

ANALYSIS 7
MAKING SENSE OF THE
POWER CRISIS DEBATE**MONEY 8**
INDIA EXPECTED TO SEE HIGHER
SALARY WITH 9.3% HIKE IN '22**SPORTS 11**
ROHIT FINDS HIS GROOVE AS
INDIA OUTPLAY AUSTRALIA

VIJAYAWADA, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

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"NATYAM IS COM-
MERCIAL, YET
THOUGHT-PRO-
VOKING"
Page 12**BE GOOD CITIZENS FIRST, THEN BE
GOOD PEOPLE: NARAYANA MURTHY**

Infosys co-founder Narayana Murthy said on Tuesday that being a good citizen is about treating the society as one's own. Speaking at the 10th annual convocation of the IIT Bhubaneswar in a virtual mode, Murthy underlined that the only way to eradicate poverty was to create more and more jobs with better income. "I have tremendous confidence in the power of youth, values, aspirations, energy, confidence, determination, discipline and enthusiasm," Murthy said. "That requires that you people do some hard thinking, some introspection and determination," he said.

**EMPLOYEES' PROVIDENT FUND ADDS
14.81 LAKH SUBSCRIBERS IN AUGUST**

Retirement fund body EPFO net added 14.81 lakh subscribers in August 2021, reflecting a growing trend in net payroll for the first five months of this fiscal. The provisional payroll data of Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) released on Wednesday highlights that it added around 14.81 lakh net subscribers during the month of August 2021, a labour ministry statement said. The data reflects a growing trend in net payroll for the first five months of the current financial year, it added. For the month of August, the net subscriber addition increased by 12.61 per cent as compared to the previous month of July 2021.

**INSURANCE SCHEME FOR HEALTH
WORKERS FIGHTING COVID EXTENDED**

The insurance scheme for healthcare workers fighting Covid-19 has been extended further for a period of 180 days, and so far, 1,351 claims have been paid under it, the Union health ministry said on Wednesday. The current period of the policy is ending on October 20. "Since the Covid-19 pandemic has still not abated and deaths of health workers deployed for Covid-related duties are still being reported, accordingly, the insurance policy has been extended with effect from 21.10.2021 for a further period of 180 days so as to continue to provide a safety net to the dependents of health workers who are deputed to take care of Covid-19 patients," it said.

**DEATH TOLL RISES TO 52 IN U'KHAND;
RAIN FURY IN UP, BENGAL & SIKKIM**

Six more bodies were recovered on Wednesday in rain-battered Uttarakhand, taking the death toll to 52 in the Himalayan state, while Uttar Pradesh, Sikkim, and areas of north Bengal were also pounded by torrential rainfall that caused landslides and led to closure of National Highway 10, the main road linking Gangtok with the rest of the country. Three people were killed and hundreds marooned as heavy rains lashed Uttar Pradesh's Bareilly and Pilibhit districts over the last two days. In Uttarakhand, 17 people were injured and 16, including 11 members of a trekking team, went missing in rain-related incidents.

Lukewarm response to bandh call by TDP

■ Naidu to sit on 36-hour 'deeksha' from today

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

It was business as usual in Andhra Pradesh on Wednesday as the bandh call given by the Telugu Desam Party protesting alleged attacks on its offices failed to evoke response from the public.

Several leaders belonging to the TDP were taken into preventive custody and many senior leaders were put under house arrest to thwart their attempts to participate in the bandh, TDP sources claimed.

TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu has decided to hold a 36-hour 'deeksha' (protest) at the party office from 8 am on Thursday in a bid to draw attention of the people to the 'attacks', Naidu's son and the party's general secretary Nara Lokesh told the media.

"Never before in Indian history, was a political party's office attacked. The people should know about this," Lokesh said.

A senior official of the Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport



Corporation said bus services were not disrupted.

All India Bank Employees Association (AIBEA) national secretary B S Rambabu told PTI that there was no disruption to banking services in the state and all clearing houses functioned normally.

Ruling YSR Congress Party workers on Tuesday allegedly ransacked offices of the TDP at Mangalagiri near here, Visakhapatnam and other places, alleging that a spokesperson of the opposition party made objectionable comments against Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy in

a press conference.

TDP spokesperson K Pattabhi Ram, objecting to police notices to former minister Nakka Ananda Babu, allegedly made some remarks against Jagan.

Condemning the attacks, TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu had called for a state-wide bandh today.

State Home Minister M Sucharitha, however, denied her party's involvement in the attacks. Several YSRCP senior leaders and Ministers took exception to Pattabhi Ram's remarks against Jagan.

TDP sources said Naidu is seeking an appointment with Union Home Minister Amit Shah to apprise him of the incidents.

Some TDP activists had a bitter experience when they tried to stop a bus in Guntur district as several women passengers reacted strongly and asked the TDP activists not to stop people from going to work.

Jagan slams Oppn for 'bid to drive a wedge in society'

SNV SUDHIR
■ VIJAYAWADA

In response to Tuesday's incidents as well as the abuses that TDP spokesperson Kommareddy Pattabhi Ram had hurled at him and the YSRP cadre's angry reaction, Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Wednesday castigated the Opposition and its 'friendly' media for deliberately using filthy language, whipping up commotion, and trying to drive a wedge in society to gain political mileage since they were "unable to digest the growing popularity of the state government".

The Chief Minister was speaking during the Jagananna Thodu programme held here on Wednesday.

Jagan said that the Opposition and a section of the media, unable to digest the popularity of the government, were dishing out lies and distortions. "They abuse in the filthiest language -- in words which I have never heard in the past



Some people who hear such language get annoyed and react across the state," he observed.

The Opposition and 'its media' used foul language, spun lies, and distorted facts only to drive a wedge among castes and religious groups for political gains, he claimed.

People were watching how the Opposition was managing the sys-

tems and holding up welfare schemes meant for the poor by filing cases in courts out of fear that "Jagan will get the credit" for them, he remarked.

In spite of the hurdles, the government had honoured its commitment to welfare measures for the past two and a half years and it would continue to do so, the Chief Minister asserted.

**Denied bail by
special NDPS
court, Aryan
Khan moves HC**

PNS ■ MUMBAI

A special court here on Wednesday denied bail to Aryan Khan, the son of Bollywood actor Shah Rukh Khan, observing that 'on the face of it', he was indulging in "illicit drug activities on a regular basis".

His WhatsApp chats also showed, prima facie, that he was in touch with drug peddlers, the court noted.

Aryan (23), arrested with a few others on October 3 after the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) raided a cruise ship off the Mumbai coast and claimed to have seized drugs including charas, has now moved the Bombay High Court.

V Patil, special judge for the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act cases, rejected the bail pleas of Aryan Khan, his friend Arbaaz Merchant (26) and fashion model Mumun Dhamecha (28).

The lawyers of Aryan Khan and Dhamecha moved the High Court seeking bail soon thereafter.

Action against attacks will be taken as per law: DGP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Director-General of Police Gautam D Sawang has said that action against Tuesday's attacks on TDP offices will be taken as per law. The police were investigating the matter, he said at a press conference here on Wednesday.

Responding to media persons' queries on the attacks on TDP offices, the DGP said "very unfortunate, deplorable and serious incidents" had taken place. The DGP mentioned that the statement made by the TDP spokesperson in question was "not at all a casual statement". It sounded like a premeditated statement in abusive language, which could not be used against any person holding a constitutional position or against a constitutional body. "Unfortunately it was used against the state Chief



Minister and one cannot abuse a constitutional position with such filthy language. The department is taking it seriously," he observed.

The DGP said that the foul language used by the TDP spokesperson against the Chief Minister repeatedly had led to reactions. Investigation was on to nab the culprits.

The pattern of accusation was

not a slip of the tongue, but premeditated and repeatedly told intentionally by a democratic party from its party office. It was the responsibility of every citizen in the state to maintain restraint, he said.

On charges that the police did not attend to the phone calls made by TDP leaders to inform about the attacks, the DGP said he himself attended a WhatsApp call while he was at the parade practice session in the Indira Gandhi Municipal Stadium. He said that the voice of the caller was clear, but he could not hear properly in view of the sounds of the parade drums.

The DGP said that the SP then attended the call; however, a few media friends penned the other way round that the calls were not attended. The police personnel in the police station also responded to the calls and took action accordingly, he said.

Patthabhi arrested YSRCP leaders comes down heavily on Oppn

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Amidst high drama police taken TDP leader Kommareddy Pattabhiram into custody on Wednesday night. Pattabhi's controversial remarks against chief minister YS JaganMohan Reddy on Tuesday that had enraged YSRCP cadres who went on a rampage on the TDP offices across the state. On Wednesday night police in large scale went to Pattabhi's residence and taken him into custody.

Pattabhi's family members alleged that police had barged into their residence and detained him illegally without even showing any FIR copy or notices. DGP Gautam Sawang in the afternoon found fault with Pattabhi's remarks against the chief minister and added those remarks triggered to some unfortunate incidents. YSRCP cadres also ransacked Pattabhi's residence on Tuesday night. Pattabhi has been shifted to Governorpet police station.

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP leaders came down heavily on TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu and TDP leaders for indulging in dirty and cheap politics by making derogatory comments against Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy and said TDP has been doing so only to prove its existence.

Speaking to media at Lake View guest house in Hyderabad on Wednesday, Agriculture Minister

Kurasala Kannababu said TDP leaders, on the orders of Chandrababu Naidu have stooped so low and used filthy language against the Chief Minister only to instigate violence, gain sympathy and save TDP and demanded an apology from Naidu.

He said the Chief Minister and YSRCP leaders are calm over TDP leaders' comments, but the

cadre who are offended won't be calm.

He said Naidu has been stating that he would go on 36 hour strike. All this drama is to conduct the strike only to prove the existence of TDP.

Sharing the same venue, MLA Ambati Rambabu questioned

whether Chandrababu Naidu was supporting the remarks made by TDP leader Pattabhi against the Chief Minister.

He flayed TDP for making derogatory comments against DGP and said TDP has been trying to mud sling on YSRCP to gain people's sympathy.

CM reimburses interest of Jagananna Thodu loans

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Under Jagananna Thodu scheme, Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Wednesday reimbursed the interest amount of Rs 16.36 crore to the 4,50,546 beneficiaries who availed loans and made timely repayments between November 2020 and September 2021.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister said that the scheme is aimed to benefit the small and petty vendors, artisans by providing a working capital, who usually approach private parties for loans and often fall into debts.

He said that the government is relieving them from paying heavy interests, by facilitating loans from banks and upon timely repayment



of loans, all the interest amount shall be reimbursed directly to the beneficiaries' accounts, and further, they will be eligible to take the next loan.

Going into the details, he said that a total of 9,05,458 beneficiaries have availed interest free loans worth Rs 905 crore in two spells of

Jagananna Thodu. In November 2020, almost 5.35 lakh people and in June 2021, another 3.70 lakh people have taken loans. In this regard, the government reimbursed the interests to 4,50,546 people who repaid their loans.

The Chief Minister said that from now on Jagananna Thodu

scheme will be held twice a year, in December and June, where new loans will be given to those who have repaid the loans and the interest shall be reimbursed along with the new loans.

He appealed to the beneficiaries to repay their loans on time to avoid overdue and NPA, which could hamper the chances of availing loans in future. He said that there are five percent NPA and 11 percent overdue in the loans taken under the scheme and directed the officials to create complete awareness on Jagananna Thodu to the beneficiaries taking loans, clearly explaining the need of timely repayment. In this context, people can call on 08912890525 to get their queries answered.

Cuss word used by Pattabhi enraged YSRCP cadre

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The cuss word used by TDP spokesperson Kommareddy Pattabhiram against the chief minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy that had enraged the YSRCP cadres on Tuesday has become a point of discussion and a rallying point all along the day on Wednesday. The Hindi cuss word that is loosely translated into son of a prostitute is what enraged the YSRCP activists that had led to attacks on TDP offices.

"How can Pattabhi use such a cuss word against the chief minister who is a mass leader having a huge following. It had really hurt

us. Since the last one month though it has been clarified that Andhra Pradesh has nothing to do with the drugs haul caught in Gujarat, pattabhi was in the forefront in linking it to Jagan personally.

We have been keeping calm and maintaining restraint for so many days. It doesn't mean that TDP leaders can have a free run. How can he use such a cuss word?," pointed out a YSRCP leader.

In reaction to foul and filthy language being used by TDP leaders including its chief N Chandrababu Naidu and his son Nara Lokesh, YSRCP had called for a protest 'Janagraham' on Thursday.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:

Ashwin & Krishna Paksha

Panchangam

Tithi : Pratipada 22:15

Nakshatram : Ashwini 16:17

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

Rahukalam : 1:27 pm - 2:53 pm

Yamagandam : 6:14 am - 7:40 am

Varjyam : 11:54 am - 1:39 pm, 12:00 am - 4:43 am

Gulika : 9:07 am - 10:33 am

Good Time : (to start any important work)

Amritakalam : 8:24 am - 10:09 am

Abhijit Muhurtham : 11:37 am - 12:23 pm

VIJAYAWADA
WEATHER

Forecast: Scattered thunderstorms

Temp: 33/24

Humidity: 66%

Sunrise: 6:10 am

Sunset: 05:50 pm

Current Weather Conditions

Updated OCTOBER 20, 2021 5:00 PM

India nears 100 cr Covid jabs mark

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As India nears the milestone of administering 100 crore Covid vaccine doses, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Wednesday appealed to all those who are eligible to get inoculated without delay and contribute in the historic vaccination journey of India.

A series of events have been lined up to celebrate the milestone of administering 100 crore Covid vaccine doses. Mandaviya will launch a song by singer Kailash Kher and an audio-visual film at the Red Fort.

"The country is close to making a vaccine century. To be a part of this golden opportunity, I appeal to the citizens who are yet to be vaccinated to contribute in this historic golden vaccination journey of India by getting vaccinated immediately," he

said in a tweet in Hindi.

The SpiceJet will unveil a special livery at the Delhi airport to celebrate the 100 crore vaccine milestone on Thursday. The health minister, Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia and SpiceJet CMD Ajay Singh will be present on the occasion. Mandaviya had earlier said that announcements will be made on airplanes, ships, metros and at railway stations when India achieves its target of administering 100 crore doses. Celebrations will also be held at central government hospitals in the city to mark the occasion.

"After 100 crore doses are administered, we will go in mission mode to ensure that those who have taken their first dose take their second dose too to ensure they are protected against COVID-19," Mandaviya had said.

Govt plans big to celebrate 100-crore vaccination mark

KAUSHIK GUNUGANTI ■ HYDERABAD

India is likely to achieve its 100-crore vaccination mark on October 21, according to top sources in the Union Health Ministry.

The Centre is planning to celebrate the feat of administering 100 crore Covid-19 vaccine doses by lighting up 100 monuments across the country in the colours of the National Flag.

"Altogether 100 selected monuments across the country are going to be lit in the Tricolour to mark 100 crore Covid vaccine doses being administered in the country. We are working on it," ASI director (monuments) NK Pathak said.

Among them were Charminar, Golkonda fort,



Warangal fort and Ramappa temple of Telangana.

In a peek at what is being planned for the day, health ministry sources revealed that airline SpiceJet has vol-

unteered to cover its aircraft with the hoarding of "one billion vaccines" to celebrate the vaccination milestone.

The government will be

looking at running hashtags of #vaccinecentury on social media on that day. Top government representatives will likely tweet special videos congratulating the efforts of the healthcare workers across the country.

Plans are also being made to make announcements in public transport facilities such as railway station platforms, trains and on Indian ships once the milestone of 100 crore vaccines is reached.

In addition to this, the efforts of the frontline and healthcare workers in remote areas, have been chronicled in the newly-launched book 'Sentinels of the Soil', that encapsulates stories of hardship faced by healthcare workers from various states who travelled to help propel India's vaccination drive.

Andhra Pradesh logs 523 new Covid cases

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Andhra Pradesh on Wednesday reported 523 Covid-19 new cases, taking the caseload to 20,61,810, while the death toll rose to 14,320 with three more deaths.

Chittoor district accounted for the highest number of fresh infections with 87 followed by Guntur with 78, a state government bulletin said, providing details of the last 24 hours ending 9 AM today.

With 608 people being cured, the total recoveries are at 20,41,924, leaving 5,566 active cases. Only two districts-Prakasam (2) and Krishna (1) reported fresh deaths.

East Godavari district topped the chart with 1,074 active cases followed by Chittoor-945. Over 44,000 samples were tested today and cumulatively over 2.91 crore samples have been tested.



YSRCP leaders comes down heavily on Oppn...

Continued from Page 1

He demanded Chandrababu Naidu to announce that the comments made by Pattabhi are wrong and then sit for hunger strike and added that law take its own course of action against Pattabhi for his remarks.

Speaking to media at party central office in Tadepalli, Civil Supplies Minister Kodali Venkatswara Rao (Nani) said Chandrababu Naidu has been conspiring to create unrest in the state to benefit Nara Lokesh.

He slammed TDP for propagating false information on supply of drugs and said TDP is trying to link every issue to the Chief Minister and create a scene out of it to gain sympathy for it.

He said the bandh called by TDP was utter failure and



added that even Heritage didn't close the shop. He slammed Pawan Kalyan for supporting Naidu and questioned why he was silent when Janasena activists attacked Posani Krishna Murali's home.

Meanwhile, speaking at a separate press conference at party office in Kadapa here on Wednesday, Chief Whip Gadikota Srikanth Reddy slammed Chandrababu Naidu and TDP leaders for their derogatory comments against

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy and said the opposition has stooped so low only to prove their existence and unable to bear internal rebellion in their party. He said Naidu had directed the TDP leaders to provoke people through hate speech against the Chief Minister and added that Naidu was indulging in conspiracies and dirty politics unable to bear the people's support to the Chief Minister.

Naidu responsible...

Continued from Page 1

He said that the opposition is unable to digest the good governance and is trying to confuse, mislead and create a wrong impression to the public by spinning lies as stories.

Recalling the past actions of TDP, he said that MLA Roja and Chevireddy Bhasker Reddy were harassed during TDP rule and unlike the previous government, YSRCP leaders are not in such a path. Summons were issued to Nakka Anandababu within the purview of police authority, however the opposition had created a scene around the issue. He said that similar reactions can be expected in future if the same scenario gets repeated.

He said that Chandrababu Naidu should apologise like a dignified person before taking up deeksha or at least issue clarification that there is nothing wrong with the abusive remarks made. He demanded the leaders of the other parties to respond over the issue and express their take on it.

Denied bail by special NDPS court, Aryan Khan moves HC...

Continued from Page 1

The matter is likely to be mentioned on Thursday before Justice N W Sambre seeking urgent hearing, legal sources said.

The special NDPS Act court in its 21-page order noted that WhatsApp chats of Aryan Khan prima facie revealed that he was "dealing in illicit drug activities on a regular basis" and therefore it cannot be said that he was not likely to commit a similar offence if released on bail.

It also held that Aryan Khan knew that his friend and co-accused Arbaaz Merchant was in possession of drugs, and hence there was conscious possession even though the NCB had not found any drugs on Aryan himself.

Considering the prima facie involvement of the appli-



cants/accused No 1 to 3 (Aryan Khan, Merchant and Dhamecha) in commission of grave and serious offence, this is not a fit case for granting bail, the judge said in the order.

The material placed before it by the NCB showed on the face of it that section 29 of the NDPS Act, pertaining to con-

s piracy, was applicable, said the court. Therefore, it is not possible to record a satisfaction at this stage that the applicants have not committed any offence under the NDPS Act, the order said.

Case papers and voluntary statements of Aryan Khan and Arbaaz Merchant disclosed that they possessed

drugs for consumption and enjoyment, the court noted further.

These things go to show that accused No 1 (Aryan) was having knowledge of the contraband concealed by accused No 2 (Merchant) in his shoes, it said.

Although no contraband is found in the possession of accused No 1, six grams of charas was found in possession of accused No 2 of which accused No 1 (Aryan) was having knowledge and thus it can be said that it was in conscious possession of both the accused, the court added.

In Aryan's WhatsApp chats, there is reference to "bulk quantity and hard drugs" and "there is prima facie material showing that accused No 1 was in contact with persons dealing in prohibited narcotic substances," the order said.

CBI files chargesheet in Dhanbad judge murder case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has filed a charge sheet against two accused in the alleged murder of Dhanbad Judge Uttam Anand, who was mowed down by an auto-rickshaw on July 28, officials said on Wednesday.

The CBI has filed the charge sheet against auto-rickshaw driver Lakhman Verma and his accomplice Rahul Verma. They are both in judicial custody, they said.

CCTV camera footage showed that the judge was jogging on one side of a fairly wide road at Randhir Verma Chowk in Dhanbad when a heavy auto-rickshaw veered towards him, hit him from behind and fled the scene, killing him.

The case was handed over to the CBI by the Jharkhand government.

The CBI had dispatched a 20-member team under its ace investigator VK Shukla to probe the case. Shukla was recently awarded by the Union Home Ministry for being among the best investigators.

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG	
Dressed/With Skin	₹256
Without Skin	₹276
Broiler at Farm	₹142
EGG RATES ₹/100	
VIJAYAWADA	425
HYDERABAD	428
VISAKHAPATNAM	470
RETAIL PRICE	₹4.25

Impose President's rule in Andhra, Naidu to prez

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) president and Leader of Opposition in Andhra Pradesh Assembly N. Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday wrote to President, Prime Minister and Union Home Minister seeking President's rule in the state citing what he called breakdown of constitutional machinery in the state.

The former chief minister also demanded a probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) into Tuesday's attacks on TDP offices and its leaders. He also sought protection by central police forces for the offices of the principal opposition party and key opposition leaders in the state.

Naidu sent letters to President Ram Nath Kovind, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah along with images, video clips and newspaper cuttings pertaining to Tuesday's attack on

TDP's central office at Mangalagiri and other party offices and houses of party leaders.

He said state-wide attacks planned against TDP in a span of couple of hours are clear indications of pre-meditated and pre-planned attacks jointly orchestrated by the chief minister, chief minister's office and the Director General of Police (DGP).

He called the attacks state-sponsored terror against people and political parties and alleged that the police colluded with attackers.

"This is not something unprecedented, it is actually the culmination of two-and-half years of intimidation and attacks by the ruling party in Andhra Pradesh on different sections of the society and democratic institutions, be it political parties, legislature, judiciary, bureaucracy and media," wrote Naidu.

"If left unchecked, state-spon-

sored violence will only escalate further and spill across state borders, threatening national security. Thus, there is a complete failure of law and order along with the breakdown of constitutional machinery in Andhra Pradesh. This current situation of widespread lawlessness constitutes an apt case for the imposition of Article 356," he added.

He said around 200 YSRCP goons attacked the TDP central office which is within a km from the office of the DGP. Never in the history of Indian democracy, did a ruling party henchmen attack the central office of the principal opposition party, he wrote.

Naidu alleged that the state-wide attacks were carried out with a view to curb the opposition with regard to drugs like heroin and cannabis. He also referred to seizure of 3,000 kilos of heroin at Mundra Port with

the importing organisation being registered in Vijayawada.

In his six-page letter, Naidu gave a detailed sequence of events leading to the attack on party headquarters. The former chief minister claimed that he personally called DGP around 5.03 p.m but he responded only by saying that he is busy. Sensing danger, the staff of TDP office also called Mangalagiri police but in vain, he said.

Naidu said ever since YSRCP came to power in 2019, there has been a concerted effort to thwart democracy by crushing dissent and filing false cases against the members of TDP. He also claimed that during the last two years, Andhra Pradesh has turned into a hub for criminal activities and emerged as an epicentre of drugs in general and cannabis. That drugs were being smuggled from Andhra Pradesh was corroborated by police of other states, especially Gujarat, Telangana, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh.

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Drugs trade rampant ever since Jagan became CM, says Lokesh

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) general secretary Nara Lokesh on Wednesday slammed Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy for the attack on Telugu Desam Party (TDP) party headquarters.

Addressing a press conference here in Amaravati, Lokesh said, "Jagan Reddy once again showed sadism by sending gangs to carry out a 'hit and run' attack. YCP goons launched a surprise attack when there were few leaders in the TDP office and vanished in no time. Instead of using such hit and run tactics like a coward, CM Jagan should come for direct flights with the TDP committed leadership."

Lokesh asked the DGP what he was doing when the culprits'



vehicles came and returned in front of his office located near the TDP office. "No action has been initiated against anybody though 24 hours have passed since the attack. A DSP was seen asking the attackers to get into the cars and go after the attack. This was state-sponsored terrorism with support from the police," he added.

Lokesh said drugs and ganja were traded ever since Jagan Reddy became the Chief Minister. "Everybody knew how a ruling party MLA was involved in transporting ganja in the Andhra Pradesh - Telangana border. He could not accept the TDP challenge for taking drug tests," he added.

Duly followed assessment scheme, CBSE to SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBSE on Wednesday told the Supreme Court that it has "duly followed" the assessment scheme in evaluating marks of class XII students whose exams were cancelled

due to the Covid. "We have duly followed the policy," the counsel representing the CBSE told the bench.

On June 17, the top court had approved the assessment schemes of the CISCE and the CBSE.

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH FOREST DEPARTMENT		
Office of the Divisional Forest Officer, Logging Division, Chintur		
Ref.No: 287/2016/LB	SPECIAL SALE NOTICE FOR BAMBOO	Date: 21.03.2020
It is informed to all the bidders that special sales will be conducted at GBD - Muthugudem (Bamboo every month 3" A.N.) and GTD-Chintur (Bamboo every month 3" F.N.) from November-2021 to March-2022 in Logging Division, Chintur as per the instructions of the Chief Conservator of Forests, Rajamahendravaram Circle, Rajamahendravaram vide RC No. 333/2020/PM4, dt. 13.10.2021 in addition to regular routine sales of 17" and 18th of every month. The details are as follows: 1) Name of the Depot, GTD, Chintur (Timber), Regular sale date 17" of every month. 2) GTD, Muthugudem (Bamboo), 3rd of every month (F.N.), 18th of every month 3) GTD, Chintur (Bamboo), 3rd of every month (A.N.), 19th of every month, from November 2021 to March-2022. 4) GTD-Rekhalapally (Timber), 28th of every month. Those who are interested can participate in the open auction by paying Rs. 5,000/- as EMD. Not less than 1/4" sale amount should be paid on the date of sale. Further details can be obtained from Division Office and GTD-Chintur Range Office during office hours on the phone numbers 910659162, 6790400401 and 9441920789.		
Divisional Forest Officer (FAC), Logging Division, Chintur		
DHPR R.O. No.: 1185/CL/NDV/1/1/2021-22 Dt.: 20.10.2021		

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AP politics reaches flashpoint with personal abuses in filthy language

SNV SUDHIR
■ VIJAYAWADA

The new trend in Andhra Pradesh politics of hurling personal abuses in foul language that had begun in 2014 reached a flashpoint on Tuesday with the TDP's spokesperson Kommareddy Pattabhiram's 'below the belt' comments against Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy and the reaction by YSRCP cadres who ransacked TDP offices across the state. YSRCP leaders described it as a "cause and effect reaction."

Although leaders of both the TDP and the YSRCP have hurled abuses it was confined towards a certain level of leadership. There were instances when YSRCP leaders like R K



Roja, Tammineni Sitaram, Dharmana Krishnadas and Kodali Nani had made caustic personal remarks against TDP leaders.

However, YSRCP leaders point out that what Pattabhi spoke on Tuesday against a sitting Chief Minister was nothing but a new low in politics.

YSRCP leaders recall that the trend began during the run up to the 2014 polls when TDP chief N. Chandrababu Naidu

had engaged in character assassination of party chief Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy by calling him a 'psycho' repeatedly during the poll campaign.

After the 2014 polls, they say the hurling of abuses continued by TDP leaders like Bonda Umamaheswar Rao, Gorantla Butchiah Chowdhary, K. Atchennaidu and Devineni Uma on the floor of the Assembly.

After the 2019 polls even the

top leadership of the TDP like its supremo N. Chandrababu Naidu and his son Nara Lokesh had made some abusive comments that didn't match their stature like the 'Em peekuntaro peekkondi' comment.

"Our cadres have always maintained restraint since 2014 when Naidu called our leader a 'Psycho'. Now, after the 2019 polls, whether out of frustration or to keep up the sagging morale of TDP cadres person-

al abuses by TDP leaders, including Naidu and Lokesh, have gone up. The pent up anger over the last few years exploded on Tuesday and a few mobs might have resorted to attacks. How long can they maintain restraint? There should be an end somewhere. None can justify such attacks, but at the same time none should play with public emotions, especially those who follow a mass leader like Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy," a senior YSRCP leader told 'The Pioneer'.

The leader also added that the top leadership of TDP like Lokesh had started addressing the Chief Minister as Jagan 'Reddy' stressing the second part of the name to indicate his caste.

Naidu urges PM for ST status to Andhra Valmikis and Boyas

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Leader of the Opposition N Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi for inclusion of Valmiki and Boya communities of Andhra Pradesh in the Scheduled Tribes (ST) list through a bill in the Parliament. On the occasion of Maharishi Valmiki's birth anniversary, Naidu wrote a letter to the PM stressing the need for resolving a long-pending issue before the Central Government with regard to the demand of Valmikis and Boyas.

The TDP chief said that the two communities were not included in the ST list despite favourable recommendations by the Anantarama Commission and several other panels. In 1964, the Government of Andhra



Pradesh passed orders stating that Valmikis and Boyas in the Rayalaseema and Coastal Andhra are one and the same. In 1968, the two communities were included in the ST list irrespective of regions.

Chandrababu Naidu said: "Unfortunately, the then Government on 27th July 1977 passed orders stating that only Valmikis living in the agency area come under the ST list. This unjust order by the government grossly ignored the earlier recommendations made by the various committees and led to differences among

Valmikis in Western Ghats, Northeastern Andhra Pradesh and the Boyas inhabiting different parts of Andhra Pradesh. In 1991, the Government of India included Valmikis and sub-groups like Nayak, Nayaka, Beda, Bedar, etc., in the ST list."

The TDP chief said that the Valmikis and Boyas in the Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh traditionally had strong social ties and marital relations. However, while their counterparts in Karnataka have been included in the ST list, the status of Valmikis and Boyas in Andhra Pradesh is confusing. Against this backdrop, the previous government under the Telugu Desam Party had attempted to resolve the issue scientifically and academically and recommended the inclusion of Valmikis and Boyas in the ST list.

Andhra woman donates 1 kg of gold to Yadadri

PNS ■ KADAPA

Donation of gold to Lord Sri Lakshmi Narasimha swamy temple in Yadadri is not only pouring in from different parts of the State but also from Andhra Pradesh with an industrialist and ZPTC Chairperson M. Jayamma from YSR Kadapa district deciding to donate one kg gold to the temple.

She described the initiative taken by the Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao to reconstruct the temple as a 'yagnam'. The Chief Minister, who reviewed the renovation works at Yadadri on Tuesday, said that 125 kgs

of gold was required for the gold plating of temple gopuram.

She said that she along with her family members would hand over a cheque to the Chief Minister during his next visit to Yadadri. She thanked the Chief Minister for relentlessly striving for the overall development of the temple and expressed happiness for contributing for the temple development on behalf of her family.

Jayamma said that she has strong belief in Sri Venkateswara Swamy temple in Tirupati and Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple in Yadadri.

TEEN JUMPS OFF NINTH FLOOR OF BUILDING, DIES

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A 17-year-old student allegedly killed herself by jumping from the ninth floor of a multi-storied building at Miyapur. Police said that her poor performance in the exams is suspected to be the reason behind the suicide.

The deceased, Jahnvi Negi, a Class XII student, was residing at the building in Miyapur with her parents, Virender Singh Negi and Sonia Negi, along with a younger sibling Tarun Negi for the last two years, said the police.

"Jahnvi was reportedly upset over her poor performance in examinations for the last few months and is said to

have even isolated herself from her family members. On Tuesday night, when the family members were absent, Jahnvi is suspected to have jumped from the ninth floor of the apartment building and killed herself. The death came to light when the watchman heard a loud thud of the body hitting the ground and found a wounded Jhanvi," said the police, adding that by the time the family and neighbours tried to rush her to a hospital, she had succumbed to injuries. The Miyapur Police booked a case under section 174 (suspicious death) of the CrPC and said that no suicide note was found at the scene of offence.

Gold worth Rs 59L seized at RGIA

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The customs officials at the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport seized smuggled gold worth Rs 59.03 lakhs from a passenger on Wednesday.

According to the officials, the gold, weighing more than 1200 grams, was found con-

cealed inside the railing beneath the seats. It is unknown which passenger concealed the gold underneath the seats, said the customs officials.

The customs officials have seized the gold and have registered a case. An investigation is underway to identify the passenger, said officials. The case is under investigation.

Traffic advisory for Police Commemoration Day today

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Traffic would be diverted in Vijayawada on Thursday as Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy is attending the Police Commemoration Day parade at the Indira Gandhi Municipal Corporation (IGMC) Stadium.

The CM would also release a book on the sacrifices made by the police, and will also address the gathering. He will also give financial assistance to the families of police martyrs.

Vijayawada Police Commissioner B. Srinivasulu said that traffic would be diverted in Vijayawada on Thursday

due to the Police Commemoration Day function from 7 am to 10 am.

All traffic including APSRTC buses would be diverted to other routes. He said that traffic on MG Road (Bandar road) would be diverted from 7 am to 10 am.

He said that vehicles coming

from Benz Circle would not be allowed on to Bandar Road and will be diverted on to the Fakirgudem-Screw Bridge-Netaji Bridge-Bus Stand route.

He said that only vehicles of invitees to the Police Commemoration Day programme would be allowed on to Bandar Road. The traffic

going towards Benz Circle through Bandar Road from the Police Control Room would be diverted through Eluru Road to the RTC Y Junction-Swana palace-Pushpa Hotel Center-Jammi Chettu Center-Siddhartha Junction route.

APSRTC buses including city services going towards Benz

Circle will not be allowed on Bandar Road. These buses would be diverted to Route Number 5 and Eluru Road.

The police appealed to the public to cooperate with the department for the smooth conduct of the CM's programme on Police Commemoration Day.

Rlys cop saves teen's life at Vijayawada station

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Divisional Railway Manager Shivendra Mohan appreciated the display of bravery by M Narsimha Rao, RPF Head Constable, in saving a teen's life in the nick of time. Narasimha Rao displayed exemplary courage and watchfulness during the act.

On Monday, Narsimha Rao, who was deployed on platform duty, was attending Train No 02705 Guntur-Secunderabad Intercity Express on Platform No 10 when he noticed a boy aged about 16 years slipping down from D-1 Coach in between the platform and the train. He immediately ran and dragged the boy out risking his own life. He cautiously pulled out the boy to safety. The boy had a slight injury. Noticing this, the guard halted the train, and the boy was safely handed over to his parents.

The boy and his parents were travelling from Vijayawada to Secunderabad. As he got down to buy a water bottle, the train started moving. Fearing that he might miss the train, the boy ran towards the coach to board the moving train. In the process of getting into the train, the boy slipped and fell down.

Co-passengers and guards appreciated the timely act of Rao. The boy's mother wrote a letter of appreciation to the RPF team for saving her son and expressed her gratitude.



Home Minister flags off garbage collection vehicles

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Home Minister Mekathoti Sucharita flagged off garbage collecting autorickshaw trucks under the Clean Andhra Pradesh (CLAP) initiative here on Wednesday. The vehicles were flagged off at the Collector's office.

Speaking on the occasion, she said that Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy is aiming to make Andhra Pradesh a clean state, and had launched the garbage collecting vehicles for that purpose.

She said that by collecting a charge of Rs 60 from each house sanitation would be provided effectively in rural areas.

MP Ayodhya Rami Reddy

said that efforts were being made to generate electricity from garbage. He said that every day 2,500 tonnes of garbage was being collected. He added that efforts were on to set up the plant to generate electricity in a month.

The plants to generate electricity from garbage for the first time were being established in Guntur and Visakhapatnam.

Three plants to generate power from garbage would also be established in EG, WG and in Rayalaseema districts. AP would emerge a model state for generating power from garbage, he said.

Collector Vivek Yadav said

that 474 villages were taken up under the Swachha Sankalpa initiative to maintain sanitation and to keep villages clean and tidy.

He said that 107 autorickshaw trucks were allocated to the district to collect garbage. This is aimed at making Guntur district garbage-free, the Collector said.

MPs Alla Ayodhya Rami Reddy, M. Venkataramana Rao, MLC Kalpalatha, MLAs Md. Mustafa, Maddali Giridhar and Collector Vivek Yadav were among those who were present.

Mayor Kavati Shiva Naga Manohar Naidu said that 224 battery powered vehicles would be inducted soon to collect garbage from households.

3 held with hashish oil worth Rs 6 lakh

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Commissioner's South Zone Task Force team, along with the Banjara Hills Police, nabbed three men and seized 1.02 litres of hashish oil worth Rs 6 lakh from them on Wednesday.

The accused were identified as Mohd Mahboob Ali alias Shooter, 33, Md. Sarfaraj, 20, and Abdul Aslam, 26, said the police, adding that two more associates, Mohd Haji Prasha and Venkatanarayana, were reportedly absconding.

The prime accused, Mahaboob Ali, is a habitual offender who was earlier involved in two robbery case, one attempt to murder case and one NDPS Act case, said the police.

"As he was addicted to narcotics, he hatched a plan to procure and sell hashish oil in Hyderabad and Cyberabad areas and asked his friends to

join him to earn easy money. As per their plan, they went to Paderu in Chintapally, Visakhapatnam and contacted one Venkat, a local who sells to the needy customers. Later, Mahaboob regularly contacted Venkat to procure the drugs and sell the same here," police said.

As per their plan, they are primarily targeting the young students and offering them drugs for less cost and as they get addicted, they increase rates.

They have established a market in the city and become popular in their circle for peddling and selling drugs.

Based on a tip off, the police teams nabbed them and seized the contraband from their possession.

The apprehended accused, and seized material, were handed over to Banjara Hills Police for further investigation.

Man murdered at Habeebnagar

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

An electrician was stabbed to death at Mallepally, late on Tuesday night. Police said that an unidentified man stabbed the victim, before fleeing from the place.

The victim was identified as 23-year-old Shadab, an electrician by profession, residing at Mangalhat.

According to the Police, Shadab was on his two-wheeler and along with his friend when an unidentified person stopped him at Mallepally junction and then stabbed him to death using a sharp edged object. With the help of passersby, he was rushed to Osmania General Hospital for treatment, where he succumbed to injuries.



Tiger census begins in Nallamala

PNS ■ NAGARKURNOOL

The four-day tiger census using state-of-the-art high-sensitivity digitalised cameras began Tuesday in the Nallamala Reserve Forest under the guidance of experts.

The earlier census had concluded that the Amrabad Tiger Reserve in the Nallamala Forest had seven tigers, two cubs and 80 leopards. Local Adivasi leaders then said that their population had doubled.

Out of the 36,552 square km of forests, reserve forest comprised 3,172.26 square km and its buffer zone 446.27 square km.

The rest of the forest area was identified as low-level dense forests.

The tiger census will enumerate the tiger population in 2,760 forest beats in Atchampet, Amrabad and Nagarjuna Sagar forest divisions.

They will be divided into four blocks for enumeration. Over 324 highly trained forest personnel would enumerate the population using high-sensitivity cameras deployed at the rate of one every 15 feet. This time the tiger census would be done with the help of an ecological mobile application, a speciality of the census this year, District Forest Officer

Krishna Goud said.

The enumeration would take place in a radius of 15 km in each forest beat at the rate of five km per day. The daily enumeration report would be sent to the National Tiger Census Authority office at Bengaluru.

Earlier, the pug marks of tigers were compared to plaster of paris moulds. Now, the enumeration is being carried out using high-sensitivity cameras and an ecological mobile application, he said. The census would be carried out taking a forest beat as a unit as part of the all-India tigers' estimation-2022 project, he added.

Partially burnt body found at Pahadishareef

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The body of a man aged between 30 and 35 was found burning at Pahadishareef area in the city outskirts early on Wednesday.

Police said that he was killed elsewhere and body was dumped and set ablaze near the Mamidipally area road by unknown assailants.

"The body was still burning in the morning around 7 am when the nearby watchman noticed it and called the cops via dial 100. We noticed injuries on his neck and it is possible that he suffered blunt force trauma to the head," said the police, adding that they are yet to identify the body.

The Pahadi Shareef police shifted the body to the Osmania Hospital mortuary and booked a case under section 302 and 201 of the IPC and started a probe.

Sharmila begins 4,000-km padayatra

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

YS Sharmila, sister of Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy and founder-president of the YSR Telangana Party, on Wednesday began her 4,000 km padayatra in Telangana covering 90 Assembly constituencies out of the total 119 in the state.

Sharmila will walk 12 km per day and address at least nine public meetings.

The march, 'Praja Prasthanam', began from Chevella near here, YSRTP sources said.

"The aim of this Praja Prasthanam is to bring back YSR rule (former chief minister and her late father YS Rajasekhara Reddy) in the state. The aim is to ensure women and backward classes get their due share in Parliament and Legislative Assemblies," she said.

Party leaders have already prepared a route map targeting youth with the slogan 'Eetharam Yuvathaku Navatharam Nayakathwam' (new leadership for present



YSR Telangana Party founder-president YS Sharmila interacts with an elderly woman soon after launching her 4,000-km long padayatra from Chevella on Wednesday.

youth) on the plank of YSR welfare rule.

YSRTP leaders said that Sharmila will participate in a 'Rachabanda' programme every day during which she would have a one-to-one interaction with the people. She will visit a minimum of

three mandals in every constituency. YSRTP leaders have already chalked out an action plan to induct leaders from other political parties during Sharmila's padayatra. She will encourage the newly-inducted leaders subsequently to urge people to give her a

chance. She alleged that the state's youths are deprived of jobs pushing them into distress.

Sharmila had earlier walked more than 3,000 km as part of her padayatra during 2012-13 in undivided Andhra Pradesh in support of her brother.



‘Cases against Pattabhiram for using improper language’

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Home Minister Mekathoti Sucharita said that a case would be registered against Telugu Desam spokesperson Pattabhiram for using improper language against Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Talking to the media here on Wednesday, she said that the language used by TDP spokesperson Pattabhiram was objectionable. Cases had been registered against him previously, she said. She also denied the allegation levelled by Chandrababu Naidu that the DGP did not respond to his phone call the other day.

The Home Minister alleged that the TDP leaders incited hatred among people by making inflammatory statements. The TDP, unable to digest the implementation of various welfare schemes, is creating animosity among people, she said.

“The TDP leaders are trying to vitiate peace and the law and order situation by

The Home Minister alleged that the TDP leaders incited hatred among people by making inflammatory statements. The TDP, unable to digest the implementation of various welfare schemes, is creating animosity among people, she said.

making speeches using objectionable language. YSRCP activists could not digest the vulgar comments made by some TDP leaders,” she flayed.

Sucharita made it clear that there is no truth in the allegation made by the TDP leaders linking Andhra Pradesh to drugs. The government is eradicating the drug menace with an iron hand, she said.

PNS ■ GUNTUR

The police arrested many Telugu Desam Party leaders in Gudur, Prakasam and Kadapa districts in connection with the bandh called by the party. Meanwhile, the bandh call given by TDP president N Chandrababu Naidu evoked a lukewarm response in these districts. Normal life remained unaffected as all commercial establishments were open and APSRTC buses plied as usual.

The police detained TDP leaders at their houses and did not allow them to go out. They locked the doors of the district TDP office here. Former MLA T Shreenu Kumar and Kovelamudu Ravindra were prevented from going to the TDP office and they were whisked away to police station. A large number of police personnel were deployed in the bus station in the wee hours itself. However, TDP leader Nasir Ahmad managed to enter the RTC bus station premises and raised slogans against the government.

Former MLA Dulipallha Narendra Kumar was arrested and taken to the police station in Ponnuru. They prevented the TDP activists who were staging a dharna at Ambedkar centre in Bapatla and a heated argument took place between the TDP leaders and the police. The police arrested TDP in-charge V Narendra Varma.

In Narasaraopet, TDP activists who were taking out a rally to the RTC bus station were prevented at over bridge. The police arrested Chadalavada Aravinda Babu. In Tenali, the party workers obstructed RTC buses and took out a rally from the bus stand centre to the Municipal Office.

In Repalle, the TDP activists burnt Sakshi newspaper copies and raised slogans against the YSP government.

In Vinukonda, a huge rally was taken out and the police arrested some of the leaders. In Mangalagiri, the police arrested TDP leaders and activists when they tried to enforce bandh. The police prevented former minister Nakka Ananda Babu by detaining him in his house.

In Prakasam district, the bandh was partial. The police detained TDP leaders at their homes in Ongole, Purchur, Chirala, Addanki, Martur, Singarayakonda, Kandukur, Markapuram and Giddalur. They staged a dharna at RTC bus station in Ongole and prevented the buses. The police arrested and whisked them away.

Former MLA Damacharla Janardhan was also arrested. In Addanki, MLA Ravi Kumar staged a dharna on the national highway. He was arrested and taken to the police station. However, Parchur MLA Yeluru Sambashiva Rao made sure that the bandh was a success in his constituency. TDP activists burnt Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy in effigy. The police and TDP activists jostled for some time leading to a tense situation.

In Kondapi, MLA Dola Bala Veeranjaneeya Swamy picked up a heated argument with the police when he was detained in his house, which led to a struggle between the TDP activists and police. The MLA later squatted on the floor. The police arrested former MLA Kandula Narayana Reddy, M Ashok Reddy and Dr. Ugra Narasimha Reddy at various places. In Kadapa, the bandh evoked no response and normal life remained unaffected. TDP MLC B.Tech Ravi and other leaders were detained.

Meanwhile, in Bhimavaram in West Godavari district, some YSRCP leaders and activists took out a rally with the effigies of N Chandrababu Naidu and TDP spokesperson



Pattabhiram. The activists slapped the effigies with footwear at Prakasam chowk to register their protest against Pattabhiram using foul language to slam Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Addressing the gathering, YSRCP leaders condemned the nasty words used by Pattabhiram to criticise the Chief Minister. Unable to face Jagan Mohan Reddy in the election battle, the TDP leaders resort to ugly politics, they flayed. Mandal president P Vijaya Narasimha Raju, ZPTC K Narasimha Rao, State Gouda Corporation director K Nageswara Rao and other leaders were among those who participated in the programme.



Jagananna Thodu: Rs 1.6 cr disbursed to 43 K beneficiaries

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Prakasam District Collector Pravin Kumar said that over 43,000 beneficiaries were given a total of Rs 1.6 crore under the Jagananna Thodu scheme in the second tranche.

Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy released the second tranche of Jagananna Thodu scheme to the beneficiaries across the state on Wednesday.

Speaking on the occasion, Collector Pravin Kumar said that the government is bearing the entire interest burden and providing interest-free loans of Rs 10,000 per annum. So far, a total of Rs 905 crore of interest-free loans has been disbursed to 9,05,458 beneficiaries in the state. He said that Rs 16.36 crore was disbursed to 4,50,546 beneficiaries by the Chief Minister.



The Collector said that some beneficiaries could not repay the loans to the banks which had become overdue. He asked the secretariat staff to sensitise the beneficiaries on the schemes and ensure that the beneficiaries would repay the loans so that they could get benefits. The Collector said that an awareness programme would be conducted on the scheme to sensitise the beneficiaries.

The Collector and MP Srinivasulu Reddy handed over

a cheque of Rs 63,26,001 towards loans and another cheque of Rs 1,60,55,010 to clear the interests of beneficiaries of the scheme. The MP said that the government is sanctioning interest-free loans of Rs 10,000 to petty traders. Joint Collector T S Chetan, Municipal Commissioner Bhagyalakshmi, MEPMA PD Ravi Kumar and DRDA PD B Babu Rao were among those who were present.

Later, Collector Pravin Kumar said that all steps were taken to solve scarcity of sand and iron

for the construction of houses.

The Collector held a review meeting here on Wednesday with the officials concerned on the construction of houses for the beneficiaries. He directed the officials to speak with the beneficiaries in the villages. The construction of houses should be expedited.

The Collector informed that in Chirala constituency, only 73 percent progress has been made and construction of 1,356 houses is pending. He said that 90 per cent progress is made in Parchuru constituency and 70 per cent progress in Kothapatnam. He told officials that the construction target was 1,961 houses in Addanki constituency and only 338 houses have been built. He expressed dissatisfaction over tardy construction of houses in Ballikurava, Santhamaguluru,

Korisapadu and Addanki areas.

Pravin Kumar said the construction of 1,200 houses was yet to be started in Parchuru constituency, 549 houses in Maddipadu zone of Santhanuthalapadu constituency and 230 in Naguluppalapadu zone. In Darshi constituency, 77 per cent progress has been made. He said that there are 1,353 houses pending in Kondapi, 261 in Ponnaluru, 400 in Tanguturu and Singarayakonda, 299 in Jarugumalli, 463 in Giddalur, 402 in Bestavaripeta and 683 in Markapuram. He inquired about the technical problems encountered in the Dornala zone. District Joint Collector (Housing) K.S. Vishwanathan and Housing Department PD Sainath Kumar were among those who were present.

Attempt to murder case filed against Lokesh, 3 others

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In an interesting development after the attacks on TDP offices in the State, an attempt to murder case has been registered against TDP General Secretary Nara Lokesh and others for allegedly attacking Circle Inspector Nayak who had come to the TDP office.

In the attempt to murder case Lokesh was named as first accused, Ashok Babu as second accused, Alapati Raja as third accused and Tenali Shrawan Kumar as fourth accused. A case under the SC and ST Atrocity Act has also been registered against them along with the attempt to murder case.

Cases have also been registered against 70 TDP activists after TDP spokesperson Pattabhi Ram made vulgar statements against Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy on Tuesday during a press conference. This led to attacks on TDP offices by YSRCP activists.

Leader of the Opposition N. Chandrababu Naidu has given a call for a State bandh on Wednesday that was not successful.

Meanwhile, Chandrababu Naidu has decided to hold a 36-hour strike to protest against the attacks on TDP offices.

YSRCP leaders have been demanding apologies from the TDP for making vulgar comments against Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy.



YSRCP holds rally against comments of TDP leader

PNS ■ GUNTUR

YSRCP activists led by MLA Bolla Brahma Naidu took out a rally in Vinukonda on Wednesday protesting against the abusive comments of TDP spokesperson Pattabhiram against Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Holding banners, the YSRCP activists raised slogans

against the TDP leaders. MLAs Vidudala Rajani, Gopireddy Srinivasa Reddy, Kilari Rosaiah Annabattuni, Shreenu Kumar, Kona Raghupati and Ambati Rambabu took part in the rally. The YSRCP leaders demanded a public apology from the TDP leaders for the abusive language which they used to flay the Chief Minister.



Safari Park at Hyderabad Zoo reopens for visitors

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Safari Park at Nehru Zoological Park has been reopened for visitors and the zoo curator, S Rajashekar on Wednesday flagged off the safari vehicles.

The facilities were closed for visitors owing to the Covid pandemic and according to the zoo officials, the zoo park will be reopened with slight modifications.

The curator said the Safari Park happens to be one of the most exciting part of the zoo visit. Animals like Asiatic Lions, Royal Bengal Tigers, Sloth Bears and Indian Gaur are freely released and the visitors

are taken in the park in a caged vehicle for sighting the animals.

He however pointed out that sighting of animals was not guaranteed as they may hide behind the trees and rocks. The visitors can avail the facility of air-conditioned and non air-conditioned 25 seater vans to view the Safari Park.

The Safari Park drive service will cost Rs 75 and Rs 40 for adults and children respectively in the CNG bus. The AC Safari bus fare remains the same for adults and children, at Rs 120. The toy train ride will now cost Rs 40 for adults and Rs 20 for children.

SHORT TAKES

Boy dies as bus falls into pond

VISAKHAPATNAM: An eight-year-old student of a private school was killed as the school bus in which he was travelling fell into a pond near Koyyam village in Etcherla mandal in Srikakulam district on Wednesday. Four other students were severely injured and are undergoing treatment at the Rajiv Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS). There were eight students on the bus at the time of the accident. The deceased student was identified as M Raju. The rest of the students were rescued by locals. The bus that fell into the pond was later recovered with the help of an excavator. Villagers blamed the driver's negligence for the accident. The bus driver, who was allegedly driving the vehicle in a rash and negligent manner, lost control after facing some buffaloes. The bus plunged into the roadside pond and fell to one side. The locals noticed the bus falling into the waters and rescued five children. The police registered a case and further investigation is on.

Cocaine seized from two men

HYDERABAD: The Excise Enforcement team of Hyderabad seized 16 grams of cocaine from two men on Wednesday during a route watch. Upon receiving information regarding illegal transportation and possession of cocaine, the officials arrested Buta Singh and seized his car which was headed from Gachibowli to Towlichowki at about 2.30 pm, said the police, adding that his associate, Alex, a resident of Navi Mumbai, the supplier of cocaine, was later apprehended. “After incurring a loss in hotel business, Buta Singh got addicted to cocaine and has been using it for the last 3 years and also started selling the same to the needy customers by purchasing it for Rs 4,000 per gram and selling it for Rs 8,000 per gram, depending upon the situation. He collects the contraband by travelling to Mumbai from his peddler, Alex,” said the police. The two accused persons and the contraband were handed over to the Prohibition and Excise Station.

Youth jumps into Durgam Cheruvu

HYDERABAD: A 27-year-old man committed suicide by jumping into the Durgam Cheruvu lake at Madhapur on Wednesday morning. The youngster was identified as Surapaneni Akhil Sai, a native of Gudivada mandal of Krishna district in Andhra Pradesh residing at Mounika Towers in Guttala Begumpet, Madhapur. According to the police, Sai left his house on Wednesday morning. He told his friends that he was going to the Durgam Cheruvu lake. After reaching the pedestrian walkway near Olive Bistro Hill, he allegedly jumped into the lake and drowned.

Protest rally against attacks on Hindus in Bangladesh

PNS ■ ONGOLE

The activists of Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), Bajrang Dal, Matru Sekthi and the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) took out a rally here on Wednesday in protest against the attacks and atrocities against Hindus in Bangladesh.

Holding saffron flags, the activists took out a rally from Keshava Swamy Temple to the Collector's office raising slogans like 'Jai Sri Ram' and 'protect Hindus of Bangladesh'. The organisations demanded India's intervention to protect the Hindus in Bangladesh. The VHP and Bajrang Dal representatives submitted a representation, addressed to the President of India, to Collector Pravin Kumar.



ISKCON temple manager Subhasri Chaitanya Das deplored that the Hindus in our neighbouring country were facing attacks from

Muslims groups. Hindu temples are being destroyed there, he said and appealed to all to condemn the heinous acts. VHP Pranth Pramukh Soma Subba Rao and district president Tunugunta Mallikharjun Rao were among those who participated in the programme.

SP checks steps for Police Commemoration Day

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Superintendent of Police Malika Garg inspected the Smriti Parade Rehearsal and arrangements made at the Police Martyrs' Memorial Stupa at the District Police Ground here on Wednesday. She gave appropriate instructions to the officers.

The SP directed the police officers to successfully carry out various programmes and

activities being conducted as part of the Police Martyrs' Day celebrations in the district. She thoroughly discussed various aspects such as the arrival of the chief guest, politicians, other dignitaries, their invitation, selection of invitation cards, parking, parade management etc. and issued key directions to the officers. Additional SP B. Ravichandra, AR DSPA. Raghavendra Rao, RIs and staff were present.



INDIA CORNER

Drug supplier woman held with heroin worth Rs 21.70 crore in Mumbai

The Anti-Narcotics Cell (ANC) of the Mumbai Police arrested a 53-year-old woman supplier of drugs and seized 7.2 kg heroin worth Rs 21.70 crore from her possession in Sion Koliwada area, an official said on Wednesday. The ANC sleuths nabbed the alleged drug supplier, identified as Amina Hamza Shaikh alias Lali, a resident of suburban Mankhurd, on Tuesday night, he said. The seized heroin was meant to be distributed to other drug suppliers operating in Mumbai and to Lali's customers, the official said, adding the ANC has launched the search to nab Lali's contacts. Lali was previously arrested by the Worli and Ghatkopar units of the ANC for her alleged role in supplying banned drugs in 2015 and 2018, he said. "Officials of the Ghatkopar unit of the ANC acted on specific information that Lali was smuggling a huge quantity of heroin following which a trap was laid in Sion Koliwada and she was arrested with drugs," said DCP (ANC) Datta Nalawade. An FIR was registered under sections 8 (c) and 21 (c) of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (NDPS), he said.



ORDERS PROTECTION OF WITNESSES

'We think you are dragging your feet'; SC to Uttar Pradesh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday came down hard on the Uttar Pradesh government for its ongoing probe into the sensational Lakhimpur Kheri case, saying it thought police are "dragging" "feet" and they are required to "dispel" that impression and ensure recording of statements of witnesses before magistrates and their protection.

"We think you are dragging your feet, please dispel that impression," observed the top court, adding that the probe should not be an "unending story" and red-flagged the issue of non-recording of statements of nearly 40 prosecution witnesses, of the total 44, before judicial magistrates under section 164 of the CrPC.

"Please ask them to immediately take steps to record section 164 statements. That is the most important thing...protection to the victims as well as the witnesses," said the bench comprising Chief Justice N V Ramana and justices Surya Kant and Hima Kohli.

Statements under section 164 of the CrPC (Code of Criminal Procedure) are recorded before a judicial magistrate and they have evidentiary value. The apex court, hearing a matter about the October 3 violence in



Lakhimpur Kheri in which eight persons including four farmers were killed during a farmers' protest, was told by the state government that state-ments of four out of the 44 witnesses have been recorded by the judicial magistrate.

Ten people, including Union Minister of State for Home Ajay Mishra's son Ashish Mishra, have been arrested so far in connection with the case. The bench raised the issue of filing of status report on the day of hearing with the CJI observing, "we waited till 1 AM last night for any filing. But we received nothing".

Senior advocate Harish Salve, who appeared along with advocate Garima Prasad for the state government, said the status report has been filed in a sealed cover on Wednesday because of the impression that

it was for the perusal of the court only.

"No that was not required and we have just received it now...we never said anything about sealed covers," the bench said while declining the request to hear the matter on Friday. It listed the next hearing on October 26.

It said, "Mr Salve, you said that you (police) have examined 44 witnesses and out of them, four witnesses' statements have been recorded under section 164 (before a judicial magistrate) of CrPC. Why have you not recorded the statements of other witnesses under 164."

"It is going on. The process is going on my Lordships," Salve said, adding that earlier the concern was that it appeared that police were going "little soft on the accused and now they all have been arrest-

Samajwadi Party has moved from Samajwad to Pariwarwad: PM

In a dig at the Samajwadi Party, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said it has moved away from the ideology of Ram Manohar Lohia with its leaders practising 'Pariwarwad' instead of 'Samajwad'. The prime minister made the remark while addressing a rally after inaugurating the Uttar Pradesh's fourth international airport at Kushinagar near the site of Gautam Buddha's Mahaparinirvana, besides laying foundation stones of several other projects. UP is not limited to giving maximum number of PMs but being the birth place of Lord Rama, Lord Krishna and many other legendary figures, it has a pristine history, the prime minister remarked in his address. Highlighting benefits of a 'double engine' government in UP, he said over Rs 80,000 crore has been transferred in bank accounts of farmers in the state so far. Modi also praised the Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh for dealing sternly with criminals and land grabbers and also facilitating vaccination of more than 12 crore people so far.



MLA thrashes youth for questioning him

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

A video has appeared on social media showing Punjab Congress MLA Joginder Pal and his security personnel thrashing a youth for asking what work the legislator had done for his village.

As the incident left the party embarrassed, Punjab Deputy Chief Minister Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa said on Wednesday that a legislator has to serve the people and the MLA should not have behaved in this way.

In the video, Pal, an MLA from the Bhoo assembly seat in Pathankot district of poll-bound Punjab, is addressing a group of people on Tuesday.

Then a youth, identified as Harsh Kumar, could be heard questioning the legislator as to what work he had done during his tenure.

When a security man of the legislator held his arm to lead him away from the event, Joginder Pal could be heard asking the youth to come and speak to him.

'Meghalaya Guv's claim about me being Roshni Act beneficiary false'

PDP president Mehbooba Mufti on Wednesday asked Meghalaya Governor Satya Pal Malik to withdraw his purported comments that the former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister was a beneficiary of now-abandoned Roshni scheme, failing which legal action will be taken against him. "False & unsavoury utterances of Satya Pal Malik about me being a beneficiary of Roshni Act is highly mischievous. My legal team is preparing to sue him. He has the option to withdraw his comments, failing which I will pursue legal recourse," Mehbooba said in a tweet. Mehbooba shared a video in which Malik, who was the last Governor of Jammu and Kashmir state, is purportedly seen claiming that National Conference leader Farooq Abdullah, his son Omar Abdullah and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) chief Mufti has got plots of land under the Roshni scheme. The Roshni Act was brought in by the Farooq Abdullah government with the aim of granting proprietary rights to occupants of state land in lieu of charges. The money thus generated was to be used for setting up hydroelectric power plants in the erstwhile state.



BJP ruined India's economy in last 7 years: Sachin Pilot

PNS ■ JAIPUR

Attacking the Centre over inflation, fuel price hike, unemployment and other issues, former Rajasthan deputy chief minister and Congress leader Sachin Pilot on Wednesday said the government has "cheated" the country in every sector.

Addressing a Dalit sammelan at Chaksu near Jaipur, Pilot said that in the last seven years, "the BJP government ruined the economy, unemployment reached a historic peak, petrol, diesel and LPG cylinder have become expensive and inflation skyrocketed".

He also unveiled a statue of Dr B R Ambedkar on the occasion.

Pilot alleged that the government rubbed salt into the wound by bringing the three agricultural laws. The laws have been facing protests all over the country for a year, the Congress leader said.

He said wherever possible, the Congress and its government in the state will give full opportunity to the Dalits to progress. Pilot also expressed hope that a member of the community will be inducted as a cabinet minister in the state government in place of Master Bhanwar Lal Meghwal, who died last year while he was the social justice and empowerment minister.

The former deputy chief minister said Meghwal, who died due to brain hemorrhage,



worked for Dalits and raised their voice.

"He was a cabinet minister in our government. The place is now vacant and I have full faith that the All India Congress Committee (AICC) and the (Rajasthan) government will soon offer cabinet rank to a member of the Dalit community," Pilot said.

This was the first occasion when Pilot, who revolted against the leadership of Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot last year, has said anything about the cabinet. The demand for a cabinet reshuffle in the state is being raised for the past several months.

Without naming anyone, the Congress leader warned those who do politics and seek votes in the name of Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar but have no attachment with him. "Those who did not used to

see Ambedkar, Sardar Patel are worshipping them for votes and power. They are doing it under your pressure. This should not be forgotten. These people are experts in hypocrisy, they have no attachment to Ambedkar, but when votes have to be taken and when it comes to rule and throne, then they can worship anyone. They are 'Behrupriye' (impressionist)," he said.

Chief Minister Gehlot, AICC General Secretary Ajay Maken and Rajasthan Congress president Govind Singh Dotasra were also invited to the programme organised by Chaksu MLA Ved Prakash Solanki, who is considered close to Pilot. These invitees, however, gave the event a miss.

Gehlot was busy in a meeting to review seasonal diseases.

Pilot said these leaders were invited but they could not attend due to different reasons.

"I know our party and government is engaged in the work of development and welfare of Dalits," he said.

Recently, Gehlot and Pilot had travelled together in a helicopter along with Maken and Dotasra to address public meetings in Vallabh Nagar (Udaipur) and Dhariawad (Pratapgarh) assembly constituencies where bypolls are being held on October 30. It was the second occasion when they travelled together after last year's Rajasthan political crisis.

AIADMK petitions Governor for action against DMK

irregularities in civic polls

PNS ■ CHENNAI

The opposition AIADMK on Wednesday petitioned the Tamil Nadu Governor R N Ravi seeking action on the ruling DMK for its alleged irregularities in the recently held civic body elections in nine districts of the State.

AIADMK co-coordinator and former Chief Minister K Palaniswami, who led a delegation to petition the Governor at the Raj Bhavan here, said legal action would be initiated on former Chief Minister late J Jayalithaa's confidante V K Sasikala for claiming to be AIADMK's



general secretary. Speaking to reporters after submitting the petition, Palaniswami, who is the Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, accused the ruling DMK of indulging in irregularities during the con-

duct of the local body elections, and said his party's plea for a free and fair poll went unheeded.

"We gave a detailed representation to the Governor explaining how the DMK had murdered democracy and reduced the Tamil Nadu State Election Commission (SEC) to the stature of a puppet in the party's hands. We demanded action on the party," Palaniswami said. He alleged his party candidates who won by a whisker were announced as losers while their contenders, the DMK candidates, were declared elected.

Amarinder Singh an 'opportunist', betrayed Punjab: Randhawa

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Deputy Chief Minister Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa hit out at Amarinder Singh on Wednesday, calling him an "opportunist", a day after the former chief minister announced he would launch his own political outfit.

Randhawa also accused Singh of betraying Punjab for the last four and a half years.

On Tuesday, Amarinder Singh said he would soon announce his own political party and was hopeful of a seat arrangement with the BJP if the farmers' issue is resolved in their interest.



The two-time chief minister added that he will not rest until he secures the future of "my people and my state".

Reacting to this, the deputy chief minister said, "Captain Amarinder Singh is an opportunist leader who only thinks about himself, his family and his friends."

Referring to Singh's meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah last month, Randhawa asked he did not attempt to resolve the ongoing farmers' stir. He also blamed Amarinder Singh for the enhancement of the BSF's jurisdiction in Punjab. "He (Amarinder Singh) says Punjab is a border state.

Chhattisgarh: 77 fall ill after consuming food at weekly market

PNS ■ RAJNANDGAON

Seventy seven people, most of them children, fell ill after consuming various food items at a weekly market in a village in Chhattisgarh's Rajnandgaon district, a health official said on Wednesday.

The market was held on Tuesday in Gatapur Kala village under Thelkadih police station area limits, Rajnandgaon's chief medical and health officer Dr Mithlesh Chaudhary said.

As per preliminary information, these people had consumed 'gupchup' (pani puri-a spicy snack) and other food items.

Huge cache of weapons recovered on border

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

The Punjab Police and the BSF have recovered a huge cache of weapons near the India-Pakistan border in the Khemkaran area of Tarn Taran district, an official said on Wednesday.

In a joint operation, the Counter Intelligence wing of the Punjab Police and the Border Security Force (BSF) recovered 22 pistols, 44 magazines and 100 rounds of ammunition, the police official said. One kg of heroin was also recovered, he added. They were packed in a black kit bag concealed in a paddy field, the official said.

Officiating Director General of Police (DGP) Iqbal Preet Singh Sahota said police received secret information that a huge consignment of



arms and heroin had been concealed, following which the Counter Intelligence wing in Amritsar was sent to the spot and a search operation was planned with the BSF authorities.

During the preliminary investigations, it has come to light that as "conceal and clear" has been the most practised modus operandi of Pakistani smugglers, this consignment was placed by them in Indian territory across the fence and it was supposed to be retrieved by their Indian associates, according to an official statement.

CROP DAMAGE

Delhi to pay Rs 50K payout per hectare

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday announced a compensation of Rs 50,000 per hectare to farmers whose crops have been damaged due to unseasonal rains.

Speaking at a press briefing, he noted that revenue officials are conducting a survey of the damaged crops and it will be completed within two weeks. "The compensation at the rate of Rs 50,000 per hectare will be provided to the farmers afterwards in around two months," he said.

The CM underlined that the Delhi government is committed to helping the farmers and that it also paid compensation to them in the past at Rs 50,000 per hectare which is the highest in the country.

"Farmers of Delhi need not get distressed over damaged

crops, their son stands with them. Ever since AAP came into power in Delhi, we have made sure that the farmers do not feel helpless," Kejriwal said.

A delegation of farmers had recently met the chief minister seeking help of the government in view of crop damage due to rains.

"This is not a mere announcement. Take your son's word for it and we will ensure that all farmers get compensated," the CM said.

The AAP national convener further said district magistrates (DMs) and sub divisional magistrates (SDMs) have been directed to complete the surveying of damaged crops in two weeks. Afterwards, the compensation amount will be credited to the accounts of the affected farmers in 1-1.5 months, he said.

SW monsoon to withdraw completely from Oct 26

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The southwest monsoon will withdraw completely from the entire country around October 26, paving the way for the commencement of the north-east monsoon, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Wednesday.

After its late withdrawal from northwest India, the southwest monsoon remains active over some parts of the country.

The southwest monsoon withdrawal line currently passes through Kohima, Silchar, Krishnanagar, Baripada, Malkangiri, Nalgonda, Bagalkote, and Vengurla.

Conditions are becoming favourable for further withdrawal of the southwest monsoon from remaining parts of northeast India, the entire north Bay of Bengal, remaining parts of West Bengal and Odisha, some parts of the central Bay of Bengal, parts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, entire Goa, some



more parts of Karnataka and some more parts of central Arabian Sea around October 23, the IMD said.

"With likely setting in of northeasterly winds in the lower tropospheric levels over the Bay of Bengal and extreme south Peninsular India, the Southwest Monsoon is likely to withdraw from the entire country around 26th October 2021. Simultaneously, the Northeast Monsoon rains are also likely to commence over Southeast Peninsular India from around 26th October 2021," the Met

department said.

The northeast monsoon brings rains over Tamil Nadu, parts of Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Puducherry and Andhra Pradesh.

The withdrawal of the southwest monsoon from northwest India commenced on October 6. The retreat was the second-most delayed withdrawal of the southwest monsoon since 1975. The southwest monsoon withdrawal from northwest India in 2019 started on October 9.

Over 1,300 people rescued from flood-affected Uttarakhand: NDRF

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) has rescued more than 1,300 people from flood-affected areas of Uttarakhand and enhanced its rescue teams from 15 to 17, the federal force said on Wednesday. At least 46 people have died in rain-related

incidents in the state so far. The Kumaon region of the hill state has been severely hit by heavy rains, leading to razing of houses, washing away of some bridges and leaving many trapped in the debris. "So far, NDRF rescuers have evacuated more than 1,300 stranded people from Udhampur Singh Nagar and Nainital.

Situation still serious: Rahul Gandhi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday expressed sympathy for the Uttarakhand flood victims and urged people to follow safety norms as the situation in the state was still serious. He also asked Congress workers to extend all possible help in the relief work in the flood-hit state. "My condolences

to the Uttarakhand flood victims. The situation is still serious. Do follow the safety norms. My appeal to my Congress colleagues is to extend all possible help in the relief work," Gandhi said in a tweet in Hindi. At least 34 people have lost their lives in the Uttarakhand floods that hit the hill state after flash floods inundated several towns.

Nainital tourists venture out, respite from rain after two days

PNS ■ DEHRADUN/NAINITAL

Tourist town Nainital was returning back to normalcy on Wednesday after being battered by rains which cut off the place from the rest of Uttarakhand, inundated its roads and kept visitors confined to their hotel rooms. The Kumaon region, under which Nainital falls, has been the worst hit by the rains which began Sunday night, killing at least 46 people in the state as houses collapsed and bridges were washed away by swollen rivers. Union Home Minister Amit Shah was scheduled to visit the state capital Dehradun on Wednesday evening to take stock of the situation.

Fetch up!

Though there are ample vaccines now, fully vaccinated people still being fewer is alarming

It was vaccine hesitancy then. It is vaccine complacency now. Some people seem disinterested in taking the second dose of the COVID-19 vaccination. Many are convincing themselves that the chances of a third wave of the pandemic look dim because of low infection rates. Adherence to safety protocol has already slackened; so has the urgency to take the second dose. It is also no longer the case that vaccine stocks are low. They are ample. In the second week of October, 11.12 crore doses were available with the States on a given day but only 38 lakh doses were administered. In Odisha, around 13 lakh people were overdue for the second dose in August-end. Such cases are being reported from all the States. The longer waiting period of 84 days between the two Covishield jabs could be one reason for the low job rate. It is also possible that overcrowding at vaccination centres puts off some people. Or, like in rural areas, they may not want to travel long distances to get their jabs. Whatever the reasons, the fact is lakhs of people are not taking their jabs when they become due. In August, the Union Government said in response to an RTI query that over 3.86 crore Indians had failed to take the second dose within the stipulated time. The poor response for the second dose is making the Government jittery. For, the process of vaccination is incomplete till the second dose is administered.

Some hospital studies reveal that a single dose of Covishield offers protection against symptomatic infections with the Delta variant in a range of 18-61 per cent. The fully immunised had 97 per cent protection against death and the partly vaccinated, 69 per cent. Secondly, an incomplete vaccination gives the coronavirus the chance to infect or mutate in a manner to resist the vaccine. Either way, it militates against the massive vaccination exercise the country has undertaken. Remember how on account of complacency, the strains of tuberculosis bacteria began to resist antibiotics and the country registered the highest number of drug-resistance tuberculosis cases in the world. The Union health ministry is running campaigns about the importance of the second jab but says it cannot force people who deliberately miss the second jab to take it. In contrast, in a judgment in May, the Karnataka High Court made it the Government's obligation to ensure that the second dose is provided. Even though the case was about the scarcity of vaccines, in principle, The court said vaccination affects the right to life. The truth is, the Government can be faulted for the scarcity of doses, and the lack of adequate vaccination centres but it cannot be responsible for people's complacency. That is something the people have to handle for themselves. It is their responsibility to get vaccinated to be safe and, importantly, keep others safe.

PICTALK



Devotees take part in the International Dussehra festival, in Kullu

PTI

Straying off

As the farmers' protest approaches its first anniversary, the very spirit of it is in question

Are the farmers and their leaders protesting against the Union Government's three farm laws losing touch with reality? Have they lost their way, probably misguided by the political inputs they might be receiving by the Opposition parties in what was initially their fight for justice? Are they doing what they had set out to do? Or, have their shepherds unwittingly crossed on to another path and are leading the flock influenced by interested political entities? These are the questions that need asking as the farmers' protest approaches its first anniversary. Already, the protests have run out of fizz; so much so that a deserted Rakesh Tikait had to shed tears to emotionally blackmail the disgruntled farmers to make them return to the protest site. Since then, he has travelled far and wide, from West Bengal to Punjab and Haryana, to amass support — and possibly funds — for the farmers' cause. But the truth of all this on ground really is that the public perception against the agitation has turned from sympathetic caring to irritatingly banal.

The locals have been inconvenienced for too long and they have started reacting adversely to the cause though, to be fair to them, nobody across the country is genuinely against the welfare of farmers and hence they have so long been supported in the pursuit of their goal; right or wrong is for the courts to judge. The farmers and their leaders themselves have done no less to hurt their own cause. Though the Lakhimpur Kheri incident may have divided people depending along the lines of which social media group members they are, the farmers haven't had a good advertisement for themselves beginning from the Red Fort on January 26, to the gherao of the Mini Secretariat, followed by the violence in Karnal, and now the brutal murder at the Singhu border. It's high time for the farmers to coax their leaders into thinking about the right strategy and execute it efficiently. Otherwise, the support and sympathy they have received thus far is likely to wane and they would have hardly anything to show for their struggle. In a democracy, that shouldn't happen. But, in a similar vein, in a democracy nobody has the right to take away the rights of anybody else. My right to swing my hand ends where your nose begins; they should remember this.

The dilemma of displacement

The whole country is going through a weird moment. Not that violence is new to India, but it was never so blatant and cover-up so brazen

When the State acts with aggression against its people on spurious grounds, One can only expect danse Macabre. Only this time it was performed by Bijoy Shankar Bania, who stomped over the corpse of Moinul Haq who had succumbed to the police gunshots. When hate has paralysed the minds and poisoned the thinking, anything is possible.

It is diabolical and sends chills down the spine. The stomper was a Government photographer. He accompanied the police team that went to evacuate the Government land in Dholpur village in Assam on September 23, 2021. He has been arrested and would be out as soon as jumping over a dead body is no big crime legally. Amoral is not punishable under the law. It is a hate crime at its best or worse. A professional psychologist would be better placed to understand the mind of a person who stomps over a dead body, religion of dead body notwithstanding. He had hatred for a community that made him do a dastardly act. It gives a peep into the mindset of the people now on the daily diet of communal hatred that has poisoned the minds of the people.

The Government of Assam was ostensibly dealing with a spin off of love jihad, land jihad with all its so-called good intentions. It acted with brute force but legally. Thanks to a nineteenth-century archaic law called 'Assam Land and Revenue Regulation, 1886'.

Dhalpur was "grazing ground" on Government land. The "chars" had erected their shanties and were around for quite some time. Around 800 people have been evicted in the drive, whereas the real numbers could be around 20,000, if not more. The people evicted were served with notices a few hours before the eviction. The violence was a logical corollary in Assam's Darrang district. However, the Government did not realise that it would come to such a pass. The police opened fire so much for the Government's will to solve the land issue with its "good intentions".



After winning the elections on a manifesto that promised illegal encroachments to be cleared, it was on the cards. Those addressed in the manifesto knew it would be Bengali Muslims, dubbed Bangladeshis in local parlance. The BJP harped upon its narrative of land jihad and consolidated its votes. The Bengali Muslims were portrayed as encroachers upon the land of the indigenous Assamese.

The Government wanted land for a farming project for locals called the "Garukhuti Project". The forceful eviction drive that led to resistance and firing. It killed Moinul Haque and the twelve-year-old child, Sheikh Farid, died on the altars of the Garukhuti project. The public good led to public misery. Though legally dressed it was naked oppression defying the basic premise of law.

In Assam, land is a far more emotional issue than elsewhere. Assam has been home to a multi-ethnic group which are often jostling for the land.

The marginalised communities are the worst sufferers in eviction drives. Be it eviction drives for beautification like 'Turkman Gate' in Delhi in the seventies or Kathputli colony rather recently or acquiring land for a pro-

IN ASSAM, LAND IS A FAR MORE EMOTIONAL ISSUE THAN ELSEWHERE. ASSAM HAS BEEN HOME TO A MULTI-ETHNIC GROUP WHICH ARE OFTEN JOSTLING FOR LAND

ject like in Bengal's Singur or Evicting forest land encroachers in Kerala or Niyamgiri in Odisha. The marginalised communities are touted as squatters standing in the way of development. It is conveniently forgotten that they too are citizens of India, who deserve to have the dignity of a small place to call their own.

Assam Land and Revenue Regulation, 1886 gives the right to the commissioner to forcibly remove acquisitions but after due notice. This was not done. The Government could also have the option of going to court, though time taking, would have given a fair chance to the person. It was not used. The Government wanted to act and wanted to be seen as acting harshly.

Even if the persons were illegal squatters on Government land, the eviction must be done following the procedure established by law. This would need a fact-finding exercise to gauge whether a person is illegally encroaching upon the said land, or has a bona fide claim upon that land.

The Government followed a "summary eviction" procedure, under Rule 18 of the Settlement Rules made under the archaic 'Assam Land and Revenue Regulation, 1886'.

However, a person cannot be directed to vacate the land if they have a bona fide claim over the land. Rule 18 also mandates a publication of notice to provide the illegal encroacher with 15 days to vacate the land. This was again not done.

The stomping of the corpse was a 'George Floyd' moment for India but it passed rather calmly. That speaks volumes about sensitivities that we have as a nation. The whole country is going through a weird moment in history. Take, for instance, the incident at the Lakhimpur Kheri. Allegedly, the son of a Union Minister mauled the protesting farmers. Not that violence is new to India but it was never so blatant and cover-up so brazen.

The Opposition leaders were rounded up while the national media called people going there "political tourism"! Incredible as it may sound, the Opposition and voices of dissent are shrinking. The over-enthusiastic bird heads are getting out of control. The frankenstein planted in their heads is now manifesting in danse macabre.

(The writer is a columnist and documentary filmmaker. The views expressed are personal.)

SOUND BITE

Unfortunately, the Opposition and a section of yellow media is unable to digest the love and affection we receive from people.

Andhra Pradesh CM — YS Jagan Mohan Reddy

We had said that when the Government is established, work (on nuclear talks) will be maintained, and now it is being pursued.

Iranian President — Ebrahim Raisi

Rajkumar Rao is one of those actors you get to learn so much from and enjoy working with.

Actor — Paresh Rawal

You always need that sixth option to free your bowlers, in case someone has a bad day.

India vice-captain — Rohit Sharma

Only 30 per cent Indians are fully vaccinated. How does the BJP plan to fulfil its promise to vaccinate all by December 2021?

Congress spokesperson — Jaiveer Shergill

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

LITERATE VS EDUCATED

Sir — No kudos is enough for the humanitarians of West Bengal's Dharmadanga village for continuing with the 43-year old tradition of celebrating Lakshmi Puja jointly by transcending all norms of religious barriers amidst this utmost communally vitiated environment all around. Tarak Das — secretary of the Lakshmi Puja committee — humbly states that though he is not "very educated" (being a school dropout), he can't forget the lines of Kazi Nazrul Islam — *Mora ek brinte duti kusum Hindu Musliman* (we are two buds of one stalk — Hindus and Muslims) — and so we never differentiated among Hindus and Muslims!

Far from being "not very educated", Tarak Das and his Hindu-Muslim companions of farming community are infinite times more "educated" than innumerable so-called "educated" who are outright communal to the core despite being armed with academic degrees and holding medium to high Chairs in respective professions. Mere earning of a university degree hardly serves the moral fabric of the society. Hence if the concerned authorities really want to see a society where the future citizens of the society turn truly educated while pursuing degrees for career prospects; then inculcation of moral values, principles and humanity remain the urgent need of the hour in school curriculum.

Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

PINK IS BEAUTIFUL, FOR ALL

Sir — Pink has not always been considered a colour for girls. There was no sudden, unanimous cultural shift but both men and women wear pink attire and that suits them well. It gets noticed, no matter who wears it. The amount of attraction that pink receives is much more than that of red. Pink is more English in nature and is combined with the right options and right apparels, it can give an elegant tone — a pink tie, for example.

Pink is a light tint of red and was named after a flower of the same name. It was first used as a color name in the

Two-wheelers are two-seaters!



The Assam BJP chief has said that tripling on two wheelers will be allowed when the price of petrol goes up to Rs200 per litre in the State. It is foolish to link the number of persons to ride on a two wheeler with petrol price. The capacity of two wheelers has been limited to two. Extra seats beyond that are likely to increase the chances of accidents due to inability of the rider to balance in certain conditions. Is it

late 17th century. According to surveys in Europe and the United States, pink is the color most often associated with charm, politeness, sensitivity, tenderness, sweetness, childhood, femininity and the romantic. As long as you are aware of how different work environments have a different way of dressing and in the daily routine pink occupies the top spot and women love to wear their favorite colour and pink is the best suited for them. A pleasing colour like pink pays well for your appearance and brings about a sea change in your dress sense as well.

Jayanthi Subramaniam | Mumbai

THE EARTH IS SUFFERING

Sir — International prices of petroleum, coal, natural gas and LPG are too high and unbearable for the poor and the middle class. Better if India imports clean renewable energy (solar, wind, green hydrogen) batteries rather than the conventional fuel. Also India should make big plans to produce clean renewable energy on both small scale and large

scale — solar roads, solar and wind energy plants in Thar desert, Ladakh and J&K). This can generate employment, help reduce air pollution and provide low cost fuel.

Also climate change related weather catastrophes such as floods, cyclones in various parts of India can be reduced to an extent. Other measures should include — increasing the use of e-paper, e-books, e-bills, mechanical pencils and chopsticks, and cashless transactions. This can save millions of trees and limit deforestation. It is pertinent that we keep the oceans clean and plastic free so that they can absorb more carbon dioxide and mitigate various kinds of pollution. That is why many countries are growing sea plants, seagrass and sea phytoplankton too. It is high time that we imbibe such measures from individual to national level so that the ecosystem yields less damage.

Nivriti Sreelekha | Secunderabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

REVAMPING THE EDUCATION SECTOR

The new education policy aims at providing premium yet affordable education to all



DEVENDER SINGH ASWAL

Eyebrows were raised when a member of the Kasturirangan-led committee, set up recently to revise the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) and lay down the broad guidelines for school syllabus and textbooks, said that the existing curriculum in schools dwells "too much on defeats", and that "in the light of new facts, history should be rewritten". The member, an ideologue, also remarked that textbooks should talk about the "fighting spirit" of rulers such as Maharana Pratap in battles against foreign invaders. When Dr Muri Manohar Joshi, HRD Minister in the Vajpayee government, caused some revision in the school text books, it was considered by the left-wing as saffronisation of the syllabus. The revision of the extant NCF has been necessitated by the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020. It is not new or novel. It was last revised in 2005, and earlier in 1975, 1988 and 2000. The NEP, the first education policy of the 21st century, aims to address the many growing developmental imperatives of India. The NEP envisages revision and revamping of all aspects of the education structure, including its regulation and governance and to create a new system aligned with the aspirational goals of the 21st century and the SDG4, while building upon India's great traditions and value systems. The NEP unambiguously says that 'the pursuit of knowl-



edge (Jnan), wisdom (Pragya), and truth (Satya) was always considered in Indian thought and philosophy as the highest human goal. A member of the National Steering Committee entrusted the task of drafting the NCF, and a right-wing ideologue, has hinted at re-writing history and the text books 'in the light of new facts' of history. The precise mandate of the steering committee is to develop the NCF within the mandated remit. The NEP speaks, among other things, of incorporating local content and flavour as the students must know about their past, immediate surroundings and topography, India's civilisational heritage, constitutional values, so as to develop the spirit of critical thinking and enquiry. The Policy advocates multilingualism, ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promotion of life-long opportunities for all by 2030 by incorporating rapid changes in the knowledge landscape in the globalised world. The aim is to promote India as a global study destination by providing premium education at affordable costs so as to help 'restore its role as a Viswa Guru'. Evidently, the founding fathers of our republic laid the foundation of a civic nation, and not an ethnic nation by crafting a republican democratic Constitution, solemnly affirming to secure to all its citizens: justice, liberty, equality and fraternity-assuring the dignity of the individual. When one speaks of India's civilisational heritage and the need for inculcating the spirit of enquiry and scientific temper, the following Vedic hymn flashes across the mind — 'Whether God's will created it (the universe), or...Only He who is its overseer in highest heaven knows, Only He knows, or perhaps He does not know.' In a steering committee of 12 eminences in diverse fields of knowledge, there may be initial difference of opinion but when they talk together, deliberate, build consensus, they will surmount parochial considerations and develop the national curricular framework in perfect accord with the hallowed provisions of the NEP 2020, staying clear of the potential carping criticism of the extreme left or the radical right, by not harking too much on the past. Of course, we must analyse the past — without being its prisoner — in the context of the present for the purpose of building a resurgent India by laying the foundation of a sound, secure and holistic school education system to meet the aspirational needs of the 21st century.

(The writer is former Additional Secretary, Lok Sabha, and member of the Delhi Bar Council. The views expressed are personal.)

Making sense of the power crisis debate

For import-dependent India, it is costlier to import longer haul Australian coal than shorter haul Indonesian coal which is getting diverted to China



SUBHASH C PANDEY

A barrage of news about rising electricity consumption, rising international price of coal and shortage of coal with power plants have raised fears of an impending power crisis. There are 135 coal-fired power plants with total installed capacity of about 202 GW meeting about 70 per cent of electricity supply. On October 7, more than half of these plants had coal stocks of less than three days. 16 small plants with total capacity of 17GW had no coal stock. Low coal stocks with thermal power plants does not mean shortage of coal in the country.

Here is the big picture; facts that speak for themselves. There is absolutely no shortage of power if people are willing to pay its price, both in terms of cash and health.

International Energy Agency has highlighted that energy demand has shot up worldwide as economic activity picks up post-pandemic. During April-September 2019, India's electricity consumption was 68100 crore units (kwh). It fell down 62500 crore in April-Sept 2020, mainly during the lockdown months of April-May 2020. However, electricity consumption during April-Sept 2021 jumped to 71500 crore units, more than the pre-covid level even though there was a distressing second wave in April-May 2021 and the tour/travel/hospitality industry is not yet back to pre-covid level. Air/rail travel is not fully restored.

Increase in electricity demand is a positive sign indicating economic recovery. Increased coverage of households with access to electricity connection have brought new electricity consumers in the market. Growing digital economy also contributes to rising demand. A welcome surge in electricity demand has raised supply concerns, especially, as all indications are further increase in electricity demand in coming months.

Since 2013, total primary energy consumption in India has been the third highest in the world after China and the US. Total power generation capacity in India has increased from 243 GW in March 2014 to 320 GW in March 2017 to 388 GW in August 2021. Out of this, 202 GW is coal/lignite fired thermal power, 46 GW is from large hydroelectric projects, 45 GW from Solar and 40 GW from Wind power. Renewable energy capacity is about 37 per cent of total and India will reach 40 per cent renewable energy capacity well before 2030 as per target accepted under 2015 Paris Climate Change agreement.

Although coal-based power plants contribute only to 52 per cent of installed electricity generation capacity, these plants meet almost 75 per cent of total electricity demand. So even though we have made impressive gains in expanding solar power, we are still largely dependent on coal for electricity. Our domestic production of coal is about 730 MMT and we annually import over 300 MMT. Electricity sector accounts for about 2/3rd of total coal consumption.



SINCE 2013, TOTAL PRIMARY ENERGY CONSUMPTION IN INDIA HAS BEEN THE THIRD HIGHEST IN THE WORLD AFTER CHINA AND THE UNITED STATES. TOTAL POWER GENERATION CAPACITY IN INDIA HAS INCREASED FROM 243 GW IN MARCH 2014 TO 388 GW IN AUGUST 2021

(The writer is former Special Secretary, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India. The views expressed are personal.)



India is the second largest coal consumer after China. International prices of coal have risen recently for two reasons. Sharper increase in gas prices mean that countries are increasing dependence on cheaper coal-based thermal plants.

China is facing increased electricity demand in post-pandemic economic recovery and in a trade war with Australia, China stopped coal imports from Australia, one of the major exporters of coal.

Coal makes up nearly 60 per cent of China's energy consumption. Increased coal/power demand from China has set coal prices soaring high and many coastal power plants depending on (previously cheaper) coal imports are now switching to domestic coal in India.

For import dependent Indian power producers, it is costlier to import longer haul Australian coal than shorter haul Indonesian coal that is increasingly getting diverted to China. The net result of all this is higher demand for coal, higher price for coal and resultant financial stress on power generating companies.

There have been temporary supply disruptions (monsoon-related) in coal mining and transportation. The coal supply position is steadily improving but there are basic issues to be addressed to ensure long term health of the power sector which is victim to populism. Coal supply is a temporary problem. There is enough coal and production/transport will increase once monsoon woes are over. But the real issue of financial distress on power generating companies remains. Power generating companies owe about ₹20,000 crore to Coal India Limited alone.

Thermal plants are expected to have stock of 20 days requirement

but many power producers don't have money to stock coal because they have themselves not been paid by discoms for power supplied. Discoms are cash starved because tariffs don't cover all costs, many consumers don't pay their bills or delay payment. Power theft and leakage through unmetered supply continues to be rather high. This is all reflected in discoms inability to pay to power producers.

Power producers give 45 days' credit to Electricity Distribution companies (discoms). If the dues are not cleared in 45 days, outstanding dues are called 'overdues' liable to charge of penal interest.

On 17 October, 2021, discoms owed an overdue amount of ₹98,067 crore to power generation/transmission companies. Nearly ₹23,310 crore is payable to public sector thermal power generating companies (NTPC, etc.) Around ₹51,899 crore is payable to public sector thermal power generating companies (maximum amount payable to a single company is ₹25,611 crore, to Adani Power). Around ₹17,980 crore is payable to renewable power producers and ₹4,877 crore is payable to PowerGrid.

If coal companies have to recover ₹20,000 crore from power utilities, will it make sense for them to produce more coal and supply on credit? If power producers are not getting paid for power supplied, will they not reduce production? Does it make sense for them to improve plant load factor and produce more electricity to supply on credit? That is the real problem.

The discom reform scheme UDAY ended in 2019-20 with most of the states failing to meet their stipulated targets. On July 1, the Centre has launched a new scheme of 'Reforms-based and Results-linked,

Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme' to provide conditional financial assistance to discoms for strengthening of supply infrastructure. The scheme with total outlay of ₹3,03,758 crore will involve Central government budget support of ₹97,631 crore by 2024-25. All existing power sector reform schemes namely DDUGJY, IPDS, PM-KUSUM scheme would be subsumed into this new umbrella program.

Among the many contemplated reforms is a measure to create separate feeder for agricultural electricity supply, expansion of network of solar run irrigation systems. Other pending electricity reforms are removal of cross subsidies and open access, introducing competition by allowing consumers choice of electricity supplier.

States are presently administering two types of cross subsidy arrangements. One is between high-end and low-end household consumers and the other is between household consumers on one hand and industrial/commercial consumers on the other.

There are just too many consumer categories and tariff lines - slabs and fixed charges, making electricity pricing quite complex and non-transparent. On top of tariffs fixed by 'independent regulators', States levy electricity duty (as it is not subsumed in GST) which ranges from 0-70 per cent for certain categories of consumers.

Cross-subsidy burden on industry is problematic because it adversely affects cost competitiveness — manufacturing and exports and resultant job creation. It is frustrating that these reforms are getting delayed and deferred. Any myopic politics will sap the nation of energy in the long run.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

RAHUL GANDHI IS A DRUG ADDICT AND A DRUG PEDDLER. I DO NOT SAY THIS, IT HAS APPEARED IN NEWS REPORTS.
—KARNATAKA BJP PRESIDENT
NALIN KUMAR KATEEL



KATEEL MIGHT HAVE CONSUMED SOME DRUGS SEIZED FROM THE ADANI PORT, WHICH IS WHY HE IS MAKING SUCH REMARKS.
—AICC GENERAL SECRETARY
RANDEEP SURJEWALA

Women officers in the armed forces

There is no doubt that officers and other ranks have to undergo a sea change in their thinking process and attitude to accept gender equality

The recent Supreme Court judgement directing the Government to open the portals of the National Defence Academy for women has finally paved way for across-the-board gender equality in the armed Forces. Eligible women will now be permitted to appear for the NDA Entrance Examination for the first time and the sky will be the limit for their career aspirations. This will now enable women to join all available combat or non-combat branches of the three services.

Notwithstanding the above judgement, women have always had their presence in the armed forces, though in a limited role like that of doctors in all the three wings of the armed forces. It



RAVI CHANDER KOCHHAR

(The writer, a retired Rear Admiral, is Group Pro Vice Chancellor & OSD (HR), Amity University, Uttar Pradesh. The views expressed are personal.)

has, however, been almost three decades when women entered many other branches where only men dominated once.

The women officers in Indian armed forces have come a long way and have adapted well with the changing times. However, it is incumbent on the services to be accommodative in assimilating women in all domains — be it combat, administration, engineering or medical. Therefore, the onus is still upon the male-dominated armed forces to recognize the power of women officers and facilitate them to achieve their full potential.

I still fondly remember, whilst I was in command of INS Vikrant in 1992, when the first batch of women officers



reported onboard for initial sea training for Short Service Commission in the Indian Navy. The lady officers were very enthusiastic and took keen interest in the training. Normally when officers join for sea training, they all live on the ship throughout their training. In this case as there were no separate arrangements onboard for their stay, the ship was in harbour and they would come in the morning and leave in the

evening. Throughout their training they exhibited their skill levels, adaptability, physical fitness and mental alertness to match with standards laid down for men.

These young lady officers were quick on the uptake and always enthusiastic to learn the service ways. They were happy with the training but had one observation — why they could not stay onboard. It was explained to them that as of now the arrangements onboard ships are for men, especially living spaces and washrooms. Whilst they all understood the existing constraints, they were keen to know when ships will have women's quarters as well. I recollect my reaction to that was 'when a child is born, he/she first learns to

crawl, then stand and only thereafter runs. I can only say that the time has come for all of them to run.

On the lighter side, many of those young lady officers found their soul mates amongst the naval officers during their initial service career and thereafter, lived happily ever after. Being from the same service the understanding between the partners also proved to be of higher quality, essential for marital harmony. In short it is a win in situation, as both the partners know each other's service conditions and do not take long to settle.

I can only say that the day has come when the idea of women joining armed forces had taken shape and has now evolved to women getting

permanent commission and entering areas dominated by men like fighter pilots, combat units and serving onboard ships and sailing on operational missions.

There's is no doubt that officers and other ranks have also to undergo a sea change in their thinking process and attitude so as to accept gender equality and when required, take orders from women officers in command. Having said that, women must also remember that they are getting into new fields and must tread with caution and never hesitate to take guidance from men who have been holding the fort for a much longer period.

By the way in the US Navy, for the first time, a woman officer has recently

been appointed to command a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier. I have no doubt it is only a matter of time when we will have lady officers in command of combat units and move shoulder to shoulder with their male counterparts.

Indian history is replete with examples of women in command of combat troops, like 'Rani of Jhansi' and many others who have led troops in battle and given a befitting reply to the enemy. It was only somewhere along the time when we lost the plot and armed forces became the forte of men alone.

At the end, I can only say, 'Welcome to Indian armed forces, brave Ladies, you are indeed the pride of India.'

India expected to see higher salary with 9.3% hike in '22

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Higher salaries in India are making a comeback with 9.3 per cent hike being expected in 2022, from 8 per cent in 2021, and with companies planning to give employees larger raises as they face mounting challenges of attracting and retaining employees, according to a report.

Salaries are projected to see a median salary increase of 9.3 per cent next year compared to the actual median salary increase of 8 per cent in 2021, according to the 'Salary Budget Planning Report' by global advisory, broking and solutions company Willis Towers Watson.

India's projected salary increase is the highest in Asia-Pacific for the next year as optimism returns over improved business outlook in the next 12 months, the report added.

The Salary Budget Planning Report is a bi-annual survey conducted online between May and June 2021, with 1,405



companies across sections of industries from 13 markets in Asia-Pacific, including 435 companies in India.

The report further showed that a majority (52.2 per cent) of companies in India have projected a positive business revenue outlook for the next 12 months, up from 37 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2020, which point towards a much-anticipated economic recovery.

This translates into increased hiring across businesses with 30 per cent of companies planning to hire in the next 12 months, the report said adding that this is almost three times more than 2020.

The report also showed that a large part of hiring across sectors is likely to happen within critical functions such as engineering (57.5 per cent), information technology

(53.4 per cent), technically skilled trades (34.2 per cent), sales (37 per cent) and finance (11.6 per cent), and these jobs will command a high salary.

In addition, attrition rates in India, both voluntary and involuntary, have been lower compared to other countries in the region, the report stated.

The voluntary attrition rate was 8.9 per cent and involuntary attrition rate was 3.3 per cent, it added.

"Increased business optimism is clearly translating into higher salary budgets and increased hiring activity. The pandemic was a watershed moment in the way organisations plan their people spend," Willis Towers Watson Consulting Leader India, Talent and Rewards, Rajul Mathur said.

He added that while talent attraction and retention remain a challenge, the core employee value proposition will now need to go beyond just competitive salaries and increasingly focus on a wider range of ben-

efits, wellness, upskilling and the overall employee experience.

"This trend is likely to reshape the people spend and total rewards philosophy in India going forward," Mathur added.

Meanwhile, the report showed that the high-tech sector is expected to see the highest salary increase at 9.9 per cent in 2022, followed by the consumer products and retail sector at 9.5 per cent and manufacturing at 9.30 per cent.

In terms of proportionate increase over last year, the high-tech sector again tops with a projection of almost 1.9 per cent increase from 2021, it stated.

"COVID-19 accelerated the digitalisation process across industries including automation and artificial intelligence. These developments, along with the high-tech sector's early adoption of the remote working model, have positively impacted the sector's salary projections.

Gross NPAs of banks may decline to 6.9 pc by March 2022: Report

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Gross non-performing assets (NPAs) and net NPAs of banks are likely to decline to 6.9-7 per cent and 2.2-2.3 per cent, respectively, by the end of March 2022 as compared to 7.6 per cent and 2.5 per cent, respectively, as of March 31, 2021, according to a report by rating agency ICRA.

GNPAs and NNPA's stood at 8.6 per cent and three per cent, respectively, as on March 31, 2020.

"The GNPAs and NNPA's are expected to further decline to 6.9-7 per cent and 2.2-2.3 per cent by March 2022, which will continue to be a relief for the bottomline (profit) of lenders," the credit rating agency said in the report.

The fresh NPA generation rate (or slippages) remained elevated during the second wave in absence of regulatory relief such as moratorium, it said.

The gross fresh slippages during the April-June 2021 quarter stood at Rs 1 lakh crore (annualised slippage rate of 4.1 per cent) compared with Rs 2.5 lakh crore or 2.7 per cent dur-



ing FY2021.

The agency expects this to remain elevated at Rs 0.7-0.8 lakh crore (2.8-3.2 per cent) during Q2 FY2022 but moderate to Rs 1.1-1.2 lakh crore (2-2.4 per cent) during H2 of this fiscal as the impact of second wave wanes.

Of the total restructured loan book of Rs 2 lakh crore for the banks as on June 30, 2021, the restructuring under the first coronavirus wave is estimated at 51 per cent of the total restructuring of Rs 1 lakh crore, while restructuring under the second wave is estimated at 31 per cent of the total restructuring or Rs 0.6 lakh crore, it said.

The agency's Vice-President (financial sector ratings) Anil Gupta said that considering that 30-40 per cent of the loan

book was under moratorium during Q1 FY2020 across most banks, the loan restructuring at two per cent of advances after the second wave is a positive surprise and much lower than our earlier estimates.

"Despite the positive headline numbers, we continue to be watchful of the asset quality, given the elevated levels of the overdue loan book and for the performance of the restructured loan book," Gupta said.

As per ICRA's estimates, the public sector banks (PSBs) may not need the capital budgeted by the government for FY2022 even with enhanced capital requirements. However, it provisions for any unforeseen events and shall provide confidence to banks as well as investors and credit growth.

MONEY MATTERS

Decision on Air India will give new energy to aviation sector

With Air India set to be acquired by Tata group, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said the decision on the national carrier will give new energy to the country's aviation sector. His comments come weeks after Tata group emerged as the winning bidder for Air India paving the way for disinvestment of the loss-making carrier. In an address after inaugurating the Kushinagar International airport, Modi said the decision on Air India will give new energy to the aviation sector of India. Tata group has emerged as the winning bidder for Air India, and on October 11, a letter of intent (LoI) was issued to the group. Earlier this month, the government accepted an offer by Talace Pvt Ltd, a unit of Tata group, to pay Rs 2,700 crore cash and takeover Rs 15,300 crore of Air India's debt.



NBCC gets projects worth Rs 300 cr in Haryana, Raj

State-owned NBCC (India) Ltd has bagged orders worth nearly Rs 300 crore for project management consultancy in Haryana and Rajasthan. In a regulatory filing, NBCC said the company has been awarded the work order for engagement as Project Management Consultant (PMC) for construction of phase III of BPS Government Medical College, Khanpur Kalan, Sonapat, Haryana. The total cost of the project is Rs 285 crore approx. subject to the revision as per Haryana Schedule Rates (HSR) 2021 plinth area rates," the filing said. In a separate filing, NBCC informed that it has been awarded the work order for engagement as an independent engineer for operations, management and development of Jaipur International Airport. NBCC is the PMC for providing independent engineer services amounting to Rs 12.40 crore, inclusive of all taxes except GST, it added.



Gold imports to rise further in coming months: GJEPC

The country's gold imports are expected to grow further in the coming months on account of peak demand due to festive and wedding seasons, Gems and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC) said on Wednesday. Gold imports, which have a bearing on the current account deficit, zoomed to about USD 24 billion during April-September 2021. The council said that the imports have witnessed a fluctuating trend during the last six months and have come at par with the statistics of the pre-covid years. Gold imports in May (12.98 tonnes) and June (17.57 tonnes) 2021 were severely hit by the second devastating Covid wave that resulted in nationwide lockdowns and paralysed several industries for a brief period including gem and jewellery, it added. The imports, it said, picked up in August which recorded the second-highest gold imports of 118.08 tonnes.



Jio gains 6.49 L mobile users in Aug; Airtel adds 1.38 lakh

India's largest telecom operator Reliance Jio gained 6.49 lakh mobile users in August leading the subscriber addition tally, ahead of Bharti Airtel which added 1.38 lakh users, according to the TRAI data released on Wednesday. In contrast, Vodafone Idea lost 8.33 lakh subscribers during August, although its losses were less than July. Jio continued to outpace rivals in subscriber gains, adding 6.49 lakh wireless users in August, as its mobile base swelled to 44.38 crore. Sunil Mittal-led Bharti Airtel onboarded 1.38 lakh users during the month, taking it overall wireless subscriber count to 35.41 crore. Vodafone Idea lost 8.33 lakh mobile subscribers in August as its wireless users count dipped to 27.1 crore, according to data released by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI). Notably, the troubled operator - that got a shot in the arm with a relief package announced by the government recently - has plugged its subscriber losses to an extent, given that it had lost 14.3 lakh users in July.



High oil prices will undermine global recovery, warns India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India, the world's third-largest energy consumer, on Wednesday warned that high oil prices will undermine global economic recovery, and nudged Saudi Arabia and other OPEC nations to work towards affordable and reliable supplies.

Petrol and diesel prices have shot up to record highs across the country after relentless price increases since early May.

"If energy prices remain high, global economic recovery will be undermined," Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said at the India Energy Forum by CERAWeek.

International oil prices had crashed to USD 19 per barrel in April last year as demand evaporated with most nations clamping lockdowns to control the spread of coronavirus. The demand recovered this year as vaccination against the infection revived economies world over.

International benchmark Brent crude has since rallied to USD 84 per barrel.

This, he said, has made fuel expensive and stoking fears of inflation.

Puri said India's oil import bill has climbed from USD 8.8 billion in June 2020 quarter to USD 24 billion this year



because of a spike in global oil prices.

"India believes energy access has to be reliable, affordable and sustainable," he said adding economic recovery after a devastating pandemic has been fragile and it is further being threatened by high prices.

India, which imports almost two-thirds of its oil needs from West Asia, has told crude oil producers, including the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), that high oil prices will hasten the transition to alternate fuels and such rates will be counter-productive for the producers.

Puri has in recent weeks flagged the issue of high oil prices to Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, the US, Russia and Bahrain.

He conveyed India's strong

preference on responsible and reasonable pricing, which is mutually beneficial for consumers and producers.

Puri said volatility in international prices is not just hurting India but also industrialised nations.

While the world has begun the transition towards cleaner fuels such as electric-powered vehicles and hydrogen, most nations are still dependent on oil to fuel their economies. And high oil prices will hurt demand recovery.

India is 85 per cent dependent on imports to meet its oil needs and relies on overseas shipments to meet 55 per cent of the gas needs.

It is the only nation in the world that is seeing growth in oil demand on a sustained basis and without it the producers will also suffer.

Crystal Crop inks pact with Bayer to acquire 4 hybrid seeds

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Agro-chemical firm Crystal Crop Protection Ltd (CCPL) on Wednesday said it has entered into a definitive agreement with global life sciences firm Bayer to acquire four hybrid seeds -- cotton, mustard, pearl millet and grain sorghum -- in India.

The two companies will work together to close the transaction by December this year, the CCPL said in a statement.

The business to be acquired by CCPL represents a very small portion of Bayer's Indian and global business portfolio, it added.

Commenting on the acquisition, CCPL Chairman N K Aggarwal said, "Staying true to our vision of inspiring growth of Indian farmers, this acquisition is a step forward to provide high performance seeds for sustainable growth of Indian agriculture."

CCPL's seed business CEO Sarjani Manhas further said that the crops to be acquired have an excellent strategic fit in the company's seeds portfolio and will support in improving the company's footprints in the Indian seeds market.



YES Bank showing remarkable progress

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Crisis-hit YES Bank has shown remarkable progress after its management was taken by the clutch of investors led by State Bank of India (SBI) last year and may take two more years to stabilise, said former SBI chairman Rajnish Kumar.

"The situation in which YES Bank was, you have to give three years time at least for it to stabilise... it has shown remarkable progress as the condition was very bad when SBI salvaged it," he told PTI while sharing a sneak peek of his memoir.

In his book titled 'The Custodian of Trust', Kumar said that SBI was reluctant to play the lender of last resort role for the YES Bank but circumstances compelled it to rescue the country's fourth largest private sector lender.

"Initially, I believed that

after having achieved the mergers of six banks, SBI would be spared the task of saving yet another bank. The last bailout (in 1995) by SBI had been that of Kashi Nath Seth Bank, a family owned bank, operating in a few districts of Uttar Pradesh (UP)," he said.

He mentioned in the book published by Penguin Random House India (PRHI) that there was pressure on him to find the other investors by March 13, 2020, by the RBI to avoid any cascading impact of the country's fourth largest private sector on the financial system.

The Reserve Bank India on March 5, 2020, imposed a moratorium on troubled lender YES Bank and capped withdrawals at Rs 50,000. Subsequently restructuring plan notified by the government on March 13 leading to lifting of moratorium on March 18, 2020.

Parsvnath cancels 15-year-old JV to build project in Chennai

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Realty firm Parsvnath Ltd has cancelled its joint venture agreement with Sumeru Soft Pvt Ltd and Gomathi Vishveswaran Trust to develop a 31-acre mixed-use project in Chennai and got nearly 8 acre land in a settlement with the two partners through arbitration.

When contacted, Parsvnath Ltd Chairman Pradeep Jain told PTI that the project could not be developed because of the market conditions and, therefore, all the parties decided to

terminate the agreement. He said the company has got nearly 8 acre land through an arbitration order and will monetise this land parcel by developing this project. Parsvnath said the company had entered into a JVA in September 2006 with Sumeru Soft and Gomathi Vishveswaran Trust for development of multi-facility complex comprising residential apartments, service apartments, commercial, IT/ITES parks, etc, on the punja land of an extent of 31 acres situated at OMR Road, Chennai.

Jubilant Foodworks profit jumps 58 pc to Rs 120 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Jubilant Foodworks Ltd on Wednesday reported 58.11 per cent jump in consolidated net profit at Rs 119.82 crore for the second quarter ended September 30, 2021 driven by continued strong momentum in delivery and takeaway channels.

The company, which operates popular fast food chains such as Domino's Pizza and Dunkin' Donuts among others in India, logged a profit of Rs 75.78 crore in the year-to-date period, Jubilant Foodworks Ltd (JFL) said in a regulatory filing.



Revenue from operations in the second quarter stood at Rs 1,116.19 crore as compared to Rs 816.33 crore in the same period a year ago. The growth in revenue from operations was

Hari S Bhartia in a joint statement said, the second quarter saw a strong all-round performance with revenue, profitability and store growth numbers hitting record highs. "The new investments announced during the quarter will help steer the company towards its goal of becoming a multi-brand, multi-country business driven by technology and will create significant value for all stakeholders," they said.

The firm had announced key strategic investments "in line with its stated goal of building a multi-brand and multi-country food business powered by technology".

Global stocks mixed after Wall St rise, weak Japanese trade

PNS ■ BEIJING

Global stock markets were mixed Wednesday after Wall Street advanced on strong corporate earnings and Japanese exports weakened.

London and Shanghai declined while Tokyo and Frankfurt advanced. The future for Wall Street's benchmark S&P 500 index was off less than 0.1 per cent after five days of gains.

"Market sentiment remains decidedly positive," said Jeffrey Halley of Oanda in a report.

Investors watched for inflation updates from Britain and some other European governments amid concern central banks might feel pressure to hike interest rates sooner than planned or roll back stimulus.

In early trading, the FTSE 100 in London lost less than 0.1 per cent to 7,210.74. The DAX in



Frankfurt rose 0.2 per cent to 15,552.62 while the CAC 40 in Paris declined less than 0.1 per cent to 6,667.52.

On Wall Street, the future for the Dow Jones Industrial Average was up less than 0.1 per cent.

On Tuesday, the S&P 500 rose 0.7 per cent to within 0.4 per cent of its Sept. 2 all-time high. The Dow and the Nasdaq composite advanced less than 0.1 per cent.

The Nikkei 225 in Tokyo gained 0.1 per cent to 29,255.55 after government data showed September exports fell 3.9 per cent compared with the previous month.

The Kospi in Seoul shed 0.5 per cent to 3,013.13 while Sydney's S&P-ASX 200 advanced 0.5 per cent to 7,413.70. India's Sensex opened less than 0.4 per cent higher at 61,469.75. New Zealand and Bangkok advanced while Singapore declined.

Wall Street's gains Tuesday

were propelled by tech and health care stocks.

Johnson & Johnson, the biggest maker of health products, rose 2.3 per cent after reporting strong quarterly earnings and raising its profit forecast for the year. Apple Inc rose 1.5 per cent and software maker Adobe gained 2.1 per cent. Investors worry disruptions to manufacturing supply chains and shipping due to the coronavirus pandemic may depress corporate profits or push up inflation. Procter & Gamble fell 1.2 per cent after saying it will raise prices amid higher commodity and freight costs. Surging energy prices are rising concerns about a supply crunch that might hold back an economic recovery. Also Tuesday, the Commerce Department reported that US home construction fell 1.6 per cent in September.

Sensex tanks 456 points; Nifty slumps below 18,300

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The BSE Sensex slumped 456 points on Wednesday, tracking losses in index majors Reliance Industries, Infosys and ICICI Bank as market participants continued to book profits at high levels.

The 30-share index ended 456.09 points or 0.74 per cent lower at 61,259.96. Similarly, the NSE Nifty dropped 152.15 points or 0.83 per cent to 18,266.60.

Titan was the top loser in the Sensex pack, shedding around 3 per cent, followed by HUL, NTPC, Bajaj Finserv,

L&T and PowerGrid. On the other hand, Bharti Airtel, SBI, IndusInd Bank, Bajaj Finance and Axis Bank were among the gainers. Almost all sectoral indices ended in the red although PSU banks were seen bucking the trend with investors cherry-picking for value in that pocket, he noted.

Further, he said the street is taking note of the cost pressures emanating from higher input costs in companies that do not possess the pricing power. Bourses in Hong Kong and Tokyo ended with gains, while Shanghai and Seoul were in the red.

John Abraham ventures into Malayalam cinema with latest production *Mike*



Bollywood star John Abraham is making an entry into Malayalam cinemas as a producer with his latest movie *Mike*. Backed by Abraham through his banner JA Entertainment, the Malayalam-language film is directed by Vishnu Sivaprasad and marks the debut of actor Ranjith Sajeev. *Mike* also stars Anaswara Rajan, Jinu Joseph, Akshay Radhakrishnan, Abhiram, and Sini Abraham. The film, which started production in Mysore on Wednesday, is a coming of age story, written by Ashiq Akbar Ali, the makers said in a statement. It will be shot at various locations in India, including Kattappana, Vaikom and Dharamshala. Renadive is credited with the film's cinematography. Besides *Mike*, Abraham's Hindi production, *Tara Vs Bilal* also went on floors in London. The actor, meanwhile, will be next seen in the action movie *Attack* and Mohit Suri's *Ek Villain Returns*.



Breathe: Into The Shadows greenlit for a new season!

Amazon Prime Video announced the green lighting of the new season of its highly acclaimed psychological thriller *Breathe: Into The Shadows*. Headlined by Abhishek Bachchan, Amit Sadh, Nithya Menen and Saiyami Kher, the sequel of the Amazon Original introduces an exciting addition to the lead cast with Naveen Kasturia joining the show. Created and Produced by Abundantia Entertainment and directed by Mayank Sharma, the new season has commenced production in New Delhi and Mumbai. "Given the popularity and sheer anticipation around *Breathe: Into The Shadows*, a new season was imminent. As the plot intensifies and new characters infuse raw energy into the narrative, the stakes and the thrill go higher this season. The announcement of the new season of this award-winning franchise, reiterates our commitment to develop and showcase the most authentic and compelling stories from India that will transcend all geographic boundaries," said Aparna Purohit, Head of

Originals, Prime Video India. Vikram Malhotra, Founder & Chief Executive Officer, Abundantia Entertainment said "We are happy to unfold a new chapter in our journey with Amazon Prime Video with another edition of *Breathe: Into The Shadows*. At Abundantia Entertainment, we endeavor to create compelling content across genres that aim to deliver impact and entertainment amongst audiences, and we are glad to bring another exciting story for fans of this marquee show. With Mayank at the helm once again and backed by a strong team of writers, this season will see a host of new characters amp up the drama anchored in a strong emotional core. We're excited to kick-start another enthralling season."



Sonu Sood on hosting NatGeo series *It Happens Only in India*

Bollywood actor Sonu Sood is all set for a new series titled *It Happens Only in India*. Hosted by him, this 10-part series will take viewers into the lesser-known and well-researched narratives from across the length and breadth of India. Sonu Sood will be seen presenting some fascinating stories from different corners of the country from modern to mystic, people to places, myths

to natural wonders, talented innovators, astounding mega structures to the latest in-space technology that are all distinctly Indian. It will help the viewers to understand India in a better way. Sonu said: "No matter how much you learn about India, you can't know enough. The country's diversity has tons of incredible stories that are yet to be revealed and this show will take viewers on a fascinating journey; bringing them closer to the incredible culture,

nature, heritage and marvels of our nation and make them proud to be a citizen of this country. I am really happy that I got to be a part of this journey." The show aims to celebrate the uniqueness of India across multiple spheres, and thought Sonu Sood fit the bill. The show will start from October 26 at 8 p.m. on National Geographic.

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



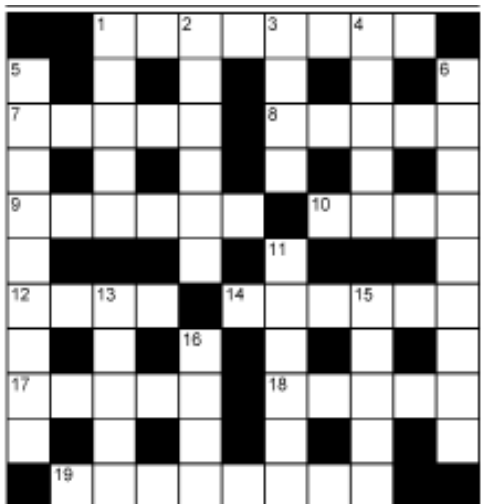
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

ACROSS

- A water sport
- After eighth
- Worship
- Hurt someone's feelings by being rude to them
- Fewer
- This metal goes rusty
- A fruit
- A large serving spoon
- Book name
- Someone in jail
- Rope loop
- Not able to be seen
- Read this daily
- Cardboard box
- Command
- Change
- Untidy shambles

DOWN

- Musical pieces for the voice
- Breathe in
- A ditch around a castle



HELPING YOUNG INDIA UNDERSTAND SEXUALITY

AMITHA GHATTI

Sexuality and reproduction, despite being important aspects of a healthy life, are often considered taboo and discussed in hushed tones in India. Only a very unimpressive number of people today are aware of their sexual, reproductive health, and rights. But thanks to organisations like Reckitt, a consumer goods company, things seem to be changing. The organisation started a programme about Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), to educate people, especially children, on the topic.

We got in touch with Ravi Bhatnagar, Director of External Affairs and Partnerships for South Asia, Reckitt. He who launched this program to teach children of ages 10-19 about the changes they will face as adolescents, shares, "The programme is focused on deepening the impact by equipping thousands of adolescents and young people with a curriculum, available in both offline and e-learning mode. This would help them make informed choices and grow to be healthy adults."

Called The Birds and Bees Talk (TBBT), supported by 'Durex', its core principles are — awareness, consent, protection, equity, and inclusion. The programme focuses mainly on the slogan — Healthier lives, healthier people. From the foundations of wellness and infant nutrition, to the fundamentals of a



hygienic home, its global brands help people live healthier and happier lives. "We aim to transform the lives of 40,00,000 adolescents in northeast Indian states like Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Manipur, and Mizoram. Northeastern states have a higher risk of HIV, making it the main reason to start there. The project will not only teach children topics relating to health but also leverage their richness in music, art, and culture and ensure that knowledge is not limited to physical classes," Ravi tells us.

Reckitt's social initiatives are centered around the principle of 'leaving no one behind', and addresses 8 of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) taking an initiative in health, hygiene, sanitation, self-care, and inti-

mate wellness. The programme covers 50% of districts in India that are affected by poor socio-economic indicators and 23 states and union territories, and has launched flagship programmes in school hygiene education, maternal and child health, hoping to leave an impact through innovative means.

On an interesting note, Ravi reveals that once they complete the 'The Birds And Bees Talk' programme, they will launch something called 'Birds And Bees Buzz', on the digital ecosystem to

ensure the Covid pandemic does not delay the education and development process. He adds, "It is an e-learning platform to give sessions to teachers and students across the state to take part in the programme. The program has a mix of different elements like multimedia, AI-based chatbots called 'HeloJubi', workshops, and webinars. There are videos used to communicate about age-appropriate behavioural change."

On a concluding note, he informs that they used murals to convey messages and raise awareness by strategically showcasing them on Khuman Lampak Sports Complex, the biggest sports complex in Manipur!



Making internet safe for young India

RACHEL DAMMALA

One of the many problems that the pandemic brought was the exposure of children to the big bad world of the internet. Schools rightly couldn't have waited and wasted an academic year fearing their students' future, but couldn't risk their health either, and so, were forced to take the online route.

But the solution to the problem at hand brought even worse problems of children discovering the best and the worst of the internet. From videos and gaming to social media and the dark web, suddenly pre-teens had access to it all, and an unfortunate few fell prey to notorious cyber-criminals.

To counter this, Rupesh Mittal, a young man from Hyderabad, who set up a charity called Cyber Jagrithi to raise awareness about cyber safety in our society, with four other people,



Rupesh Mittal

decided it was time to step in help.

"The use of digital devices has become a part of children's lifestyle today, and in such a society, it is very necessary to live vigilantly. We notice that young people are constantly engaged in digital media, especially on social media and other networks. Once online education started, we started receiving more and more complaints from schools and parents about the screen time of their



Ligi Tony

wards. They fear the worst happening with such exposure. That's when we started rolling out webinars to various organisations and schools, talking to students about various guidelines, their digital footprint on the internet, internet ethics, and more," Rupesh tells us.

Citing an example of how use of social media at a young age with no parental control could be damaging, Rupesh tells us, "Youngsters are under the impression that being faceless on the

internet can give them the freedom to do all that they can. Right from silly comments, immature abuses, to threats, stalking, and extortion, all these have become more common during the pandemic. Many have become easy prey to such crimes. Through these awareness campaigns, we teach students various online ethics, what language to use, how to be careful, because privacy is, unfortunately, a myth."

The organisation also tells these students about how their digital footprint will make or break their future, because today, everybody looks them up online to discern how good or bad a particular candidate is, before hiring them. He adds, "When we have children playing games on the internet constantly, especially violent ones like PUBG and COD, we can't be surprised when they nature becomes more aggressive by the day. This is a very real and big concern for parents, and they fear coming across as controlling and possess-

sive when they confront their child about such behaviour. That's where we come in, and counsel and teach these young kids as a guide and friends."

The campaigns focus on cyber values for children, parents and youth by spreading awareness on digital safety, juvenile law, digital parenting, awareness on cybercrime, privacy on social media, and awareness on sniffing fake news. It was launched in a multi-fold manner, where several deliverables like live webinars, informative videos, flyers, surveys, polls, and a bunch of interesting competitions like poster making and crosswords along with many others were done to make the whole program a very entertaining a ride along with being informative.

Talking about the timely help by such organisations have been providing, Ligi Tony, a student counselor, lauds the efforts of such an organisation, saying, "Children have suddenly been exposed to things on the internet, and they have, over time, grown addicted to it. Gaming, especially, has made things worse. Today, being ethical on the internet is a major life skill and children need to be specifically taught about it. The organisation also made children aware of the POCSO e-box so they know they can always raise a complaint about any such issues, or when they see such red flags."

A mother of a nine-year-old who is grateful for such an initiative, talks about how her parenting has gotten easier and less controlling after such a webinar: "Like all parents, I too, was worried about my child using a phone at such a young age. We can't help but let her use the phone because her classes, notes, coordination — all require a phone. But after such awareness campaigns, both she and I have learnt so much about being safe on the internet. The awareness program creates a very healthy and interactive platform for youngsters to discuss cyber security with experts in the field without having any hesitation. It has been helping many students in becoming more aware of the risks involved in online surfing and help them to secure themselves more in the online world. Parenting controls awareness definitely leads to better handling of the situation."



OWN A BUSINESS AND SEE THE CHANGE

Continuous and effective growth, motivated management and risk education are some of the goals of an entrepreneur. And, for landing up with loads of other benefits that will take the brand to newer heights then the franchise model is just apt for them. Dedicated a budget especially in a franchise could be a boon for the company as it automatically sets the expansion for the brand. Besides it, the model also helps you to establish your brand by collaborating with a popular company that already has a huge customer base. Franchising also cuts down the cost of the newbie brands' advertising, marketing and other sales effort

besides providing the training and support so that they can enter the market with confidence. Over a period of time, franchise has evolved as a successful entrepreneurial model. It is often leveraged by both parties to gain professional growth. Here are some of the ways in which franchising can enable to attain entrepreneurial aims with effortlessness:

Capital acquisition

It has been seen that the most prominent roadblock for a small business is poor access to capital. In such cases, franchise provides some advantages because it is an alternative form of capital acquisition. Startups or small brands are turning to franchises because franchises

offer them the assurance of expanding their business without the cost of equity or risk of debt. Franchise not only provides funds to open a unit but also allows the company to grow by making use of the resources of others. This is how franchisors can expand their business without registering any debt.

Speed of growth

There is always a constant fear running in the minds of entrepreneurs, who have developed something innovative, that their product will soon be replaced by some other entrepreneurs' uniquely innovative product in the same category. So, till the time they are ruling the market, they should be reaping the benefit as much as they

can. For attaining the same, franchise is the best. Opening a single unit takes time. Franchising allows brands to fight with much larger businesses so they can saturate markets before the latter can respond.

Reduced risk

It is the responsibility of the franchisee to provide assistance in purchasing any inventory, hiring any employees, and taking responsibility for any working capital. Therefore, it reduces many potential risks of franchisors, which might have faced while setting up a business. Franchisors are largely out of any liability including purchasing any inventory, hiring any employees, and taking responsibility for any working capital.

Moreover, the expense of becoming a franchisor is far less than the cost of opening one more location or entering one more market, thereby starting up risk of a business is greatly reduced.

Increased profitability

Franchise organisations run in a highly profitable manner because they are leveraging the benefits of staff and ease of supervision. Franchisors completely depend upon franchisees to take on the responsibility of location selection, local marketing, training, hiring, human resource functions and lease negotiation. So, the net result signifies that attaining a franchising model is any day profitable.

(The author, Mr. Gaurav Dabas, is the Director of WK Life, a premier multinational corporation in London.)

SHORT TAKES

Student develops Covid warriors' app

Aryan Singh Saluja, a Class 12 student of Delhi Public School Nacharam, Hyderabad, has developed a novel app called, 'Covid Warriors' to extend succour to the government staff, by thoroughly sanitising and disinfecting government offices and workspaces in the state capital, as per WHO Guidelines, free of cost. This will aid the hapless staff including the frontline warriors, who have to weather difficult work conditions in the call of duty.

National Olympiad on Practically app

Practically, an experiential learning app, tied up with the Entrepreneurship Cell (E-Cell) of IIT-Bombay, for the fifth edition of Eureka! Junior. It will host a National Entrepreneurship Olympiad on the app on October 31, 2021. The test will be divided into three tracks — Classes 6 to 8, Classes 9 & 10, and Classes 11 & 12. The top 2 winners across the three tracks will be rewarded with Practically scholarships worth up to 1.5 lakh rupees. They will also get an overall cash prize of 15,000 rupees from E-Cell, IIT Bombay.

Odissi dance workshop by Aruna Mohanty

Culminating the dance workshop series themed around Celebrating Devi on a high note, the National Centre for the Performing Arts(NCPA) announces a 3-day Odissi workshop by one of the finest Odissi dancers - Aruna Mohanty. The workshop will be conducted virtually from October 22-24 and will also have noted scholar and dancer Rahul Acharya speaking on the influence of Tantra in the temple tradition of Puri. For details, contact: 8879114939/ 9819002515

Paradise's 20th restaurant near Charminar

Charminar and the world's favourite biryani Paradise share a common address with the opening of its Omni Channel Restaurant catering to Dine-in, Take away and Delivery of Paradise at the iconic site of Charminar. Guests can now enjoy their biryani while dining at the restaurant and marvel at the spectacular view of Charminar from where they are seated.

Celebrate Diwali with Hollywood premieres

This Diwali, 'Flix Firecrackers' on &flix brings to you an exciting lineup of cinema that is sure to add the much-needed cheer this festive season. Join Luke Skywalker's peaceful and solitary existence with *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* airing this Thursday at 9 PM only on &flix. The adrenaline-pumping line-up will also feature other popular hits such as *Resident Evil*, *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle*, *Salt and the Drunken Master*, among many others!

Satisfy your fusion cravings at Anna Native

Anna Native introduces the one-of-a-kind south fusion food to the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad. Conveniently located at the prime neighborhood in Sainikpuri, Secunderabad, guests will be able to enjoy fresh and high-quality authentic south Indian dishes items from their extensive menu like sabudana vada, roasted tomato chutney, golichina kodi wings, curry leave chutney, mokka jonna sheek kebab, roasted tomato chutney, kali mirchi kodi kebab, soybean, and batani yellow pulao, bhuna yata nalli biryani, and Anna Native freshly brewed mango delight!

Festive hampers by 45th Avenue

Experience the timeless flavours of traditional Indian sweets with a deliciously healthy twist with exclusive Modern Indian Fusion Sweet and sugar-free option from the house of 45th Avenue, perfect for your festive gifting solution. The ongoing sale at 45th Avenue, Jubilee Hills, ends on November 10.

In high spirits

For many of us, a celebration is incomplete without some good old wine and whisky. Pernod Ricard India has a wide variety of spirits in their portfolio ranging from Wines and Champagne to Single Malt Whiskies and Gin. So this festive season, indulge yourself, and also gift these to your hosts at the next Diwali party in town!

Rohit finds his groove as India outplay Australia

PTI ■ DUBAI

India fine-tuned their T20 World Cup preparations with a convincing nine-wicket win over Australia in their final warm-up game here on Wednesday but the sixth bowler's slot remained a worry as even Virat Kohli rolled his arm over going into the tournament proper.

Captaining the side with Kohli only taking the field to bowl, Rohit Sharma (60 retired off 41) showed sublime touch alongside opening partner K L Rahul (39 off 31) as India chased down Australia's 152 for five in 17.5 overs.

Suryakumar Yadav (38 not out off 27) came at number three in Kohli's absence and got valuable time in the middle which should boost his confidence going ahead.

Hardik Pandya (14 not out off 8) came at four to finish the game and he did it with a clean hit over the bowler's head.

Another plus for India was seasoned pacer Bhuvneshwar



Australia's Marcus Stoinis looks on as India's Rohit Sharma and KL Rahul run between the wickets during the Cricket Twenty20 World Cup warm-up match between India and Australia in Dubai, on Wednesday

AP

Kumar finding rhythm after a poor outing against England. India had also beaten England in their earlier practice game.

The batting department looks more or less settled and the five specialist bowlers also inspire confidence but the same can't be said about the extra bowling option with Hardik not bringing his all-round skills to the table at the moment.

"Hardik is coming along pretty well, but it'll be a while before he will start to bowl. He hasn't started bowling, but he should be ready by the start of the tournament," said Rohit at the toss for the warm-up match against Australia.

The team management is hoping he will be ready to bowl during India's World Cup campaign which begins with the marquee clash against Pakistan on Sunday.

Skipper Kohli kept things tight with two overs of medium

pace but to expect him to do the job in high-pressure scenarios would be asking for too much from him.

India conceded 58 runs off the last five overs and that is something they would like to improve on.

After losing the toss, India put up a decent bowling effort. Rohit mentioned at the toss that Kohli, Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami were rested from the game but the skipper took the field to bowl a couple of overs in which he conceded 12 runs.

India had Australia on the mat at 11 for three after Aaron Finch opted to bat first.

David Warner's barren run continued after a failed attempt at a reverse sweep had him trapped in front off Ravichandran Ashwin.

With his very next ball, Ashwin got rid of birthday boy Mitchell Marsh who played for the turn which wasn't there only to edge it to the first slip.

Hardik expected to bowl when Indian T20 WC campaign begins: Rohit

PTI ■ DUBAI

India vice-captain Rohit Sharma on Wednesday said that all-rounder Hardik Pandya is expected to be "ready" to bowl when the team starts its T20 World Cup campaign here on Sunday. Rohit, who is leading the side in the warm-up game against Australia as Virat Kohli has been rested, said the team needs a sixth bowler during the showpiece.

"Hardik is coming along pretty well, but it'll be a while before he will start to bowl. He hasn't started bowling, but he should be ready by the start of the tournament," said Rohit at the toss for the warm-up match against Australia.

"We have quality in the main bowlers, but you'll need an option for a 6th bowler," he

added. India play Pakistan in their opening match here on Sunday. Pandya's fitness is a concern heading into the tournament as he did not bowl at all in the IPL. The team management has repeatedly stated that Pandya's bowling is crucial for the team's balance. Besides Kohli, pacers Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami were also rested from Wednesday's warm-up game.

"We want to make sure that we get the 6th bowling option, some options in the batting order as well, we'll try all those things today," Rohit said.

"We wanted to bat first as well, just wanted to try and get runs on the board." India had beaten England by seven wickets in their first warm-up game on Monday, riding on a 24-ball 51 from KL Rahul.

While Maxwell used his reverse sweep to good effect, Smith kept himself busy by rotating the strike.



T20 World Cup window

12 YR OLD DEIGNED SCOTLAND T20 WC JERSEY

Dubai: Scotland beating teams such as Bangladesh in the ICC T20 World Cup was never unthinkable. But what is difficult to believe is that the team's striking dark blue and purple-coloured jersey has been designed by a 12-year-old girl. Rebecca Downie is the young designer and she has been cheering her team, which proved to be the most impressive in the first week of the tournament. The team chose the design from over 200 entries from school children across the country. The jersey is based on the colours of Scotland's national emblem — the thistle.

'IF WE DON'T GET RESULTS, WE SEARCH FOR SCAPEGOATS'

Karachi: Former captain Misbah-ul-Haq said that there will be no improvement in Pakistan cricket unless it changes its culture and stops hunting for scapegoats. Speaking for the first time after his sudden resignation as head coach last month, Misbah said "cosmetic surgery" will not change anything in Pakistan cricket as the problems are deep rooted in the system. "The problem is that in our cricket we only look at results and we don't give time or have patience for planning ahead and improving the system," he said on 'A-Sports' channel.

Namibia beat Netherlands, keeps them in hunt for Super 12

PTI ■ ABU DHABI

In a sensational display of power-hitting, David Wiese conjured up a 66-run knock to fashion Namibia's six-wicket win over the Netherlands in a crucial first round Group A game of the T20 World Cup here on Wednesday.

Wiese's maiden international half-century changed the pace of the game in matter of minutes as runs flew thick and fast after he took charge at the crease and in the process added 93 runs with skipper Gerhard Erasmus (32) for the fourth wicket. Chasing 165 to stay alive in the competition, debutants Namibia were stuttering at 52 for three after nine overs but Wiese single-handedly sank the Dutch side.

His onslaught on the spinners, especially the monstrous straight sixes, was a treat to watch as the Dutch bowlers were guilty of putting the balls in the slot for Wiese to clobber.

And even if the pacers drew the length changed a bit back, the 36-year-old Wiese had enough power to muscle the ball around for big shots.

He raised his fifty in just 29 balls, with a six off rival skipper Pietar Seelaar. His 40-ball unbeaten knock was adorned with five



sixes and four shots to the fence. Erasmus too timed the ball beautifully and got boundaries with ease in his 22-ball knock

that had four fours and a six. The victory has kept Namibia in hunt for the Super-12 stage and now need to beat

Ireland in their final game in the first round.

They had lost to Sri Lanka in their opening match.

The Netherlands now have lost both their games and their chances to make it to the next stage are quite low.

Earlier, opener Max O'Dowd (70) struck his second consecutive half-century and shared a 82-run stand with Colin Ackermann (35) to help the Netherland post a competitive 164 for four.

O'Dowd, who had hit 51 against Ireland in the previous match, expressed himself freely, going after the bowlers. At times he played uppish shots, not exactly in control but still kept finding the gaps to keep the scoreboard going.

It should be spinners' World Cup, says Rashid Khan

PTI ■ DUBAI

The ICC T20 World Cup will belong to the spinners, Afghanistan's star leg-break bowler Rashid Khan has asserted, and said they can beat any team if they bat well in the showpiece. Since being picked up by IPL team Sunrisers Hyderabad as an 18-year-old in 2017, ace leg-spinner Rashid has emerged as T20 cricket's leading wicket-taker in this period with 333 scalps and is wanted by franchises across the world.

Appearing in his second T20 World Cup, Rashid feels spinners are always "effective" on pitches at three venues in the UAE, where the Super 12s, the



semi-finals and final will be played.

"Conditions here are always good for spinners and it should be spinners' World Cup," Rashid was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo.

"Doesn't matter how wickets are prepared here, it is always helpful for the

spinners. Spinners will play a huge role in this World Cup.

"As we have seen in the IPL, spinners have brought back their team in the game. I feel that will be same in the World Cup as well. The best spinners will bring their team back in the game and win it."

Rashid feels Afghanistan, who are in Group 2 along with India, Pakistan and New Zealand, would need to do "lots of hard work" considering all their opponents in the Super 12s are "good players of spin".

Afghanistan have played 14 T20Is at the three venues in the UAE and have won all of them.

PTI ■ ODENSE

Young Lakshya Sen thumped compatriot Sourabh Verma in straight games to enter the second round but it was curtains for Saina Nehwal at the Denmark Open Super 1000 tournament here on Wednesday. Lakshya, who had finished runners-up at Dutch Open last Sunday, dished out a superb performance to outclass national champion Sourabh 21-9 21-7 in 26 minutes.

The 20-year-old from Almora, who had failed to make the cut for the Sudirman Cup and Thomas Cup Final after losing his only match in the trials, is likely to clash with second seed



and Olympic champion Viktor Axelsen of Denmark next.

London Games bronze medalist Saina, who had retired midway through her first match at Uber Cup Final due to a groin injury, couldn't match Japan's world no 20 Aya Otori and lost

21-16 21-14 in the opening round.

The Indian doubles players had a dismal outing as apart from Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Ashwini Ponnappa, none of the others could put up a fight in their respective matches.

While Satwik and Ashwini's gallant battle ended with a 17-21 21-14 11-21 loss to China's Feng Yan Zhe and Du Yue in mixed doubles, Meghana Jakkampudi and Poorvisha S Ram lost 8-21 7-21 to Indonesian combination of Nita Violina Marwah and Putri Syaikhah in women's doubles. Commonwealth Games bronze medalists Ashwini and N Sikki Reddy also went down 17-21 13-

21 to second seeded Korean pair of Lee Sohee and Shin Seungchan.

Lakshya had claimed five titles in 2019 before COVID-19 forced the suspension of the BWF calendar.

On Wednesday, the world no 25 Indian was up against Sourabh, an opponent against whom he had lost twice in the past but it made no difference as Lakshya dished out a dominating show to blow him away.

He led 7-2 early on and never looked in trouble as he reeled off seven straight points from 13-7 to grab seven game points. Sourabh saved two before Lakshya pocketed the opening game.

Pattinson retires from international cricket

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Australian fast bowler James Pattinson on Wednesday retired from international cricket after realising that he won't be in the reckoning for the Ashes series due to fitness issues.

The 31-year-old, who has played 21 Tests and 15 ODIs, though will continue to play domestic cricket.

Pattinson had recently suffered a knee injury during an intra-squad Victorian trial game.

"Leading into pre-season I really wanted to give the Ashes a crack but in the end I haven't had the preparation I would have liked heading into the coming season," Pattinson was quoted as saying by cricket.Com.Au in a statement.

"If I was to be part of the Ashes I would need to do myself and my teammates justice. I didn't want to be in a position of battling with my body when you need to be 100 per cent fit and ready to go at any time. That would not be fair to myself or the team."

"It was then I felt that instead of trying to play at the very highest level, knowing I have only got three or four years of cricket left, I would focus more on Victoria, helping the young guys develop, perhaps some cricket in England and spending more time with my family."

Messi scores 2 goals to rescue PSG



AP ■ PARIS

Lionel Messi scored twice in quick succession, including an exquisite Panenka-style penalty, to rescue Paris Saint-Germain as it rallied to beat Leipzig 3-2 in the Champions League after being dominated for long spells.

Messi equalised in the 67th minute on Tuesday, poking home from close range after goalkeeper

Peter Gulacsi tipped his first shot onto the post. He then sent Gulacsi diving to the left before dinking the ball softly down the middle for his third goal since joining PSG from Barcelona.

They have all come in the Champions League, with Kylian Mbappe setting up the first two and winning the penalty for Messi's winner against Leipzig in the 74th minute.

Mbappe pointed straight at Messi to tell him he could take the spot kick.

"It's normal, it's about respect," Mbappe said.

"He's the best player in the world. I've always said it's a privilege to play with him."

It was the 34th time that Messi scored at least two goals in a Champions League game, bringing the Argentina captain's total to 123

goals in the tournament. He remains second to longtime rival Cristiano Ronaldo on 137.

Mbappe then took a penalty in the fourth minute of stoppage time, awarded following a video review for a foul on right back Achraf Hakimi, but he blazed it well over.

PSG is atop Group A with seven points, one more than Manchester City. Leipzig is last with no points.

Mbappe opened the scoring with a ninth-minute goal. But after that, the visitors took control by pressing high up the field and forcing panicky PSG into numerous errors.

"(Were we) lucky, no? You make your own luck," Mbappe said. "But of course, it was difficult, Leipzig played well. We had some low spells which were perhaps a little bit too low."

Striker Andre Silva equalised in the 28th and midfielder Nordi Mukiele volleyed in powerfully in the 57th, with left back Angelino setting up both with his deft left foot.

"Leipzig have a good team, full of confidence," PSG winger Julian Draxler said. "They caused us some problems, but we ruthlessly exploited the room we were allowed."

PSG was missing forwards Neymar and Mauro Icardi, which gave Draxler a rare start alongside Mbappe and Messi in attack. Neymar has a sore adductor while Icardi was excused for family reasons.



Olympic flame arrives in Beijing amid boycott calls

PT ■ BEIJING

The Olympic flame arrived in Beijing on Wednesday amid calls from overseas critics for a boycott of the Feb. 4-20 Winter Games.

Beijing's Communist Party Secretary Cai Qi, the top official in the Chinese capital, received the flame at a closely-guarded airport ceremony.

Beijing successfully hosted the Summer Olympics in 2008, although the event failed to produce the more open political and social environment in China that many had hoped for.

Activist groups disrupted the flame lighting ceremony in southern Greece on Monday, accusing the International Olympic Committee of granting legitimacy to rights abuses in China.

IOC officials have said they are committed to seeing the competition go ahead and that rights issues are not part of their remit. Speaking in the ancient stadium of Olympia, IOC President Thomas Bach said the Games must be "respected as politically neutral ground."

Activists on Tuesday said human rights in China have deteriorated since 2008, claiming that the Summer Games "emboldened" China.

SINGLES

BENZEMA ABSENT FOR BLACKMAIL TRIAL

Versailles : Real Madrid forward Karim Benzema wasn't present Wednesday for the opening of his three-day trial for involvement in an alleged attempt to blackmail former France teammate Mathieu Valbuena over a sex tape. The 33-year-old Benzema's legal team told the court in Versailles that professional obligations made it "impossible" for him to attend. Valbuena's lawyer said he deplored the absence. Benzema played for Madrid in Kyiv on Tuesday against Shakhtar Donetsk in the Champions League. Madrid plays again Sunday against Barcelona in the Spanish league. Four other people accused of attempted blackmail in the case were present in court.

AKEAL HOSEIN REPLACES FABIAN ALLEN

Dubai: Left-arm spinner Akeal Hosein was on Wednesday approved as replacement for an injured Fabian Allen in the West Indies squad for the ongoing ICC T20 World Cup. The Event Technical Committee of the tournament has approved Hosein as a replacement for Allen, the ICC said in a statement. Hosein, who has played nine ODIs and six T20Is, was picked after Allen was ruled out due to an ankle injury. Hosein was a reserve as per the allowance for teams to travel with extra players in view of COVID-19 quarantine requirements.

OLYMPIANS HEADLINE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

Hisar: Olympians Simranjit Kaur (60kg) and Pooja Rani (81kg) headline a strong field for the National Women's Boxing Championship, which will double up as a selection trial for the world championships, starting here on Thursday. The tournament, which is being conducted in association with Haryana Boxing Sangh, will see participation of more than 320 boxers from 36 States/UTs/Boards from across the country. Apart from Simranjit (60kg) and Pooja (81kg), who is the reigning Asian champion, 2019 World Championships bronze-medallist Jamuna Boro (54kg), defending champion Pwila Basumatary (60kg) and Asian Championships bronze medalist Jaismine (60kg) will be seen presenting strong challenges.

SRIRAM RETURNS TO T'WOOD WITH ASALEM JARIGINDI

K RAMYA SREE

Asaalem Jarigindi, an independent film based on real-life incidents, is coming to theatres tomorrow. This film marks the comeback of the *Okariki Okaru* star Sreekantha aka Sriram.

The film, directed by cinematographer-turned-director NVR, bankrolled by K Neelima under the banner of Exodus Media, has Sanchita Padukone playing the leading lady. Set in the backdrop of a village, *Asaalem Jarigindi* is a suspense love story that encompasses love, suspense and action.

The Pioneer catches up with Sriram ahead of the film's release for a chat about the film, the making of it, and more.

Starting off with what made him come on board this project, Sriram was quick to take the name of his director NVR. He says, "Raghava (NVR) is a good director and a good narrator. I was fascinated by the way *Asaalem Jarigindi* story was narrated to me. When I heard the story, I knew this was going to be a compact project

and that there will be a lot of restrictions. I also knew that there will be honest efforts from the team as the entire crew was passionate about making films. That got me convinced. Moreover, Raghava and I share a good understanding. We were able to do things nice and faster, and bring good vibes to the film. That said, I also wanted to do more Telugu films. "To be very honest, I have a lot of love for Telugu cinema. Although I'm doing a lot of projects in Tamil, if anyone from the Telugu industry believes in me and wants to do a film with me, I would reach out to them personally. More than economics, for me, it is about being part of such a project," adds the *Adavari Matalaku Ardale Verule* actor.

After Love Story, *Asaalem Jarigindi* is

another film that is set against the backdrop of rural Telangana and Sriram plays a man from there and is to deliver dialogues in Telangana dialect. When asked if it was difficult dubbing for himself, maintaining the Telangana slang, he shares, "I live in Chennai and the Teluguites who live here are not fluent in their own native language. Similar is the case with me. When I dub for my Telugu films, I am sometimes corrected on how a certain word is to be pronounced, and I do it. That is all about it. I speak Hyderabad Telugu which more or less has Telangana dialect and it made my work easier. Being a Hyderabad was an advantage for me to dub for this film. I cannot read or write Telugu because of the CBSE background I come from and my second language was Hindi. Our director would bring dialogues of 3 to 4 pages. There was so much learning from the film. Also, this was one of the fastest movies made in recent times," shares the actor who worked in films like *Nanban*, *Adavari Matalaku Ardale Verule*, and *Lie*.

It's not just about the language, the entire shooting of this project was a learning process for Sriram. Having shot in the rural districts of Telangana, Sriram says he is happy to have got a chance to travel to these villages he hasn't been to before,

despite being a native of Hyderabad. He thanks his producer Johnson, and director Raghava, for believing in him.

"Although initially everyone was apprehensive if I will be able to manage the travel from Chennai to Hyderabad for the film's shoot, by the end of our schedule, everyone was surprised that I wrapped up my schedule real quick and in single takes," giggles Sriram adding that the film's unit wanted him to do more Telugu cinema after working with him for this film. About this, he answers, "I will do Telugu cinema if I am given an opportunity." For Sriram, the pleasant, lyrical-rich music is something he loved the most about the film, which is a perfect balance of romance, superstition, fiction, and more.

Asaalem Jarigindi has new-bee Sanchita Padukone playing the leading lady. Heaping praises for her work, Sriram shares, "Sanchita is a very genuine, hardworking person. Though she didn't know the language, she put in all her efforts. There were a lot of constraints while making this film — like shooting in extremely hot weather, working without breaks sometimes, but she managed to handle everything with ease. Locations sometimes were not compatible for a woman, still, she managed and I really appreciate that about her."

When asked why one should watch this film, Sriram says it is for the genuine efforts put by the team and that he is confident the film will be entertaining.

Meanwhile, the *Dhada* actor has another Telugu film called *10th Class Diaries*, which was launched by director Krish. Avika Gor, Srinivas Reddy, Nasser, and Himaja will be seen playing some key roles in the film.

Like everyone, even the film industry fell prey to Covid-19 and Sriram wants people to promote movies and watch films in theatres to support the movie industry.



"Natyam is commercial, yet thought-provoking"

K RAMYA SREE

Natyam, a film based on classical dance, is exciting a certain set of audience as it is all set to hit big screens tomorrow. The film, starring popular Kuchipudi dancer Sandhya Raju, is directed by short filmmaker Revanth Korukonda.

Ahead of the film's release, Sandhya, who will make her acting debut with *Natyam*, shares, "Dancing has been my passion since I was a child. I chose this project with the idea that I could get even closer to people through this film."

Sandhya is someone who eats, breathes, and sleeps dance and for someone like her, doing a full-length film was no less than a roller-

coaster ride. On being asked why she chose to do a full-length film, she shares, "I have not known about the world of cinema, have not been exposed to it even as a child. All I knew was dance. Many great films were made on dance, and it's only about moving your legs and arms. Our director's idea of telling a story through it is seen in this film. This dance film is thought-provoking."

She adds that the film will show the relationship of a guru with his disciples: "We show the boundaries that exist for classical dancers. What is the difference between western dance and classical dance? *Natyam* is the name

of the village. The superstitions that surround it are also shown in the film. It is like a commercial movie."

The film is gaining everyone's praise, especially from veterans. Recently, even Vice-president of India, Venkaiah Naidu appreciated the team's efforts.

Speaking about her passion for dance, she shares, "As a kid, I was sent to various schools by my parents and I ended up staying at a dance school for 10 years, watching the training of Vempati Chinsatya *garu*. That's when I decided to dedicate my life to arts. I come from an eCommerce background, my parents wanted me to take care of our factories but my heart beats for dance. My family members never let me down. Even after the wedding, they stood by me like an anchor."

Designed to arouse interest even for those who are not in touch with classical dance, music director Shraavan provided excellent music for it.

This is her first film and she donned the role of a producer and an actor.

Sharing how she managed to do both, Sandhya said, "Being an actress seemed very difficult. I have been working with the production team, the location team, and all the departments. I could not be anywhere like just the heroine. It seemed very difficult to finish the movie and catch up to the theater."

"Acting in front of the screen is different from a dance performance. The director has already told me how to be in front of the camera. The story, the character, those words, must be understood, and acted upon. The camera does not just capture our faces, it also captures the feelings within us. The camera has that power," adds she.

When asked if she is willing to do more films, Sandhya says she doesn't want to do commercial movies. "I will do a film if I come across a good story and character. I will play roles that have the potential to win a national award. I'll take up roles that will inspire girls to want to lead a film."

Sukumar to film Arya 3 with Vijay Deverakonda



Sukumar, who is currently busy with Allu Arjun and Rashmika Mandanna's upcoming flick *Pushpa*, a high-budget action drama, being made in two

parts, is already gearing up for his next and it is with the current heartthrob of Indian cinema — Vijay Deverakonda.



According to the latest reports, Sukumar will take up this project as soon as he wraps up *Pushpa*.

Soon after that, Sukumar is to kickstart the pre-production work of his upcoming movie, which is touted to be the sequel to Sukumar's most-hyped anthology — *Arya* and *Arya 2*. The new movie is to be titled *Arya 3*, it is heard.

Both *Arya* and *Arya 2* had Icon star Allu Arjun. While everyone expected Allu Arjun to play the

lead in *Arya 3*, it seems like Sukumar is keen to rope in *Arjun Reddy* actor Vijay Deverakonda as his hero.

Sukumar has already announced his next film with Vijay Deverakonda, which is to be bankrolled under the banner Falcon Creations sometime back, but it was not announced if this will be *Arya 3*. An official confirmation is yet to be made.

Meanwhile, Allu Arjun and Sukumar, who delivered the two greatest hits in Telugu — *Arya* and *Arya 2*, have come together for their third film *Pushpa*.

Pushpa, being a pan-India film, has a huge hype around its release, which is scheduled for December 17. On the other hand, Vijay Deverakonda is all set for his upcoming movie *Liger* to hit the screens soon. Ananya Panday acts as Vijay's female lead in this Puri Jagannadh directorial.

SEETA MANOHARA SRI RAGHAVA LAUNCHED FORMALLY WITH A PUJA



Seeta Manohara Sri Raghava, a film starring yesteryear actor Haranath's grand nephew Virat Raj in the lead role, has been launched formally with a puja ceremony on Wednesday at Ramanaidu

Studios in Hyderabad.

While director Anil Ravipudi gave the first clap, the camera was switched on by veteran producer A M Rathnam. Suresh Babu too, was present at the launch. The film directed by Sudhakar T on Vandana Movies banner, is tipped to be a lively youthful entertainer.

Durga says this film will be a mass entertainer. "It is a clean family entertainer. Salaar music director Ravi Basur's music will be one of the highlights of the movie. Action sequences will be composed by *RRR* fame King Solomon. I thank Sudhakar Reddy and I am sure we will succeed in fulfilling all expectations that are on us."

The film is said to hit the big screens by early 2022.

Samantha files defamation cases against YouTube channels

Samantha Ruth Prabhu, who recently announced her separation from Akkineni Naga Chaitanya, stood up for herself in these tough situations. She has now filed defamation cases against some YouTube channels for streaming malignant content about her.

Suman TV, Telugu Popular TV, and a few more YouTube channels will receive legal notices from Samantha, for defaming her image on their respective channels. Also, Samantha has apparently filed a legal notice against an advocate named Venkat Rao, who had allegedly spoken about Samantha's marital life and had alleged that she had affairs.

Post her divorce from Naga

Chaitanya, Samantha has been the talk of the town, while she is being targeted by internet bullies.

In the wake of all the negativity, Samantha had released a personal note asking others to stay away from her as she is not going to allow any kind of negativity to break her. Apparently, neither her ex-husband Naga Chaitanya, nor his father Nagarjuna stood by her in these struggles.

On the work front, Samantha has a couple of interesting subjects she would start shooting for soon, while she is also taking her personal space to cope with the recent tumult in her life.



K3 KOTIKOKKADU TO RELEASE ON NOV. 12

Kannada film *Kotigobba 3* is all set to release in Telugu on November 12 with the title *K3 Kotikokkadu*.

The movie casts Kiccha Sudeep, Madonna Sebastian and Shraddha Das are in the lead roles along with P. Ravi Shankar, Aftab Shivdasani, Nawab Shah, Danish Akhtar Saifi, Sudhanshu Pandey are seen in supporting roles. Telugu theatrical rights bagged by Good Friends banner and Devendra DK. The music is composed by Arjun Janya while cinematography is done by Shekhar Chandru and editing by Goran Ivanovic.



Allu Arjun reminisces Allu-Akkineni bond

After *Love Story*, the recently released *Most Eligible Bachelor* is the current talk of the Telugu film industry. The film's unit is diving deep into the success of the film. Presented by mega producer Allu Arvind under the banner of GA2 Pictures, the film, directed by Bommarillu Bhaskar, has Akhil Akkineni, Pooja Hegde as the lead pair.

The success meeting of the film was a glamorous event with the who's who of Tollywood gracing the event and sharing kind words about the film.

One such prominent guest of the night was Icon star Allu Arjun who couldn't stop praising the film. Beginning his speech by congratulating Akhil for scoring high with *MEB*, the *Pushpa* actor appreciating Akhil, said, "For me, Akhil is just like my younger brother and I am elated that Akhil has to his credit a big hit like *MEB*. Akhil's dancing and fighting skills gave this film those extra points."

The Allu family's association with the Akkinenis dates back to the 1960s.

Commenting on the same, Allu Arjun said, "From our grandfathers to our fathers to our generation, our journey with the Akkineni family has been very special and this bond will continue for years to come."



"Bunny Vasu got another big hit. I have not seen him work so hard lately. The whole team worked very hard and gave us all a memorable film. The film proves that if a good film is made, people will come to the theaters. Thank you to the Telugu audience for making it such a big success," concluded the actor.