



the pioneer



SHILPA SHETTY IN
MAHESH-
TRIVIKRAM'S
STORY
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PETROL, DIESEL PRICES HIKED AGAIN; PETROL PRICE NEARS RS 99 IN MUMBAI

Petrol price on Sunday was increased by 24 paise per litre and diesel by 27 paise, pushing rates across the country to record highs and that of petrol in Mumbai to near Rs 99 a litre. The increase led to rates in Delhi climbing to Rs 92.58 per litre and diesel to Rs 83.22, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers. Rates had already crossed Rs 100-mark in several cities in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra and with the latest increase, price in Mumbai too was inching towards that level. A litre of petrol in Mumbai now comes for Rs 98.88 and diesel is priced at Rs 90.40 per litre.



CONGRESS MP RAJEEV SATAV WHO HAD COVID DIES, RAHUL GANDHI SAYS 'BIG LOSS'

Senior Congress leader and MP Rajeev Satav died at a private hospital in Pune this morning, days after recovering from coronavirus infection. "It's a big loss for us all," Rahul Gandhi tweeted, addressing Mr Satav as "my friend" who embodied the ideals of the Congress. "Rajeev Satav became RT-PCR swab negative on May 9, 2021. However, after a prolonged illness he succumbed to secondary pneumonia with multi-organ dysfunction on May 16 at 4:58 am," Jehangir hospital, where the Congress leader was admitted, said in a statement. The 46-year-old Congress leader was in critical condition after he was diagnosed with a new viral infection, according to Maharashtra Health Minister Rajesh Tope.



COVID-19: LOCKDOWN EXTENDED IN DELHI BY ANOTHER WEEK

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday announced extension of the ongoing lockdown by one more week in the national capital, saying the gains made so far in combating COVID-19 cannot be lost due to any relaxations now. During a visit to the GTB Hospital, he said Delhi has recorded a "good level" of COVID-19 recoveries in the past few days and the number of cases is also reducing "very fast". "But we do not want the gains made in the past few days to be lost all of a sudden. So, the lockdown is being extended for another week till 5 am on May 24," Kejriwal said.



FREE WI-FI NOW AT 6,000 RAILWAY STATIONS

The railways has enabled free Wi-Fi at its 6000th station as the facility went live at Hazaribagh town of Jharkhand on Saturday, the national transporter said. The railways provided Wi-Fi facility first at the Mumbai Railway station in 2016, reaching its 5000th station, at Midanpore in West Bengal. On May 15, Jarapada station in Angul District of Odisha was also provided with Wi-Fi facility, it said on Sunday. "The Wi-Fi facility at railway stations meets the objectives of the aspiring 'Digital India' programme of government of India.



MLA Vamsi donates
02 cylinders to GGH

3



Maha CM asks family
docs to join fight
against Covid

5



Covaxin effective
against India, UK
strains: Biotech

8

Lockdown inevitable?

C PRADEEP KUMAR
■ VIJAYAWADA

With more than twenty thousand Covid positive cases being reported everyday during the recent past, despite imposing 18 hours curfew for 14 days across Andhra Pradesh, the state government is likely to move ahead with a complete lockdown. As per the fever survey, a measure to control Covid-19, the positivity rate is alarming in the state and has crossed 20 per cent.

Despite the strict curfew being imposed in the state, Covid positive cases are spreading like wild-fire. Curfew is imposed from 12 noon to 6 am exempting emergency medical care. The present curfew does not appear to contain the spread of Covid as relaxation is given from 6 am to 12 noon and people are coming onto the roads unnecessarily during the relaxation period. There are criticisms that corona is not coming under control with the present curfew.

In the present scenario officials feel that lockdown, as imposed during Covid first wave, is the only way out. It is learned that the authorities have also told CM Jagannathan Reddy the same and it is believed



that the corona cases will be difficult to control without a complete lockdown.

The second wave of Covid is turning scary with the increasing number of positive cases of about 20,000 per day besides shortage of medicines, lack of vaccines, inadequate beds in hospitals, short supply of oxygen, exploitation done by private hospitals etc.. All these are the conditions under which people have to live in dire straits.

According to the ranking matrix of Covid-19 situation index and health infrastructure index of a few selected states in the country, AP's health infrastructure index is average and the Covid-19 situation index is poor.

The AP government has been taking steps to curb the pandemic, however the question now is how far their measures will yield good result as the spread of the virus in the state appears to be very

high. Medical experts are also deeply concerned about the situation here.

The state government was initiating region-wise action depending on local conditions, but that had not been yielding expected results to contain the spread of infection.

Generally, if the positivity rate crosses ten percent it is termed dangerous, however, the data revealed that the positivity rate has crossed 20 per cent, which is alarming. According to ICMR lockdown is inevitable if the positivity is above 10 per cent.

In the 11 districts in AP, the positivity rate was found to be above 20 per cent, with Visakhapatnam, East Godavari and Anantapur districts recording the most positive cases. With this, ICMR suggests imposing complete lockdown instead of curfew in the state for another six to eight weeks.

According to the Fever Survey conducted in AP more rural population seems to be suffering from fevers. Although most people show corona symptoms, the survey seems to find that they do not come forward to get tested. If tests are conducted for everyone the real situation will be more alarming.

BENGAL POLL EFFECT

Centre changes its attitude towards Telugu states now

SNCN ACHARYULU
■ HYDERABAD

Following the debacle of the Bharatiya Janata Party in the two recent bye-elections - Nagarjuna Sagar and Tirupathi seats- and its not-so-good performance in the West Bengal Assembly elections, there is a perceptible shift in the Centre's attitude towards the two Telugu States. This is in line with the expectations of the Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. This also explains why their current expectations are being met by the Centre, especially in connection with the distribution of oxygen, vaccine and medicines to fight the pandemic.

There has been a lot of difference in the attitude of the Centre towards the Telugu states in May, compared to that in April, observers feel. The Central government has increased the quota of oxygen and vaccine supply to both

TS and AP as per the requests made by the respective Chief Ministers.

Before May, the Centre faced lot of criticism from opposition parties and non-BJP ruled states over the assistance provided in tackling the Covid pandemic. In April the Congress interim president Sonia Gandhi alleged that the BJP-ruled states had been receiving preferential treatment in getting medical equipment. The states ruled by opposition parties alleged that they were getting step-motherly treatment from the Centre in getting supplies of oxygen, vaccines and other items to fight the pandemic.

Prior to the West Bengal Assembly elections, the Chief Ministers of Telugu states had indicated that they expected a change in the attitude of the central government towards non-BJP ruled states, should TMC win the polls.

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Primary contacts refuse to get tested for Covid

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a surprising move by the villagers of U Venkampeta hamlet of Veeraghattam Mandal in the north Andhra district of Srikakulam, the villagers refused to get them tested for Covid infection. Already a few people in the village were tested Covid positive and the medical and health authorities were identifying their primary contact to test for the deadly infection while the villagers refused to come forward for the test.

According to Health Supervisor, B Jagadish, U Venkampeta is a hamlet that has a population of 950 people. About five people were tested positive a few days back and they were isolated from their family members. The health department staff identified about 12

people who were primary contacts of the Covid positive patients. They were told to come and get tested by the health staff, six of them came and got tested while the remaining six said that they could not come for testing.

Jagadish said that they would conduct a Covid testing camp at Chidimi village, which is close to U Venkampeta and get the primary contacts and others tested for Covid infection.

M Sarasvathi ANM said that three women and two men of U Venkampeta hamlet were infected and the family members were not willing to come to the testing centre as it was about 5 kms away and the medical supervisor told that they would set up a camp for them at Chidimi village on Monday.



39,000 people suffer from fever reveals household survey: Singhal

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Anil Kumar Singhal, principal secretary, Medical and Health department, said a household survey to identify people suffering from fever was in full swing across the state and was likely to be completed by the evening of May 17. He asked the Centre to increase the oxygen quota given to AP.

Addressing a press conference on Sunday, Singhal said that Asha workers were identifying people suffering from fever at every home. ANMs would provide medicines and isolation kits to the identified people suffering from fever. The survey was expected to be completed by Monday evening. So far, 39,000 people had been diagnosed with fever across the state. He said if treatment was provided to the infected at the right time, the pressure of corona cases on hospitals would be reduced.

Anil Kumar Singhal, said that the Medical and Health department officials were looking into the mat-



ter of black fungus to find out if any case was reported in the state till date. On the other hand the central government has allotted 1,600 vials to AP to treat black fungus cases and the state government is ready to purchase the vials, said the Principal Secretary.

He said that during the past 24 hours, the central government had delivered 600 MT liquid medical oxygen (LMO) to AP and that was 10 MT more than the regular allocation. He said 80 MT of medical oxygen was received from Jamnagar, 60 MT from Jamshedpur and 40 MT

from Durgapur. He said all hospitals across the state have full stocks of oxygen. He asked the central government to further increase the oxygen allocation to AP. Central government officials will hold video conferencing and decide on oxygen allocations by Monday, he said.

During the past 24 hours 94,550 samples were tested and 24,171 turned out to be positive and 101 people succumbed to the deadly virus. On the other hand 15,911 people across the state called 104 call centre in the last 24 hours and availed medical services, said AK Singhal.

Tauktae intensifies into 'very severe cyclonic storm'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Cyclone Tauktae has intensified into a "very severe cyclonic storm" and is approaching the Gujarat coast, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Sunday.

"It is very likely to move north-northwestwards and reach Gujarat coast in the evening hours of 17th (May) and cross Gujarat coast between Porbandar and Mahuva (Bhavnagar district) around 18th May early morning," the IMD said.

The IMD has also issued a yellow alert for the coasts of Gujarat and Diu and Daman.

According to the Cyclone Warning Division of the IMD, by May 18, the wind speed is expected to increase to 150-160 kilometres per hour, gusting up to 175 kmph.

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TODAY
ALMANAC
Month & Paksham:
Vaishakha & Shukla Paksha
Panchangam
Tithi : Panchami: 11:34 am
Nakshatram : Purnavasu: 01:22 am
Time to Avoid : (Bad time to start any important work)
Rahukalam : 07:23 am – 08:59 am
Yamagandam : 10:36 am – 12:12 pm
Varjyam : 09:53 pm – 11:35 pm
Gulika : 01:48 pm – 03:25 pm
Good Time : (to start any important work)
Amritakalam : 10:45 am – 12:29 pm
Abhijit Muhurtham : 11:46 am – 12:38 pm

VIJAYAWADA
WEATHER
Forecast: Partly cloudy
Temp: 37/28
Humidity: 61%
Sunrise: 05:43 am
Sunset: 06:41 pm
Current Weather Conditions
Updated may 16, 2021 5:00 PM

Israel air strikes kill 33 Palestinians

PNS ■ ISRAELI

Israeli air strikes on Sunday killed 33 Palestinians, including eight children, Gaza health officials said, as militants fired an early morning barrage of rockets into Israel.

With no sign of an end to the worst outbreak of Israeli-Palestinian violence in years the United Nations Security Council was due to meet later on Sunday to discuss the hostilities.

The death toll in Gaza overnight jumped to 181, including 47 children, amid an intensive Israeli air and artillery barrage since the fighting erupted last Monday. Ten people have been killed in Israel, including two children.

No injuries caused to rebel MP Raju: HC panel

SNV SUDHIR
■ VIJAYAWADA

The High Court appointed medical committee had said that there were no injuries or wounds on the body of YSRCP rebel MP Kanumuru Raghurama Krishna Raju and he was in perfect health.

Raju was arrested by CID on sedition charges on Friday evening in Hyderabad. After his bail petition was rejected by a single judge bench of the High Court on Saturday afternoon, Raju through his advocate wrote a letter to the High Court chief justice that he was inflicted injuries by the police on Friday during their custody.

Acting upon the letter, the High Court chief justice had asked a division bench to look into it. The division bench had constituted a medical committee and asked it to submit a report in a sealed cover.

On Sunday High Court judges while hearing the petition of Raju read the report submitted by the



medical committee.

The medical team clearly stated that there were no injuries on the body of Raghurama Krishna Raju and added that he was in perfect health.

The High Court has ordered to implement the orders of the CID Court which had said Raju should be taken to private Ramesh Hospital for medical tests and examination. However, after the

tests at GGH CID sleuths had taken Raju to Guntur sub jail instead of Ramesh Hospital which was objected by Raju's counsel during the hearing before the High Court bench on Sunday.

The Additional Advocate General (AAG) Ponnaavolu Sudhakar Reddy said that the High Court had issued orders at 6:40 PM on Saturday.

Kshatriyas disown Raju

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Kshatriya community representatives and leaders from Narsapuram, Palakollu, Bhimavaram, Undi, Tadepalligudem had conducted a meeting on Sunday and unanimously stood on the point not to support YSRCP rebel MP Kanumuru Raghurama Krishna Raju.

The members of the Kshatriya Seva Samiti of Narsapuram found fault with Raghurama Krishna Raju and also condemned his hate speeches. Their condemnation comes in the wake of Raju trying to evoke sympathy from his constituency particularly from his community members.

"We as a community supported him in the last elections and campaigned for him. But he is disloyal. In the last 15 months of his tenure he did nothing for his constituency as an MP. He has been not cooperating with any of the five MLAs of this region," Guntur Peddiraju, member of Kshatriya Seva Samithi told reporters on Sunday.

He added Raju had changed at least three parties in the last few years and his interest lies solely in safeguarding his properties and increasing his wealth.

The members said they were feeling disgusted with the behavior of Raghurama Raju and they were not going to support him in this context.

Monday Mirchi

Lack of coordination or communication?

The decision to regulate entry of ambulances with Covid patients at Telangana borders has created a stir in the administration in both the Telugu states. While the Chief Secretary of Andhra Pradesh called his counterpart to convey the AP government's displeasure, Telangana Chief Secretary reportedly conveyed that he had 'no role' in the decision to stop the ambulances. This has raised serious questions about who is actually taking such important decisions in the government. Both the governments have come under fire for the 'inhuman' decision, due to which Covid patients were stuck at the borders with some losing their lives. Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh Y S Jaganmohan Reddy did not call his Telangana counterpart even as patients died at the border waiting for emergency medical help, though his aides advised him to call K Chandrasekhar Rao to sort out the issue. At the same time, the Telangana CMO waited for some 'higher level' intervention to sort out the problem as they have a defence in the form of 'state-wise quota' from the Centre.

"We are getting 675 Tocilizumab injections to the state from the Centre. We are reserving them for our Telangana patients. If patients from other states flood our hospitals, how can we manage our meagre supplies from the Centre?" questioned a senior official. Though it seems to be quite logical on the face of it, none could defend the 'inhuman' treatment meted out to the patients from the Andhra Pradesh. Even as AP, TS are fighting over this, patients from Karnataka, Maharashtra continue to flood Hyderabad hospitals. All of this has exposed lack of communication between the two states and lack of coordination at the official level during the pandemic.

Wish babus could think out of box

Only babus can think of a circuitous route to reach medical supplies during an emergency. That is because they work in silos, obey political masters without thinking, and invariably resist change for the better. Babus at the Centre have not risen to the occasion even during the present pandemic-induced national crisis. Just look at the time an Oxygen Express reached Krishnapatnam in Nellore from Durgapur Steel Plant in West Bengal. "Absolutely cannot understand this logic! Vizag Steel Plant oxygen is supplied elsewhere and 'Durgapur Steel Plant sends oxygen to Vizag! What a colossal wastage of resources! Bureaucracy still drives the divinity," goes a tweet. Two cryogenic containers, each carrying 20 MT of liquid medical oxygen (LMO) from Durgapur Steel Plant reached Krishnapatnam port in Nellore district on Saturday. Another train with 60 MT of liquid oxygen, after starting from Durgapur on Saturday evening, was expected to reach Nellore within 24 hours. These two trains will be running in opposite directions to ensure assured supply of 60 MT per day to Rayalaseema districts and Nellore. This being so, five units of oxygen making plants in the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant are in operation,

loading and dispatching of cryogenic tankers with LMO. Rising to the nationwide demand for LMO, RINL-Vizag Steel's cumulative dispatch has crossed 11,900 MT mark since the outbreak of the pandemic. The bulk of it is being dispatched primarily to other states. On April 22, the first Oxygen Express, carrying 100 MT of LMO in 7 cryogenic tankers, was dispatched to Maharashtra to meet the emergency requirement in the state. At least subsequently the Vizag Steel Plant's oxygen could have been allotted to Andhra Pradesh, while sending Durgapur's output elsewhere, to save time and resources, say observers.

Stay home, stay safe

'Stay home, stay safe' is the latest catchphrase that helps one realize the dire need to keep coronavirus at bay. The governments are telling people to stay at home and not come onto roads as corona is literally in the air. Moreover, Telangana State has imposed lockdown. However, government offices, including the ad hoc Secretariat, are working from 10 am to 5 pm with 30% staff. Still, most employees, motivated by the slogan, are staying at home. Post demolition of the Secretariat buildings, the departments have scattered and no one knows which department is working from where. So, one can only hope that the 30% staff required to work from office are really going to their workplace. An employee's union leader said: "There is no mechanism in place to track the 30% employees who are expected to attend the office and to determine which employee has to come on which day". Employees, based on mutual understanding, decide who has to come to office on which day. In other words, it is one big vacation for most employees; call it lockdown induced by corona or whatever. The government is also not in a position to ask the employees why they are not attending duty. A senior officer said: "If the government provides vaccine to employees on priority, then it has a right to ask".

Babus in loop line elevated after Eatela's exit

Following the ejection of former health minister Eatela Rajender from the state cabinet, officials in loop line, particularly those sidelined by him, are being elevated. An important source of the TRS supremo was sidelined and given a nominal role after Eatela took over as health minister. However, now that official has been elevated to serve in the CMO. A fortnight after the dramatic exit of the health minister, the doctor has been appointed as Officer on Special duty in CMO. Dr T. Gangadhar, moved and asked to head the nephrology wing in NIMS, was a made member of the Task force committee on Covid last year. Possibly it was the first indication of the coming events for Eatela. The doctor is the fourth OSD in CMO. About a fortnight ago, he became a member of the Core Committee of Experts for the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, which is involved in developing guidelines and policies for handling Covid positive patients.

- Yours truly

No injuries caused to rebel...

Continued from Page 1

While the High court had rejected private doctors' examination, CRPF security and presence of family members, Additional Advocate General Ponnavaolu Sudhakar Reddy had informed the court that he himself had arranged the GGH medical team.

AAG said that CID Court had ordered to send Raju to Ramesh Hospital at 8:30 PM which meant the orders of CID Court had come after the orders of High Court. This issue has been taken to the notice of CID Court by AGP.

AAG informed the High Court that the CID court would amend the judgment once High Court order copy is submitted. CID court had ordered the uploading of the judgment copy of the High Court online and AAG said it would be uploaded online by tonight.

AAG had objected to sending Raju to Ramesh Hospital stating it's like sending him to TDP office. It is not good to send Raju to Ramesh Hospital after a report is submitted by GGH doctors after careful examination.

The High Court has ordered filing of an affidavit in this

regard. CID court will file an affidavit by tonight.

It was a whole day of high drama on Sunday as there was a delay in conducting medical tests on YSRCP rebel MP from Narasapur Kanumuru Raghurama Krishna Raju by the court appointed medical committee and submitting the report to the CID sessions court. The CID sessions court in turn submitted the report to the High Court.

The High Court Division Bench had directed the medical board to submit the report along with the video footage of the tests conducted by 12pm.

India records 3.11 lakh fresh cases of Covid, 4,077 deaths

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With 3.11 lakh fresh coronavirus infections, India saw the lowest rise in daily COVID-19 cases after a gap of 25 days, while the death toll rose to 2,70,284 with 4,077 new fatalities, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Sunday.

A total of 3,11,170 new cases were reported in a day, taking India's total tally of COVID-19 cases to 2,46,84,077.

A total of 2,95,041 cases were reported in a span of 24 hours on April 21.

The active cases have reduced to 36,18,458 comprising 14.66 per cent of the total infections, while the national COVID-19 recovery rate has improved to 84.25 per cent, the data updated at 8 am showed.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 2,07,95,335, while the case fatality rate was



recorded at 1.09 per cent, the data stated.

India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16. It went past 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one-crore mark

on December 19. India crossed the grim milestone of 2 crore on May 4.

According to the ICMR, 31,48,50,143 samples have been tested up to May 15 with 18,32,950 samples being tested on Saturday.

The 4,077 new fatalities include 960 from Maharashtra, 349 from Karnataka, 337 from Delhi, 303 from Tamil Nadu, 281

Centre changes its attitude...

Continued from Page 1

The two states were then facing difficulties in getting from the Centre adequate medical equipment and supplies to fight Covid -19. Moreover, in the bye-elections -- for the Nagarjuna Sagar Assembly seat in Telangana and the Tirupati Lok Sabha seat in Andhra Pradesh -- the BJP lost its deposits. Local BJP leaders of both Telugu states had told the BJP high command that they were going to give a tough fight to the ruling parties in the bye-elections. But the results of the bye- elections had shown the BJP where

they stood in both the Telugu states. In the West Bengal Assembly elections, the BJP leadership thought that their party would come to power. But the BJP has occupied the principal opposition's position and not the position of the ruling party.

In the light of these developments, the Telugu states' Chief Ministers, K Chandrasekhar Rao of Telangana and YS Jaganmohan Reddy of Andhra Pradesh, expected that the Centre would give preference to their states in all aspects, including the fight against Covid-19 pandemic. In keeping with

their expectations, the central government has increased the quota of oxygen, Remdesivir injections and supply of Covid-19 vaccines to Telangana State.

Union Minister Piyush Goyal called Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao on Saturday to convey Prime Minister Narendra Modi's decision to increase the quota. At the same time, the central government has increased the supply of oxygen - 80 tons per day - from Jannagar Reliance plant to Rayalaseema as requested by the Chief Minister of AP YS Jaganmohan Reddy.

Spurt likely in gold market

The gold market seems to be readying for an unprecedented tejee (spurt) considering the rapidly changing geo-political phenomena. If, on the one hand, the world has been watching with bated breath the war-like situation on Gaza borders, equally it is worrisome matter to learn about Azerbaijan's invasion of Armenia. These two factors have all the potential to divide the world into at least two blocks, each one siding one country or the other. If that happens, all markets, including of course gold, would flare up as the global strife escalates.

During the week ended Saturday, the New York gold appreciated and closed at US \$ 1,843.90 (per ounce) while silver remained steady and closed at \$ 27.43 (per ounce). On the other hand, platinum and palladium declined and closed at \$ 1,222 (per ounce) and \$ 2,799 (per ounce) respectively.

Other economic parameters remained from moderate to strong. Brent and Nymex crude closed at US\$ 68.71 and 65.31 (per barrel) respectively, while Crude MCX was quoted at Rs.4,786 (per barrel). While Gold MCX stood at Rs.47,677 (per 10 gms), MCX Silver closed at Rs.71,080 (per kg). Copper MCX closed at Rs.773.25 (per kg). Sensex and Nifty 50 closed at 48,732.55 and 14,677.80 points respectively. Leading foreign currencies' exchange rates on the closing day of the week were: US \$: Rs.73.29, British Pound: Rs.103.32, Euro: Rs.89.00, Singapore \$: Rs.55.02, Swiss Franc: Rs.81.27, Australian \$: Rs.56.98, Saudi Riyal:

Rs.19.54, New Zealand Dollar: Rs.53.04, Kuwaiti Dinar: Rs.243.61, Omani Rial: Rs.190.41 and UAE Dirham: Rs.19.95, Japanese Yen: Rs.0.67 and Hong Kong Dollar: Rs.9.43.

India has been the second largest importer of gold after China. Akshay Tritiya is a festival when traditionally Hindu families (nowadays, people of other faiths also) purchase gold according to their financial capacity. In normal times, gold worth 15-20 tons is bought on this occasion, but since the spread of Covid-19 pandemic, due to a decline in earnings and restrictions on movements, there has been a drastic fall in the volumes. This year, according to trade sources gold sale was recorded in the range of 9-10 tons

only. In local markets, standard gold (24 carats) appreciated by Rs.320 and closed at Rs.48,980 (per 10 gms). Ornamental gold too followed suit and was quoted in the range of Rs.44,800-44,900 on the closing day. Silver (0.999), on the other hand, declined marginally by Rs.100 and closed at Rs.76,000 (per kg).

COMMODITIES
With a view to augment supplies, the government has eased restrictions on the import of tuar daal, moong daal and urad daal until October 31.

The sentiment in principal wholesale commodity markets in the twin cities turned moderate due to lower demand.

Rythu Bazaars and other commodity markets located in Begum Bazar, Kishangunj, Mukthiyargunj, Risala Abdullah, Mir AlamMandi, Dilukhannagar, Kukatpally, Bowenpally and General Bazar witnessed moderate trading. During the week, like in the previous week, common pulses such as tuar daal, masoor dal, moong dal and urad dal and commodities like chillies and garlic remained unchanged. Staple food grains and common edible recorded a negligible decline. Common vegetables such as cabbage, cauliflower, ribbed gourd, snake gourd, lady's finger, cucumber, potatoes, onions, tomatoes, French beans and leafy vegetables remained unchanged at the previous week's higher levels. The NECC wholesale price of egg in Hyderabad further appreciated by Rs.30 and closed at Rs.448 (per 100). The highest price of Rs.552 was recorded at Ranchi and Muzaffarpur, while Hospet recorded the lowest of Rs.435.

A tale of two verdicts of Madras High Court

■ HC UPADHYAY

It is said that the courts are not the propounders of gospel truth. Even judges are fallible, since they are also human beings; and to err is human. However, in a country like ours where a vast majority of people look at the courts as temples of justice, those adorning the august posts as judges owe extra responsibility to people.

Seen in this context, the two judgments delivered by the Madras High Court recently deserve special consideration. However, the din and dust over the first judgment relating to the Election Commission of India (ECI) has been subsequently cleared in an appeal by the apex court vide its 31-page judgment dated April 30. Earlier, the Madras High Court had castigated the EC for its utter disregard for the people and going ahead with the elections in Tamil Nadu even when people were dying due to Covid-19 pandemic. The court had gone to the extent of describing the ECI as killer of the people.

Aggrieved by such caustic remarks by the Constitutional court against it which too, is a Constitutional body, the ECI filed an appeal in the Supreme Court. The appeal, titled Election Commission of India Vs. Vijayabhaskar & Others was heard and decided by a division bench comprising Justice Dr.Dhananjay Chandrachud and Justice M.R. Shah. The said judgment indeed is an excellent example of tight-rope walking. While the apex

court on the one hand, has upheld the powers of the High Court under Art.226 as also the media's right of reporting and expression, on the other it has upheld the importance of the ECI and eulogized its role in conducting free and fair elections in the last seven decades. The apex court, obviously applying the principle of obiter dicta, has observed that since nothing has gone into the judgement in written form, there is nothing to quash. In

other words, the apex court has felt that the harsh words used by the judges of the Madras High Court have not been considered as ratio decidendi and therefore, the ECI need not feel offended.

True, as the highest court of the land, the apex court has done what it could be expected to do to douse the fire.

Still, it ought to have overtly or covertly at least 'advised' the judges of not only of the High

Courts but also all other subordinate courts to refrain from using harsh words against a litigant in the open court in course of hearing or trial of a case, because any way such oral observations or outbursts by the presiding

officers are not going to form the part of their orders or judgments. Further, the readers of newspapers and viewers of televisions are generally devoid of the knowledge about legal fine line between the oral observations of the court and what will form the part of the

final order or judgment. Therefore, they are likely to form a wrong opinion about a party to the case. Lastly, if the judges behave in dignified manner without losing temper, there will not be any question of gag on media's reporting of court proceedings.

Another judgment by a division bench of the Madras High Court, comprising Justice N.Kirubakaran and Justice P. Velmurugan, delivered on May 9 is an eye-opener to the 'secular' band wagon. The fanatic Muslim elements of V.Kalathur village in Parambalur district of Tamil Nadu had the audacity to knock on the doors of the High Court for registering their resistance to Hindus taking out religious procession through Muslim-dominated areas on the ground that Islam considers taking out a religious procession of other religions as a 'sin'.

The High Court, while dismissing the Writ Petition, observed that allowing religious intolerance is not good for a secular country and

'resistance' by the religious group, if reciprocated by another, could lead to chaos and riots. Alas! Even after repeated judicial warnings, what prevents the government of the day to declare the country as a Hindu Rashtra still remains a riddle. **Allahabad HC on juvenile justice**

A single-judge bench of the Allahabad High Court, comprising Justice Ajay Bhanot, in a recent judgment has held that using criminal prosecution faced by a candidate as a juvenile to form an opinion about his suitability for appointment is arbitrary, illegal and violative of Art.14 and 21 of the Constitution of India. The bench further observed: "As a sequitur prosecution faced as a juvenile is not a relevant fact for forming an opinion about the criminal antecedents and suitability of the candidate for appointment, such prosecution cannot be made a basis for denial of appointment."

The observation came in a writ petition, titled Anup Kumar Vs. State of A.P. &

Others assailing the order dated September 3, 2020 passed by the Commandant of Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC), Etah wherein the petitioner was found as being not suitable for the post of Constable by the Competent Authority as the petitioner had not disclosed in the application for employment his criminal prosecution as a juvenile.

However, in the instant case the petitioner was 15 years, 8 months on the date of offence. The Court clarified that these observations shall not apply to cases beyond the ambit of Juvenile Justice Act, 2000 and also in cases of heinous crimes committed by persons in the age group of 16 to 18 years.

Temple hauled up in US for labour law violations

The Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS), which brought some 200 workers to the US as religious volunteers from India and made them perform manual labour for as many as 87 hours a week for \$ 450

(approximately Rs.28,000-31,000) per month --which is a wage well below the wage fixed by the State and Federal governments - is now facing a law suit.

As per the plaint, the workers were recruited from India to come to the United States with R-1 religious visas to do stonework and other construction work during the construction of the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Robbinsville, New Jersey. The plaint further alleged that the workers were forced to live and work in a fenced, guarded compound, which they were not allowed to leave unaccompanied by overseers affiliated with BAPS. Further, BAPS had confiscated the workers' passports to prevent them from leaving, the plaint added.

Filed by Jaffe Glenn Law Group, the suit stated that the actions of BAPS constitute forced labour, document servitude, conspiracy and confiscation of immigration documents with the intent to engage in fraud in foreign labour contracting.

Tauktae intensifies into 'very severe...

Continued from Page 1

The IMD said wind speed reaching 70-80 kmph gusting to 90 kmph is likely along and off south Maharashtra-Goa and adjoining Karnataka coasts, and 40-50 kmph gusting to 60 kmph along and off the north Maharashtra coast on May 16. It is likely to increase to 65-75 kmph, gusting to 85 kmph along and off the north Maharashtra coast from May 17 till the morning of May 18.

Squally wind speed reaching 40-50 kmph gusting to 60 kmph is likely over the north-east Arabian Sea and along and off south Gujarat and Daman and Diu coasts from morning May 16. It will gradually increase, becoming gale with speed reaching 150-160 kmph gusting to 175 kmph over the northeast Arabian Sea and along and off Gujarat coast (Porbandar, Junagarh, Gir Somnath, Amreli) and 120-150 kmph gusting to 165 kmph over Devbhoomi Dwarka, Jamnagar, Bhavnagar districts of Gujarat from the early hours of May 18.

Israel air strikes kill...

Continued from Page 1

The pre-dawn attacks were on houses in the centre of Gaza City, Palestinian health officials said. A spokesman for the Israeli military said he would look into these reports.

Palestinians working to clear rubble from a building wrecked in the air strikes recovered the bodies of a woman and man.

"These are moments of horror that no one can describe. Like an earthquake hit the area," said Mahmoud Hmaid, a father of seven who was helping with the rescue efforts.

Across the border in the

Israeli city of Ashkelon, Zvi Daphna, a physician, whose neighborhood has been struck by several rockets, described a feeling of 'fear and horror'.

The Israeli military said that Hamas, the Islamist group that runs Gaza, and other armed groups have fired more than 2,800 rockets from the enclave in six days.

This was more than half the number fired during 51 days in a 2014 war between Hamas and Israel, the military said, and more intensive even than Hezbollah's bombardment from Lebanon during the 2006 war between Israel and the Iran-backed Shi'ite group.

NIA searches in TN over ISIS social media posts

PNS ■ CHENNAI

The NIA on Sunday carried out searches at four locations in Tamil Nadu's Madurai in connection with a case relating to incriminating Facebook posts by an extremist advocating the ideology of the Islamic State terror group and fundamentalist organisation Hizb-Ut-Tahrir, an official said.

The case pertains to uploading some incriminating posts on Facebook by Mohammad Iqbal, a Madurai resident, who was arrested in December last year, he said.

In the social media posts, Iqbal, an extremist, advocated the ideology of the ISIS terror group and Hizb-Ut-Tahrir, a fundamentalist organisation, the official of the premier investigation agency said.

The posts on the Facebook page titled "Thoonga Vizhigal Rendu" is in Kazimar Street" was uploaded by Iqbal for denigrating a particular community, the official said.

Power consumption may go up in June

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Power utilities are expecting a surge in the electricity consumption across the state in June when compared to last year. In fact, the electricity usage had already gone up in the last fortnight of May.

The average energy consumption during the fortnight i.e; from May 1 to 15 was around 196 MU/day, which is an increase by 15.37 pc compared to corresponding days in May 2020.

The energy demand in May 2021 is expected to be 190 MU/day with an average increase of seven per cent as against 177 MU/day in May 2020. The demand is low in May 2020 due to Covid induced Lockdown and an increase in energy demand in May 2021 is because industries

are not much impacted this year with Covid conditions compared to last year.

Similarly, as per the estimates of the state energy department the demand in June 2021 is expected to rise by 13 per cent compared to the energy consumption of 167 MU/day in June 2020.

This clearly indicates that the economic activity in the state has picked up compared to last year. “Taking all the precautionary steps in Covid, we will put all-out efforts to provide satisfactory services to all consumers,” Energy Secretary Srikant Nagulapalli said during a telephonic review on power supply position on Sunday.

Even as the Covid had hit hard the entire power sector in the country, Andhra Pradesh power utilities have shown significant progress in supplying



quality and reliable power to its electricity consumers with the continuous support of the government. Significantly electricity consumption across the sectors in Andhra Pradesh had surged manifold in the last few days.

“We are quite jubilant to have a robust power system in place in meeting the requirements of all categories of consumers

— SRIKANT NAGULAPALLI, Energy Secretary

The energy consumption in the first week of May 2021 was 1,399 million units (MU) with an increase of 23 per cent as against 1,139 MU in the first week of May 2020 while the national energy consumption increased by 25 per cent. The demand as of May 15 is 188.2 MU as against the expected demand of 200 MU. The reduction of demand of 12 MU on May 15 is due to rains in some parts of the state.

The secretary said that meeting the growing energy demand is absolutely not at all a constraint for AP power util-

ities because the state government is fully supporting the power sector in the augmentation of generation capacities, transmission and distribution, renewable energy generation and other advanced technologies. “We are quite jubilant to have the robust power system in place in meeting the requirements of all categories of consumers,” he said.

Minister for Energy Balineni Srinivasa Reddy appreciated the efforts of power utilities in meeting the demand and requirements of the consumers, the secretary said.

Naidu seeks Guv’s intervention on YSRCP rebel MP’s release



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Leader of the Opposition N Chandrababu Naidu on Sunday appealed to Governor Biswa Bushan Harichandan to intervene in the case of Narsapuram MP K Raghurama Krishnam Raju, who was shifted to the Guntur sub-jail by the AP CID in violation of court orders.

In a letter to the Governor, Naidu stated that the MP’s wife and family members were worried as there was a grave danger to his life because of the threat from the YSRCP. Already, the MP sustained injuries while in the CID custody. The court has ordered for sending him to medical examination at the Ramesh Hospital in Guntur, but the police defied the orders.

Expressing serious concern, the TDP chief, said: “The CID Police of Andhra Pradesh have illegally arrested Lok Sabha MP K Raghurama Krishnam Raju in Hyderabad on May 14 and he was brought to the CID Police Station in Guntur. On the same day, custodial violence was unleashed on Raju by five masked men and was brutally injured. In this regard, the court has ordered for a medical report about injuries sustained by Raju during the police custody.”

Naidu said that as per the

Chinarajappa demands CBI probe into ‘custodial torture’ of Narsapuram MP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP senior leader N Chinarajappa asserted that Narsapuram MP Raghurama Krishnam Raju was being victimised by the YSRCP government for filing a petition in the CBI court seeking cancellation of Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy’s bail.

He said the ruling YSRCP targeted Raghurama Krishnam Raju for his courageous remarks against the government. No further proof would be needed other than the third degree methods to say how the YSRCP regime was bent on taking its revenge regardless of the political repercussions, he said.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, the TDP leader said the government and the Chief Minister would be held responsible if anything happens to the Narsapuram MP. The police were wielding their lathis against the law-abiding citizens instead of maintaining law and order. The rule of law was thrown to the wind under the autocratic rule, he remarked.

Chinarajappa asked what



would be the fate of the common man in the state when an MP was assaulted by the police. It was a fact that Raghurama Raju sustained injuries while in the custody of the CID. The AP CID violated the Covid guidelines by going in large numbers to arrest the MP.

They committed one more serious offence by using third degree methods against Raju. Some police officers were going to any length in order to please the Chief Minister.

Terming it as a disgrace for the police force, Chinarajappa asked whether there would be any safety and security for the Opposition parties if they wanted to highlight the failures and misdeeds of the government, he questioned?



MLA lauds NGO’s gesture

PNS ■ VINUKONDA

MLA Bolla Brahmanayudu inaugurated a special ward for the Covid patients at the Covid Care Centre in Vinukonda, which was set up with the help of the US-based NGO Empower and Excel.

Speaking on the occasion, the MLA lauded Ayesha Charagulla, founder President and CEO, Empower and Excel, USA, and Karanam Kalyan Krishna Kumar, India Chapter head, Vijayawada, for their

gesture.

He thanked the donors for coming forward to set up beds worth Rs 2 lakh on witnessing the plight of people in the backward Vinukonda area.

Empower and Excel volunteer Vasireddy Ravichandra said that their organisation came forward to sponsor 500 beds across the state and they are planning to provide 100 beds in the Guntur district and already handed over 50 beds to GGH in Vijayawada.

Second Oxygen Express with medical oxygen reaches Guntur

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Second Oxygen Express with 76.39 MT reached Guntur on Sunday, said D Narendra Varma, Senior DCM-Guntur. He said that given the rapid rise in Covid cases and a significant surge in the demand for Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) across the country. Indian Railways has created a signal-free ‘Green Corridor’ to provide safe, secure, hassle-free and fast transportation of oxygen to the different parts of the country during these critical times.

The Second Oxygen Express for Andhra Pradesh was loaded with four containers carrying 76.39 tonnes of Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) reached Concor Siding in Guntur on Sunday. It had started from Reliance Rail Terminal, Kanalus in Gujarat on May 14 and travelled a total of 1,854 km and took 31 hrs 30



minutes to reach the destination in Guntur.

The Oxygen Special Express arrived at Pagidipalli in Guntur Railway Division and was placed at Concor Siding for decanting of liquid oxygen. A total of 76.39 tonnes of Liquid Medical Oxygen was decanted. Ram Babu, Senior Divisional Operational

Manager, Narendra Varma, IRTS Senior Commercial Manager, and other officials visited the container depot and monitored the decanting of liquid oxygen. This Oxygen Express is expected to bring relief to Covid patients in the state and strengthen the collective effort in the fight against the Covid pandemic

Govt sanctions ₹15,000 for Covid victims’ funeral

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The government has issued orders sanctioning Rs 15,000 towards funeral charges of those who died of Covid. In this connection, the government accorded permission to all the District Collectors. The commissioner of Health & Family Welfare shall release the required funds to the respective District Collectors while the latter shall take necessary action accordingly.

Tech Biz Incubator launched at SRM University

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Technology Business Incubator of SRM University-AP launched the first venture cohort with 36 selected start-up business ventures in the presence of the special guest of honour from the industry Prof Ramesh Loganathan, head of Co-Innovation and Outreach at IIIT Hyderabad.

On the occasion, Ramesh Loganathan delivered a lecture on the scope and future of entrepreneurship in India and the global scenario.



“The entrepreneurial journey should start with identifying the problems in the ecosystem. A great example can be the face recognition software that started with the idea of capturing student attendance in colleges. Similarly, the budding entrepre-

neurs should identify such similar problems thorough market research and then prepare the business plan.”

Dr Prakash Jadav, associate professor and head of IDEA, opined, “It is exciting to see so many students submitting their

business ideas in the first business cohort. I am sure that with our guidance and mentorship, they all can reach new heights in setting up their ventures in the industry.”

Udayan Bakshi, CEO, SRM TBI & Associate Director Entrepreneurship, thanked speakers and panelists for their efforts to make the SRM TBI cohort launch a grand success. He also highlighted that TBI will not limit to just this batch of students or the SRM University-AP, but shall extend its vision and activities to the entire ecosystem.

Nadendla seeks LS Speaker’s intervention

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Jana Sena Party Political Affairs Committee chairman Nadendla Manohar condemned the government for arresting Narsapuram MP Raghurama Krishnam Raju. He said that the Lok Sabha Speaker should take a suo moto cognizance of the case and order an inquiry.

He said that it was not appropriate to misbehave with the MP in the name of investigation.

Covid patients’ kin cry foul over hospitals’ exorbitant fees

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The kith and kin of Covid patients, who admitted their dear ones to private hospitals, alleged that they are being fleeced by the hospital managements by violating the rules framed by the government.

Therefore, officials made surprise raids on Covid Care Hospitals here in the city on Sunday. Minister for Transport Perni Nani, local MLA Krishnaprasad, Collector Imitiaz, JC Siva Shankar and others are part of the team that inspected the hospitals.

Nimra Hospital at Ibrahimpatnam is one among them where they paid a visit where some beds are taken over by the government for free treatment under the Aarogya.

But, it was alleged that the hospital management was collecting lakhs of rupees from the Covid patients and also not maintaining the records accordingly.

The issue came to the notice of the government when one of the public representatives’ follower had received a huge bill from the hospital management recently.

At the time of the inspection, hospital management was unable to show the requisite documents like duplicate medical bills, which had given to the patients at the time of discharge.

And officials found solid evidence from the patients end about the billing issues in the hospital. This hospital is a reputed one in the city and it had treated patients well in the Covid first wave, but after the transfer of powers from one person to other during the second wave, the hospital reportedly collecting huge bills from patients.

Indeed, local governing bodies in the cities had already appointed an animal husbandry assistant director as a coordinator to the hospital earlier.

But, due to his negligence in doing his work, the hospital management was acting as per its whims and fancies, alleged officials during the inspection. Not only Nimra Hospital, but there are also so many hospitals in the city that are collecting more money than prescribed by the government.

Recently, a woman in the city posted on social media about the cost of treatment in a local corporate hospital where she was an attendant to a man infected with Covid, and saw paying Rs 7 lakh towards the hospital bill without getting any receipts.

Vigilance officials responded to the post and assured her to render justice. Indeed Krishna district has 77 Covid Care Hospitals, of which six, are under the control of the government.

Work from home facility for women police

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

In the wake of the Corona pandemic, the police department has made it easy for pregnant women to work from home. DGP Gautam Sawang issued orders to all police stations in the state regarding the facility.

He directed all the police stations in the state to notify the details of pregnant police personnel to the police headquarters in Vijayawada immediately. He ordered officials to make arrangements for women police personnel to work from home. He directed to monitor the health and medical services from the Police Help Desk from time to time and provide appropriate assistance.

‘Raghurama enacting drama to avoid punishment’

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The law will take its own course where even an MP can be arrested if he goes against the constitution, opined YSRCP MLA Ambati Rambabu.

Addressing the media here on Sunday, he said that there is no need for the government to ill-treat an MP and with the GGH report making it clear about injuries of MP Raghurama Krishna Raju, the anti-social elements supporting his stand exposed.

Raghurama is only trying to defame the government and took up the drama by accusing that he was assaulted by the police just to avoid jail. Two TDP leaders Atchannaidu and Dhulipalla Narendra were also

arrested by the police, but none has complained of being assaulted by police unlike Raghurama Raju, he pointed out.

He said that Raghurama Raju was enacting drama and he has complained about his assault immediately after his bail application was rejected in the High Court.

The MLA said that people are not going to believe either TDP’s version or Raghurama’s allegations against the YSRCP, as everyone knew that those injuries of Raghurama were due to psoriasis where many are still studying on search engines.

TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu is the man behind Raghurama’s drama, he said and made it clear that neither



of them can gain political mileage nor damage the government’s image. Rambabu demanded that he resign as an MP he has no right to continue as a representative of the

YSRCP, as he was going against the party rules and criticising the government.

The CID had submitted 46 CDs before the court, explaining how the MP had committed treason, also indulging in hate speech targeting some sections of society provoking religious hatred among the public. Being a public representative, he has left out the welfare of people of his constituency and was living in Delhi for 14 months, all the way participating in the debates of TDP pro media channels to accuse the government.

Refuting the TDP’s allegations that the government has been trying to eliminate him, Ambati Rambabu questioned what is the necessity for the government to kill an MP in

police custody? Rambabu warned of dire consequences if the TDP leaders continued their vicious propaganda against the government.

Raghurama has violated the 10th schedule of the Constitution by toeing another party line, betraying the party from which he was elected. The MLA alleged that leaving people behind, the MP is only lobbying in Delhi and working under the direction of N Chandrababu Naidu.

Right from Tirupati bypoll to every election, including ZPTC, MPPTC, municipal and panchayat polls, Raghurama spoke against the party on which he was elected as an MP in 2019, also inciting the sentiments of people by speaking on caste and religious matters.

Navy gives fresh lease of life to Covid patients

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Teams from Visakhapatnam Naval Dockyard achieved a breakthrough in repairing two major oxygen plants in Nellore and Sri Kalahasthi bringing a major boost to the oxygen supply in the state during the ongoing oxygen crisis amid Covid second wave.

Based on a request from the government, the Eastern Naval Command (ENC) airlifted the teams of specialists from Naval Dockyard by naval Dornier Aircraft from Visakhapatnam recently.

The teams successfully repaired the oxygen plants on

Sunday by overhauling the compressors and replaced certain adapters and accessories, which were manufactured within Naval Dockyard.

The Krishna Teja oxygen plant in Nellore is a big cryogenic plant capable of charging 400 jumbo type cylinders a day and has been non-functional for the past six years. The naval team undertook the repairs of the plant and managed to achieve the cryogenic temp of minus 186 degrees Celsius and also achieved the requisite output oxygen pressure to charge bottles.

The analysis of the output is 98 per cent oxygen, zero per

■ Teams from Visakhapatnam Naval Dockyard repairs two major oxygen plants in Nellore and Sri Kalahasthi near Tirupati

cent carbon monoxide and 0.01 per cent carbon dioxide, meeting the requirements of medical-grade oxygen.

The oxygen plant at Sri Kalahasthi near Tirupati is a big plant-based on VPSA technology and is capable of generating 16,000 litres per minute at five bar (direct feed to lines rather than charging). The

naval team undertook repairs of the plant and achieved the requisite output proved for medical-grade oxygen above 93 per cent, zero per cent carbon monoxide and 0.02 per cent carbon dioxide by carrying out necessary adjustment of column and moisture absorption of the plant.

A specialist team from the Naval Dockyard led by Commander Dipayan worked tirelessly for almost seven days, along with the engineering teams of the Health Department, to complete the task with the cooperation of the Collectors and the administration.



39 private hospitals fined ₹1.56 cr in East Godavari

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Acting tough on the violations during the second Covid-19 wave, the East Godavari district administration has imposed fines against as many as 39 Covid notified private hospitals for violating government regulations, besides several other reasons.

District Collector Muralidhar Reddy enforced a total penalty of Rs 1.54 crore on all the 39 Covid-notified private hospitals in the district for failing to allocate 50 per cent of beds for Covid treatment under no-cash treatment under Arogyasri and EHS (employees Health Scheme). The hospitals charged more fees against the prescribed rates and violating regulations.



Some of the private corporate Covid hospitals in the district were allegedly robbing the patients and charged exorbitant prices. They ignored to consider the Arogyasri health

scheme. Some hospitals, however, admitted Covid patients even without permission. Acting on the media reports, Collector Muralidhar Reddy ordered surprise inspections.

He also inspected several private hospitals and found many lapses.

The inspections carried out by vigilance officers, cluster officers and flying squads found 39 private hospitals in the district notified for Covid treatment to have resorted to malpractices. Each hospital imposed a fine at a rate of Rs 2 lakh to Rs 10 lakh, the Collector said.

The respective private hospitals were ordered to pay the fine to the Arogyasri account within 48 hours. Muralidhar Reddy warned that the private hospitals would be taken over by the government and maintained by its personnel if they repeated to commit irregularities without changing their attitude.

Dist Collector suspends 2 docs, 2 nurses for negligence

PNS ■ ANANTAPUR

Anantapur Collector Gandham Chadrudu issued orders suspecting two doctors at the Government super-speciality hospital in Anantapur on Sunday for dereliction of duties.

He expressed ire over the negligence on the part of the doctors and their failure to provide better medical services to APMIP project director Subba Rao, who succumbed to the Covid at the hospital. He suspended Dr Sudhakar and Dr Sridhar on the spot. Show-cause notices were issued to Superintendent Bhaskar and two head nurses. The Collector expressed grief over the death of Subba Rao due to the corona.



Minister Balineni inspecting the vaccination process at Ongole PVR School

Be vigilant in Covid treatment, Minister Balineni tells doctors

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Minister Balineni Srinivasa Reddy directed the Ongole GGH doctors to be more vigilant and work hard to provide better Covid treatment to the poor in government hospitals.

At an emergency meeting with government doctors and GGH officials at Prakasam Bhavan in Ongole on Sunday, the Minister said steps should be taken to ensure the best medical assistance in the wake of the increase in Covid positive cases in the district during

the second wave corona pandemic.

Minister Balineni asked the government doctors to provide maximum care in treating the corona victims at the GGH. He inquired about the emergency requirements such as oxygen and Remdesivir injections. A nodal officer was appointed at the district level to ensure an uninterrupted supply of oxygen, he said.

The Minister said he would stay here for two months and work on the Covid control in the wake of the surge in the

corona cases in the district. He appealed to the people to meet him only for Covid related issues and for other works.

Joint Collector TS Chetan, Ongole Mayor Gangada Sujata, the nodal officer K Krishna Veni, GGH superintendent D Sriramulu were present.

Balineni Srinivas Reddy visited the vaccine centre set up at PVR Boys High School where he instructed staff to ensure a smooth vaccination procedure.



SHORT TAKES

Ongole MP's sons donate Rs 1 crore to TN CMAF



ONGOLE: Ongole MP Magunta Srinivasula Reddy's sons and young industrialists Magunta Raghava Reddy and S D Rami Reddy announced a donation of Rs 1 crore to Tamil Nadu Chief Minister's Assistance Fund (CMAF) and handed over the cheque to Chief Minister Muthuvel Karunanidhi Stalin. Stalin thanked Magunta Srinivasula Reddy and Magunta Raghava Reddy for donating funds for the cause of containing the Covid during critical times. He called upon the people to work together to defeat the Covid pandemic in the dire circumstances.

Speed up new crematorium works: Minister Anil Kumar



NELLORE: Minister for Water Resources Dr P Anil Kumar Yadav on Sunday inspected the new crematorium works going on at an estimated cost of Rs 2 crores at Bodigadi Thota in Nellore. Along with the officials concerned, the Minister visited the site and directed the officials to speed up the work and make it available by month-end. The Minister's visit came close on the heels as people were facing difficulties and standing up in queue lines with corpses at the crematoriums during the second Covid-19 wave. Leaders Obili Ravichandra, Polam Reddy Venkateswarlu Reddy, Sankranti Kalyan and others accompanied the Minister.

Man slits wife's throat, held



GUNTUR: A man allegedly attempted to kill his wife by slicing her throat at Boyapalem village in Yedlapadu mandal under Chilakaluripet constituency. According to the police, the couple Popoon Ganun (37) and Rita (28) from Orissa were working as daily labourers in a local Ranganaika spinning mill. Popoon Ganun allegedly slit his wife Rita's throat with a blade on Sunday. Raged by the incident, the local people tied him to a pole and beat him. Later they handed him over to the police. The police arrested the accused and rushed the injured woman to Chilakaluripet Government Hospital. SI P Rambabu said that Rita's health condition was stable. A case was registered and the investigation was on.

First black fungus case detected in West Godavari

PNS ■ ELURU

The first-ever black fungus case in Andhra Pradesh was reported from Nidadavole in West Godavari district. Doctors at District Headquarters Government Hospital said that one of the patients Kolapalli Anjibabu of Nidadavole has had symptoms of black fungus. Anjibabu recovered from Covid 15 days ago.

At the time of discharge from the hospital in Eluru, he has had a swollen eye. For the past one week, one of his eyes is swelling progressively with each day. His family members



contacted expert doctors in Visakhapatnam and Rajamahendravaram. Doctors confirmed it as one of the symptoms of black fungus.

The doctors say that the fungus is likely to spread to the

eyes, nose and brain. They have made it clear that they have no option except surgically removing one of the eyes, putting his family members under a lot of stress.

MLA Vamsi donates O₂ cylinders to GGH

PNS ■ GANNAVARAM

Gannavaram MLA Vallabhaneni Vamsi has donated 100 oxygen cylinders to the Government General Hospital which was facing an acute shortage to save the lives of the Covid patients in Vijayawada. As the oxygen shortage in the state was severe, he took the initiative to bring the cylinders in a special vehicle from Hyderabad with his own funds.

The cylinders were handed over to the hospital



Superintendent on Sunday. The doctors thanked MLA Vamsi for his timely action to save the Covid patients. YSRCP

leaders Anagani Ravi, Olupalli Mohanaranga, Ramavarappadu Sarpanchi Vari Sridevi and Modugumudi



Venkateswara Rao and GGH EE Purushottam and DE Ramana Rao were present on the occasion.

DIVERSION AVERTED



Officials seized a lorry laden with PDS rice at Nachugunta in Unguturu mandal of West Godavari district on Sunday.

Govt trying to kill my husband, alleges Raju's wife

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Narasapuram MP Raghurama Raju's wife Satyamani Ramadevi alleged that her husband was badly beaten up by the police in the lock-up. Asking the police why they did not follow the Court's order and failed to admit him to the Ramesh Hospital, she alleged that the government was trying to kill her husband tonight.

She said she was unable to understand what was actually going on.

The accused in the murders were going scot-free and leaders who questioned the government on public issues were put behind the bars.

Meanwhile, MP Raghuram Krishna Raju was shifted from GGH to Guntur jail.

The police tightened the security at the district jail. Despite the court order to provide proper treatment to him, he was shifted to jail. The prison authorities assigned prisoner number 3468 to Raghurama Raju.

'Restore Garuda scheme to help families of priests'

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Consultations were going on with the state government to support the poor priests at the state level during the critical times of Covid-19, state president of the Andhra Pradesh Brahmin Seva Sangh Federation and spokesperson of the YSR Congress Party Brahmin Welfare Study Committee Jwalapuram Srikanth said on Sunday.

He said there was a scheme earlier that financial assistance of Rs 10,000 would be given under the Garuda scheme through the Brahmin Corporation if someone in a Brahmin family lost their bread-earner. Due to unknown reasons, it was now stopped.

Chairman of the Brahmin Corporation MLA Malladi Vishnu agreed to revive the Garuda scheme to support Brahmin families in difficult circumstances, he said.

On Sunday, he held a zoom video conference with Samakhya representatives from East Godavari district. On this occasion, he said that he had met the Chief Minister, Minister of Endowments and the Principal Secretaries of Revenue asking them to help



the priests in the same way that the government has been helping the Imams and the Christian fathers through the Minority Corporation. They promised that funds would be allocated to the Brahmin Corporation and steps would be taken to revive it.

Samakhya District Working Committee representatives Mamillapalli Ayyappa, Cable Ramana, Tejomurthula Murthy, Bhuvanagiri Venkataramana, Korukonda Sitarama Sastry and others explained the severe Covid situation prevailed in the district.

3 bail pleas to come up for hearing today

MARTHI SUBRAHMANYAM ■ VIJAYAWADA

Drawing interest in the political circles, three bail petitions filed by political leaders are coming up for hearing in different courts in one day on Monday. Since all the three bail applications were belonging to political leaders, everyone was waiting to see who would get bail and who would be rejected. The Andhra politics were gaining momentum with internal squabbles and allegations and counter-allegations across the state when the people were struggling for life in hospitals with the second Covid-19 wave. The petition filed by Raghurama Krishnam Raju to cancel the bail issued earlier to Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy in CBI Court was coming up for a hearing on Monday. Hence, the focus of YSRCP activists and leaders was on the case. Another bail

petition was also coming to the bench in the AP High Court on Monday filed by former MLA Dhullipala Narendra. He was allegedly arrested on charges of tampering with Sangam Dairy affairs. With this, the Telugu Desam Party focused on him whether Narendra would get bail or not. In the third issue, the bail petition was expected to come for a hearing in the Supreme Court filed by MP Raghurama Krishnamraju, who was arrested on the allegations of hate speech against the government during debates in two Telugu TV channels. Meanwhile, the other parties were also watching closely to see the court orders on the three bail petitions. One should have to wait and see who would be granted bail in the courts today. Whose petition would be cancelled and who would have to spend some more time in jail!

G GOPIKRISHNA ■ KADAPA

The ancient Brahmamgari Matham in Kadapa district was looking for the next descendant as a pontiff as the incumbent seer Veera Bhoga Vasantha Venkateswara Swamy (76) passed away recently, leaving a puzzle among the devotees who would be the next?

Now, it was a matter of a debate as to who would succeed him in the key post of Matham pontiff. Srinivasa Swamy, the sixth generation seer of Brahmagari Matham and his wife had three sons and two daughters and he had demised in 1969. After him, according to the Hindu tradition, Veera Bhoga Vasantha Venkateswara Swamy, the eldest son of their children, had taken over as the pontiff of the seventh generation in September 1969 at the age of 23. The seventh seer has two



wives Chandravatamma and Maruthi Mahalakshmi. The first wife had eight children, while the second wife has two children. After the death of his first wife Chandravatamma 12 years ago, he married Maruthi Mahalakshmi from Singarayakonda of Prakasam district.

He had faced strong opposition to having second marriage in those days. Now the question

is who would descend the Matham after Venkateswara Swamy. A debate was going on among the people of Brahmagari Matham and also the devotees of Veerabrahmam.

Most of the people living in the Matham area want Venkateswara Swamy's eldest son Venkatadri Swamy to be given the opportunity as a seer. According to Agama Sastra and Hindu tradition, only the eldest



son was eligible for the highest position which comes as an inheritance.

Speaking to 'The pioneer', educationalist Deepthi Ramana Reddy shared his views stating that they were living in the Matham for the last 60 years and well aware of the Brahmagari Matham. As per the Hindu tradition, the eldest son should be the next pontiff.

Meanwhile, Venkateswara

Swamy's first wife's second son Veerabhadra Swamy entered into the scene claiming that he should be the right person to hold the position. Moreover, he brought a new theory stating that his father had promised him the top post. He was showing some documents as evidence that his father had promised him after he got impressed with him when he donated his kidney to his mother.

Giving another twist to the episode, the second wife was also claiming the position to her two sons. She said Venkateswara Swamy had given her a promise on papers stating her two sons would be the next seers. The devotees of the Matham have, however, ruled out her claim saying it was ambiguous as both her children were minors.

As per the AP Endowment Act, the seer of the Matham has a power to decide who should inherit the post of the pontiff. He, however, has to inform the Endowments Department in writing of the decision within 90 days. Still, it was not clear whether the seventh seer has given any such letter to the Endowment Department or not. The issue of the next pontiff of the monastery would be resolved within the family or it would be settled in the court of law became a debate among the devotees.

FIRST COLUMN

SHOULD YOU COUNT ON MUTUAL FUNDS?

Research shows that past returns and the age of the mutual fund have an impact on your savings



HIMA BINDU KOTA

Mutual funds are gaining popularity as a preferred investment avenue among Indians over the last decade. Particularly over the last five years, the industry has witnessed a huge increase in the number of folios which grew to 44.2 million from March, 2014 to June, 2019. What makes this growth interesting is the fact that it had largely come from the segment of individual investors, including both retail investors and high networth individuals (HNIs). This segment registered a growth rate of 15.5 percent during this period, which in turn contributed to a 27 percent rise in assets under management (AUM) of individual investors from ₹4 lakh crore in March, 2014 to ₹4 lakh crore in June, 2019. Since mutual funds have become one of the preferred investment destinations or investor, it is important to choose funds that will perform better than others.

One of the ways in which the performance of mutual funds is measured is through net inflows and outflows, which is the net result of the total money that has moved into and moved out of the fund for a particular time period. If the end result is positive, indicating



inflows, it means that more money has been invested into the funds and vice versa. Net flows are important as they provide the performance report of mutual funds. High net inflows are significant as they lead to higher AUM, which in turn increase company's profits. On the other hand, high net outflows, might lead to some tactical changes like changing the fund manager or the investment philosophy. Increase in the collective net inflows also leads to increase in the size of some individual mutual funds and also the size of the mutual fund industry as a whole. In addition, net flows can also provide an insight into the general collective predictive capacity of investors. So, an overall net inflow into any mutual fund may forecast its positive performance. So, if net flows are so important for any mutual fund, what determines that it gets positive inflows? Research shows that factors like past returns, the age of the mutual fund, higher expenses like higher advertising costs, lower fees and size of the fund family. Some strategic decisions, like changing the name of the mutual fund to match the current season trend also bring in extra inflows.

Size plays an import role in the performance of mutual funds. Several studies suggest that younger or new funds have higher performance as they enter the industry with higher skill sets and their relatively smaller exposure to market makes sure that any adverse market movements would have less impact on the performance. In addition, the increasing size of the industry also has an adverse impact on the performance. The larger the industry size, the lesser is the potential of any profitable trades, as adjustments to any anomalies, which may lead to any profit making, quickly happen, leading to less chances of booking profits.

Skill of the fund and the fund manager are an important determinant of mutual fund performance. Fund managers' compensation also contributes its performance. In cases where the compensation depends on performance, such mutual funds, due to an active strategy, end up generally becoming high performance funds and perform better than funds where managers use passive fund management style. So, a fund manager's skill in stock picking helps in generating a higher return.

Several studies show a predictive pattern of mutual fund analysis based on the above discussed determinants. Small investors should take advantage and make use of the skills of the funds and fund managers to beat the benchmark and hope to generate higher returns.

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

Corona: Some real, though some hype

Somehow, the States and the Union Government are passing on the impression that they have been unable to meet the challenge of the virus. But why?

Thoughts of prospective troubles hardly come true, and most people die of visceral fear of spectre or something that doesn't exist. "Ninety per cent of our problems are caused by our own thoughts," says Hilda de la Rosa, a South African popular author and motivational speaker. She says, entrapped in our thought processes, we find it arduous to extricate ourselves from the thinking pattern we have imbibed over years. Unaware of the facts about morbidity and mortality due to Covid or otherwise, most people are caught with the fear psychosis that is taking a larger toll than the pandemic itself. The predicament has shaken people of all description. The pandemic 2.0 is hitting Indians with greater intensity and virulence but a sensible and broader perspective can reduce the hype and assure the implications of the current crisis are not as dismal as being made out.

Certain mystery shrouds the resurgence of Covid 2.0 with new strains. True, the plateauing of Covid cases in India by last fall led to public and government complacency about continuing risks. And the the government toned down restrictions. As the going seemed manageable, shops, restaurants, wholesale and retail markets, malls, schools, public transport, businesses and public establishments tended to function normally. Export of jet fighters, plans to lay 75,000+ stations to charge electric vehicles, supply of domestically produced Covid vaccine to 87 countries and medicines to over 150 countries meant progression towards a vibrant economy and making of "atmanirbhar" nation. Naturally, the Indian buoyancy and optimism was not palatable to arms, oil, and pharma lobbies, as they could lose huge businesses in India; apropos of 5-billion-dollar PPE and masks deals alone came to a naught in one shot, oil companies were next. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who repeatedly said and meant 'desh nahi lutne dunga, desh nahin bikne dunga' was a common enemy who would not bend like Donald Trump of the US. For the global business magnates to flourish in India, Modi's downsizing-with the aid of domestic disgruntled elements appeared the only option. To support them was neighbouring China. Possibility of China-sponsored biological war behind the abrupt rise in Covid cases in India bypassing the neighbouring countries with identical life style during April 10-15 cannot be ruled out. Accompanying this was the opposition's refrain of failure of Modi government to deal with Covid, enthusiastically supported by Western media. On April 20, international media showed 'large scale' cremations and highlighted deficiencies in Indian health care sector. Strangely, at this hour, Pakistan also offered to help India.

The anti-government chorus was endorsed by UNICEF executive director Henrietta Fore on May 4: "The tragic situation in India should raise alarm bells for all of us." Most recent is the editorial in the medical journal *Lancet* summarily undermining the government's efforts in dealing with Covid; the vindictive portion being, "Modi's actions in attempting to stifle criticism and open discussion during the crisis are inexcusable." The statement suggesting the government "own up to its mistakes" is the tone of a hardcore political adversary and in bad taste, unbecoming of a medical publication. Reports about Chinese instigations behind the sordid coverage and observations on India's handling of Covid



AT HOME, DURING COVID 1.0, THE OPPOSITION DECRIED LOCKDOWNS FOR ITS ADVERSE IMPLICATIONS ON LIVELIHOODS. IN THE SECOND WAVE, AFTER THE STATES WERE ALLOWED TO DECIDE AT THEIR OWN LEVEL, THEY CHOSE LOCKDOWN. THEY ALSO CRITICISED THE EFFICACY OF VACCINE, THEN TOOK IT ONE BY ONE

The author is a blogger at www.bluntspeaker.com and writes on health, spiritual, and social issues.



shall be revelatory.

At home, during Covid 1.0, the Opposition decried lockdowns for its adverse implications on livelihoods. In second wave, after States were allowed to decide at their own level, they chose lockdown. They also criticised the efficacy of vaccine, then took it one by one. The purpose was creating a public impression that government is unwilling and unfit to manage Covid crisis, something not in national interest.

Ambiguity in identifying the precise aetiology, genesis and manifestations of Covid 2.0 further tends to destabilise the poise of lay public. The doctors find it expedient to classify routine health issues as Covid in keeping with trends. The head of a prestigious health facility, Dr Arvind Kumar of Medanta, Gurugram: Consider any one of symptoms like sneezing, headache, fever, throat soar, vomiting, diarrhoea, loss of smell or taste, skin patches, body ache as Covid case unless proved otherwise, and begin with self-isolation without wait for lab reports - even negative reports with either symptom must be treated as Covid. Such precepts further down the already diminishing morale of the patient and his kith and kin that needs bol-

stering in the nerve breaking era we are passing through.

As for the numbers game in Covid, national morbidity and mortality data across states in specific time frames are subject to wide fluctuations because transmission of Covid is multifactorial in nature involving the vision of the government based on infections and death data of few days, weeks or even months; policies and actions take long to show results. Taking the Covid data of April 28, 2021, though numerically India witnessed largest daily deaths (3647) compared to USA (954), Germany (320), France (344) and Italy (344), the deaths per crore population turns out to be mere 26 for India and 29, 38, 48 and 57, respectively, for these countries (source: worldometers.info). Thus, the narrative that India is worst hit by Covid smacks of foul play to tarnish the image of India.

Doctors are not knowalls in health matters but in a few weeks after Covid 2.0, how do they presume that all non-Covid diseases

have eclipsed altogether. Based on 2017 data, World Economic Forum analysis revealed 25,270 daily deaths in India, second to China at 28,036. The estimated global annual death toll for tuberculosis of all kinds in 2019 stood at 14.18 lakh and 79,144 in India; for HIV-related diseases the annual death toll was 5-9 lakh globally and 69,000 for India in 2017. These figures shall not be significantly different for 2020 and 2021. A fair, comparative assessment of quantitative changes in morbidity and mortality in pre-Covid and it a time frame shows that the Covid death toll as reported is misleading and ignores mortality from classical diseases. The actual Covid toll is not of the level we are told to make out.

The fear against COVID is largely visceral. It is the spectre of COVID that is the real threat, and not the virus itself. The virus with a life of around seven days is an issue only in about three to five per cent cases where specialist handling is required. We are undergoing times when each section of country has to lend a helping hand. Let us face the facts squarely, keep our peace and hope for the best.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

THERE WILL BE NO SHORTAGE OF OXYGEN IN THE STATE NOW, AND I ALSO I ONCE AGAIN APPEAL TO THE FARMER LEADERS TO SUSPEND THEIR PROTESTS.
HARYANA CHIEF MINISTER
— MANOHAR LAL KHATTAR



THE SITUATION IN HARYANA IS WORSE THAN THAT OF NEIGHBOURING DELHI. HEALTH MINISTER ANIL VIJ SHOULD RESIGN FOR FAILING TO HANDLE THE SITUATION.
INLD LEADER
— ABHAY SINGH CHAUTALA



Time to take hypertension, a COVID-19 comorbidity, head-on

You can reduce your risk for high blood pressure with healthy lifestyle changes; just stick around with a few simple tips

In India at least one in three adults in India have hypertension, also known as high blood pressure. The ongoing pandemic has revealed how people with hypertension are at greater risk of becoming severely ill or dying from COVID-19. Research indicates that most people are unaware that they have high blood pressure and even if diagnosed, they are either irregular with their medication or discontinue taking it after a while. Studies have also shown that patients with hypertension but not on medications had a significantly higher risk of mortality compared with those on medication, if they got Covid-19.

In the past World Health Organisation (WHO) and Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) have issued various warnings and guidelines for people with chronic



VIKAS MAHATME

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conditions, particularly hypertensives to ensure they continue their treatment - through telemedicine whenever possible and keep taking the prescribed medicines. On this World Hypertension Day, it is critically important for India to pay attention to this silent killer and take adequate precautions.

Dos and don'ts:
Secure your supply of blood pressure medicines. Keep a stock of at least 90 days.
Continue to take medicines for blood pressure and other chronic conditions such as diabetes as prescribed by the doctor.

If possible, regularly measure your blood pressure at home. If it fluctuates, consult your doctor remotely. Do not change your treatment without a medical opinion.

Avail of telemedicine facility if you develop coronavirus



symptoms or feel unwell. In the last one year, 35 lakh Indians have dialled E-Sanjeevani, the government's telemedicine platform for a medical consultation.

Avoid consuming excess salt in your food
Risk Factors associated

with hypertension
Hypertension can lead to severe health complications and increase the risk of heart disease, stroke, and sometimes death. It is a primary risk factor for cardiovascular disease, including stroke, heart attack, heart failure, and

aneurysm. Uncontrolled hypertension may affect eyes; leading to Hypertensive Retinopathy which may lead to irreversible blindness. Keeping blood pressure under control is vital for preserving health and reducing the risk of these dangerous conditions.

High blood pressure is often symptomless and quietly damages blood vessels leading to serious health problems. While there is no cure, using medications as prescribed and making lifestyle changes can enhance your quality of life and reduce your risk of heart disease, stroke, kidney disease and more.

You can reduce your risk for high blood pressure with healthy lifestyle changes. If you already have high blood pressure, the same lifestyle changes combined with medication therapy (as recommended by your provider) can also help you control it. Certain individuals are more likely to develop high blood pressure than others if they have a family history of hypertension or consume diets rich in salt, saturated fats, consume tobacco or alcohol and are overweight. Stress

can also raise your risk of developing high blood pressure. Hypertension typically develops over the course of several years. Usually, you don't notice any symptoms. But even without symptoms, high blood pressure can cause damage to your blood vessels and organs, especially the brain, heart, eyes, and kidneys.

The first criteria to deal with hypertension or high blood pressure is early detection. Regular blood pressure readings can help you and your doctor in noticing any change. If your blood pressure is elevated, the health provider may need to keep checking it for over a few weeks to see if the number stays elevated or falls back to normal levels. Treatment for hypertension includes both prescription medication and healthy lifestyle changes.

Q4 earnings, pace of vax, trends to dictate markets

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Equity markets this week are likely to follow the quarterly earnings outcome of listed companies, pace of vaccination drive in the country and global market trends for further direction, according to analysts. "In absence of any major event, participants will be closely eyeing the performance of global indices, US bond yields, movement of rupee against the US dollar, and crude oil prices.

Religare Broking Vice-President (Research) Ajit Mishra said, "Needless to say, COVID-19-related updates and progress of the vaccine drive will also be in focus."

On the earnings front, Bharti Airtel, Tata Motors, Indian Oil Corp, Havells, Hindalco and Federal Bank are some of the prominent names who will be announcing their results during the week along with several others, Mishra added.



The quarterly earnings from Canara Bank, JK Tyre & Industries, Havells India, JK Lakshmi Cement, JSW Steel and State Bank of India will also be watched by investors this week. "Going forward, market will track the pace of vaccination, trajectory of active cases curve and management commentary of companies," Shibani Kurian, senior executive vice-president and head

(equity research) at Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Co, said. Investors would also track the Wholesale Price Index-based inflation data to be announced on Monday.

Samco Securities Head (Equity Research) Nirali Shah said, "Indian indices have shown sturdiness despite the increasing number of cases. However, sustainability at high-levels seems difficult if the

situation aggravates."

She added that in addition, this fear of inflation flourishing in developed markets may continue to trickle down to India and keep domestic bourses under pressure. "Stock-specific volatility due to quarterly earnings cannot be ruled out." During the holiday-truncated last week, the BSE benchmark tanked 473.92 points or 0.96 per cent.



FPIs net sellers to the tune of Rs 6K cr in May

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) pulled out Rs 6,452 crore so far in May from Indian markets amid tumbling investor sentiment due to the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As per depositories data, the overseas investors pulled out Rs 6,427 crore from equities and Rs 25 crore from the debt segment during May 1-14. The net outflow during the period under review stood at Rs 6,452 crore. "The severe Covid second wave, increasing lockdowns and concerns regarding its impact on GDP growth and corporate earnings seem to be behind FPI outflows," said VK Vijayakumar, Strategist at Geojit Financial Services.

Coal India Jharkhand arm CCL loses 47 personnel to COVID-19

PNS ■ RANCHI

Central Coalfields Ltd (CCL) supplying dry-fuel to the nation's power plants and other projects even during the pandemic has lost 47 of its personnel to COVID-19, an official said.

Many others and their family members are battling for life, the Jharkhand arm of the Coal India Limited (CIL) said.

"Mining activities of Central Coalfields Ltd, a Jharkhand based subsidiary of Coal India, are going on round the clock but around 47 employees of CCL have lost their lives while serving the nation during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic," a CCL official said.

This maharatna coal miner claims to have set up around 2,000 beds which include ICU, isolation and covid care beds with oxygen support. While oxygen supported beds are over 750 the ICU beds number nearly 70.

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted lives in the country as well as world over for



more than one year.

"Despite following the protocol of COVID-19 issued by the government from time to time, many executives as well as non-executives, have been affected from the COVID-19 infection. Altogether about 47 employees have lost their lives due to the deadly virus and many are undergoing treatment. It is not only the employees of CCL are affected but there are cases in which many family members too became affected and few of them died

due to the COVID-19," the official said.

CCL which has been allowed mining activities, has recorded a 112 per cent increase in production at 4.84 million tonne (MT) in April 2021 as against 2.28 MT coal output in April 2020.

The surge in infections has led to the re-imposition of severe lockdown in Jharkhand till the morning of May 27 which has imposed many restrictions to flatten the COVID-19 virus curve.

MONEY MATTERS

McDonald's plans Rs 100 cr investment to open 30 outlets

Westlife Development, which operates McDonald's restaurants in southern and western region in India, plans to invest Rs 100 crore to open up to 30 outlets of the quick service restaurant brand in the current financial year. The company, which now witnesses more than half of its sales from convenience channels such as delivery, takeaways and drive-thru, is bullish about growth in FY'22, leaving out the next 2-3 months. "The intention is to open 20-30 McDonald's outlets in the current fiscal year. We will invest Rs 100 crore for opening these outlets," Westlife Development Vice-Chairman Amit Jatia told PTI. In the last financial year, the company had opened five McDonald's outlets. Jatia said COVID-19 has accelerated the shift towards convenience channels and the company is bullish about growth in the current fiscal. "The business has pivoted towards becoming a convenience brand. Having brought all digital channels in place, we have entered this second wave with a lot of strength."



Windlas Biotech Limited files draft papers for IPO

Windlas Biotech Ltd has filed preliminary papers with markets regulator Sebi for an initial public offer that includes a fresh issue of Rs 165 crore. Besides the fresh issue, there will be an offer for sale of shares. The company is into domestic pharmaceutical formulations contract development and manufacturing business. According to the Draft Red Herring Prospectus (DRHP), the company will also consider a pre-IPO (Initial Public Offer) placement of up to Rs 50 crore. The proposed offer includes fresh issue of Rs 165 crore and an offer for sale of up to 5,142,067 equity shares. The latter will comprise "up to 1,136,000 equity shares by the individual selling shareholder and up to 4,006,067 equity shares by the investor selling shareholder", as per the document. The proceeds from the IPO will be utilised for purchasing of equipment required for capacity expansion of the facility at Dehradun Plant - IV and addition of injectables dosage capability at the facility at Dehradun Plant-III.



34,200 kg of oxygen production raw material lands at Bengaluru

Two Air India flights, carrying 34,200 kg of zeolite, used in oxygen production plants, arrived at the Bengaluru airport from Rome on Sunday, airport operator BIAL said. Zeolite is used in oxygen production plants that are based on pressure swing adsorption (PSA) technology, and its import would help mitigate the acute shortage of medical oxygen in the country. India has been hit badly by the deadly and more virulent second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic with hospitals across the country facing acute shortage of medical oxygen, health workers, vaccines, life-saving medicines, among others. "Two Air India flights, carrying 34,200 kg of Zeolite from Rome, arrived at the Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru, on May 16. This is the first of the many batches of Zeolite that would be imported by the government to generate oxygen," Bangalore International Airport Ltd (BIAL) said in a statement.



Gold import jumps to USD 6.3 bn in April

Gold import, which has a bearing on the country's current account deficit (CAD), zoomed to USD 6.3 billion for the month of April due to a surge in domestic demand, according to the Commerce Ministry data. Silver imports during the month, however, dipped by 88.53 per cent to about USD 11.9 million. Gold import stood at USD 2.83 billion (Rs 21.61 crore) in April 2020, the data showed. The rise in gold imports pushed the country's trade deficit to USD 15.1 billion in April 2021 as against USD 6.76 billion in the same month a year ago. According to industry experts, increasing domestic demand is pushing up imports of gold, however, the second wave of COVID-19 may impact the demand in the coming months. Akshaya Tritiya, a highly auspicious day to purchase gold, also saw muted sales as compared to pre-COVID numbers, with the new pandemic wave and resultant restrictions and partial lockdowns hitting consumer sentiment.



Covaxin effective against India, UK strains: BB

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bharat Biotech on Sunday said its COVID-19 vaccine 'Covaxin' has been found to be effective against coronavirus strains found in India and the UK.

Citing a study published in peer-reviewed medical journal Clinical Infectious Diseases, the Hyderabad-based vaccine major noted that vaccination with Covaxin produced neutralising titres against all key emerging variants tested, including B.1.617 and B.1.1.7, first identified in India and the UK, respectively.

The study was conducted in collaboration with the National Institute of Virology and Indian Council of Medical



Research, it added.

"Covaxin gets international recognition yet again, by scientific research data published demonstrating protection against the new variants. Yet another feather in its cap," Bharat Biotech co-

founder and Joint Managing Director Suchitra Ella said in a tweet. She also tagged PMO India, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Health Minister Harsh Vardhan, among others, in the tweet.

M-cap of 8 most valued firms plummets Rs 1.13 lakh crore

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Eight of the top-10 most valued companies witnessed a combined erosion of Rs 1,13,074.57 crore in market valuation last week, with Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys and HDFC Bank emerging as the worst hit.

Among the top-10 most valued companies, only Reliance Industries Limited and State Bank of India managed to book gains on a weekly basis. During the holiday-truncated trading week, the BSE benchmark Sensex tanked 473.92 points or 0.96 per cent. The valuation of Tata

Consultancy Services tumbled Rs 30,054.79 crore to Rs 11,28,488.10 crore.

Infosys witnessed an erosion of Rs 15,168.41 crore, taking its market worth to Rs 5,61,060.44 crore.

The market capitalisation (mcap) of HDFC Bank eroded by Rs 15,139.12 crore to Rs 7,65,035.49 crore and that of Kotak Mahindra Bank plummeted by Rs 14,398.04 crore to Rs 3,38,358.80 crore.

The valuation of HDFC dived Rs 13,430.38 crore to Rs 4,36,879.75 crore and that of Bajaj Finance tanked Rs 9,844.62 crore to Rs 3,21,592.05 crore.

Power consumption grows nearly 19 pc

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Power consumption in the country grew by around 19 per cent in the first fortnight of May to 51.67 billion units (BU) over the same period last year, showing recovery in industrial and commercial demand of electricity, according to the power ministry data.

Power consumption in the first fortnight of May 2020 was 43.55 BU. The power consumption in the entire month of May last year was 102.08 BU.

During the first fortnight of May this year (from May 1 to 14), peak power demand met or the highest supply in a day touched the highest level of



168.78 GW (on May 6, 2021) and recorded growth of over 15 per cent over 146.54 GW (peak met) recorded in the same

period in 2020 (on May 13, 2020).

The power consumption in April grew nearly 40 per cent

to 118.08 BU. Power consumption in April 2020 had dropped to 84.55 BU from 110.11 BU in the same month in 2019, mainly because of fewer economic activities following the imposition of lockdown by the government in the last week of March 2020 to contain the spread of deadly COVID-19.

The power consumption also fell in May 2020 to 102.08 BU from 120.02 BU in May 2019. Similarly, peak power demand met or the highest power supply in a day also slumped to 132.73 GW in April last year from 176.81 GW in the same month in 2019, showing the impact of lockdown on economic activities.

Tractor sales to be hit due to second wave

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic hitting rural areas, tractor sales will be impacted in the short term although in the second half of the fiscal it is likely to pick up to give the industry a mid-single digit growth, according to a senior official of farm equipment major Escorts Ltd.

The company, which has a joint venture with Japan's Kubota, is looking at around 55 per cent growth in exports



in 2021-22 with Europe serving as one of the main drivers

while it plans to enter markets in South East Asia and Brazil

through its partner.

"Unlike in the first phase (of COVID-19) where the impact was not at all there in the rural market, this time it is all very spread out. It is impacting not only the urban area, (but) channel partners and dealerships are also closed because of lockdown in states. Clearly this will have an impact, it is more severe and it is going to have an impact on everyone," Escorts Ltd Group CFO Bharat Madan told PTI.

Covid brings behavioural change in cash usage: Experts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about a behavioural change in usage of cash with people withdrawing larger amounts from ATMs but preferring to make digital modes to make payments, said experts.

The ferocity of the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic has scared people, forcing them to withdraw larger amounts from the ATMs with a view to avoid frequent visits. The money thus withdrawn is mostly held for emergency use and often payments are being made through UPI and other digital modes.

Talking about the behavioural change in currency usage, Sarvatra Technologies founder and MD Mandar Agashe said that in view of the lockdown and social distancing norms, people are not venturing out to banks and ATMs as frequently.

"The average ticket size of withdrawals at any given time has gone up by almost 20 per cent, as people withdraw in larger quantities and prefer to hoard, pre-empting medical or any other form of emergencies, which ultimately is not consumed as much."

"The average ticket size of withdrawals which earlier ranged between 2,000-3,000

now has invariably gone up by 20 per cent to Rs 3,000-4,000 across both rural and urban India," Adashe said.

He further said UPI was taking care of small-ticket transactions with the average ticket size constant at Rs 1,000.

Owing to this behavioural shift, daily average transactions on IMPS have now gone up to Rs 9,000 which was earlier in the range of around Rs 6,000-7,000, he said.

"The second wave of the pandemic has had a significant impact on the handling and management of cash."

"This has in turn brought about substantial shift in behavioral patterns among the



masses which will play out in favour of digital transactions in the long run," he added.

Immediate Payment Service (IMPS) is an instant interbank

electronic fund transfer service through mobile phones.

According to the RBI's latest data, the outstanding currency in circulation on May 7 was Rs

2,939,997 crore, up from Rs 2,858,640 crore on March 26.

Care Ratings Chief Economist Madan Sabnavis opined that during these uncertain times, there is a preference for people to hold down to cash. It is more for precautionary purposes because one needs cash for rainy days such as for medical reasons or for any sudden other expenses, said Sabnavis.

PayNearby founder, MD and CEO Anand Kumar Bajaj said the anxiety of lockdowns has forced people to withdraw money and to keep cash handy — both for medical emergencies and basic needs in these dire times.

Why diets don't work in the long run, lifestyle changes do

For decades, diet conversations globally have ranged from the simple and straightforward to elaborate and convoluted, the latter sometimes even bordering on crazy. In today's digital age, before you can say cheese, a new diet would have garnered a global following, with everyone from a lay person to experts swearing by its efficacy.

However, just a few weeks or months later, the same experts have moved on to another 'miraculous' weight-loss or diet program. That is what you get when you don't follow science, just fads. Health though, is not a fad. It is a lifestyle habit.

Amid all these fads, one cannot help but wonder if each of these programs are a sure-shot way to maintain a healthy weight and lifestyle, why don't they survive the test of time?

According to a study published in the BMJ, most diets help with weight loss and lower blood pressure in the first few months, but the desired effects don't last. So, people keep returning to new fads. But fad diets can be damaging. They often lack essential nutrients and teach you nothing about healthy eating. Excessively restrictive diets also take pleasure out of eating and may lead to eating disorders, slow down your metabolism, causing more harm than good in the long run.

One of the reasons for crash diets to fail is because the body views dieting as a form of starvation. When you eat much below your desired energy intake for a long time, your metabolism slows down and tries to fight back. The hormones that regulate our hunger and satisfaction waver making it harder to sustain the diet and hence weight loss. Further, the idea of taking extreme steps such as quitting certain foods can often lead to one feeling low and disappointed. Sooner or later you bounce back to prior 'unhealthy' eating habits. And a few months later, you are trying another new weight loss diet.

No wonder that the diet and weight loss industry around the world is growing leaps and bounds from \$192.2 billion in 2019, expected to be over \$295 billion by 2027. However, more and more studies show that if you are truly interested in losing weight and maintaining a healthy lifestyle you need a more sustainable plan than a fad diet. We must also understand the difference between weight loss and fat loss. Not all weight



loss might be healthy, you might just be losing muscle or water weight due to crash dieting and doing copious amounts of cardio.

To lose fat, a few components are proven to work: these are eating slightly less than your energy requirements, having adequate protein intake to preserve muscle mass, and strength or resistance training. Doing this regularly, will slowly help manage your weight in a healthy manner, and also boost your metabolism and tone your body.

Consider making these small, incremental changes to your lifestyle to embrace a healthy relationship with food and, indeed, life. Suggested by Habbitt CEO and Co-founder Dhruv Bhushan.

Make healthy eating a daily habit

It is important to be in tune with your specific needs, and not feel deprived. The same plan might now work for everyone. Nutrition need not be complicated, and crash diets are not sustainable. Don't think about giving up the 'bad' foods, instead focus on choosing foods that are holistic, nourishing, and pleasing to the palate. Don't be taken in by jar-

gon-filled technicalities on nutrients. Opt for easy to use, nutritious products.

Play with your food choices, mix and match ingredients. Health and taste can go hand in hand. Even foods that you crave or are 'addicted to', have a healthier alternative out there. Ensure a balanced diet of fresh, seasonal fruits and vegetables for vitamins, minerals and anti-oxidants. Balance these with whole grains and healthy fats. Meet your daily protein intake, whether from foods, or supplements using natural proteins. This can't be stressed enough since protein deficiency is one of the leading causes of lifestyle diseases, including obesity. Drink plenty of water.

Add physical activity into your regular routine

Make exercise, activity and movement a part of your daily routine, like brushing your teeth. In case you have very busy schedules, try and exercise first thing in the morning before the day consumes you. Just like your food, pick activities that you can stick to, and not things that will peter out after a few weeks of initial enthusiasm. You don't need to be spending hours in the gym or hiring a personal trainer.

Even a relaxing walk or jog while listening to your favourite music, a dance class or a yoga session can be a good starting point. Also, stay active throughout the day. Take stairs instead of the lift, walk around while on the phone, contribute to household chores, play with your kids or pets, enjoy a sport, have sex, walk or cycle to neighbourhood areas instead of driving there, just simple choices without the need to take out extra time also go a long way. And for more dedicated individuals looking to burn fat, lose kilos and tone up, research shows that strength or resistance training, and high intensity workouts offer more sustainable outcomes. More than how much or what you do everyday, what matters is that you do exercise everyday.

Start small and stay consistent.

Make sleep a priority

This is one of the most overlooked aspects of our well-being today. We should aim to get adequate restful sleep every night, which may range from 6 to 9 hours for different individuals. It is during this time that the body repairs and recovers. Essential hormones that also aid weight loss are at play only during sleep. Not getting

enough sleep can have a detrimental impact on your physical, mental and emotional health.

If for some reason, you have trouble falling asleep, address it as a priority. Make time to sleep. Avoid alcohol, caffeine, and nicotine. Unplug your digital devices before bedtime. Instead, unwind with a bath or some light reading. Create an environment that is conducive and free from distractions, with a bed and bedding that is comfortable.

Manage your stress levels

Stress might feel like a default response to the challenges of a modern lifestyle, but constant stress can pose serious health problems.

Stress causes an increase in cortisol and adrenaline levels which influences blood pressure, heart rate, eating habits, sleep patterns, blood sugar, fat metabolism, and immunity. Long-term stress can also increase your risk of heart attack or stroke and contribute to depression. You can manage stress by adopting some of the above healthy habits, and by making conscious efforts to relax. Breathe deeply, enjoy your favorite activities, spend time with your loved ones. And ask for help, by speaking to those who care for you, or a trained professional.

Eating and living healthy, or trying to manage weight should not be a punishment or a sacrifice. There is no one size fits all definition or path to good health. It is a combination of different small steps that add up to big results over time. Health is a lifestyle. Trusting your instincts with food and actions that feel good, go a long way towards overall well-being. Eat food you enjoy without the guilt, just maintain a balance. With the right mix of natural organic ingredients, an indulgent low calorie Blueberry Crumble wise cream will be better and more delightful than so-called magic fat burner pills. The next time, someone tempts you with the next-best diet fad, show them your intuitive eating and healthy lifestyle plan. You will develop a better relationship with food when you tune in to your body's needs and cues, and incorporate this into your everyday life.

Remember not to think of lifestyle changes as daunting behavioural changes. They are small steps on a journey towards good health -- ones that combine science, taste, and sustainability.

(Dhruv Bhushan is Co-Founder and CEO of Habbitt)

HOW TO CHOOSE A WORKOUT THAT FITS YOUR NEEDS

The process of staying healthy starts with choosing workout that backs your other healthier habits.

It is essential that your chosen workout doesn't just help to make you fit, but also keeps energy levels up and provides an overall energy boost.

There are questions that need to be answered when you pick a suitable workout from the fitness basket. Essentially, the answers need to be very honest to avoid any lasting damages later on. The following pointers can be followed.

Understand the goal of your workout. Unless that's not set, chances of picking the wrong workout are possible. The end result gets reflected in an unhealthy and possible damaged body.

A thorough research of exercise forms, benefits and advantages to be gained needs to be researched in a comprehensive manner. It will be conducive in the picking process.

Following fads is all okay. But the workout needs to suit one's needs and not get influenced by fads.

Now that the basics have been drummed in the minds, the next step would be to choose the suitable workout from the few options out there.

CARDIO



An ideal cardio session allows for burning substantial calories. Running or walking is two good ways to do cardio. If weight loss is the chosen end result, then cardio helps start things and warm up for more intense workouts.

YOGA



This ancient Indian exercise method is perfect for ab overall strong and fit body through a mixture of postures.

PILATES



For stronger cores, Mat Pilates is the proper choice. Along with toning the core and abdominal muscles, lower back, hips and buttocks, this workout is all about focussing on body strengthening and flexibility and lean muscles building. A flexible and controlled body will be quite possible. In fact, machine Pilates combines the benefits of both weight training and Yoga.

HIIT



The workout technique alternates between small episodes of high intensity exercise and less intense rest. The varied exercises depend on the targeted body part for improvement.

WEIGHT TRAINING

This is perfect to build strength with weight training. Weights in workout routine can result in sturdy muscles and bones along with lesser injury threat. But weight training is not body building or creating a bulky body, it's about toning the body and building muscle. Muscle building comes from premeditated practice and requires hardwork complete with weight-gain diet and supplements intake.

Choose the right workout for a healthy body.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



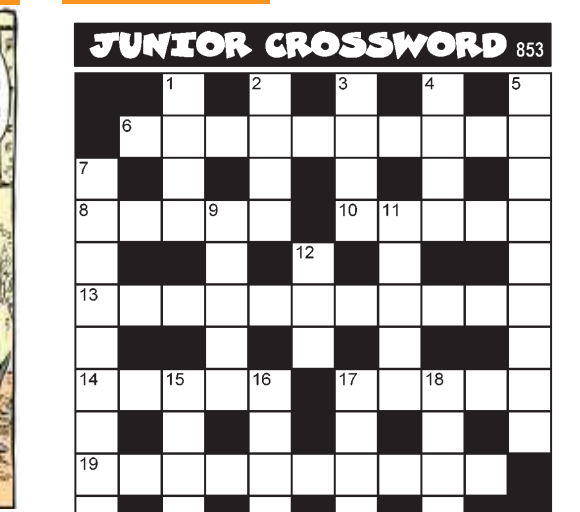
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 6 A two-wheeled vehicle
- 8 Unclean
- 10 Our planet
- 13 A party for something special
- 14 Close-fitting
- 17 Money used in France before the euro
- 19 Cooked too long

DOWN

- 1 Number in a quartet
- 2 Replica
- 3 Throbbing pain
- 4 A mark from a healed cut
- 5 Car engine repairs
- 7 Schooling

Use these to bite

- 11 Change
- 12 Attempt
- 15 Got bigger
- 16 Mark correct
- 17 You need this to stay alive
- 18 Chopping tools

SOLUTION

RECIPE	TRUE
IA	FA
DRUM	POLISH
EGG	ORN
CHICKEN	L
FT	TIDE
L	FORGERY
IE	PNIA
GENIUS	OVER
HY	S
TOYS	NEARLY

Looks like the days of motorcycling as the best hobby in town are over. Meet Vamsi and his pet doggo, Bear. The duo has made heads turn as they toured places like Hampi, Goa, Bengaluru, etc. The Pioneer's K RAMYA SREE writes about their adorable journey.

THE PAWSOME PAIR AND THEIR ADVENTURES

While biking has become a common scenario these days amongst millennials, who doesn't love involving their furry companions in the adventures of their life? Meet Vamsi Vadam, a 27-year-old music producer based out of Hyderabad riding his own classic 350 through the streets of Hyderabad. His journey to riding with his pawfriend is no less inspiring. Not very long ago, he was performing at a cafe in Hyderabad where adoption drives happen every Sunday. 30 minutes into his performance, a rescuer comes with a huge cage and a tiny little pup in it. Everybody in the cafe went crazy for this puppy and surrounded the cage, but the pup didn't give a care. But destiny got Vamsi and the pup etched — Vamsi decided to take a break from his set and went close to the cage. "I fell in love with her, but it took me a

few days to be okay with me adopting, because it's a huge responsibility. My girlfriend back then was after my life to get it home. Finally, after fostering her for a week at the cafe, we got her home. He, while motorcycling with Bear, toured Hampi, Goa, Chennai, Bengaluru, and Bagalkot. How does it feel to ride with a pet? He explains, "It's amazing. It is also scary at times but that is inevitable when you're on the road, even though I ride with a pet. Another advantage is that since she is traveling with me, I generally don't tend to ride too fast. I maintain an average of 80Kmph." Pets are a part of our lives. Riding with them physically is no equal to a human because of our body postures. Vamsi shares, "The challenges I face start from storing her food to finding a place for the both of us to rest or halt for the night. It is hard for Bear because she is allergic to packed food. So, I must carry homemade food for her during the



ride. It gets difficult because I must make sure the food doesn't go bad. The next big thing is calling up places to check if they allow pets. Even most of the metropolitan

are not petfriendly, imagine the scenario at a

rural location. It is one of the major reasons why I have not traveled to places where it takes more than a day to ride." When it comes to riding with pets, training them to adjust to their surroundings and behave is the most crucial process. Explaining how he trained his companion, Vamsi shares, "The training started at a very young age. She started riding on

the bike when she was 29 days old. That's when we adopted her. She would sit in between me and my girlfriend. As she grew bigger, I grew confident about her being able to handle herself and shifted her onto the tank. It took a month for the both of us to get used to riding like this. She sits on my thighs with her forelegs on the tank." "Every ride we experience



is different from the ones before, because it's at different times of the day and we get to do different things along the way. The best thing about all the rides is the look people have on their faces when they see us cruising at those speeds on the highways," adds he. How do you take long trips? He answers, "We normally start early in the morning and we ride towards the sunrise. We take a break every two hours or say 70 km, for water and chai. Taking breaks is the most important thing about the ride because I don't want to stress her out a lot. In these breaks, she gets to stretch and do her thing. After she came into my life, my life changed. I suddenly became more responsible and a lot of other things changed. Sure, it was difficult for both of us to understand each other and it is a timetaking process and it is not

an easy one. But we stuck by each other's side to the best we can to have a fun and adventurous life," added the passionate rider whose passion for motorcycling began after watching his uncles (who own a RE showroom in Kumbakonam) ride around to Ladakh and other places. What is the kind of impact Bear makes in his life? How has traveling with a pet changed him? Vamsi concludes, "She's the best thing that has happened to me. She is the reason why I travel so much — because we both love to travel to places and it's fun to see people watching us while we do that. It's amazing how she can make people smile just by looking at them and I have seen that happen a million times — where they forget everything they are going through, and just smile. Looking at the joy she spreads makes me so happy."

Information being passed via WhatsApp has been considered unreliable, for the right reasons.

Rumours and fake news have ruled the app for more than a year now. But today, a group of IT professionals in the city is doing all it can to receive, pass on, and verify, reliable help amid the pandemic, writes The Pioneer's SHIKHA DUGGAL.

City's helpdesk on the forefront in fight against Covid



through WhatsApp is nonsense and unverified! We are here to curate data collected through various sources and verify it for you, because we found that 90 percent of information is useless. We validate the information, cross-check the same, and when requests come, we use the data to facilitate their requests," Sandhya Jonnada, who works with Vigilant Tech, tells us. We also learn of the case of a 45-day old toddler from Chirala, who was in an emergency condition. The child had to be shifted to a better medical facility. With the assistance of the Help Desk, they scouted the best and nearest hospital for the child with all the specialisations available according to the ailing medical condition of the child, and at the moment, the kid is recovering faster than he was expected to. The sense of unanimity tragedy could

the pandemic seriously, misfortune would've become avoidable! Recounting another testimony, where the Help Desk proved helpful, Satyanarayan shares, "One night we got an SOS Call for an oxygen concentrator from a 75-year old man living in the outskirts of the city. His saturation levels were going immensely low! The night curfew was on but we somehow managed to connect with the supplier, trying to negotiate a deal. In no time, we facilitated all the clearances from police, fixed up a vehicle, ensured its safe passage, and reached out to the family! This is what we do — we connect the right supplier and consumer along with an expert's advice." Giving due acknowledgment for the unstinted support from all the volunteers, doctors working round the clock at full covid-care hospitals, admins at the hospital, Hyderabad and Cyberabad police, and GHMC, the organisation is making all attempts to pass over this colossal disaster that is in

nobody's control or predict, but can be prevented by deflecting accountability and responsibilities! The firm is also planning to set up an 'Isolation cum Oxygen Hub' for residents below the poverty line who don't have the luxury of quarantining at home. "They will be treated for fourteen days with all the medicines, food, and nursing care. In case of an emergency, GHMC will shift them to the covid-care hospital! It is a thirty bedded arena coming up at handanagar Community Hall. This is being set up in support of corporate houses like GHMC, IKEA, HARSCO and Zenoti, doctors and the zonal commissioner," concluded the founder. They can be reached on 63093 71600.

Helping women help themselves

Nizamabad-based 30-year-old Latha Nadukuda is a woman donning many hats — she is a housewife, mother to two girls, and a proud business owner and founder of Shree Latha Garments and Ladies Tailors.

Latha — the ever-smiling and hard-working entrepreneur — was part of Project Her&Now's women's entrepreneurship support programme in Telangana in 2020. She's a successful entrepreneur today, but she didn't get here easily. Latha had to discontinue her studies after 7th standard due to financial problems in her family, her zeal to learn and experiment with new things and ideas never died! During school, she had her first lessons in cutting and tailoring as a home skill, which she then perfected and mastered over the years. As an adult, Latha started earning a decent income through this skill, which eventually led to new forming a business idea.

With financial and emotional support from her husband and in-laws, Latha ventured into her own business enterprise around tailoring. She began making women's wear, did well, and as orders kept coming in, she was unable to manage everything on her own, and so started employing local women as employees, and training them to do the work.

Her husband helped her scale the business by getting her multiple orders of stitching uniforms for local government schools. Today, Shree Latha Garments and Ladies Tailors has grown to accommodate over 120 employees — an overwhelming majority of them (at least 100) being women from nearby villages or towns.

While around 20% of all the employees/resource persons are currently



working from the store's factory, the rest are working from their respective homes. Latha and her husband have equipped these women by buying each of them a sewing machine and giving them detailed training on the kind of work that needs to be done.

Many have even started replicating Latha's business model on a smaller scale and getting orders on their own (they are not dependent on Latha anymore for the orders)! Essentially, what Latha is doing through her enterprise is creating a "ripple effect" — helping so many local women earn a livelihood on their own and become self-dependent over a period of time!

During the Covid outbreak last year, all of Latha's employees were working from home and having a steady source of income, with some of them earning as much as up to Rs. 1.5 lakhs per month! Latha started getting orders for making masks from local SHGs and for PPE kits from hospitals and orders for police uniforms too!

Soon, Latha hopes to take Shree Latha Garments and Ladies Tailors beyond the boundaries of Telangana, to various other parts of India, and thereby establish a solid brand name for her enterprise.



via doctors and oxygen supplies. Apart from this, there were around 130 requests in cities like Vizag, Vijayawada, Nellore, Warangal, and Tirupati for ambulance support. Hence, the Help Desk is targeted at people in distress particularly from IT indus-

IGA IS QUEEN OF ROME

AP ■ ROME

If Iga Swiatek continues playing like this, she might have no problem defending her French Open title when the year's second Grand Slam starts in two weeks.

The 19-year-old Pole routed Karolina Pliskova 6-0, 6-0 with what is known as a "double bagel" score in an Italian Open final that lasted just 46 minutes Sunday.

Swiatek lost just 13 points. "Definitely not the best day for me," Pliskova said. "Iga was playing great tennis today."

It was the first double bagel in a WTA final in five years, since Simona Halep overwhelmed Anastasiya Sevastova in Bucharest.

"I think you have just days like this in tennis where things are not going your way," Pliskova added. "I will just quickly forget about today."

Blasting winners at will with both her forehand and backhand, Swiatek led 17-5 in winners and committed only five unforced errors to Pliskova's 23.

It wasn't always so easy this week for Swiatek, the surprise winner in Paris last year when she was ranked 54th.

She had to save two match points in her third-round victory over Barbora Krejickova then had to win twice on Saturday — beating both two-time Rome champion Elina Svitolina and 17-year-old Coco Gauff — after



her quarterfinal was pushed back a day due to rain.

"It's been a tough week but I'm really happy that I got through everything," Swiatek

said. "I was super focused today so I'm really proud of myself."

Swiatek's third career title will move her into the top 10 of the rankings for the first time on

Monday — to No 9.

Pliskova was playing in her third consecutive final at the Foro Italico, having won the title in 2019. The veteran Czech player

slammed her racket to the clay in frustration early in the second set and received a code violation warning for unsportsmanlike conduct.



Novak vs Nadal in men's final

Maybe the new generation of tennis players isn't quite so ready to end the eras of Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal.

Titles for Stefanos Tsitsipas and Alexander Zverev in the Monte Carlo Masters and Madrid Open, respectively, raised speculation again that the Big Three — including Roger Federer — was expiring.

Well, again, not yet. Djokovic and Nadal won a total of three matches over younger players on Saturday and will renew their record-setting rivalry in the Italian Open final on Sunday — exactly two weeks before Roland Garros starts.

Coach creating match situations for me in training: Sindhu



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The lack of competitions before the Olympics is a major concern for Indian shuttlers but not so much for PV Sindhu, who trusts her Korean coach Park Tae Sang to create match situations for her in training itself.

Owing to the raging Covid-19 pandemic, the Badminton World Federation has been forced to cancel the remaining three Olympic qualifiers in India, Malaysia and Singapore. These were to be the last set of events before the Tokyo Games in July-August.

Asked if cancellations will affect her preparations, Sindhu said: "Well, we were thinking that Singapore will be the last event before Olympics but now we don't have another option, so I am playing matches against different players and my coach Park is trying to create match situations for me in training."

"Different players have different styles like Tai Tzu (Ying) or Ratchanok (Intanon) have different styles of play but Park is there to guide me, to prepare me for it," Sindhu said.

"Obviously, we will be playing each other after a few months and there will be something new in our games, so I will have to prepare for that."

Sindhu doesn't train with the rest of the Indian Olympic-bound team. She has been training at the Gachibowli indoor stadium in Telangana and does her fitness training at Suchitra academy.

The 25-year-old endorsed BWF's decision to cancel the events, saying while it is sad that competitions could not take place but life is more important than sports.

"It is sad that the whole world has come to a standstill but before sportspersons, we are human beings and life comes first," Sindhu said.

"If tournaments happen, we don't know if we will be safe, we might think we will be but we can't be sure because we don't know from where this virus will come."

"For the moment, events are being cancelled and I know sportspersons are sad but I think it is good for the people...Organisers take a lot of measures and keep us in a bubble but still we need to be careful."

Sindhu, who had reached the finals of Swiss Open in March after returning to action following a long break, said she is improving as a player.

"It has been a good campaign so far this year. I have been improving as a player. My coach has analysed my game, so really looking forward to the Olympics. My dad also helps me a lot," she said.

Kohli best batsman in world: Paine

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Virat Kohli seems to have left an indelible mark on Australian Test captain Tim Paine, who says he will "always remember" the Indian skipper for being the world's best batsman, capable of also getting under the opposition's skin with his competitiveness.

Kohli and Paine have had a fiery rivalry which goes back to India's 2018-19 tour of Australia. Their on-field spats were an interesting sub-plot during the historic showdown in which India became the first Asian country to win a Test series Down Under.

"For Virat Kohli, I've said many times, he seems like the type of player you would love to have on your team. He is competitive. He is the best batsman in the world," the 36-year-old



Paine said on the *Gilly and Goss* podcast.

"He (Kohli) is challenging to play against and he can get under your skin because he is so good and he is so competitive."

"But yeah, for me from where I came from, sharing a feud with him four years ago. He is certainly someone I will

always remember," he added.

Interestingly, last year Paine had said that Kohli is "just another player" in the Indian team who "doesn't really bother me".

He had also stated that the Australian team "loves to hate" the superstar for his awe-inspiring abilities with the bat.

Finally, Hussey leaves for home

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Having recovered from Covid-19, Chennai Super Kings batting coach Michael Hussey left for Australia on Sunday via Doha, a top official of the IPL franchise said.

Following an RT-PCR test, the former Australia batsman had returned negative for Covid-19 on Friday, paving the way for his departure in the early hours of Sunday.

"Yes, Hussey has left for Australia via Doha by a commercial flight. He left in the early hours of Sunday," CSK CEO K S Viswanathan said.

Hussey, who had first tested positive for Covid-19 during the now-suspended IPL, is expected to reach home on Monday.

Hussey aside, the other Australians involved in the 2021 edition of IPL took a detour to Maldives and quarantined there before heading back to Australia.

India Eves likely to tour Oz in Sept

New Delhi: The Indian women's cricket team is set to travel to Australia in September.

Australia pacer Megan Schutt dropped a hint that India will be visiting in September though Cricket Australia is yet to announce the schedule. The tour is expected to comprise ODIs and T20Is.

"We have got a tour against India in mid-September," Schutt said on *No Balls: The Cricket Podcast*, hosted by Kate Cross and Alex Hartley.

"So, there's a couple of camps. I believe we are doing one in Darwin, which will be really cool... And then the tour against India. And then pretty much from there things get crazy with Big Bash, WNCL, Ashes, World Cup, and hopefully the Commonwealth



Games."

The BCCI, in its last Apex Council meeting, had also approved the tour of Australia ahead of the World Cup in New Zealand next year. A home series against the Windies was also cleared.

The tour of Australia was originally planned for January this year but was postponed after the World Cup was put off to 2022 amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

PTI

shortpasses

BREMEN SACK KOHFELDT

BREMEN: Werder Bremen on Sunday sacked head coach Florian Kohfeldt and replaced him with club legend Thomas Schaaf for their final league game this season after the club slipped into the bottom three of the Bundesliga. After four years in charge, Kohfeldt has been shown the door with just next Saturday's home game against Moenchengladbach left as Bremen fight to stay in Germany's top flight.

ZIZOU IS LEAVING REAL

MADRID: Spanish media claimed early Sunday that Zinedine Zidane has already told his players that he intends to quit as coach at the end of the season. According to Onda Cero radio and Goal online, the Frenchman, who has a contract until 2022, informed his squad a week ago that he was going to leave when the season ends next week.

TEJASWIN CLINCHES GOLD

NEW DELHI: Indian high jumper Tejaswin Shankar has claimed a Gold medal at the Big 12 Outdoor Track and Field Championships in Manhattan, USA. Representing Kansas State University, Tejaswin cleared 2.28 metres on Saturday, making a facility record.

SPOTIFY BID TO BUY ARSENAL

LONDON: Spotify co-founder Daniel Ek said Saturday a formal offer to buy Arsenal had been rejected by the Premier League club's American owners. In a statement on Twitter, the Swedish tycoon said the club's owners, Kroenke Sports and Entertainment (KSE), had rebuffed his bid.

N KOREA OUT OF WC QUALIFIERS

SEOUL: North Korea have pulled out of next month's qualifying matches for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, the AFC said on Sunday. No reasons were given for the withdrawal but South Korean media reported earlier this month that Pyongyang had said it would skip the qualifiers over coronavirus fears.

KAYLEE NARROWLY MISSES WR

SYDNEY: Australian Kaylee McKeown narrowly missed the 50 metre backstroke world record on Sunday while setting the year's best time in the 200m individual medley as she ramps up preparations for the Tokyo Olympics.

TEAM SELECTION ON JUNE 15-16

NEW DELHI: The Indian para-athletics team for the Tokyo Paralympic Games in August-September will be picked during a to-day trial to be held in New Delhi on June 15 and 16, the national governing body Paralympic Committee of India said on Sunday. Agencies

2018 sandpapergate monumental mistake: Sekar

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Former Australia bowling coach David Sekar, who was with the team during the 2018 ball-tampering scandal, on Sunday said it was a "monumental mistake" which could have been prevented and for which fingers can also be pointed at him.

"Obviously a lot of things went wrong at that time. The finger-pointing is going to go on and on and on. There was a lot of people to blame. It could have



been me to blame, it could have been someone else. It could have been stopped and it wasn't, which is unfortunate," Sekar told the *Sydney Morning Herald*. "Cameron's (Bancroft) a very nice guy. He's just doing it

to get something off his chest... He's not going to be the last," he added. Sekar lamented that the incident is going to be associated with Australian cricket forever and there is nothing one can do about it.

"You could point your finger at me, you could point your finger at *Boof* (then coach Darren Lehmann), could you point it at other people, of course you could," he said.

"The disappointing thing is it's never going to go away. Regardless of what's said. We all

know that we made a monumental mistake. The gravity wasn't as plain until it all came out," he added.

The 54-year-old Victorian made the statement after Bancroft made a startling revelation that Australian bowlers at the time might have had some knowledge about the plot.

While Cricket Australia issued a statement saying that it was open to a re-investigation into the incident, Sekar said he was not sure what could possibly come out of it.

Spurs still in Europe race



Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg, left, celebrates with teammates after scoring Spurs second goal AP

AFP ■ LONDON

Harry Kane scored his 22nd Premier League goal of the season as Tottenham Hotspur beat Wolves 2-0 on Sunday to maintain their hopes of a top-four finish. England captain Kane fired Spurs ahead on the stroke of half-time before Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg doubled their lead in the 62nd minute. Victory left Spurs in sixth place, five points behind fourth-placed Chelsea, with a maximum of six points available

to them from their final two league games.

The top four in the Premier League are assured of a place in the 2021/22 Champions League.

Kane gave Spurs the lead running onto Hojbjerg's through ball behind centre backs Conor Coady and Romain Saiss.

The Spurs star side-stepped Coady's challenge and rounded goalkeeper Rui Patrício, before curling the ball into the corner of the net.

Hojbjerg made it 2-0 just

after the hour when he followed up Gareth Bale's shot and tapped the ball in after Patrício could only parry.

Earlier, Crystal Palace twice came from behind to beat Aston Villa 3-2, with Tyrick Mitchell's first goal for the club sealing victory six minutes from time.

John McGinn's third goal of the season put Villa ahead in the 17th minute at Selhurst Park before Christian Benteke equalised against his former club with a 32nd-minute header.

But Palace fell behind again two minutes later when Anwar El Ghazi scored from close range.

The Eagles equalised for a second time in the 76th minute when Wilfried Zaha grabbed his 11th goal of the season with low shot deflected in off Ahmed Elmohamady.

The comeback was complete in the 84th minute when the 21-year-old Mitchell followed-up from close range after team-mate Eberechi Eze had miscued. Victory lifted south London club Palace to 13th.

IPL helped Shami get his rhythm back

New Delhi: Veteran India pacer Mohammed Shami found his "rhythm" during the now suspended IPL and feels the UK tour will be a successful one for the team if it is able to replicate the stellar performance of the last six months.

India will leave for the UK on June 2 for three and half months during which they will play six Test matches starting with the World Test Championship final against New Zealand in Southampton from June 18.

With the Covid-19 wreaking havoc across the globe, the soon to be 31-year-old Shami said that too much of planning in these times is of no use.

"See, there is no point in planning too much as certain things are not in our control. Who would have thought that the pandemic would virtually destroy two years of our lives — hence I prefer to take it by each series or tournament as the case may be," the pacer told *Gulf News*. "We have played some extraordinary cricket in recent times as an unit and naturally, the confidence level is high on the eve of our departure for England."

"If we can reproduce some of the form which we did over last six months, I am confident it will be a great summer for us," said the man, who has 180 wickets from 50 Tests.

Archer's elbow injury resurfaces

PTI ■ LONDON

England's star pacer Jofra Archer's participation in the upcoming Test series against New Zealand was thrown into doubt after his longstanding elbow injury resurfaced during Sussex's county championship game against Kent.

The 26-year-old fast bowler has a history of elbow injuries that saw him miss two Tests against India and the currently-suspended IPL earlier this year as



well as games in South Africa at the start of 2020.

Turning out for Sussex in his first competitive game after the injury lay-off, Archer registered figures of 2 for 29 in the first innings. However, the pacer could only bowl five overs in the second essay and complained of a sore elbow.

"If you saw today he's not going to bowl tomorrow. You'll have to ask the ECB," Sussex head coach Ian Salisbury told reporters on Saturday.



Napoli keep CL hopes alive

AFP ■ FLORENCE

Napoli moved third in Serie A on Sunday with a 2-0 win at Fiorentina to keep their push for a Champions League return alive.

Lorenzo Insigne missed a penalty but send in the rebound after 56 minutes with a Lorenzo Venti own goal 11 minutes later sealing an important win for the visitors.

Napoli are third, two points behind Atalanta who assured a third consecutive season of Champions League football, with a 4-3 win at Genoa on Saturday. AC Milan, are a point behind Napoli, occupying in the final Champions League berth, and play 16th-placed Cagliari later on Sunday.

Juventus are fifth, one point behind Napoli, but still in the running for a top four finish after a 3-2 win over newly-crowned champions Inter Milan on Saturday, with one match left this season.

Napoli's final game will be at home against midtable Hellas Verona, as they look to return to elite European football after missing out last season.

Juventus play their final game at Bologna desperate to avoid missing out on the Champions League for the first time in a decade.

Lazio will not play among the European elite next season after a 2-0 derby defeat to Roma on Saturday. Sixth-placed Lazio are eight points behind Juventus having played a game less.

MAHESH'S GENEROUS GESTURE

Prince Mahesh Babu, who recently got vaccinated for Covid-19 after being under home isolation, has extended his support to two adopted villages of Andhra Pradesh — Burripalem and Siddapuram. The *Srimanthudu* actor arranged for vaccines against Covid for all the people of these two villages.

Until a few days ago, Mahesh Babu was busy shooting for *Sarkaru Vaari Paata* with National award-winning actress Keerthy Suresh, in Hyderabad. The two will be sharing screen space for the first time in the film written and directed by Parasuram and is jointly financed by Mythri Movie Makers, 14 Reels Plus, and G. Mahesh Babu Entertainment.



Ram Charan-Shankar film postponed?

It is known that Mega Power Star Ram Charan is collaborating with Shankar for a pan-Indian film to be produced by noted producer Dil Raju. According to the latest report, the magnum opus may be shot on a budget of Rs 150 crore.

The upcoming untitled film was supposed to go on the floor by the second half of this year. But we now learn that a tiff between the makers of *Indian 2* may affect Ram Charan and Shankar's film.

Kamal Haasan and Kajal Aggarwal-starrer *Indian 2* was just 50 percent into its making before the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic struck. Shankar signed two movies, one in Telugu with Mega Power Star Ram Charan, and the other, a Hindi film starring Ranveer Singh.

Sources close to the film's unit say that the Ram Charan-starrer, which was supposed to commence production in June, stays on hold given the current scenario. Meanwhile, the controversy surrounding Shankar's directorial venture *Indian 2* seems to be only getting murkier. Shankar will first be wrapping up *Indian 2* before moving onto Ram Charan starrer *RC15*. This would mean that Shankar and Charan's *RC15* will start rolling only in 2022.

On the other hand, Ram Charan will soon be seen essaying a key role in Chiranjeevi's movie *Acharya*.

Khiladi to release in theatres only

After back-to-back successful ventures, Mass Maharaja Ravi Teja is back in full action.

It is known that the actor's next, *Khiladi* is one of the most-awaited films of the year.

Given the second wave of Covid, the film had to be postponed like many others, dampening the actor's fans' spirits.

Recently rumours were

rife that the film will head to an OTT release. Putting a full-stop to all these rumours, the makers of the film on Sunday announced that the Mass Maharaja film will release only in theatres.

"#*Khiladi* has confirmed. This film will release ONLY IN THEATRES. A New release date will be announced once the situation becomes normal."

@DirRameshVarma @idhavis @PenMovies

Wear Mask #StayHomeStaySafe," tweeted industry biggies.

Khiladi, an action thriller film written and directed by Ramesh Varma and jointly produced by Satyanarayana Koneru and Ramesh Varma under the banner of A Studios LLP, will see Ravi Teja in a dual role alongside Arjun Sarja, Unni Mukundan, Meenakshi Chaudhary, and Dimple Hayathi.



LENDING A HELPING HAND



Omkaram Guruj, along with junior artists and TV Artists President Vallabhaneni Anil and Secretary Swamy Goud, donated groceries sufficient for one month, to over 200 members of the cine industry.

KORATALA TO AKHIL'S RESCUE?



Akhil Akkineni, despite making multiple efforts, is time and again failing to impress the Akkineni fans, creating no niche for himself. The three-films-old actor — *Akhil*, *Hello*, and *Mister Majnu* — will next be seen in *Most Eligible Bachelor* under the direction of Bommarillu Bhaskar alongside Pooja Hegde. He will also star in *Agent* under the direction of Surender Reddy romancing Sakshi Vaidya, on which the family has pinned their hopes. We now hear that Akhil's father Nagarjuna is planning to rope in Koratala Shiva for his son to catapult his career.

Koratala is currently busy with Chiranjeevi's *Acharya* and also had his next locked with NTR Jr. Sources say that upon Nagarjuna's request he is reading the script for *Akhil*.

The project may go to floors in summer next year if everything goes according to plans. Akkineni fans are all excited over this news and started speculating as to how Koratala Shiva will show their Prince on the silver screen.

SHILPA SHETTY IN Mahesh-Trivikram's story

Mahesh Babu's project with dialogue sorcerer Trivikram Srinivas is generating tremendous interest. Already rumours started about Mahesh Babu's role and the film's storyline. In the meantime, reports came that the film still is titled

Parthu which sent fans dizzy. It is known that *Parthu* is the character name played by Mahesh Babu in *Athadu* directed by Trivikram Srinivas.

We now hear that Bollywood actress Shilpa Shetty will play an important role in the film! This news has excited Telugu fans of the actress.

It is known that Trivikram casts yesteryear heroines in all-powerful roles



and one can cite the examples of Nadiya in *Attarintiki Daaredi*, A Aa, Sneha in *S/O Satyamurthy*, Khushboo in *Agnaathavaasi*, Devayani in *Aravinda Sametha Veera Raghava* and Tabu in *Ala Vaikunthapuramlo*.

Trivikram penned a powerful female role and plans are on to cast Shilpa Shetty in it. Shilpa Shetty earlier romanced top stars like Venkatesh, Nagarjuna, Balakrishna and Mohan Babu during her hey days. Reports also have it that Sumanth, nephew of Nagarjuna, will also be seen in an important role. The film is produced by Radhakrishna on Haarika Hassinie Creations banner.

