judge was not designated as a special NIA judge at the time and hence, could not have taken cognisance of the charge sheet. We are also challenging an earlier order passed by this judge in November 2018 granting the police time to file the charge sheet," Bharadwaj's counsel Yug Chaudhry argued.

The case relates to alleged inflammatory speeches delivered at the "Elgar Parishad" conclave on December 31, 2017, which the police claimed triggered violence the next day.

Vaccinate on war footing, prepare for 3rd wave: Rahul

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday urged the government to prepare for the third wave of coronavirus by improving medical infrastructure and vaccinate on a war footing to protect all Indians.

He also released a "white paper" by the party on the Centre's Covid handling, saying, "It is pretty clear that the management of the first and second wave was disastrous." Gandhi also took a swipe at the prime minister for turning emotional while talking about Covid deaths in his address to the nation, and said the deaths have been needless and could have been avoided.

"The prime minister's tears cannot wipe the tears of those who lost the lives of their kin. The PM's tears did not save the lives of those who died, but oxygen could have saved them," he said.

He alleged the prime minister did not take the second



wave seriously and was fighting elections in Bengal and his focus was elsewhere.

The former Congress chief said there were some central reasons as to why the first and second waves were disastrous and added that the party has "tried to point out those reasons in our white paper".

"This is a blue print on how to react to the third wave, which is going to come. It is our intention to provide the government with information and insights on what went wrong," he told reporters at a virtual press conference.

The purpose of this white paper is not to finger point at

the Government, but to help the nation prepare for the third wave that is going to come.

"If the second wave was bad, the third wave would be worse," Gandhi said, noting that the virus is smart and is mutating fast.

"The idea behind our white paper report on COVID-19 is to provide insights and information so that avoidable deaths can be prevented in the coming waves. GOI must work on our constructive inputs in the interest of the country," he later tweeted.

Asserting that the central pillar to fight Covid is vaccination, Gandhi said it is important that "we aggressively do vaccinations and cross this bridge over 100 percent vaccination as soon as possible, because that is the only protection."

"It is important that the government prepares itself for what is going to come," he said, adding that it needs to have the infrastructure like oxygen and medicines required ready.

Woman fulfils decades-old doctorate dream at 67

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

While for many, age is a reminder to take things slow, for 67-year-old Usha Lodaya, it pushed her to pursue her teenage dream of becoming a doctor.

Lodaya, who had dropped out of college at 20, has completed her doctorate course in Jainism after resuming her education in her sixties.

The gritty Vadodara resident enrolled into a Jainism course at Maharashtra-based Shatrunjay Academy, an institution set up to spread the knowledge of Jainism among the community members.

On Sunday, the sexagenarian passed her viva voce on 12 contemplations in Jain tradition, to earn her doctorate degree.

"It has been my dream to become a doctor ever since I enrolled for a BSc," she said.

Stalin assures resolutions against farm laws, CAA

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Resolutions would be adopted in the Assembly during the upcoming budget session against the Centre's farm laws and the Citizenship Amendment Act, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin said on Tuesday.

Eversince the three farm laws were enacted by the union government, the DMK had all along demanded the Centre to withdraw the laws, which are "against the interests of farmers," the Chief Minister said intervening his party MLA Tamizharasi, who spoke on the matter in the House.

The government has made a clear decision to pass a resolution seeking the withdrawal of these three farm laws reflecting the feelings of farmers across the country, he said

adding there is no change on that decision.

However, since this is the first session after the DMK assumed office and when the debate on motion of thanks to the Governor's Address is on, it would not be appropriate to adopt such resolutions, he said.

Stalin asserted that Tamil Nadu government's opposition to the farm laws would be made known by way of a resolution during the budget sitting.

Similarly, since the CAA has "affected the interests of minorities across the country leading to a sense of fear" among them, a resolution would be adopted in the budget session urging the central government to take back the Citizenship Amendment law, he added.

U'khand allows ayurvedic docs to prescribe allopathic drug

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The ayurveda-versus-allopathy debate has taken a new turn with the Uttarakhand government deciding to allow ayurvedic doctors to prescribe select allopathic medicines to patients in emergencies.

Making the announcement on the sidelines of a programme to mark the International Day for Yoga at the Uttarakhand Ayurvedic University here on Monday, Ayush Minister Harak Singh Rawat said the decision was taken for the benefit of the people living in the state's remote hill areas, where the primary health centres mostly have ayurvedic doctors.

There are around 800 ayurvedic doctors in Uttarakhand and as many ayurvedic dispensaries, of which 90 per cent are located in the remote hill areas, he said.

The decision, which requires changes in the Uttar Pradesh Bharatiya Chikitsa Adhinyam, will help people living in the disaster and accident prone hill areas who are deprived of proper health-care facilities, the minister said.

However, the announcement sparked a sharp reaction from the Indian Medical Association (IMA), Uttarakhand, which termed it "illegal".

Journalist robbed, police say 'no complaint'

PNS ■ NOIDA

A journalist was allegedly waylaid and robbed at gunpoint by five unidentified men in Greater Noida.

The incident took place on the intervening night of June 19 and 20. The accused took around Rs 5,000 cash that he was carrying in his wallet and tried to choke him, the journalist, Atul Agrawal, who works with a Hindi news channel, said in a Facebook post.

Police said on Tuesday that they have not received a com-

plaint from Agrawal regarding the incident but have launched an investigation into the matter after taking suo moto cognisance of his social media post.

In his Facebook post, Agrawal claimed the incident took place barely 250-300 metres from a police post in Greater Noida (West), also called Noida Extension.

"The music system in my car had some issues so I had to stop my car to adjust the USB pen drive. Suddenly, five young men on two bikes came there and waylaid my car," he said.

"The car was locked from the inside. They started banging the windows but I resisted. Then one of them pulled out a gun and pointed it at me, forcing me to come out of the car. I had no other choice so I followed their instructions as they held me at gunpoint," he claimed.

Agrawal said he pleaded with the assailants, all of whom were wearing face masks, to spare his life as he has a young son and told them they could take his car and whatever money he was carrying.

He said the assailants took around Rs 5,000 cash that he was carrying in his wallet but left behind his mobile phone and gold jewellery after finding out that he is a journalist.

At one point, Agrawal claimed, one of the accused attempted to choke him but was stopped by one of his associates.

The local police, however, said Agrawal is "not cooperating" with them and has not given any complaint to them even after 48 hours of the incident.

North Bengal ethnic groups reject separate UT proposal

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Several ethnic groups, which had spearheaded agitations for creation of separate states in north Bengal over the past few decades, have now rejected a BJP MP's controversial demand for a union territory comprising all districts of the region, calling it an "unrealistic" and "vindictive" move.

John Barla, the saffron party MP from Alipurduar, recently sparked a political debate in the state when he called for bifurcation of Bengal, drawing sharp retort from the TMC and other parties.

Ironically, Barla's demand did not find resonance with the prominent identity-based groups in the region - the Gorkha Jana Mukti Morcha, Greater Cooch Behar People's Association and those backing

the Kamtapur movement.

They said it was an attempt to create unrest ahead of the next Lok Sabha polls in 2024.

Barla, during an interaction with the party's north Bengal leaders, had said he would take the matter up in Parliament during the upcoming Monsoon session.

His views were endorsed by BJP MP Jayanta Roy and some other leaders.

Noida range to be renamed: Yogi

PNS ■ NOIDA

As a mark of respect to women power, the shooting range at the Noida stadium will be named after "Shooter Dadi" Chandro Tomar, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said on Tuesday.

Jewar's BJP MLA Dharendra Singh wrote to the chief minister on Monday with a request that the recently-built shooting range in Noida's Sector 21 be named after Tomar, who died on April 30 due to COVID-19.

Hailing from Baghat in western Uttar Pradesh, Tomar was above 60 years of age when she picked up the gun for the first time, but went on to win many national competitions for veterans, her feats

inspiring the award-winning Bollywood movie, "Saand ki Aankh".

Adityanath announced on Twitter that the shooting range would now be named after Tomar, an eminent shooter who symbolised "vitality, will power and women empowerment".

"Naming the shooting range after Chandro Tomar is a tribute to women power, in line with the Mission Shakti programme of the Uttar Pradesh government," he tweeted in Hindi.

In his letter to the chief minister, Singh had highlighted how Tomar, who hailed from Baghat's Johri village, broke the barriers of orthodoxy to make the state and the country proud.

HC stays 2 orders of Lakshadweep administration

PNS ■ KOCHI

The Kerala High Court on Tuesday stayed the operation of two recent orders of the Lakshadweep administration - to close down dairy farms and remove meat products, including chicken from the menu of midday meals for school children.

The stay order was issued by a Division bench, comprising Chief Justice S Manikumar and Justice Shaji P Chaly on a PIL filed by a lawyer from the Islands.

Petitioner Ajmal Ahmed R alleged that when Praful Khoda Patel took charge as island administrator in December last year, his top priority was to close down the farms run by the Animal Husbandry Department and to 'attack' the food habits of the Islanders, being followed from time



Lakshadweep has been witnessing protests by various political parties since administration started implementing reform measures in the islands.

immemorial.

Challenging the May 21, 2021 order of the Director of Animal Husbandry, directing immediate closure of all the dairy farms, Ahmed said it was done with an intention to implement the proposed 'Animal Preservation

(Regulation), 2021,' which bans slaughter of cows, calves and bulls.

He submitted that as per this proposed rule, sale and purchase of beef and beef products would be banned by closing down the farms, curtailing the islanders' source of getting milk products and forcing them to purchase milk products imported from Gujarat.

"This is nothing but interfering with the right to choose the food habits of the Island people, which is against the right enshrined under the Constitution," Ahmed alleged. The petitioner also chal-

lenged the administrations' decision to remove chicken and other meat items from the menu of midday meals for school children in Lakshadweep.

"Now the Administrator wants to intervene and as part of his ill-motivated intention to implement his hidden agenda, a meeting of the union territory level monitoring committee was held at his instance.

As per the decision taken by said committee in the meeting held on January 27, 2021, a new menu has been suggested, totally altering the prevailing menu for mid-day meal for the students in the Islands", he alleged.

Lakshadweep has been witnessing protests by various political parties since the administration started implementing reform measures in the islands.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

The bulwark

An Opposition front is seemingly in the making, but its united impact on the BJP remains to be seen

It is best to think of the meeting of like-minded parties and individuals convened by Sharad Pawar and Yashwant Sinha as being exploratory. For, the invitation issued for the meeting is not clear about the real purpose of the deliberations at this juncture, who all are expected to put up a united political front to confront the BJP and the scope of the political strategy. The meeting between Pawar and political strategist Prashant Kishor preceding the invite gave rise to speculations in the entire Opposition camp. There is also ambiguity about the status of the Congress in this scheme of things because the invite did not go to the party but to three senior leaders who are part of the 'G-23' group. Prashant Kishor clarified that what they will look for is not the Third Front model. Be that as it may, the meeting comes just as the political parties gear up for the next round of Assembly elections, including in Uttar Pradesh. The second wave of Coronavirus has left most parties, in power in one State or the other, scarred by exposing their inadequacies in handling the pandemic. Both are good enough reasons for the politicians to take stock of where they stand individually and what it means to shape themselves into a united forum to challenge the BJP in 2024.



There is enough on the table even for an exploratory meeting. The regional parties are strong in their respective States, but lack national presence or relevance. Most of the leaders, save a few,

do not have a national presence either. Many of them fight the Congress in regional politics. Some, like the YSRCP and the TRS, are partners with an umbilical rivalry. The true postures of these parties will become apparent in the next presidential election due next year. The national parties suffer from a shrinking area of influence even as they confront one another, like in Kerala, or are whipped by a regional force, like in West Bengal. Some of these parties are not even attending the meeting. Second, they will need to project a correct perception of their relations with the Congress. A non-Congress, anti-BJP bloc of regional parties is one thing. An anti-Congress, anti-BJP forum of regional parties is another. For, the latter, by definition, shares anti-Congressism with the BJP. The Congress, despite its dipping political fortunes, remains the fulcrum of anti-BJP politics, given that in both 2014 and 2019 it was the runner-up in upwards of 200 seats. It all depends on whether the Congress can retain Punjab and fare better in other States in the upcoming elections. The real issue, however, is coming up with an alternative to brand Narendra Modi's political narrative that has an equal resonance nationally and a post-pandemic economic agenda. What the exploratory meeting can afford not to do is wait for the law of diminishing utility to eventually kick in against the BJP.

PIC TALK



Devotees offer prayers on the occasion of Bada Mangal, at Bade Hanuman Ji temple near Sangam, in Prayagraj

Fuel on fire

The Government should exercise fiscal discipline rather than exploiting oil prices to shore up revenue

While every graph of economic indicator is nose-diving, oil prices and inflation are defying gravity. This month, diesel also breached the ₹100-mark in Rajasthan. In seven States, petrol is selling for more than ₹100. This is indeed not a good sign for economy, which is reeling under severe recessionary pressures. Manufacturing is down, employment is low, and so is the purchasing power of the common man. The petrol-diesel prices put an extra burden on him. Oil prices push the prices further up as these have a cascading effect on economy. The Government is in no mood to relent. Moreover, volatility in the international market limits its options. These two factors are responsible for putting the fuel prices on fire. The prices were hiked 43 times this year. This has indeed helped the Government collect more revenue. The excise collection during April-November 2020 was at ₹1,96,342 crore, up from ₹1,32,899 crore during the same period in 2019. The central taxes increased from ₹10.39 in May 2014 to ₹32.9 in June 2021! This explains the dynamics of oil pricing. Before Modi Government, crude oil price constituted two-thirds of the fuel price, now taxes have taken that spot. The central and State Government taxes account for nearly 54 per cent of its cost.

The Government is justifying the high excise on petrol and diesel by saying that it needs money to spend on welfare schemes. Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan concedes that it is problematic for people, though quickly adding that the Government spent ₹35,000 crore on vaccines. So, apparently the logic is that people who drive should foot the bill. But then it is not only the cars and bikes that consume petrol and diesel. The trucks that carry freight and diesel pump sets that push water into the fields also run on diesel. That was one reason that diesel was always priced less but that consideration has been done away with. This naturally translates into higher input costs for farmers and a higher cost of farm products. However, adjusting excise and other taxes could control the fuel prices. With the Opposition struggling, there are hardly any street protests. Each time, the increased new price becomes normal. The Government has done little to tighten its expenses. It has failed to avoid wasteful expenditure on projects of little value. Fiscal discipline is missing in the Government. The petrol price hike comes in handy.

Corona's orphans: Kids of a lesser god



GYANESHWAR DAYAL

Stung by the tragedy of one or both parents succumbing to the virus, thousands of children stare at an uncertain future, if they have one

Even as the country braces for the third Corona wave which experts feel would be tougher on children, the pandemic has already taken a toll. On June 1, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) reported in the Supreme Court more than 9,300 Corona orphans in India. These include more than 1,700 children who lost both the parents. The actual figure could be many times this number as the data is yet to be collected from across the country.

Unfortunately, as of now, the Government does not have a plan in place to rehabilitate these children. Let alone a plan, it has not even identified these children yet. Many children have been orphaned due to circumstances created by the pandemic. Many people lost their lives while going back to their hometowns during the lockdown. They carried children in their arms or dragged them on wheeled suitcases. Many never reached their destinations and the children were left in the middle of nowhere. Who can forget the pictures of a toddler trying to wake up her dead mother on a railway platform? Of course, these children would not figure in the Government data of Corona orphans.

The pandemic has already killed the dreams, aspirations and hopes of the Corona orphans. Their number is now in thousands, if not lakhs, after the second wave. Many people who succumbed to Corona could not even have the last word with their children. Some children are still waiting for their parents to return. They are fed on lies that their parents have "gone to work" and will "return with goodies". The day they find out the truth would be shattering for them.

Often, especially in the second wave, both the parents died within a few days of each other. The child was left alone without any support system to fall back upon. Even those survived by a single parent do not have the normal childhood left for them. The person who got them toys,



played with them, attended their PTMs is gone. A bleak future and hardships await them; the innocence all set to yield at the altar of the real world.

Corona took away the children's childhood as it did their innocence. Most people at a tender age wilt under pressure. If it is a child, the chances of her/his being altered for life are high. For children, losing parents is traumatic. Parents fulfil not only the needs of a child but give him a sense of security which is important in the growing up years. Most of the behavioural traits of the children get consolidated in the first seven years. Losing parents during that time scars children, changing their worldview forever.

It is the time when we, as a nation, need to step up our efforts to take care of such children. The parents cannot be replaced but, in the least, the child can be given a sense that there is someone who cares and provides him support. It could be his relatives, adopting parents, non-governmental organisations, or the Government itself.

The moot question is, what next for these children?



THE PERSON WHO GOT THEM TOYS, PLAYED WITH THEM, ATTENDED THEIR PTMS IS GONE. A BLEAK FUTURE AND HARDSHIPS AWAIT THEM; THE INNOCENCE ALL SET TO YIELD AT THE ALTAR OF THE REAL WORLD

Indeed, adoption comes up as the most natural way these children could be given a second lease of life. But there are some inherent dangers. The chances of fake adoptions are high. Child traffickers see it as an opportunity. Often, the children get adopted by traffickers and sold off.

The Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) handles adoptions in the country. Strict guidelines govern the process of adoption in India. Any adoption without following this process is illegal. It puts children at high risk. Many adopted children are exploited, trafficked and abused. Moreover, the adoption rate in India is rather low. Only around 4,000 children are adopted every year; so few children would find a family that way.

An abandoned child is an easy prey for traffickers. In this situation, it becomes the responsibility of each one of us to help a child in distress. At the least, one could call children's helpline number (1098) and inform the authorities about the child in distress. Or, one can also contact the district Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) or inform the local police sta-

tion. The CWC decides the fate of these children — whether the child needs to go to a long-term or short-term shelter or for adoption. The Prime Minister has announced that such children will get a monthly stipend once they turn 18 through a corpus fund of ₹10 lakh under the "PM-CARES for children" scheme. But the important question is how a child, says age two, survives 16 years to take that stipend!

Foster care is another option that can be explored and encouraged. The kith and kin of the deceased can take care of the child. But then that, again, is not free of problems. Many a time, the children end up working as domestic helps, their education stopped, their rights curtailed. There must be an agency to monitor such cases. There is an urgent need to tackle this issue on priority so that these children do not fall into the wrong hands. We, as a nation, have to think out of the box to help these children of a lesser god!

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

AN UNCHARITABLE DECISION

Sir — We have only heard of insurance companies trying to find some loopholes in the claim applications and find some lame excuses to deny claims made against policies issued by them. It is shocking that the Central Government is trying to follow the tactics of such insurance companies to deny *ex gratia* compensation to the family of those who died of COVID-19 on the plea that this is not a one-time disaster and that such a huge payout will empty the disaster funds available with the Government.

While we have witnessed the Government defending the expenditure of more than ₹20,000 crore for the not-so-urgent and not at all necessary Central Vista project and a luxury mansion for the Prime Minister, the Government has denied compensation to the victims' families. What is the use of dumping the available funds in developing new infrastructure for medical facilities without paying the amount to the bereaved families that need immediate support in the absence of the breadwinner of the family?

The argument of the Government to deny COVID-19 compensation is uncharitable when it has taken decisions to give huge tax benefits to the corporates and also to write off non-performing assets in banks amounting to millions of rupees.

Tharcus S Fernando | Chennai

BEFORE THE NEXT WAVE HITS

Sir — The strains of the third wave of Coronavirus would fall upon us during October, according to medical experts. So, it is the foremost duty of the States and the Centre to be prepared to combat it from all directions. Further, people should strictly follow guidelines, protocols and advisories issued by the authorities concerned. It is also suggested that stress should be on the production of vaccines, medicines and other healthcare facilities. Hopefully, this third wave may be outcast from the country without putting any deleterious impact on the health of people.

If the Government takes their advice and opens up schools, then what will hap-

Blue Dot Network versus Chinese BRI



The G7 Summit held recently in the wake of the COVID-induced crisis will be remembered for certain positive outcomes like adoption of the US-backed "Build Back Better World" plan to support middle and lower income countries in high-quality infrastructure. What is surprising is that it took several years to visualise and conceptualise a network akin to the Chinese model. In its quest to contain the overgrowing influence of belligerent China in the world panorama. Considering the emergence of Indo-Pacific as the centre of the rivalry between the US and China, there is an urgent need to explore alternative areas of collaboration. The Blue Dot Network (BDN) is one such area. The concept of BDN, envisaged under the Trump Administration in 2019

at the 35th Asean Summit in Bangkok and proposed in the recent G7 Summit under the auspices of the OECD, can serve as a counterweight to the Chinese BRI unveiled in 2013.

As China has acquired the dubious distinction for unsustainable debt creation in participating countries, this network can serve as a balancing act to curb the hegemonic designs of China. The BDN's objective is to assist smaller countries in developing quality infrastructure, to promote open and transparent investments, which was found wanting in the latter, as they did not adhere to international certification standards. Moreover, the BRI in the guise of economic and infrastructural development has put several participating countries of Asia and Africa in a debt trap. Sri Lanka and Pakistan are glaring examples of this.

The BRI's intention to develop deep sea ports in the Indo-Pacific region is also ambiguous. Australia pulled out of BRI in April 2021 on grounds of violation of territorial integrity. As one of the ardent critics of BRI, India must play a significant role in shaping a global discourse in order to counter China.

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Nainital

SOUND BITE

It (the Government) failed to learn from the lessons and response models of other countries which had been hit by the pandemic.



Congress leader — Rahul Gandhi



Easing measures at the border will happen as we see our communities increasingly become safe.

Canadian Health Minister — Patty Hajdu



#gotvaccinated. Join the fight back. Now loading: Antibodies...

Actor — Kartik Aaryan



I am humbled to have this opportunity of representing India at the Olympics for the third time, this time as team captain.

Hockey midfielder — Manpreet Singh



Way to go Team AP. More power to you. Congrats to YS Jagan Mohan Reddy for his inspiring leadership.

Actor — Chiranjeevi

Send your feedback to:



FIRST COLUMN

NEED FOR HOLISTIC EDUCATION POLICY

An important position should be given to education, and particularly inclusion, in the scheme of things



HIMA BINDU KOTA

Gender disparity and non-inclusivity is a major hindrance in India's pursuit to achieve the 4th Sustainable Development Goal of ensuring quality education for all. India lags behind China and other BRIC nations in terms of inclusivity and participation in education. China in particular has near universal levels of enrolment in lower secondary and a majority completing upper secondary in most parts of the country. India has a smaller proportion of its population enrolled at secondary levels than Brazil, Russia, and China. The only region of the world with lower participation at secondary school level than India is sub-Saharan Africa. India witnesses a huge gender disparity and access to education in India remains widely problematic, with great variations between and within states, and large differences in participation between identifiable sub-populations like Scheduled Castes and Tribes, girls, and some Muslim communities. Nationally, there is a high initial enrolment rate in the first grade. However, about 30 per cent of them fail to complete Grade V (primary), about 50 per cent drop out before completing Grade VIII (upper primary), and 60 per cent do not finish Grade X (lower secondary). This is prevalent in northern India, particularly in the BIMARU states. Gender plays an important role in education in India. According to



the Census of India 2011, only 26 per cent of girls completed secondary education as compared to 50 per cent of boys. The Annual Status of Education Report (Rural), 2019 also found that preference is given to the education of sons in comparison to daughters, by enrolling the former in private schools, which are considered better than government schools in imparting education.

In India, both direct and indirect costs of schooling are high and the lower household incomes of the majority of the population makes participation in secondary schooling a big challenge. Household surveys show the poorest allocate less than five per cent of expenditure to education. Unsubsidised secondary schooling is not available to most rural households and is considered a prerogative only for rich urban households. The present globalized world and integrated economies have brought to the fore the core importance of education. It plays a crucial role in empowering individuals and pave way for transformation of the society at large. Education has a major role in making the youth improve their social standing by alleviating their poverty-ridden condition. One of the main measures of human development is access to education, and as the Human Development Report 2012 mentions, the growth in index is associated with growth in public spending on education. Therefore, a fundamentally important position should be accorded to education, and particularly inclusion, in the entire scheme of things. The importance of quality education and the urgent need of equality in education should be ingrained in the policy. As education is imperative for empowering people, equality and inclusivity have to be crucial for any education policy to facilitate and drive widespread social transformation in the society. The government should create a framework based on equality of condition, which has five dimensions of 1) resources; 2) respect and recognition; 3) love, care and solidarity; 4) power; and 5) working and learning. With equality of condition as a base, gender equality framework can be extended by adding the aspect of inclusion, which, in addition to parity, equity and equality, can become the pillars for achieving quality education for all. It is proposed that these four elements of the gender equality framework have to be guided by another framework — strategy, practices, resources and governance — to develop a holistic and integrated education policy.

(The writer is Associate Professor at Amity University, Noida. The views expressed are personal.)

Big Tech vs Governments: The road ahead

A few unaccountable and unelected corporations having the power to silence or amplify an opinion and directing a country's political discourse doesn't bode well



ANIL K ANTONY

Great corporations exist only because they are created and safeguarded by our institutions, and it is, therefore, our right and duty to see that they work in harmony with these institutions." These were the words of the 26th US President Theodore Roosevelt during his 1901 State of the Union address. "There is a widespread conviction in the minds of the American people that the great corporations known as trusts are in certain of their features and tendencies hurtful to the general welfare," he wrote before he used the Sherman Antitrust Act to break up monopolies including the largest railroad conglomerate, J.P. Morgan's Northern Securities, and the largest oil company, Rockefeller's Standard Oil.

The US since then has used updated antitrust legislatures to clip the wings of giants including AT&T and Microsoft which were deemed powerful enough to stifle free-market competitiveness. The extent of influence of Big Tech companies that drive today's internet-technology-driven world is much more profound.

None of us can imagine a life where we do not use one of their products. They have aided in the creation of a hyper connected planet where any individual with technical know-how, irrespective of other differences, can access the internet and find myriad avenues for acquiring knowledge, form communities, create or get access to digital products and services, and be a part of a global digital economy. They act as instruments of economic and social mobility for billions.

Their valuations also unsurprisingly increased with their rapid expansion. Currently, eight of the world's largest ten companies based on their market capitalisation are from this industry. They exceed the GDP of most nations. Some of their balance sheets have surplus cash greater than the reserves of most countries. Apple, for instance, has a valuation exceeding \$2 trillion, and cash reserves of nearly \$200 billion.

The growth of this sector has been immune even to the Covid-19 pandemic that wrecked economies as people's reliance on digital tools increased during lockdowns. This sector's growing prominence has also led to some of the great maladies of our time, including never-seen-before inequalities, and democratic recession.

Integration of Artificial Intelligence, and Automation into Big Tech products has cut down the need for new jobs, leading to jobless growth. The same platforms that disrupted mass communication have ironically been used by governments with authoritarian tendencies to further extend state control. They have also aided in the rise of many demagogues to power across the world. As these tech titans continue their market conquests, run-ins with governments have become commonplace. The past year saw fronts opening across continents between these companies and various governments. Antitrust lawsuits are the biggest battlegrounds. Major Big Tech firms including Google, Amazon, Apple, Alibaba, Facebook, and FlipKart are facing multiple investigations across the United States, European Union, China, and India.

This is mainly because the Big Tech firms have evolved into the gatekeepers of the Internet. They have userbases in hundreds of millions. Customers and enterprises cannot access many markets without going through their tech infrastructure. These companies set up large barriers of entry, or promote unfair business practices that charge



OUR DIGITAL ECONOMY IS DRIVEN BY DATA AND ALL THE BIG TECH FIRMS DERIVE TREMENDOUS VALUE FROM THE DATA COLLECTED FROM THEIR MYRIAD USERS. WE SHOULD SEE MORE COUNTRIES MAKE LAWS THAT WOULD MANDATE THE BIG TECH FIRMS TO SHARE SOME OF THE WEALTH CREATED WITH THE MAIN CONTRIBUTORS, INCLUDING PUBLISHERS

(The writer is a tech entrepreneur, public policy commentator, and works on the Congress party's digital initiatives. The views expressed are personal.)



excessive platform fees, limit competition, and kill smaller businesses.

Very recently, five bills have been moved with bipartisan support in the US House of Representatives meant to prevent big tech firms from favouring their products and services through their platform over their competitors. These proposed laws could separate their primary platform from their other line of businesses. Interestingly, US President Joe Biden has named Lina Khan, a very vocal Big Tech critic, as the country's top regulator.

The EU has proposed a sweeping set of legislation through the Digital Markets Act (DMA) that has clauses to fine an offender up to 10 per cent of their annual global revenue for anti-competitive behaviour. Provisions are included to break up repeat offenders. Aspirants are vying to be modern-day Teddy Roosevelts on both sides of the Atlantic.

India in 2018 itself had banned e-commerce companies from selling products they have an equity interest in through their platforms. The latest CCI probes are based on allegations of them circumventing these laws through circuitous business structures.

Google and Facebook, meanwhile, locked horns with the Australian Government over a new law that requires these tech companies to pay news companies for any original content they share on their platforms. After an altercation that resulted in a week-long blockade of the country's news links on Facebook, local news publishers started receiving payments. These developments will have conse-

quential effects.

Our digital economy is driven by data and all the Big Tech firms derive tremendous value from the data collected from their myriad users. We should see more countries make laws that would mandate the Big Tech firms to share some of the wealth created with the main contributors including publishers. Upcoming technologies like BlockChain would enable micro-payments to be made to every person contributing value in cyberspace. Big Tech's unassailable influence was highlighted during the months following the 2020 US Presidential elections when Donald Trump and some of his most vocal supporters were locked out of all social media platforms in a united effort by Big Tech. What can happen to the all-powerful President of the United States could happen to anyone. Angela Merkel of Germany called Trump's bans 'problematic'.

The prospect of a few unaccountable and unelected corporations having the power to silence or amplify any voice or opinion based on their predilections and thereby directing a country's political discourse does not bode well for any democracy. Since then, Uganda banned Twitter before their Presidential elections, and Nigeria banned Twitter after the social media platform deleted a tweet of their President.

Twitter and the Indian Government are at loggerheads over its intermediary status. Tech platforms have created internal systems for flagging and deleting questionable content posted on their platforms. However, there are repeated altercations with

authorities. India could again take a leaf out of the EU, which through its newly proposed Digital Services Act (DSA) makes it mandatory for all platforms to reveal to regulators currently opaque areas of tech platform functioning including possible dissections of their proprietary algorithms, and requires clear-cut mechanisms on filtering or removing content. Penalties up to six per cent of the company's turnover, and even suspension of service await non-complying offenders.

The tech sector, whose role and impact would only increase with time, requires broad, standardized, holistic regulations including well-defined penalties. Policy ambiguity would only create avenues of Government overreach. Regulatory bodies and tax authorities could arbitrarily open probes based on individual whims and fancies.

India's ruling party and the Union Government have many a time been accused of using these very same platforms for spreading false narratives, and for the propagation of underhanded political practices. Our Parliamentary Committee of IT should take the initiative in creating watchdog institutions under their purview, comprised of domain experts, with independence and authority to check Government excesses in tech policy.

Institutions and regulations thus formed are essential to ensure that our markets and political processes remain free and fair, and our digital landscape remains safe places for open discourses, without being subjected to digital colonization.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

90 PER CENT OF PEOPLE WHO DIED... BIGGEST REASON WAS LACK OF OXYGEN. THE PM'S TEARS CAN'T WIPE FAMILIES' TEARS....
— CONGRESS LEADER RAHUL GANDHI



WHENEVER WE ARE AT A CROSSROADS IN OUR FIGHT, RAHUL GANDHI AND THE CONGRESS HAVE TRIED TO DERAILED EFFORTS BY PLAYING POLITICS.
— BJP NATIONAL SPOKESPERSON SAMBIT PATRA

Sasikala planning a return to Tamil Nadu politics?

Age and circumstances are against her but she will not throw in the towel easily and will weigh her options to see how she can stage a comeback

Will V.K. Sasikala, a one-time close confidante of late Tamil Nadu chief minister J. Jayalalitha, make a comeback? It is a question mark as politics is changing fast in the state. 'Chinnamma', as she was known, has had her ups and downs in the past four decades. She enjoyed power as Jayalalitha's shadow but she never did understand that she was only the shadow, not Jayalalitha. She took over the party and nearly became Jaya's successor in 2017 but the BJP spoiled her plans and she instead went to Parappana Agrahara jail in Karnataka for four years.



KALYANI SHANKAR

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

before going to the Bengaluru jail and thumped the memorial platform thrice with her palm vowing to avenge her enemies. Now, after her release and a month after the AIADMK lost power in the Tamil Nadu polls, she is all set to return to active politics. In a recent alleged, phone conversation with one of the party cadres, Sasikala confirms her plans to take the political plunge.

She has been sending confusing signals about her future. Significantly, 2021 is not 2017. Much has changed in the past four years. Her two hand-picked leaders - former chief ministers O.Panneerselvam (OPS) and E.Palaniswamy (EPS) — have captured the party and they do not want



her to return. Sasikala had been involved in separate power tussles with both leaders earlier.

The intensifying feud between EPS and OPS even after the electoral defeat and Sasikala's come-back plans are threatening to break the party again. EPS pipped OPS to the post of the leader of

opposition after a literal show of strength: the former had more legislators backing him. Sasikala, on the other hand, sees an opportunity in the two leaders' tussle to avenge her setbacks.

Though she cannot contest until 2027, there is no legal ban to head a party. It is a mystery why Sasikala announced her retirement from politics in March and why she wants to come back now. The timing she has chosen is also significant because the AIADMK is still struggling to come to terms with the loss of power. The cadres, especially EPS backers, are opposed to her emerging as a power centre again. EPS is one of the big hurdles for her return to the AIADMK because he

senses a threat to his position in the party.

The 'leaked' audio clip of an alleged conversation between Sasikala and one of her supporters has gone viral, creating a flutter about her imminent return. In the clip she is heard saying, "we will for sure streamline the party... certainly, I will come". And this as well: "You don't worry at all. Sure. We will resolve all the problems in the party. I will come. I will definitely come. You take care and be safe." For now, she has sent enough signals to her supporters that she is ready and waiting. Will Sasikala achieve her ambition? Though age is against her, those who know her believe she will not throw in the towel easily and will

weigh her options to see how she can stage a comeback.

The second hurdle is her own corrupt image. Her first effort to float an outfit AMMK through her nephew, TTV Dhinakaran, flopped in the recent assembly polls even though he initially won the R.K.Nagar assembly by-poll in 2017. Now she wants to find a place for herself in politics.

Thirdly, there still are other cases against her pending in the courts. She is particularly troubled by a case involving the purchase of properties with monetized currency. With a Union Government and the State Government hostile to her she is skating on thin ice.

Fourthly, according to insiders, Sasikala is in no

hurry as her target is the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. She wants to get back into the BJP's good books by that time and establish herself and her nephew as players by using her money power. She wants to do this either by dividing the AIADMK or expanding her nephew's AMMK. Being the backroom player and Jayalalitha's shadow in Tamil Nadu politics since the 1980s, Sasikala knows the ins and outs of Dravidian politics. She and her family were called the "Mannargudi mafia" in Jaya's time.

Chinnamma's future hangs in balance for now. It depends on many factors. Where one week is long in politics, another three years is too long.

NCLT approves Jalan's resolution plan for Jet Airways

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) on Tuesday approved the Jalan Kalrock Consortium's resolution plan for the bankrupt Jet Airways, two years after the once-storied airline went into insolvency proceedings.

Financial distress forced Jet Airways, which flew for more than two decades, to suspend operations on April 17, 2019 and a consortium of lenders, led by the State Bank of India (SBI), filed an insolvency petition in June 2019, to recover outstanding dues worth over Rs 8,000 crore.

An NCLT Mumbai bench, chaired by Mohammed Ajmal and V Nallasanapathy, has approved the resolution plan

for Jet Airways that will have to be implemented in 90 days starting from

June 22.

In an oral order, the bench also said that if further extension of the effective date is required, the resolution applicant (Jalan Kalrock Consortium) can approach the tribunal again.

On the historicity of slot allocations for Jet Airways, the tribunal said it was not giving a direction and the issue will be handled by the government or the appropriate authority.

Slots will be crucial for the

revival of Jet Airways once it restarts operations. The slots that were with the airline prior to the suspension of operations in April 2019, have been allocated to other carriers.

In October 2020, the airline's Committee of Creditors (CoC) approved the resolution plan submitted by the consortium of the UK's Kalrock Capital and the UAE-based entrepreneur Murari Lal Jalan.

Jet Airways has been undergoing a resolution process under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) for two years, and its affairs are

being managed by resolution professional Ashish Chhawchharia.

After the CoC gave its approval to the resolution plan, Chhawchharia had approached NCLT stating that the "slots are a vital part of the plan, and it is important that DGCA and MoCA submit their stance on the same".

However, in a joint affidavit to the tribunal, DGCA and MoCA had submitted that Jet Airways does not qualify for grant of slots on the basis of historic precedence and the allocation will be based on 'Slot Allocation Guidelines'.

"Jet Airways does not qualify for grant of slots on the basis

of historic precedence and the submission of the airline's that it is in operation for the last 25 years is not a criteria for claiming historicity and it can't substitute the requirements for claiming historic precedence.

"Thus, the claims are wrong and denied," as per the affidavit that was filed earlier this year. DGCA is the Directorate General of Civil Aviation and MoCA is the Ministry of Civil Aviation.

The carrier, which was admitted to the NCLT in June 2019, owes more than Rs 8,000 crore to banks, with public sector lenders having significant exposure.

The carrier started off as an air taxi operator on May 5, 1993, with a fleet of four leased Boeing 737-300 aircraft.

Private hospitals to log 15-17 per cent revenue growth in '22

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Higher occupancy due to surge in COVID-19 cases would help private hospitals post 15-17 per cent revenue growth this fiscal year, a shade higher than what they attained in 2020-21, ratings agency Crisil said on Tuesday. The growth will aid recovery of operating margin by 100-200 basis points to 13-14 per cent, but still fall short of the 2020-21 mark due to higher proportion of COVID-19 treatments, which are less profitable, it said in a statement.

"While the second wave lashed again in April, the first quarter this fiscal will be sharply better on-year, with occupancy of 75 per cent, almost double on-year. This will be largely on account of a surge in COVID-19 treatments more than offsetting the deferral of elective surgeries and outpatient footfalls," Crisil



Ratings Senior Director Manish Gupta said.

As the second wave recedes in the second quarter, Crisil expects pent-up demand for non-COVID treatments to rebound and support occupancy, he added. "Overall, higher occupancy of 65-70 per cent this fiscal versus 58 per cent in the last, would drive rebound in revenue growth," Gupta said. Recovery in revenue and

margins will nevertheless spur hospitals to resurrect capex, which had almost halved year-on-year last fiscal.

"Much of the capex this fiscal is expected to be brownfield in nature, towards bed addition and related infrastructure including oxygen plants, and funded significantly through accruals," Crisil Ratings Associate Director Rajeswari Karthigeyan said.

MONEY MATTERS

Kesoram Industries suspends work in rayon factory

B K Birla group company Kesoram Industries Ltd on Tuesday suspended work at its rayon factory in West Bengal's Hooghly district due to fall in demand. The company management blamed the slump in demand due to COVID-19 led disruptions for the suspension of work till further notice.

"We had to issue a suspension of work as there is no demand for the product due to COVID-19 situation. If we continue our loss will triple from current losses," a senior company official told PTI. The company employs 2,500 people in the loss making rayon plant. The finished products are used in textile and textile decorative and the pandemic has led to sharp slump in demand for textiles. Rayon division contribution is negligible for the company that is struggling to bring down its Rs 1,900 crore debt to a sustainable level. Kesoram Rayon was established in 1959. The division manufactures quality viscose rayon filament yarn (VFY), cellulose transparent paper and has a chemical manufacturing unit.



ACME, Brookfield to develop 450 MWp solar project in Rajasthan

Solar power producer ACME on Tuesday said the company along with Brookfield Renewable will jointly build a 450 MWp solar project in Rajasthan. "ACME, India's leading solar IPP (independent power producer), today announced closure of a deal with Brookfield Renewable, a global owner and operator of renewable power assets, to build a 450 MWp Solar Project in Rajasthan," a company statement said.

However, the company did not disclose the financial details. According to the statement this solar project includes a 25-year power purchase agreement with Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company Limited (MSEDCL), a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Maharashtra State Electricity Board, the largest electricity distribution utility in India and the second largest in the world. The project will provide clean and green electricity to over a million households. It is also expected that the project will provide jobs for over 450 people during its construction phase and 150 people while it's operating.



BMW drives in three new cars under MINI brand in India

German luxury carmaker BMW on Tuesday said it has launched three new cars under its MINI brand in India. The all-new MINI 3-Door Hatch is priced at Rs 38 lakh, the all-new MINI Convertible at Rs 44 lakh and the all-new MINI John Cooper Works Hatch at Rs 45.5 lakh (all prices ex-showroom).

This new MINI range will be available in petrol engines as completely built-up units (CBUs). "This significantly strengthens the exceptional position of MINI within the premium small car segment in India," BMW Group India President Vikram Pawah said in a statement. The MINI 3-Door Hatch and MINI Convertible come with a 2-litre petrol engine. The MINI 3-Door Hatch can sprint from 0 to 100 km/hr in 6.7 seconds while the MINI Convertible takes 7.1 seconds for 0 to 100 km/hr. MINI John Cooper Works Hatch on the other hand can hit 100 km/hr in 6.1 seconds. In March this year, BMW launched the new MINI Countryman in the country.



Gold rises to Rs 46,213; silver declines to Rs 66,389

Gold in the national capital on Tuesday gained Rs 45 to Rs 46,213 per 10 gram, according to HDFC Securities. In the previous trade, the precious metal had closed at Rs 46,168 per 10 gram. Silver declined marginally by Rs 86 to Rs 66,389 per kilogram from Rs 66,475 per kilogram in the previous trade.

"Spot gold prices for 24 carats in Delhi were up by Rs 45 reflecting an overnight recovery in COMEX gold prices and rupee depreciation," according to HDFC Securities, Senior Analyst (Commodities), Tapan Patel. Meanwhile, the Indian rupee slumped 10 paise to 74.20 against the US dollar in opening trade on Tuesday. In the international market, gold was trading marginally lower at USD 1,778 per ounce and silver was flat at USD 25.84 per ounce. "Gold prices traded marginally down with spot gold prices at COMEX trading at USD 1,778 per ounce on Tuesday," he added.



Clean Science, Shriram Properties get Sebi nod IPO

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Three companies -- Clean Science and Technology, Shriram Properties and GR Infraprojects -- have received markets regulator Sebi's to raise funds through initial public offers (IPOs).

The three firms had filed their preliminary papers with Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) in April.

Clean Science and Technology, Shriram Properties and GR



Infraprojects have obtained Sebi's observations on June 12, June 15 and June 16 respectively, according to an update with Sebi. Sebi's observation is

very necessary for any company to launch an initial public offer (IPO), follow-on public offer (FPO) and rights issue. Speciality chemical manu-

facturer Clean Science and Technology plans to raise Rs 1,400 crore through its initial share sale. The IPO is entirely an offer for sale (OFS) by existing promoters and other shareholders, according to draft red herring prospectus.

Those offering shares in the OFS include Anantroop Financial Advisory Services, Ashok Ramnarayan Boob, Krishnakumar Ramnarayan Boob, Siddhartha Ashok Sikchi, and Parth Ashok Maheshwari.

EU investigates Google's conduct in digital ad tech

■ LONDON

European Union regulators have launched a fresh antitrust investigation of Google, this time over whether the U.S. tech giant is stifling competition in digital advertising technology.

The European Commission said Tuesday that it has opened a formal investigation into whether Google violated the bloc's competition rules by favouring its own online display advertising technology services at the expense of rival publishers, advertisers and advertising technology services.

Indian cos' m-cap grew fastest last year, presents fin stability risk: SBI

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Indian companies' market capitalization has grown at the fastest pace last year among major economies despite contraction in GDP, economists from SBI said, flagging the risks to financial stability it poses.

Further, retail investors have shown higher interest in markets and their numbers have increased by 1.42 crore in FY21 and another 44 lakh in April and May, they said in a note, wondering if this will be a lasting behavioural change or is transitory. The economists at the country's largest lender



attributed the growth in equity markets to lower returns on other financial instruments amid a low rates regime, increase in global liquidity, and even a tendency to spend more time at home because of mobility restrictions which led many to trade more. The 30-share benchmark

index BSE has rallied from 28,000 points in early April 2020, to over 52,000 points at present. "The rise in the stock market without significant development in the real economy may raise the issue of financial stability which as per our financial stability index shows modest improvement in April 2021, but lower than the peak witnessed in December 2020. However, it is expected to have declined in May 2021," it warned.

It can be noted that in the past, the Reserve Bank has also expressed risks of financial stability because of the fast growth in stock markets.

Existing investment advisers should get BASL membership

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

All existing registered investment advisers will have to obtain membership of BSE Administration and Supervision Ltd (BASL) before August 31, leading stock exchange BSE said on Tuesday.

BASL, a wholly-owned subsidiary of BSE, has been granted recognition as Investment Adviser Administration and Supervisory Body (IAASB)

for a period of three years from June 1, 2021 under investment advisers rule.

It has been entrusted with the administration and supervision of Investment Advisers (IAs). Moreover, all existing SEBI Registered Investment Advisers (RIAs) are mandatorily required to obtain membership of BASL. "All existing SEBI RIAs shall be required to submit their membership application and obtain their BASL membership before August 31, 2021," BSE said.



Auto component suppliers to see 70% dip in profits

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Auto component industry is likely to witness a 70 per cent decline in operating profits in the first quarter of the current fiscal due to disruptions caused by the second wave of COVID-19, as per domestic ratings agency Icria.

The challenges for component manufacturers will be further compounded by the sharp increase in commodity prices, which are generally passed through to original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) with a lag of 3-6 months, Icria noted.

"ICRA estimates a revenue loss of 30-40 per cent quarter on quarter, and this will translate into a sequential decline in EBITDA of over 70 per cent



during the first quarter for the industry," it added. Exports have come to the industry's rescue in the last few months, when domestic

demand nosedived due to lockdown restrictions, Icria said. Suppliers dependent solely on domestic demand have been the worst impacted, it

added. Icria noted that despite the short-term headwinds, it expects the domestic auto component industry to register a 20-23 per cent revenue growth in the current fiscal year, supported by double-digit volume growth across most automobile sub-segments and impact of commodity inflation on realisations.

"The overall industry revenue will still be almost double than the April-June quarter of last financial year," it added.

Elaborating on the current situation, the rating agency said that while the production volumes were stable in April, retail sales declined sharply during the last two months indicating inventory build-up

Green hydrogen purchase to be made mandatory: R K Singh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Green hydrogen would be brought under renewable purchase obligation (RPO), Power and New & Renewable Energy Minister R K Singh said on Tuesday.

Under RPO, bulk purchasers like discoms, open access consumers and captive users are required to buy a certain proportion of renewable energy out of their total consumption of electricity. They can also buy RE certificates from renewable energy producers to meet the RPO norms.

Interacting with media in a virtual curtain raiser press conference on India's role as a Global Champion for the Energy Transition theme at the UN High Level Dialogue on Energy 2021, Singh said the RPO for green hydrogen which

can also be called hydrogen purchase obligation for states would ensure that products sell. We are going to include green hydrogen in RPO."

Green hydrogen is produced using renewable energy and electrolysis to split water and is distinct from grey hydrogen, which is produced from methane and releases greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, and blue hydrogen, which captures those emissions and stores them underground to prevent them causing climate change.

The minister also expressed dismay over under-achievement of RPO targets by states. "Most states have not achieved their RPO. In 2030, total installed power generation capacity of the country would be 821 GW including 450 GW of renewables. (So RPO is required to be met by states)," the minister said.

He noted that there would be a penalty for states for not meeting the RPO.

Explaining about the high or unviable price of green hydrogen, he said the price will come down with an increase in volumes (sales and production) as was seen in the case of solar and wind energy.

IIFCL profit surges over three-fold to Rs 325 cr in FY21

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India Infrastructure Finance Company Ltd (IIFCL) on Tuesday reported a more than three-fold jump in its net profit to Rs 325 crore for the fiscal ended March 2021, mainly helped by recovery and reduction of bad loans.

The state-owned infrastructure finance company had earned a net profit of Rs 94 crore on a consolidated basis in the previous fiscal.

At the same time, the standalone profit of the company rose over five times to Rs 286 crore as compared to Rs 51 crore in 2019-20.

World Vitiligo Day is on June 25. To mark the occasion, *The Pioneer* speaks with doctors about the stigma attached to the condition and whether science has found a cure for it.

THE PROBLEM OF COLOURS

At least once in a while, we must have been told by our parents to maintain distance from people who have white spots on their body. If not, we ourselves must have turned around to inspect those patches on a random person that we might have come across in a grocery store or a super market. Why so?

"Acceptability about vitiligo is poor in our society. Despite the disease being very old there is still a lot of stigma attached to it which needs to be dissipated by spreading awareness about the condition," says Dr Shitij Goel, Senior Consultant, Dermatologist, Sharda Hospital, Greater Noida.

The reason why people often look down upon people with vitiligo or think they are any different is the growing consciousness about looks. "Vitiligo has been called as *shvet kushtha* and other names since ages. Due to the unsightly nature of lesions, it has traditionally been associated with stigma attached to it. Moreover aesthetics/ appearance of human skin is gaining more importance in today's world. People have become more conscious of their looks and that has been leading to the indifferent behaviour with people having vitiligo," Goel adds.

Not only the stigma, but the disease also comes with several myths. One of them being — it is contagious.

"This is totally untrue. Vitiligo is an autoimmune disease in which pigment producing cells i.e. Melanocytes are destroyed in the skin, leading to white colour of the skin. There is no role of any infection in this condition and hence it's totally non contagious," Goel tells you.

Dr Pooja Chopra, Dermatologist, Aakash Healthcare, Dwarka, is of the opinion that there is much more awareness related to this skin condition now as compared to a

few years back. "It goes without saying that vitiligo has a lot of social and psychological implications. But yes, people are definitely aware of it now. In fact, we get a lot of patients fearing that any white spot on their body is vitiligo. However, there is not much awareness regarding its treatment. People still think that it's not treatable and hence, resort to alternate medicine or home remedies," Chopra opines.

The early signs of the condition, she says, are asymptomatic white patches anywhere on the skin and hair. "The patches might be stable or can gradually increase in size," says Chopra.

It's difficult to label vitiligo as progressive as it depends from patient to patient.

Some may have a couple of stable patches for years, while others may report rapidly increasing patches.

As for the causes of the condition, Chopra tells you that there are many theories behind it.

"There are many theories regarding the causes of vitiligo: autoimmune, genetic, neurogenic, environmental and others. However, there is no specific cause of the disease. The basic pathology is inability of the pigment cells to produce pigment, melanin," Chopra opines.

Not to forget, that

early diagnosis can curb the spread of patches. Oral medication and topical application of specific creams can definitely lead to repigmentation. "Skin grafting or punch grafting for small, stable patches gives good results. However, the disease has an unpredictable course. Repigmentation can be permanent but there are chances of new patches occurring anytime during the lifetime," adds Chopra.

Goel adds that he wants vitiligo to be seen as other chronic diseases like Diabetes, arthritis and thyroid, which are reversible some times. "In a majority of vitiligo cases complete repigmentation of skin is achievable by medical therapy. There are a lot of medicines, therapies such as pho-

totherapy and lasers which are now available for successful treatment of vitiligo. Even a lot of different vitiligo surgeries are now being done to get back colour in vitiligo patients. So, vitiligo should not be seen as an incurable disease but a disease which needs long term treatment just like many other diseases," explains Goel.



Yoga not only strengthens us physically and intellectually, it is also vital in fighting Covid. Dr Partap Chauhan lists various asanas that can help stimulate your lungs.

Yoga for the lungs



move your palms over your feet at the same time, until your arms are straight. Maintain a neutral position for your neck. For a few breaths, stay in this position. Exhale and slowly return to the starting position. As you straighten up, withdraw your hands and bring them back to your hips.

Ardhachandrasana aka half-moon pose: Begin with Padahasthasana. Then, extend your left leg back, kneel down, and point your toes out. Look up and stretch your arms over your head. Make sure your right knee is parallel to your ankle. Form an arch with your upper body by bending backwards (which resembles half a moon). Hold the position for a few moments. Carry on with the opposite leg in the same manner.

Chakrasana aka wheel pose: Lie down on your back with your legs folded at the knees and your feet firmly planted on the floor. Bend your elbows and face the sky with your palms facing up. Place your palms on the floor on either side of your head and rotate your arms at the shoulders.

Apart from frequent breathing exercises and meditation, obtaining six to eight hours of sleep, and eating a balanced, home-cooked cuisine, keeping a healthy diet is critical for post-Covid recuperation.

(The writer is the Director of Jiva Ayurveda, an author, public speaker, TV personality and an Ayurvedacharya.)

June 21 was International Yoga Day, it coincided with the summer solstice, to recognise the many benefits of the ancient Indian practice of Yoga.

This year marks the sixth edition of the International Yoga Day.

Yoga serves to strengthen us physically, intellectually, and spiritually, and is vital in fighting the coronavirus, as it helps boost the immune system. Yoga asanas, combined with the treatment protocol prescribed by Ayurveda immensely helps in the post-Coronavirus healing phase.

The following are some of the asanas that can strengthen the lungs if practised regularly:

Hasta uttanasana aka raised arm Yoga pose: To begin, stand straight in

samasthiti. Raise your arms over your head and stretch upward, making sure your palms facing each other. Bend back slowly while keeping your head in between your arms. Maintain a straight line with your knees and keep your eyes open.

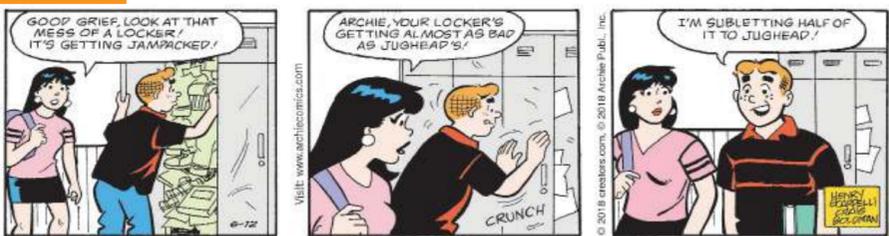
Dhanurasana aka bow pose: Begin by lying on your stomach, bending your knees and holding your ankles with your palms. Have a firm grip. As high as you can, lift your legs and arms. Look up and maintain the stance for a few moments.

Ushtrasana aka camel pose: Kneel on your Yoga mat with your hands on your hips. Arc your back and



FUN

ARCHIE



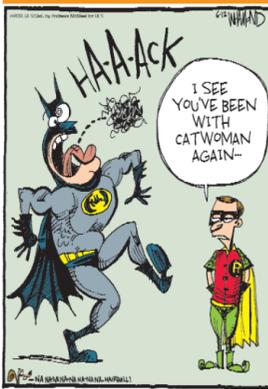
CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



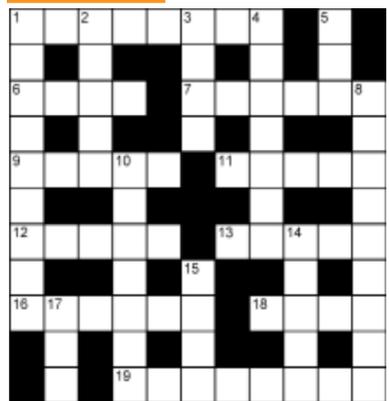
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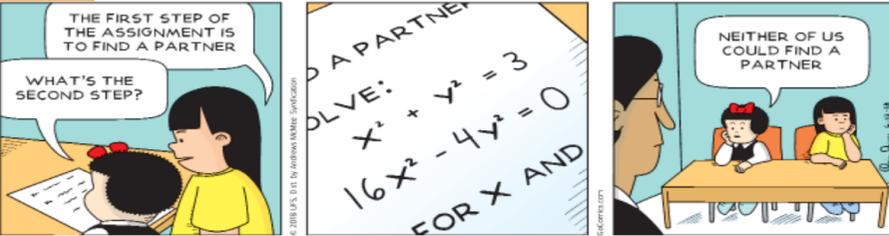
SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

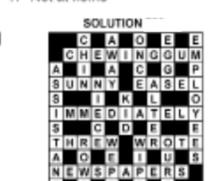


ACROSS

- 1 Nice, enjoyable
- 6 Decays
- 7 An animal with a shell
- 9 Causes pain to
- 11 A witch's power
- 12 Footwear
- 13 A hot drink
- 16 A medical professional
- 18 Lengthy
- 19 Inspected closely

DOWN

- 1 Bought
- 2 Go in
- 3 Takes part in a play



GINGER MEGGS



SHIKHA DUGGAL

THE INSPIRING JOURNEY OF A MOTHER-SON JEWELLERY DUO

Conceptualised in early 1998 by Sushma Maloo, an iconoclast with her forward-thinking and unique designs in an industry that is largely male-dominated, for her at the moment, creativity is soaring in terms of how jewellers market, show and sell their collections! Today her son, Pradyuman Maloo, the creative head of 'Nornament' is also now a household name after featuring on the Netflix Original documentary series 'Indian Matchmaking' and is carrying forward his mother's legacy that is deeply rooted in Indian craftsmanship. The pandemic influenced consumer tastes in rings with a notable rise in minimalist styles. Social media has never been more important to all brands across all sectors than it is now, millennials want to be assured about what they buy has not had a negative impact on humans or the environment. "As a boy, I watched the dream of my mother when she founded our brand in 1998. I saw myself assisting her in practically everything related to the business. Be it photographing images, designing jewellery, tagging along as a kid to buying offices to sitting next to workers to mould a piece to life. We further recognised the compatibility of classic traditions with modern functionality and felt that's the way forward! From the very beginning, I have created models that merged with my mother's vision of bespoke luxury jewellery. From the business perspective in the current times, customised affordable luxury is something I see becoming the new trend or need of the hour! The jewellery business generally has come a very long way, from people buying jewellery only for investments to now when people are buying jewellery to reward themselves or pass on a legacy or an emotion. Jewellery is becoming more of an extended personality of an individual," shares



Pradyuman.

Jewellery is indeed embedded in the fabric of the country's cultural history! Contributing to 29 percent of the jewellery consumption worldwide, India today is an integral part of the global fine jewellery landscape. And, the recent rise of this independent fine jewellery brand, which builds its business

on transparency has shone a light on the exceptional craft associated with jewellery made in India also. "The inception of a collection has mostly been something that catches my eye during when I travel or the way a material speaks to me. The most difficult part is to translate the concept or the vision into a piece of jew-

ellery. After the initial designing of the concept on paper, I love to use a wide range of materials, gems, or metal to mix-match and figure the perfect fit for the design or the collection. Often, I am just caught glaring at the stones as if I have transcended to another reality! Recreating my whole design into a visual design is

an extremely exhilarating process. After the smallest to the most significant modifications, we generate a rendering which is later translated into a wax piece and further into metal. After completion of the whole process of jewellery making, seeing the final product is one of the most satisfying things for me — it's a feeling that one feels to make a dream into a reality," adds the creative head.

The nepotism debate isn't new in the society we inhabit and everyone deep down knows that it exists in every field of work. We are a feudal

society and unfortunately, nepotism permeates all levels. Pradyuman Maloo ultimately believes it is your hard work and dedication that will take you the long way! Nepotism might help you in your initial days, it might give you the platform to showcase what you got but finally, your talent will speak. Nepotism can give your cycle a push but paddling it through is on the individual! Leading the conversation towards the inception of Nornament, he says, "It was born to a fearless and passionate dreamer — my mother Sushma Maloo. She was a first-generation entrepreneur who created what she did with forward-thinking and unique designs. Above all, she had the spirit that was willing to beat the odds! More than two decades ago, she was one of the first few women entrepreneurs to have started a jewellery brand in a male-dominated world. Back in the days, my mother was a housewife, she used to receive a monthly stipend from my father to run the house. She got into an argument over 2,000 bucks and she remembers it as the moment she decided to start earning for herself! I decided to take my mother's legacy forward with a determination to make the brand a force to be reckoned with — nationally and internationally."

Mostly, women's tastes and preferences are influencing the jewellery industry. Despite this, the proportion of women's workforce in this industry is still negligible. The jewellery industry is largely seen as a man's world even today! Pradyuman says that empowerment is undoubtedly pivotal even in jewellery business.

At the heart of Nornament lies the philosophy of love, respect and empower women. "My mother who began the legacy was initially a homemaker, that too from a very humble background. She learnt everything at the workplace and the hard way! Back in 1998, there weren't enough women running businesses and there was a lot of opposition from circles that didn't understand why women need to work. But she was sure of what she wanted to do and determined to work hard. She has a way of dealing with problems and manages to get where the business needs to go! It was always daunting to take on the legacy. When it comes to the business, I had applied myself to learn about the ins and outs of it before I came into it. There were things I needed to figure out and I leaned on my mother's advice. I also realised there was a need to adapt the business into the digital age and steer the business towards newer trends," adds the jewellery designer.

Lastly, talking about gold, it has always been a reliable form of investment for generations and decades and it is not surprising to see people investing in gold in any form!

"They are the most safest and liquidate investment, especially during these unprecedented times. Another way to look at it is since social gatherings have reduced considerably due to the pandemic which in turn has resulted in a lower requirement of jewellery as people find it hard to find events and occasions to go to. Therefore, it is completely justifiable for people to give preference to investment-oriented purchases compared to leisure purchases while shopping online," concludes Pradyuman Maloo.



After Lalhnehpua Chhakchhuak became the sixth NBA Academy India graduate to commit to college basketball program in US, Marc Pullés, Director, Basketball Operations Team Leader en National Basketball Association (NBA), talks to K RAMYA SREE about the program aiding the development of basketball in India, future of basketball in India, women's basketball league, and more.

No matter how much we try to tell ourselves that we can get everything done from home without having to step out, sports is something we all miss playing — going to the grounds, catching up with friends, and playing your favourite sport. To keep things going, National Basketball Association's (NBA) Basketball Schools, in order to keep fit and fine during the pandemic, went online this year and conducted sessions over the 12-week series, where around 2,000 participants took an active part in the event. Returning for the eighth consecutive year, the Reliance Foundation Jr. NBA program is a comprehensive youth development initiative that aims to develop the game at the grassroots level and apply the core values of basketball — teamwork, respect, determination, and community — to positively impact the lives of boys and

girls in India. Since its launch in 2013, the program has reached more than 11 million youth from more than 13,000 schools across 34 cities and has trained more than 13,000 physical education instructors nationwide. This year, owing to the pandemic, the program went online, having a meaningful dialogue with the youth and leveraging the power of the game to educate, empower, and giving them a chance to brush up their skills and not lose touch with the game — all from the comfort of their homes.

Earlier this month, Lalhnehpua Chhakchhuak became the sixth NBA Academy India graduate to commit to playing high school/prep school/collegiate level basketball in the US. In conversation with The Pioneer, Marc Pullés, Director, Basketball Operations Team Leader en National Basketball Association (NBA) talks to

Dunking high AND ABOVE

us about the program, how it's aiding the grassroots development of basketball in the country, what the future holds for basketball in India, women's basketball league, and more.

"Over the years, the program has shown a positive impact and provided a platform for more youth to play basketball and pursue the sport. These online sessions provide a platform for the youth to speak to people they look up to. Having conversations with NBA, WNBA talent is something most will cherish. I think it's important, especially in a time like this where interaction is limited, and everyone has to stay inside," Pullés shares.

Explaining how they manage to pull off the program successfully, he added,

"Rather than having to focus on a one-way presentation through the course of a session, the participating kids, coaches, and Physical Education teachers were encouraged to actively take part in the drills. The program also provided pre-recorded training videos and content to PE teachers and coaches at participating schools, providing year-round development opportunities for aspiring players through digital platforms. In October 2020, we had organised a standalone session with three-time NBA champion Bruce Bowen that explored the subject of mental health and wellness."

Pullés, speaking of the future Basketball holds in India, says they are encouraged by the popularity of cricket, which demonstrates

the strength of the sporting culture in India. "We see this as an opportunity in basketball, especially with a young population, to build a strong fanbase over time. India is a priority market for the

NBA

with tremendous potential. It also poses its own unique set of challenges, including the local basketball infrastructure. We need more basketball courts to allow more people to have access to the game. Our international basketball development strategy is a 'grassroots to high performance' system. As players develop, the NBA's strategy is to move them up the system from Jr. NBA and NBA Basketball Schools to BWB and NBA Academies, which feature NBA-level coaching and facilities, and the opportunity to compete against top competition throughout the year.

Through our developmental efforts, we've put basketballs into the

hands of boys and girls — from grassroots all the way to the elite level. Over 15 male & female prospects from our Academy program have committed to D1 colleges, universities, prep schools, and Academies in the U.S. Princepal Singh became the first

NBA Academy India graduate to sign a professional contract when he signed with the NBA G League Ignite in July last year.

These success stories are the real indicator of the potential and the growth of the game.

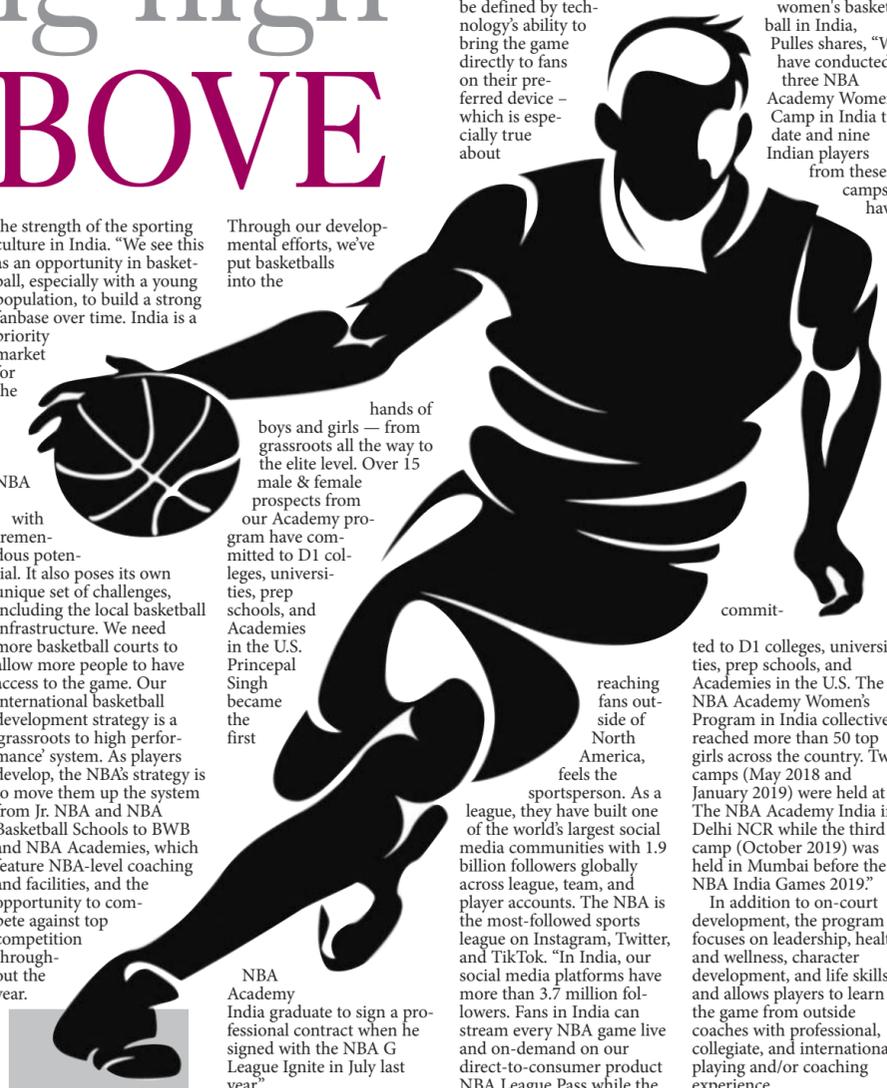
The future of sports will be defined by technology's ability to bring the game directly to fans on their preferred device — which is especially true about

entire Conference Finals and The Finals will be broadcasted live on Star Sports Select," he points. Explaining the

potential of women's basketball in India, Pullés shares, "We have conducted three NBA Academy Women's Camp in India till date and nine Indian players from these camps have

committed to D1 colleges, universities, prep schools, and Academies in the U.S. The NBA Academy Women's Program in India collectively reached more than 50 top girls across the country. Two camps (May 2018 and January 2019) were held at The NBA Academy India in Delhi NCR while the third camp (October 2019) was held in Mumbai before the NBA India Games 2019."

In addition to on-court development, the program focuses on leadership, health and wellness, character development, and life skills, and allows players to learn the game from outside coaches with professional, collegiate, and international playing and/or coaching experience.





Mikkel Damsgaard, center, celebrates after scoring Denmark's opening goal during the Euro 2020 Group B match between Russia and Denmark in Copenhagen. AP

AFP ■ COPENHAGEN

Denmark made it through to the last 16 of Euro 2020 on Monday after a convincing 4-1 win over Russia which alongside Belgium's victory against Finland meant they finished second in Group B.

Goals from Mikkel Damsgaard, Yussuf Poulsen, Andreas Christensen and Joakim Maehle gave the Danes their first win of the tournament on a joyous evening at the Parken Stadium in Copenhagen.

Delirious fans showered each other with beer as Denmark rattled in the goals that allowed them to end the group stage in party mood after the trauma of Christian Eriksen's mid-match collapse in their opening fixture against the Finns.

Denmark will face Wales in the last 16 in Amsterdam on Saturday.

The Danes came into the match with no points from

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE MADE POSSIBLE

Denmark finish second in Group B after sensational 4-1 victory over Russia & qualify for knockouts

their first two matches but knowing a win over Russia by two goals or more and defeat for Finland would guarantee them passage from the group as the second-placed team.

It was the Russians who had the first chance of the game, Aleksandr Golovin driving towards the goal and fashioning a great scoring opportunity only to shoot straight at Kasper

the time in the world when he unleashed a curling strike that whipped past Matvei Safonov and caused an eruption of celebrations in the stands.

Denmark second came in almost comical circumstances on the hour mark.

Poulsen could hardly believe his luck when Daler Kuzyaev's miscued back-pass rolled straight to him in front of the Russian goal, leaving him the simple task of rolling into an empty net and giving Denmark the two-goal lead they needed to finish second should Belgium win.

Soon after the already rowdy fans in the Parken let out possibly the loudest cheer of the night as news of Romelu Lukaku's opener against Finland filtered through, but they were soon dampened by that goal being ruled out and Russia being awarded a penalty which was slotted home by Artem Dzyuba.

They were on their feet again with 15 minutes remain-

ing thanks to Lukas Hradecky's own goal which put Belgium a goal ahead and Denmark in second place.

Denmark were now charging forward and Safonov had to pull off three incredible saves in quick succession before Christensen rammed home a superb long-range strike in the 79th minute.

As the fans, who had made a tremendous racket all game, began their celebrations for making the knockout stage, Denmark ended the group stage in style when Maehle slotted home the fourth three minutes later to complete a perfect evening.

BELGIUM FINISH 1ST

In other Group B game in Saint Petersburg, Belgium scored two late goals to see off a valiant Finland 2-0, pushing their opponents to the brink of a group-stage exit.

Finnish goalkeeper Lukas Hradecky's 74th-minute own goal and Romelu Lukaku's third strike of the tournament ensured Roberto Martinez's Belgium finished top of Group B.

The world's number-one-ranked side will face a third-placed team in the next round on Sunday in Seville.

Finland finish third in the group, but appear unlikely to be one of the four best third-placed teams.

5 MAKE IT THROUGH

Five teams advanced to the round of 16 without even playing at the Euro 2020.

France, England, the Czech Republic, Sweden and Switzerland all are assured of advancing because they have four points and will finish no worse than third in their groups.

Results in the final Group B and C games have left Finland and Ukraine in third place in the respective standings with three points. That means any team with four points is guaranteed to be at least among the four best third-place teams.

Finland and Ukraine have not yet been eliminated. Results in Group D on Tuesday and Group E on Wednesday could leave those third-place finishers with only two points.

Mount, Chilwell to isolate until June 28

London: England will be without Chelsea duo Mason Mount and Ben Chilwell for their final Euro 2020 Group D match on Tuesday against the Czech Republic and potentially their last-16 tie, after the pair were forced to isolate following exposure to an opponent who has Covid-19.

Mount and Chilwell were seen embracing their club teammate Billy Gilmour after Friday's 0-0 draw between England and Scotland. Gilmour tested positive on Monday.

England have already qualified ahead of the Czech Republic's visit to Wembley and if they beat the Czechs to win the group, they will play their last 16 match at Wembley on June 29, giving both players a chance to feature.

Second place in the group would see Southgate's men travel to Copenhagen on June 28.

"We can confirm that Ben Chilwell and Mason Mount must isolate up to and including next Monday (28 June). This decision has been taken in consultation with Public Health England," the English Football Association said in a statement.

"Chilwell and Mount will isolate and train individually in private areas at England's training base St George's Park." AFP



Wembley to host 60K fans for Euro semis, final

More than 60,000 fans will be allowed to attend the semi-finals and final of Euro 2020 at Wembley with attendance increased to 75 percent of capacity, the British Government announced on Tuesday.

The matches will see the largest crowds assembled at a sporting event in Britain in more than 15 months, with numbers previously strictly limited due to the coronavirus pandemic.

All ticket holders will need to follow a number of strict entry requirements, including having a negative Covid-19 test or proof of full vaccination.

"We have worked extremely closely with UEFA and the FA (Football Association) to ensure rigorous and tight public health measures are in place whilst allowing more fans to see the action live," said culture and sport secretary Oliver Dowden.

"The finals promise to be an unforgettable moment in our national recovery from the pandemic."

UEFA declines Munich application for rainbow-colored stadium

Munich: UEFA's decision to block plans by Munich to light the Allianz Arena in rainbow colours for the Germany-Hungary Euro 2020 match was met on Tuesday with defiance in the Bavarian city which vowed to decorate other landmarks in protest at a law passed by the Hungarian Government.

"UEFA is a politically and religiously neutral organisation," said European football's governing body in a statement ahead of Wednesday's match.

"Given the political context of this request — a message aimed at a decision taken by the Hungarian national parliament

— UEFA must refuse."

Munich's mayor Dieter Reiter slammed UEFA's decision as 'shameful' and announced plans to decorate other city landmarks in rainbow colours in defiance.

"I find it shameful that UEFA forbids us to send a sign for cosmopolitanism, tolerance, respect and solidarity with the people of the LGBTIQ community," he said.

He plans to put up rainbow-coloured flags at the Munich town hall and illuminate a huge wind turbine located close to the stadium, as well as the city's 291m-tall Olympic Tower.

AFP

Argentina, Chile qualify for quarters



Argentina's Alejandro Gomez, center, celebrates scoring the opening goal against Paraguay with teammates during a Copa America match in Brasilia. AP

AFP ■ BRASILIA

Argentina and Chile on Monday booked their places in the Copa America quarter-finals, ending top of Group A after low-scoring matches that left the other two spots up for grabs.

Argentina logged their second win in three group matches, beating Paraguay 1-0, with Alejandro 'Papu' Gomez scoring the sole goal of a lacklustre match in the ninth minute.

The win placed Lionel Messi's La Albiceleste top of Group A with seven points — enough to secure its spot in the next phase of the tournament being played in empty stadiums in coronavirus-battered Brazil.

The match marked a personal milestone for Messi, who tied Javier Mascherano's record for the most games played for Argentina — 147.

But it was not a night of glory for Messi or his team, who in the second half seemed to resign themselves to defending a spirited, but ultimately fruitless, Paraguayan attack.

In the other match Monday, Chile drew 1-1 with Uruguay to end the day with five log points.

With four matches left to play in Group A, Paraguay has three points, Uruguay one, and Bolivia zero, meaning they all still stand a theoretical

chance to go to the quarter-finals.

Brazil has already qualified from Group B.

The build-up to Chile-Uruguay game had been overshadowed by controversy in the Chile camp after revelations the team had breached Covid-19 protocols by bringing a local hairdresser into the team hotel.

CONMEBOL said it would fine those involved \$30,000.

However there was no sign of the controversy affecting their play, with Vargas firing Chile ahead on 26 minutes from a tight angle after latching onto a clever pass from English-born Ben Brereton.

Uruguay grabbed a share of the points in the second-half when Suarez bundled in the ball from close range during a tangle with former Barcelona team-mate Arturo Vidal at the far post following a corner.

Manchester United striker Edinson Cavani almost snatched victory for Uruguay in the 85th minute, but his glancing header flashed just wide of the post.

Vargas's first-half strike saw him draw level with Peru's Paolo Guerrero on 14 goals in the Copa America's all-time goalscoring rankings, three behind the record of 17 held by Brazil's Zizinho and Argentina's Norberto Mendez.

PTI ■ SOUTHAMPTON

Mohammed Shami's artistry was on full display but New Zealand still managed to take a crucial 32-run lead after scoring 249 on the fifth day of the World Test Championship final against India here on Tuesday.

More than the quantum of the first innings lead, New Zealand will gain psychological advantage as their seam attack can go for the kill on the final day to force a result.

New Zealand showed more intent on keeping the scoreboard ticking with Kyle Jamieson (21) and Tim Southee (30) throwing their bats around for useful runs which certainly put the pressure back on India going into the final session of the day.

The tea break was called after the fall of last New Zealand wicket.

Mohammed Shami (4/76), after a mesmerising morning spell, got a couple of more wickets in the post-lunch session. He dismissed Colin de Grandhomme with a delivery

Shami brings India back in match

angled in and Jamieson with a bouncer.

During the final half-hour, India's senior-most player Ishant Sharma (3/48) denied half-century to a dogged skipper Kane Williamson (49) with a classic Test match dismissal — delivery rearing up and shaping out which was edged to Virat Kohli at third slip.

Sensing that mere survival would spell doom, New Zealand scored 114 runs in the post lunch session even as Shami and Ishant remained standout performer bowling their hearts out.

Jamieson and Southee got some easy runs at the fag end which could prove to be useful in the final context.

But no amount of praise is enough for Shami, who brought India back in the match before New Zealand could press its foot on the pedal. Such was his



India's Mohammed Shami, left, celebrates the dismissal of New Zealand's BJ Watling, right, during Day 5 of WTC Final. AP

domination that Williamson managed only seven runs in an entire session of play.

Ross Taylor (11) was dismissed as Shami reaped the rewards for finding the fuller length which enticed the batsman to go for a drive. Shubman Gill, at short cover, took a brilliant diving catch.

Ishant then had the normally dependable Henry Nicholls (7), who went for a 'fishing expedition' when the lanky speedster pushed his length fuller by a yard and the edge at second slip was taken by Rohit Sharma.

BJ Watling (1), in his last Test, got a ball that would have put the best in the business in trouble. Shami, who by then had started bossing the batsmen, bowled one that looked like shaping in but held its line after pitching, clipping the off-bail in the process. From 117 for 2, New Zealand were reeling at 135 for 5 in no time.

Younis quits as Pak batting coach

Karachi: Former captain Younis Khan on Tuesday stepped down as Pakistan's batting coach in a surprise decision which the cricket board said was agreed upon 'reluctantly but amicably' even though no reasons were specified for it.

The Pakistan team is due to start a tour of the UK from June 25 to July 20 for three ODIs and three T20Is. The team will next go to the West Indies from July 21 to August 24 to feature in five T20Is and two Tests.

"Pakistan men's national cricket team will travel to the United Kingdom without a batting coach, while the decision to appoint Younis Khan's replacement for the West Indies tour will be made in due course," a PCB statement said two days before the team's departure.

The announcement was followed by speculation that Younis himself had decided to quit the position as he was not happy with his role and wanted greater say in selection matters. PTI

Indian women's resolve, grit & determination in England Test impressed Anjum

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Indian skipper and commentator Anjum Chopra was full of praise for the Indian women's cricket team for the fight they showed in the one-off Test match against England, which ended in a draw in Bristol on Saturday.

The Indian team which was playing its first red-ball game in seven years, batted for more than 120 overs in the second innings after follow-on to avoid defeat.

Speaking to *The Pioneer* about India's show in the match, Anjum said: "It was a very good performance because there were so many debutants in the Indian playing XI. Barring Mithali (Raj) and Jhulan (Goswami) everyone has very little experience in playing Test cricket. So it was

Maharaj hat-trick headlines Proteas Test series win

AFP ■ GROS-ISLET

Keshav Maharaj completed just the second hat-trick by a South African in Test history as the Proteas completed a 158-run victory over the West Indies on the fourth day of the second Test of the two-match series at the Daren Sammy Cricket Ground in St Lucia on Monday night.

In the penultimate over before lunch the left-arm spinner removed Kieran Powell, Jason Holder and Joshua da Silva in successive deliveries to join fast bowler Geoff Griffen, who achieved the feat at Lord's in 1960, in the record books.

Maharaj then followed up with two of the last three to fall in the afternoon to finish with figures of five for 36 as the West Indies were dismissed for 165.

Following a comprehensive innings and 63-run victory



inside three days in the first Test a week earlier at the same venue, the result gave South Africa the series 2-0, their first away series triumph since 2017 in New Zealand.

"This is huge for us because we haven't won on the road for quite some time," said South African captain Dean Elgar.

"There will be teething years as captain but this is a good, important step on the way forward."

"As a batting unit we let ourselves down but I must really commend the effort of the bowlers," said a dejected Windies captain Brathwaite.

Aadi-Veerabhadram TO WEAVE MAGIC WITH KIRATHAKA



with movies such as *Aha Naa Pellanta* and *Poolarangadu*. Actress Payal Rajput of *RX100* fame has been roped in for the film to romance Aadi Sai Kumar. The upcoming film of Aadi Sai Kumar and Payal Rajput has been titled *Kirathaka*.

The film is being bankrolled by Nagam Tirupathi under the banner of Vision Cinemas. Full details about this project will be revealed very soon. The makers of *Kirathaka* are planning to start the shoot very soon.

Earlier during an interview, Veerabhadram had said, "Aadi Sai Kumar-starrer *Chuttalabbayi*, which I had helmed, became a hit in my career."

We planned a new film in our combination to score a hit. Nagam Tirupati Reddy, P Manmadha Rao are the producers. They are very eager to come up with a good entertainer movie. We will together make a big commercial entertainer without any compromises in the quality of the film and production."

Actor Aadi Sai Kumar has recently joined hands with director Veerabhadram for an upcoming project. Veerabhadram is known for helming the romantic comedy *Chuttalabbayi*. Aadi and Veerabhadram are coming together to dish out an exciting out and out entertainer this year. The director has earned his reputation in the film industry



MEHREEN IN BALAKRISHNA-GOPICHAND MALINENI FILM

After days of speculation, it is officially confirmed now, that Nandamuri Balakrishna has teamed up with Gopichand Malineni for an upcoming project which is produced by Naveen Yerneni and Y. Ravi Shankar under the Mythri Movies banner, whose music will be scored by SS Thaman.

According to the latest buzz, the makers of the film have approached actress Mehreen Pirzada of *F2* fame to play one of the female lead roles in Balakrishna and Gopichand Malineni's film.

Sources say that Mehreen has responded positively and gave them her nod. Very soon, the official announcement regarding the inclusion of Mehreen in this film of Balakrishna will be made.

Ever since the *Pattas* actress decided to postpone her wedding, she is on a signing spree and is signing back-to-back projects in Tollywood.

Mehreen Kaur Pirzada will be seen playing the female lead in hilarious drama *F3* which has Venkatesh Daggubati, Varun Tej,



and Tamannah Bhatia in lead roles and it helmed by Anil Ravipudi. She will also be seen playing the female lead in Santhosh Sobhan starrer *Manchi Rojulu*

Vachayi. On the other side, Balakrishna is currently working for Boyapati Srinu's directorial venture *Akhanda*.

Nithiin-starrer Maestro to see an OTT release?

That the shoot of upcoming action and thriller drama *Maestro* starring Nithiin, Tamannah, and Nabha Natesh has reached completion amid Covid-19 pandemic, is known news. The Telugu film *Maestro* is a remake of the Hindi blockbuster,

Andhadhun starring Ayushmann Khurrana, Tabu, and Radhika Apte in lead roles. Tamannah will be reprising Tabu's role whereas Nabha Natesh is essaying Radhika Apte's character.

What we now hear is that the movie *Maestro* will skip theatrical release and pre-

miere directly on an OTT platform! Apparently, Disney+Hotstar is offering the team Rs 40 Cr for the direct to digital rights. This is one of the biggest OTT deals in Tollywood to date. An official confirmation from the team about the digital release is still awaited. *Lie* fame Nithiin, who was last seen in the romantic and comedy movie *Rang De*, is thrilled about the release of his upcoming film, *Maestro*. *Ismart Shankar* fame Nabha Natesh is paired opposite Nithiin, Tamannah Bhatia's character has negative shades.

Apart from them, *Maestro* also has Jishu Sengupta, Sreemukhi, Harshvardhan, Ananya, Rachha Ravi, Mangli, and Srinivas Reddy in supporting roles.

Helmed by Merlapaka Gandhi, and the film is jointly bankrolled by N Sudhakar Reddy and Nikitha Reddy under the banner of Shreshth Movies Banner. Rajkumar Akella. The film has cinematography by J Yuvraj whereas music is scored by Mahati Swara Sagar.



VD: Rs 200 crore is too little, I will do more in the theaters

Young and happening actor Vijay Deverakonda has established himself to be one of the most exciting stars not only down south but other industries as well. The actor is making his debut in Bollywood with the upcoming film *Liger* which is being directed by Puri Jagannadh, who is known for making *Pokiri*, *Businessman*, *Temper*, and *Ismart Shankar*. This will be the first collaboration between Puri Jagannadh and Vijay Deverakonda. The bilingual movie is being produced by Karan Johar. According to the latest news on the film, Vijay Deverakonda took to his Twitter handle to refute reports of an OTT release in a cheeky way.

It was being said that team *Liger* received a mouth-watering OTT deal from a streaming platform. They offered a massive Rs 200 crore for its direct OTT release of *Liger*, including the satellite rights in all languages. Sharing the report on his Twitter account, the *Geetha Govindam* star wrote, "Too little, I will do more in the theaters".

In the film *Liger*, which also has Bollywood belle Ananya Pandey as the female lead, Vijay Deverakonda will be seen as a kickboxer with a stutter.



After Pushpa, Salaar to release in two parts?

Recently, the makers of action thriller drama *Pushpa* starring Stylish Star Allu Arjun and Rashmika Mandanna, made an official announcement that the movie will be released in two parts. Now according to the latest buzz, the makers of action entertainer *Salaar* too, are planning to release the Prabhas and Shruti Haasan-starrer in two parts!

Baahubali was released in two installments and ended up as a super hit. In the same way, Yash-starrer action drama *KGF: Chapter 1*, directed by



Prashanth Neel was also a sensational hit and now all eyes are on the second installment *KGF: Chapter 2* which is slated to hit the theaters in the month of July. Discussion on the film being released in two install-

ments is on, and very soon the official announcement regarding it will be made.

Sources say that director Prashanth Neel believes that the content of *Salaar* has scope to be extended into two parts and he is going to develop the script accordingly.

Salaar is an action drama that has Madhu Guruswamy in the role of an antagonist. It is being produced by Vijay Kiragandur under Hombale Films. Prabhas and Prashanth Neel's film is set to release on April 14, 2022.

Sai Tej starts dubbing for Republic



Sai Tej is busy with his upcoming entertainer *Republic* under the direction of Deva Katta of *Prasthanam* fame. Sai Tej, sources say, started dubbing for the film. The makers are extremely happy with the

output and started post-production. They are keen on completing it at the earliest and plan the film's release soon. Rumours were rife that the makers got a fancy offer from a top OTT platform. However the makers decided to release the film in theatres and now that the lockdown is lifted, they are gearing up for the same.

Actress Aishwarya Rajesh has been paired opposite Sai Tej. Senior actress Ramya Krishna is playing an important role in the film. Deva Katta wrapped up the shoot in record time and made it ready for release, but the second wave of the pandemic undid their plans.

