

ANALYSIS 7
IMPORT DUTY CUTBACK ON
TESLA IS NO GOOD**MONEY 8**
FM ASKS IBA TO PLAY PIVOTAL ROLE IN
RESURGENCE OF ECONOMY**SPORTS 11**
VIRAT, RAHUL STATIC
AT 4TH & 6TH

VIJAYAWADA, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

NAVEEN'S NEXT
WITH DEBUTANT
DIRECTOR

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**INCOME TAX DEPARTMENT RAIDS SIX
PLACES LINKED TO ACTOR SONU SOOD**

Actor Sonu Sood's premises in Mumbai and a company in Lucknow linked to him were raided by the Income Tax department, sources said today. "A recent deal between Sonu Sood's company and a Lucknow-based real estate firm is under the scanner. The survey operation has been initiated on allegations of tax evasion on this deal," sources in the Income Tax department said. The tax raids come days after the actor's high-profile meeting with Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who declared him the brand ambassador for his government's mentorship programme for school students in the capital.

**TATAS SUBMIT BID FOR AIR INDIA
SALE, CONFIRMS FINANCE MINISTRY**

The government is expected to complete the bidding process of debt-laden national carrier Air India on Wednesday (September 15). Tata Sons has apparently submitted its bid for the sale. The airline received financial bids (including Tata's) for its disinvestment process, Finance Ministry said. "Financial bids for Air India disinvestment received by Transaction Adviser. Process now moves to concluding stage," Secretary, Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) stated. Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia had earlier made it clear that September 15 deadline for the process is fixed and will not change.

**BIG DROP IN ANTIBODIES WITHIN 4
MONTHS OF COVID SHOT, SAYS STUDY**

A study of 614 fully vaccinated health workers in India found a 'significant' drop in their COVID-fighting antibodies within four months of the first shot. The findings could help the government decide whether to provide booster doses as some Western countries have done. Waning antibodies do not necessarily mean that immunised people lose their ability to counter the disease, as the body's memory cells may still kick in to offer substantial protection, said the director of a state-run institute that did the study.

**CBI BOOKS INDIAN TECHNOMACH CMD
FOR RS 1,528 CRORE BANK FRAUD**

The CBI has registered a case against Indian Technomach Co Ltd, its promoter and CMD Rakesh Kumar Sharma, and others for allegedly defrauding a consortium of 16 banks led by Bank of India to the tune of over Rs 1,528 crore, officials said on Wednesday. The company, which has its unit in Himachal Pradesh and is involved in manufacturing of ferrous and non-ferrous metals, had taken credit facilities from consortium members during 2008-13 but the account has turned into a non performing asset because of alleged defaults on payments, they said.

Jagan gives final touches to new 25-member TTD Board

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy was believed to be giving the final touches to the list of TTD Board members, a task that has been kept pending since long.

While the official list is yet to be released, sources in the State government were confident that the Chief Minister has more or less decided that a 25-member Board would suffice for administering the affairs of the world-famous temple at optimal level, while a few more people recommended by some prominent people would be appointed as special invitees.

The official announcement in the form of a GO is expected to be issued late on Wednesday, or on Thursday.

Wednesday saw some hectic activity regarding the constitution of the TTD Board, with its chairman YV Subba Reddy meeting Jagan in the evening. The meeting is believed to have discussed the list



threadbare.

According to sources, the new TTD Board will have on board four to five members from Telangana, three from Tamil Nadu, two from Karnataka and one each from West Bengal, Puducherry and Maharashtra. The remaining members would be from Andhra Pradesh.

From Telangana, chairman of the My Home Group Jupalli

Rameshwar Rao, Hetero Drugs MD Bandi Parthasarathy Reddy, Muramsetti Ramulu, YSRCP Rajya Sabha Member Vemireddy Prabhakar Reddy's wife Vemireddy Prashanti Reddy, Rajesh Sharma and India Cements chairman N Srinivasan are likely to be re-nominated to the Board, the sources said.

**Jagan honours
KCR's request
of 5 members
to TTD Board**SNCN ACHARYULU
■ HYDERABAD

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy has honoured the request of his Telangana counterpart K Chandrasekhar Rao by accommodating five people recommended by him on the prestigious Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam (TTD) Board.

These five names have been appointed as regular members of the TTD Board.

QUID PRO QUO CASE CBI court rejects petition seeking cancellation of bail given to Jagan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

special CBI court here on Wednesday dismissed petitions seeking cancellation of bail granted to Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy and a YSR Congress MP in a case against them over alleged quid pro quo deals.

Earlier, rebel YSR Congress Party MP K Raghu Ramakrishnam Raju filed a petition before the court seeking cancellation of bail given to Jagan alleging that he was not adhering to the bail conditions and accused him of directly and indirectly influencing the witnesses.

Subsequently, Raju filed another application seeking cancellation of bail to YSRCP Rajya Sabha MP V Vijayasai Reddy, accusing him of violating bail conditions.

According to the petitioner,

Jagan was trying to drag the cases.

The CBI had filed 11 charge sheets against the YSRCP president (Jagan) and others. While Jagan has been named as the prime accused, Vijayasai Reddy is the second accused in the cases over the alleged quid pro quo deals.

The cases relate to investments made by several companies in Jagan's companies as quid pro quo for various favours, including land allotments, bestowed on them during the tenure of his father YS Rajasekhara Reddy as the Chief Minister of undivided Andhra Pradesh between 2004 and 2009.

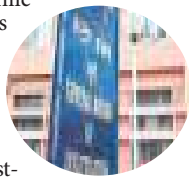
Jagan, thus, amassed huge wealth misusing the office of his late father, the CBI alleged.

Several former Ministers and bureaucrats are also accused in the case.

Currently, Jagan and Vijayasai Reddy are out on bail. Jagan was released from the prison here in September 2013 after serving 15 months following his arrest in May 2012.

A close aide of Jagan, Vijayasai Reddy, who had served as financial advisor for group companies of Jagan, and the first person to be arrested in the case in 2012 was accused by CBI of entering into a conspiracy with the Chief Minister and playing a vital role in soliciting investments in the form of bribes as a quid-pro-quo from some companies.

He was granted bail in October 2013.

**MAKING A POINT**

Rajya Sabha MP Subramanian Swamy pays a courtesy visit to Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy at the latter's camp office on Wednesday.

HC holds 2 IAS officers guilty of contempt, issues NBW

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh High Court has issued a non-bailable warrant against senior IAS officers Poonam Malakondaiah and Chiranjeevi Chowdary for not appearing before the court on Wednesday.

The High Court also held Malakondaiah and her colleague Chiranjeevi Chowdary guilty of contempt of court for failing to implement its orders.

It may be recalled that sericulture employees had moved the court seeking regularisation of their posts. After hearing the matter, the High Court had on February 28 2020 directed the government to regularise these posts.

However, the order was not implemented by the authorities following which the High Court held the two IAS officers guilty of contempt of court.

‘Cherry-picking’ of candidates in appointments in Tribunals upsets SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme court on Wednesday pulled up the Centre over the recent appointments in some tribunals, saying it was "cherry-picking" candidates from the recommended list and that there was "no consistency" in the selection process.

"We are very much unhappy with the way the issues are going on and how the decisions are

taken, the court observed, calling the situation "unfortunate".

Observing that making appointments in tribunals is the only solution, the top court asked the Centre to do so in two weeks as the quasi-judicial bodies face a severe crunch of presiding officers as well as judicial and technical members that crippled their functioning.

The Centre was also asked to apprise the court of the reasons if

persons from the recommended list are not selected.

A three-judge special bench headed by Chief Justice NV Ramana took note of the assurance of Attorney General KK Venugopal that the Centre would make appointments in two weeks to the tribunals from the list of persons recommended by the search and selection committee.

AP gets Public Warning System for disaster alerts

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh State Disaster Management Authority has partnered with Vi (Vodafone-Idea) and Celltick to launch the first cell broadcast-based Public Warning System to alert citizens on a real-time basis on disasters.

Celltick's state-of-the-art Cell Broadcast Entity (CBE) and its Cell Broadcast Center (CBC) will deliver emergency warning alerts on Vi's network in the state, a release said here on Wednesday.

Vi is the first telecom service provider in the state to support the Common Alerting Protocol-compliant Integrated Public Alert and

Warning System (IPAWS), the release said. This would enable alerts in real-time based on location prior to, during or post-disaster.

IPAWS is a World Bank-aided project and AP now joins countries like the USA, Canada, Japan, Australia, Israel and South Korea in deploying the system.

APSDMA Commissioner K Kannababu said the new system would enable the State government to automate the alerting process and disseminate geo-tagged alert messages in real-time with minimal manual intervention.

CM vows economic development of women

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Wednesday discussed the employment opportunities being undertaken for the sustainable economic advancement of women through several government schemes.

During a review meeting on the progress of YSR Cheyutha and YSR Aasara schemes at his camp office here on Wednesday, the Chief Minister said that his government was committed towards the economic development of women and thus introduced welfare schemes like Aasara and Cheyutha paving the way for true empowerment.

He said that the government also revived zero interest loans that were

Jagan said that his government was committed towards the economic development of women and thus introduced schemes like Aasara and Cheyutha.

scrapped during the TDP regime and also partnered with major companies like ITC, Reliance and Amul to support women entrepreneurs.

The Chief Minister asked officials to ensure spot documentation while availing loans for employment avenues that contribute to sustainable economic growth. He said that steps should be taken to

provide a loan of Rs 35,000 at 25 paise interest.

On the occasion, the Chief Minister recalled that the previous government betrayed women by promising to clear outstanding loans and asking them not to repay their loans.

With non-repayment of these loans by the previous government, the YSRCP administration took up the responsibility and has been clearing them in four instalments, Jagan said.

"Had former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu cleared those loans in 2014, the burden would have ended there.

Since he told women not to repay and failed to keep his promise, the burden fell on the women resulting in a great loss, where the A grade

groups have fallen into 'C' grade," Jagan said.

In this context, the Chief Minister stated that the government had brought welfare schemes like Aasara and Cheyutha. He directed the authorities to create awareness among the women on these programmes.

Jagan also asked officials to come up with special programmes ahead of the disbursement of the second tranche of the Aasara initiative, by involving the public representatives.

He said that the money given under Aasara should be deposited in unencumbered accounts so that the banks cannot deduct the money for unpaid debts.

HYDERABAD DRUGS CASE

Actress Mumaith Khan appears before the ED

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Actress Mumaith Khan appeared before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) here on Wednesday as part of a money laundering probe in connection with a high-end drugs racket that was busted in the city in 2017.

Mumaith is the eighth person from the Telugu film industry (Tollywood) to appear before the ED, which has summoned over 10 personalities, including directors and actors.

**TODAY****ALMANAC****Month & Paksham:**

Bhadrapada & Shukla Paksha

Panchangam

Tithi : Dashami 09:35**Nakshatram** : Uttara Ashadha 28:08**Time to Avoid** : Time to Avoid (Bad time to start any important work)**Rahukalam** : 1:41 pm - 3:12 pm**Yamagandam** : 6:07 am - 7:38 am**Varjyam** : 12:40 pm - 2:13 pm**Gulika** : 9:09 am - 10:40 am**Good Time** : (to start any important work)**Amritakalam** : 9:57 pm - 11:30 pm**Abhijit Muhurtham** : 11:46 am - 12:34 pm**VIJAYAWADA
WEATHER**

Forecast: Partly cloudy

Temp: 33/26

Humidity: 77%

Sunrise: 6:02 am

Sunset: 06:17 pm

Current Weather Conditions

Updated SEPTEMBER 15, 2021 5:00 PM



Four from AP, two from Telangana among 18 toppers of JEE mains

■ 44 candidates score 100 percentile, 18 share top rank

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A record 44 candidates have scored 100 percentile in the engineering entrance exam JEE-Main this year while 18 candidates have shared the top rank, according to National Testing Agency (NTA).

The result for the crucial exam was announced post midnight on Tuesday with the website crashing for several hours after that.

The first rank holders included Gaurab Das (Karnataka), Vaibhav Vishal (Bihar), Duggineni Venkata Panesh (Andhra Pradesh), Siddhant Mukherjee, Anshul Verma and Mridul Agarwal (Rajasthan), Ruchir Bansal and Kavya Chopra (Delhi), Amaiya Singhal and Pal Agarwal (Uttar Pradesh), Komma Sharanya and Joysula Venkata Aditya (Telangana), Pasala Veera Siva, Karnam Lokesh and Kanchanapalli



Rahul Naidu, (Andhra Pradesh), Pulkit Goyal (Punjab) and Guramrit Singh (Chandigarh).

Last year, 24 candidates had scored 100 percentile.

On account of using unfair means, a total of 20 candidates have been debarred from appearing in future examinations for a period of three years. Their results have also been withheld.

Starting this year, the Joint Entrance Exam (JEE)-Main

was conducted four times a year to offer flexibility to students and a chance to improve their scores. The first phase was held in February and the second in March.

The next phases were scheduled for April and May but those were postponed in view of the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic that raged through the country affecting lakhs.

The third edition was held from July 20-25 while the

fourth edition was conducted from August 26 to September 2.

The examination was conducted in 13 languages - English, Hindi, Gujarati, Assamese, Bengali, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Odia, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu.

Over 9.34 lakh candidates appeared in four editions of JEE-Main. A total of 2.52 lakh common candidates had appeared for all four editions of the exam.

A total of 6.58 lakh male candidates had appeared for the exam while the number of female candidates appearing for the exam was 2.80 lakh.

The ranks of the candidates have been released taking into consideration the best of the four NTA scores in accordance with the policy already made.

NTA scores are normalised across multi-session papers and are based on the relative

performance of all those who appeared for the examination in one session.

"The marks obtained are converted into a scale ranging from 100 to 0 for each session of examinees. NTA score is not the same as the percentage of marks obtained," a senior official said.

As per NTA's tie breaking policy, candidates with higher marks in Mathematics are given preference; followed by NTA score in Physics; followed by NTA score in Chemistry and if the tie remains, the candidate with a lesser ratio of negative to positive response will be preferred.

The examination was conducted in 925 centres in 334 cities, including 12 cities outside India in Bahrain, Colombo, Doha, Dubai, Kathmandu, Kuala Lumpur, Lagos, Muscat, Riyadh, Sharjah, Singapore and Kuwait.

State's energy consumption surpasses national average

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The average electricity consumption in Andhra Pradesh has surpassed the national average in August.

Power consumption in AP grew by 20.5 percent in August 2021 which is higher than the national average energy consumption of 18.6 pc.

Energy consumption in AP was 6,085.61 million units in August 2021, an increase of 20.5 percent as against 5,050.40 MU in August-2020.

The per day average energy consumption in August 2021 was around 196.3 MU as against 162.92 MU in August 2020. Similarly, the highest demand was recorded as 11,018 MW on August 28, 2021 and 8,892 MW on August 30, 2020.

Energy Secretary Srikant

Nagulapalli, while speaking at a programme organised on the occasion of 161st birth anniversary of the eminent Indian engineer Sir Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya on Wednesday, said the increase in energy demand was likely indicating the rise in economic activity in the State compared to last year. This could be a good sign for the development of the State, he added.

In fact, the national average energy consumption grew 19 percent in the first fortnight of May 2021 while the State average energy consumption was 15.37 percent for the same period. However, the State energy consumption had surpassed the national average energy consumption in August this year.

"Despite severe financial constraints, the power utilities

will take it as a challenge and strive hard to make the sector self-sufficient in providing the best services to the consumers with the support of government and esteemed consumers," the Energy Secretary said.

Discoms power purchase arrears and operating expenses stood at Rs 12,500 crore as on June 2, 2014 which reached to Rs 32,000 crore as on April 1, 2019.

The State government made serious efforts from 2019-20 to bail out the crisis-ridden power sector.

As the discoms are facing a severe financial crisis, the State government has come to the rescue of them and released Rs 28,166 crore to power companies between 2019-20 and 2020-21, Srikant Nagulapalli said.

Actress Mumaith Khan appears before...

Continued from Page 1

Since August 31 this year noted filmmaker Puri Jagannadh, actresses Charmee Kaur and Ragul Preet Singh, actors Rana Daggubati, Ravi Teja and P Navdeep have so far appeared before the central agency.

Apart from Telugu movies, Mumaith, who is known for her item numbers, has also appeared in Hindi, Tamil and Kannada films. On July 2, 2017 the Telangana's Prohibition and Excise department, had busted the drug racket by arresting a three-member gang including

Calvin Mascarenhas, a musician, for allegedly peddling narcotic drugs such as LSD and MDMA. Calvin was also questioned by the ED recently.

Subsequently, several cases related to the drug trafficking were registered and over 20 people were arrested including a US citizen, who was a former aerospace engineer and had worked with the NASA, besides seven B.Tech degree holders employed with multi-national companies here.

The names of some Tollywood personalities surfaced during the interrogation

of persons arrested in connection with the drug racket.

A Special Investigation Team (SIT) of the Prohibition and Excise department, as part of its investigation had also probed the alleged drug links with Tollywood, and had then questioned 11 people connected to the Telugu film industry including actors and directors besides the driver of one of the actors.

The investigators suspected that film personalities, employees of MNCs, school and college students were among the gang's clients.

Jagan gives final touches to new...

Continued from Page 1

Others in the list include industrialist Maruthi, auditor from Tamil Nadu Sanath, MSS Labs Managing Director Manne Jeevan Reddy and K Sourabh from Kolkata.

Interestingly Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's close confidante and Shiv Sena Secretary Milind Narvekar may also find a place on the Board.

Other members include former minister from Puducherry Malladi Krishna Rao, Pokala Ashok Kumar, MLA Gorla Babu Rao, Burra Madhusudan, MLA Katasani Rambhupal Reddy, Rajesh

Sharma, Kalwakurthi Vidyasagar Rao, Laxminarayana, MLA Nanda Kumar, MLA Vishwanath Reddy and Shasidhar from Karnataka.

On August 8, the State government renominated Subba Reddy as the Chairman of the TTD Board for a second term.

Subba Reddy was first appointed the TTD Board Chairman in June 2019. After his term ended there were intense speculations that he would be renominated for a second term. However, the government had appointed a specified authority with the Executive Officer managing the affairs of the TTD.

Jagan honours KCR's request...

Continued from Page 1

Jagan has appointed six people from Telangana to the Board, while one more name will be appointed as a 'special invitee'.

In the previous TTD Board prominent industrialist D Damodar Rao was appointed on the recommendation of KCR, but his name does not figure in the list of new appointees.

However, the new Board has MSN Laboratories vice-president Jeevan Reddy, appointed on the recommendation of Telangana IT Minister KT Rama Rao.

Jeevan Reddy is brother of TRS MP Manne Srinivas Reddy from Mahbubnagar. On the recommendation of Vizag seer Swarupnanda Swami, Jagan has appointed Lakshminarayana of Sahithi Builders to the TTD Board.

J Rameswar Rao, chairman of My Home Group, Bandi Partha Saradhi Reddy, chairman of Hetero Group and TRS leader from Siddipet Mooramsetti Ramulu continue to serve as members of the new Board, on the recommendation of KCR. Also, Kalvakuntla Vidyasagar Rao TRS MLA from Koratla, a relative of

KCR also made it to the Board.

These five names are on the list of regular members. In addition to these five members, one more name, said to be of a woman reportedly recommended by KTR, will be accommodated in the special invitees list which will be made public soon.

Earlier, doubts were cast whether Jagan would honour the recommendations of KCR in appointing the TTD Board due to the recent dispute over sharing of waters between the two Telugu states.

AP gets Public Warning System for disaster...

Continued from Page 1

Vodafone Idea Limited's Chief Regulatory and Corporate Affairs Officer P Balaji said the Commercial Mobile Alert System was the first-of-its-kind alerting mechanism being used in the country.

"It has the highest global standards that will enable transmission of alerts securely in the users' native language in times of emergency," he said.

Celltick CEO Ronen Daniel said their system has an uptime of 99.75 percent and a fail-safe mechanism in place to deliver mass alerts.

HC holds 2 IAS officers guilty ...

Continued from Page 1

The quantum of the sentence will be decided by the court on September 29.

While the IAS officers will be pardoned by the court if they so appeal, instances like this will be a black mark on their service records.

Malakondaiah is one of the senior-most IAS officers in Andhra Pradesh and has no blemish in her career.

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG	
Dressed/With Skin	₹259
Without Skin	₹279
Broiler at Farm	₹144
EGG RATES ₹/100	
VIJAYAWADA	436
HYDERABAD	398
VISAKHAPATNAM	425
RETAIL PRICE (IN VJYAWADA)	₹4.36

CM vows economic...

Continued from Page 1

Reviewing YSR Cheyutha, the Chief Minister directed the authorities to ensure that marketing their businesses shouldn't be a problem and told the officials to take appropriate measures so that no woman runs into losses. The main purpose of the scheme is to make women use the money provided for sustainable livelihood, he said.

The officials informed the Chief Minister that over eight lakh DWCRA groups were benefited under Aasara scheme, where the govern-

ment has released Rs 6,330.58 crore in the first tranche.

Officials said that the social audit on the list of beneficiaries for the second tranche has been completed and the lists have also been displayed in the village secretariats.

Similarly, through the first instalment of YSR Cheyutha, almost 3 lakh women have set up businesses like retail shops, rearing cattle, buffaloes, sheep, and goats. In the second phase, the government is aiming to create employment opportunities for 2,21,598 women, they said.

AP NGOs Association meets CM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A delegation of AP NGOs Association paid a courtesy visit to Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy at his camp office here on Wednesday.

APNGO state president Bandi Srinivasa Rao, state general secretary KV Siva Reddy,

former president N Chandrasekhar Reddy, prominent members Ch Purushottam Naidu, V Dastagiri Reddy, M Parameswara Rao, B Kripavaram, M Venkateswara Reddy, V Subba Reddy, A Ranga Rao, TV Ramireddy, Md Jani Basha and other state executive leaders were present.

‘Cherry-picking’ of...

Continued from Page 1

"There is no consistency, I am sorry. I do not know why you want to bring trouble in all these matters. It is very unfortunate. The government has to realise this...Subject to the consideration of the submissions made by you, so far as the appointment is concerned, the contempt is concerned, we will hold our hands for two more weeks. Let's see what will happen," the CJI said.

There are around 250 posts lying vacant in various key tribunals and appellate tribunals such as the NCLT, DRT, TDSAT and SAT.

"We are waiting very patiently. A counter affidavit (reply of the Centre to the pleas) is not the solution. We are telling the government to make appointments," said the bench that also included Justices D Y Chandrachud and L Nageswara Rao.

The bench referred to specific instances of Debt Recovery Tribunals (DRT) where its Jabalpur branch has no presid-

ing officer and the recovery cases of banks transferred to Lucknow while neither Telangana nor Andhra Pradesh had such a functional body.

The top court termed the condition pitiable and said the litigants, who are facing bank notices for attachment of properties, have no place to go as the high courts are not hearing them and they cannot be left in lurch.

It referred to the recent appointments and said that without exhausting names from the recommended list of persons, the authorities have appointed from the waitlist also and this amounted to cherry-picking.

"The appointment letters which have been issued clearly indicate they (Centre) have cherry-picked three names from the select list and others from the waitlist, ignoring others in the select list. In service law, you can't go to the waitlist ignoring the select list. What kind of selection and appointment is this?" the bench asked Attorney-General Venugopal.

2020 sees 15pc less crime than 2019: NCRB

C PRADEEP KUMAR ■ VIJAYAWADA



Cognizable crime came down by 15 percent in Andhra Pradesh in 2020 when compared to the previous year.

This was revealed by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data for the years 2019 and 2020 that was released on Wednesday.

As per the NCRB data, as many as 1,00,620 cases under various sections of the IPC were registered across AP in 2020, down 15 percent from the 1,19,229 cases registered across the State in 2019.

The NCRB said that cases related to murders, crime against women, crime against SC/STs, kidnappings and abductions in AP have decreased. Road accidents too came down in the State while cyber crime cases saw

an increase.

These statistics are in sync with the nation-wide trend that saw a dip in the crime rate on account of the Covid-induced lockdown, police sources said.

As per the NCRB data, 853 murderers took place in 2020

while 870 people were murdered in 2019, a decrease of two percent.

Crime against women decreased by four percent in 2020 compared to the previous year. A total of 17,089 cases of crime against women were registered in 2020 while 17,746

cases were recorded in 2019.

Crime against SC/STs decreased by 3 percent in 2020 compared to 2019. The NCRB data stated that 2,270 cases of crime against SC/STs were reported in 2020 as against 2,401 cases in 2019.

Road accidents decreased by 13 percent in 2020. In all, 12,830 road accidents took place in 2020 and 14,700 mishaps were registered in 2019.

Interestingly, cyber crimes increased by 1 percent in the State in 2020. A total of 1,899 cases of cyber crimes were registered in 2020, compared to the 1,886 cases in 2019.

Similarly, dacoity, robbery, house break-ins during the daytime, house break-ins at night and theft cases also decreased in the State.

A total of 39 dacoity cases were recorded in 2020 against

40 in 2019 — a decline of two percent.

A total of 237 robbery cases, 555 house breaking during the daytime cases, 2,831 cases of house break-ins at night and 9,508 theft cases were recorded in 2020.

In 2019, a total of 40 dacoity cases, 310 robbery cases, 756 cases of house break-ins during daytime, 3,101 cases of house break-ins at nighttime and 11,301 cases of theft were registered in 2019.

Due to Covid pandemic, the cases related to crime and other offences decreased last year. Lockdown was also implemented for some months to check the spread of Coronavirus last year.

Also, the police have stepped up vigil and been trying to check the crime in the State.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India recorded 50,035 cases of cyber crime in 2020, with a 11.8 per cent surge in such offences over the previous year, as 578 incidents of "fake news on social media" were also reported, official data showed on Wednesday.

The rate of cyber crime (incidents per lakh population) also increased from 3.3 per cent in 2019 to 3.7 per cent in 2020 in the country, according to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data.

In 2019, the country recorded 44,735 cases of cyber crime, while the figures stood at 27,248 in 2018, the data from corresponding years showed.

The year saw 4,047 cases of online banking fraud, 1,093 OTP frauds and 1,194 credit/debit card fraud, while 2,160 cases related to ATM were reported in 2020, the NCRB figures showed.

There were also 578 cases of fake news on social media, 972 related to cyber stalking or bullying of women and children, 149 incidents of fake profile and 98 of data theft, it added.

In terms of motive, the maximum 60.2 per cent cyber crimes lodged in 2020 were done for fraud (30,142 out of 50,035 cases), the NCRB, which functions under the Ministry of Home Affairs, stated.

It was followed by sexual exploitation with 6.6 per cent (3,293 cases) and extortion 4.9 per cent (2,440 cases), the data showed.

Among states, the maximum 11,097 cyber crime cases were reported in Uttar Pradesh followed by Karnataka (10,741), Maharashtra (5,496), Telangana (5,024) and Assam (3,530), it showed.

However, the crime rate was highest in Karnataka with 16.2 per cent followed by Telangana (13.4 per cent), Assam (10.1 per cent), Uttar Pradesh (4.8 per cent) and Maharashtra (4.4 per cent), the data showed.

National capital Delhi recorded 168 such cases during the year with a crime rate of 0.8 per cent, according to the NCRB, which is responsible for collecting and analysing crime data as defined by the Indian Penal Code and special and local laws in the country.



94% qualify Polycet 2021

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Polycet entrance results were announced here on Wednesday. K Roshanlal from Visakhapatnam and K Vivek Vardhan from West Godavari secured the first rank while P Rajashree from Visakhapatnam secured the third rank in the Polycet 2021 entrance exam that was held on September 1. The results were announced by Industries, IT and Skill Development Minister Mekapati Goutham Reddy.

In all, 68,137 candidates appeared for the exam and 64,187 candidates qualified in the exam with 94.20 per cent. Out of the qualified candidates, 19,024 are girls with 96.87 percent and 45,163 are boys with 93.12 percent. Srikakulam district secured 95.52 pass percent (Girls & Boys) while

the pass percentage of girls in Nellore is 98.80 and pass percentage of boys in Prakasam district is 94.55. The candidates can download the rank cards from <https://polycetap.nic.in/>.

As many as 69,724 seats are available across the State with 15,957 seats in 84 Government Polytechnics, 53,197 seats in 175 private approved colleges and 598 seats in two aided colleges. The exam was held for 120 marks and the pass mark was 30.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Goutham Reddy said that from the current years five new technical courses will be introduced in the circular. The government was providing fee reimbursement to polytechnic students and in every constituency there would be a polytechnic college, said the minister.

He said that the admission

process would begin in a week.

The minister said that through Vidya Deevana, Rs 81 crore and through Vasati Deevana Rs 128 crore is being provided to 54 crore students across the state. The infrastructural facilities in Government Polytechnics are being improved and to provide skills among the students the government was taking all measures, said the minister.

G Jaya Lakshmi, principal secretary Skill Development & Training, Dr Pola Bhaskar, commissioner, Collegiate Education, Technical Education, Chairman, SBTET, B Lavanya Veni, Director Employment and Training, N Bangar Raju, MD & CEO, APSSDC, K Vijay Bhaskar, Secretary, SBTET, A Nirmal Kumar Priya, Joint Director of Technical Education and others were present.

Father-son duo rape 2 minor girls

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a heinous incident, a man and his son have allegedly raped two minor girls in Pudimadaka village of Atchutapuram mandal in the district. Though the incident took place on Sunday evening, it came to light only when the parents of the victims lodged a police complaint on Monday.

According to the police, a 27-year-old youth befriended some minor girls in the name of training them in kabaddi. His 50-year-old father also joined the girls when his son was training them in kabaddi.

On Sunday evening when the girls were playing kabaddi, the youth took a nine-year-old-girl to the nearby fields and raped her. Similarly, his father also raped another girl near his home on the same day.

However, the issue did not come to light on the day of these incidents. The girls told their parents how they were cheated by the father-son duo. The parents immediately lodged separate complaints against the duo.

Based on the complaint, the Atchutapuram police registered a case against the father and son under Section 376 and 506 of the IPC and relevant sections of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act-2012.

Both the girls were admitted at NTR Hospital.

93% ryots in debt-trap: Dhulipalla

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Former TDP MLA Dhulipalla Narendra Kumar on Wednesday slammed the YSRCP government for making 'false claims' on the farm sector when the national level reports said that 93 percent farmers' families were stuck in debts in Andhra Pradesh.

Narendra Kumar asserted that the ruling YSRCP betrayed the farmers at every step in the past two and half years. CM Jagann Reddy promised in his party manifesto to pay Rs. 12,500 to every farmer under Rythu Bharosa but he was giving just Rs. 7,500 after coming to power. This came to Rs. 13,500 along with Rs. 6,000 being given by the Central Government. The national level programmes and funds were being used for the publicity of the Chief Minister.

Addressing a press conference here, he said that the Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBK) were set up with the ulterior motive to give total control to the ruling party leaders. The rates of fertiliser were skyrocketing and the DAP was being available only in black market. Even the seed was not made available at the RBK centres. AP had fallen far behind Telangana in the purchase of foodgrain. The Telangana Government spent Rs. 16,700 Cr and purchased 1.40 crore metric tonnes during 2020-'21 while AP spent just Rs. 6,700 Cr.

Mr. Narendra Kumar said that the Jagann Reddy Government bought just 14.47 lakh metric tonnes grain dur-



ing kharif of 2019-20 when compared to 38 lakh metric tonnes in Telangana. During 2020-'21 kharif, the AP Government bought just 15.04 lakh metric tonnes as against 41.06 lakh metric tonnes in Telangana. The maize and jowar purchase centres had only helped the YSRCP leaders to fill their pockets. The CM was not ensuring a fair deal to farmers as his party leaders and middle men were causing severe losses. The ruling party was only deriving undue publicity but not taking true care of the farmers' well being.

The TDP leader deplored that not a single farmer got crop insurance money in AP under the Prime Minister Fasal Yojana during 2019-'20. Even the interest concession was not extended to loans below Rs. 1 lakh. The farmers were being cheated at every level. The Government had also destroyed the dairy farmers and dairy farmers' federations in the name of Amul. The wrong policies were pushing farmers into such a crisis that they would not recover for a long time to come.

Naidu cheated farmers, says YSRCP leader

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) has come down heavily on TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu for launching a state-wide protest with the slogan 'Rythu Kosam TDP' and said it was Naidu who has abandoned, cheated farmers and implemented 'anti-farmer' policies during his regime while Chief Minister YS Jagannamohan Reddy is committed to the welfare of farmers.

Speaking to media at the party's central office here on Wednesday, Agriculture Mission Vice-Chairman MVS Nagi Reddy termed Chandra babu Naidu fighting for welfare of farmers as "joke of the century". He listed out the degrading comments made by Naidu on farmers related to their suicides, free electricity and irrigation projects and said he didn't start a single irrigation project during his nine year tenure from 1996-'2004 and added that he didn't even oppose increasing the height of Almatti dam ignoring the interests of farmers. He said the previous government has declared 238 mandals in 2014, 359 mandals in

2015, 301 mandals in 2016, 121 mandals in 2017, 347 mandals in Kharif 2018 and 227 mandals in Rabi 2018 as drought-affected mandals while there was no single drought-hit mandal in the last three years. He compared the production of food grains and pulses with that of previous government and said the production has increased during the last three years and questioned the significance of

TDP's protests in this regard.

He said the Chief Minister has cleared the pending arrears of Rs 8,750 crore of previous government regarding free power to farmers.

Meanwhile, speaking to media at Guntur IB Guest House, Housing Minister Cherukuvada Sriranganadha Raju played Naidu for ignoring waiving of farm loans, providing nine hour electricity for agriculture, setting up Price Stabilisation Fund of Rs 5,000 crore during his regime and protesting for farmers' welfare at present only for his political interests. He said the state government has set up RBKs at every village, appointed agriculture assistants and veterinary assistants in village secretariats to support farmers.



V'nagaram tops in implementation of Niti Aayog schemes

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Niti Aayog member Jayanth has said that the Vizianagaram district has stood first in the country in implementing the Niti Aayog dashboard schemes. While reviewing various parameters of the Niti Aayog being implemented in the district on Monday, he said that the core aspects of the Niti Aayog including Health, Education, Agriculture, Water Sources, Financial Inclusion and Skill Development the Vizianagaram district is attending and stood in the first place.

While talking about the 100 percent institutional deliveries in the district, the member enquired how they have achieved the target. He also appreciated the Nadu-Nedu, (reshaping of the school infrastructure) programme and said that the students would be happy to attend the new-look schools.

Lokesh has no respect for Disha Bill, says Taneti

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Women and Child Welfare Minister Taneti Vanitha has come down heavily on TDP general secretary Nara Lokesh stating that he has no respect for the Disha Bill and it is evident from his burning of the copies of the law.

Speaking to the media in the Secretariat here on Wednesday, the Minister said though the Disha Bill was not enforced as law, it has increased the confidence among the women in regard to their safety. She explained the immediate help being extended to women and their safety through Disha Bill and Disha App in the State and said the Chief Minister had introduced them to ensure safety and security to women.

She said Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh had taken inspiration from Disha Bill and planning to implement it in their own states and criticised TDP for not respecting it. She said it used to take about three to four months to investigate a rape case against women in the past, but in 2019 it was 100 days, in 2020 it came 86 days and in 2021 it came



down to 42 days.

She said the State government had set up 18 Disha police stations, three forensic labs, fast track courts and also appointed DSP cadet officers and staff. She said charge sheets were filed in just 15 days in 2,114 cases and added the details of 2,11,000 suspects were collected and geo-tagged. A total of 148 people were sentenced for crimes against women. Capital punishment was awarded to three people, life imprisonment to 17, 20 years jail term to three and 10 years term to 10 people.

She said 53 lakh women had already downloaded the Disha app which came to the rescue of a woman in distress in New Delhi and she was rescued.

Attacks on women rising: Lokesh

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP national general secretary Nara Lokesh on Wednesday said that the YSRCP Government's inefficiency was the reason for the rising attacks and harassment of women in different parts of the State.

Lokesh condemned the manner in which a woman was beaten up and tortured in Nellore despite her plea for help. Moreover, the physical attack on her was videographed and circulated with total disrespect for women and for the laws. It was because of the total failure of the systems under the present regime that the perpetrators of atrocities were rearing their ugly head. In a statement here, Nara Lokesh accused the Chief Minister and his partymen of turning Andhra Pradesh into the lawless Taliban in just 27 months. The criminals, gangsters and offenders were crossing all limits by taking advantage of the weaknesses and inefficiency of CM Jagannamohan Reddy. As a result, an incident was being reported



on a daily basis from across the State. Every day, a woman was falling victim to the harassment and torture of the anti-social elements. Nara Lokesh advised the Chief Minister not to release the perpetrators of atrocities on bail within days of their arrest. If such a casual approach was continued, more women would become victims of inhuman offences. The previous TDP rule took tough measures that put fear in the hearts of the criminals and offenders. In one case, the perpetrator of an atrocity committed suicide at that time. Strong punishments were required to prevent harassment of women.

Ryots assured of solution to land-related problems

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Narasaraopet MP Lavu Srikrishnadevarayalu and Macherla MLA Pinnelli Rama Krishna Reddy assured the farmers that they would strive to resolve the land-related problems. Addressing a seminar of farmers held in the agriculture market yard in Macherla on Wednesday, the MP said that many people meet him daily seeking help on land-related problems.

The MP said that the farmers were unable to get subsi-



dies as their lands were not digitised. He said that similar seminars would be organised in all mandals.

Joint Collector Dinesh Kumar asked the revenue officials to resolve the land-related problems of farmers at the earliest. MLA Ramakrishna Reddy also spoke.

SECI offered 9000 MW solar power to Andhra Pradesh

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) has offered 9,000 MW of power at Rs 2.49/kw to Andhra Pradesh under its manufacturing-linked solar scheme.

SECI General Manager Atul Kumar Naik, in a letter to State Energy Secretary Nagulapalli Srikanth, said that the solar power under the scheme can be offered in three tranches of 3,000mw each from 2024 to

2026 years.

Significantly, it was in July-end SECI announced the first power supply agreement (PSA) with Odisha in connection with its manufacturing-linked solar tenders, floated in long back in November 2019. These were won by Adani Green and Azure Power.

SECI had floated a first-of-its-kind manufacturing-linked solar tender in November 2019 for 7 GW of solar capacity. The tender received a good

response and was oversubscribed by 1 GW.

Though Adani Green Energy and Azure Power emerged as bid winners in January 2020 itself and the award of letters were issued to them, these solar projects has been stuck on account of its large capacity and high discovered tariff, resulting in SECI not finding any discoms willing to sign PSAs. Now, SECI had offered 9000 Mw to Andhra Pradesh.

95 K cases settled at Lok Adalats during Covid crisis

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Giving the much-needed respite to both litigants and the courts, the National Lok Adalat has helped many cases resolved, especially those pertaining to financial disputes during the Covid crisis. About 1.5 lakh people approached the Lok Adalat at various courts across the State seeking resolution of cases related to compoundable, criminal, civil, motor vehicle accident compensation, land acquisition, matrimonial disputes. Significantly, 95,000 cases were settled.

According to sources, the NLA is held thrice during the Covid pandemic from March 2020 till date. The NLA was held on December 12, 2020



then on July 10 and recently on September 11, 2021. As many as 1,55,885 people approached the NLA held at various courts across the State. Interestingly, 94,409 cases were settled under mutual consent before the NLA and a whopping Rs 388 crore amount was settled during the three NLA.

At the NLA held on December 12, 27, 316 people approached the MLA and

15,205 issues were settled and an amount of Rs 81,08, 69, 780 pertaining to compensations and fines was settled. During the NLA held on July 10, 2021, 48,779 people approached and 34,851 cases were settled. On September 11, 79,790 people approached the NLA and 44,353 cases were settled involving a compensation amount of Rs 143,65,45,227.

Chinnamsetty Raju, member

secretary (District & Session Judges), said that the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) has been constituted under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 to provide free Legal Services to the people. Cases pertaining to compoundable, criminal, civil, motor vehicle accident compensation cases, land acquisition cases, matrimonial disputes (except divorce) and non-compoundable criminal cases were brought before the NLA for mutual settlement.

The NLA will be organised in physical mode as well as virtual mode. A Judge, advocate member and social worker (NGO) will take up the case and an award will be passed. The settlement is as good as civil court decree and there

shall not be any chance for appeal, he said and added that a pre-Lok Adalat sitting will also be held.

B Balaji high court advocate from Guntur said that he referred his client to NLA held on September 11 for land settlement as the client was in a financial crisis due to Covid. For fast and easy settlement of his land dispute, he suggested approaching the NLA.

T Raja Rao said that their advocate advised them to approach the NLA for speedy settlement of the land issue that was pending for a long time. After speaking to the opponents they mutually agreed to get the matter settled and then approached the NLA, settling the dispute mutually settled, he added.

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Members of Passengers Services Committee (PSC) constituted by the Railway Board inspected the Vijayawada Railway station on Wednesday. Ramesh Chandra Ratan, Chairman, Passenger Services Committee, Pranab Baruah, Dugyala Pradeep Kumar, Babita Parmar, Gangadhar Talupula and Baby Chanky took part in the station inspection programme and interacted with passengers.

D Srinivasa Rao, Additional Divisional Railway Manager (Infrastructure) Vijayawada Division, SCR accompanied the members of PSC throughout the inspection. The main objective of the inspection is to obtain passenger feedback on cleanliness, amenities, valuable suggestions for improvement and recommending steps for execution and imple-



mentation of steps concerning consumer's insights on passenger services to the Railway Board for implementation.

P Bhaskar Reddy Sr DCM briefed the members about the Vijayawada Station profile, footfall, special amenities for divyangjan and passenger services available. At Vijayawada Railway Station, PSC Members inspected AC waiting hall, Babu waiting hall, cloak room, RO water vending machine, fruit juice stalls, Pay & Use toilets and general waiting hall, and Ladies Waiting Hall on Platform No 1.

GVL defends VSP privatisation

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Strongly supporting the Central government's strategic sale of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP), BJP MP G V L Narasimha Rao has said that it is the government's policy decision to privatise PSUs to create more employment opportunities for the youth.

Speaking to the media here on Wednesday, he said that new railway zone would come up soon with Visakhapatnam as its headquarters. Because of the Covid-19 impact, there was a delay in setting up of the new zone, he added.

Talking about the Andhra Pradesh government's policies, Rao said that during the past two years there were no developmental activities in the State. The State government was running the show only with the financial support of the Centre, he added.

BJP MLC P V N Mahdavi was also present.

Veligonda project to be completed by September 2022, says Minister

PNS ■ ONGOLE

The Veligonda project works are being carried out on war footing and the project will be completed by September 2022, Minister for Social Welfare Pinipe Viswarup said.

The District Review Committee Meeting was held here on Wednesday in which Ministers P Viswarup, Balireddy Srinivasa Reddy, Adimulapu Suresh and Collector Pravin Kumar were among those who were present.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Viswarupu said that the DRC passed a resolution on the Veligonda project which would be sent to the Union government, Union Water Resources Minister and Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy.

The minister said that the government is determined to complete the Veligonda project by September 2022. He said a comprehensive discussion was held in the DRC meeting on the medical, revenue, houses construction, rural driving water supply and Veligonda project today. He said that if the project was completed, irrigation water could be supplied to 5 lakh acres and drinking water to 15 lakh people.

Minister Balineni Srinivasa



Reddy said that people were facing difficulties to get sand. He asked how the housing construction could be taken forward if scarcity for sand continued. He asked the officials why they were registering cases against those who were taking sand for the construction of their houses.

The Minister clarified that there were no restrictions on sand if the poor brought it for the construction of their houses. He asked the officials to consider giving permission to set up sand reaches at the Gundlakamma River. The minister said that steps would be taken to ensure provision of

power connections to the Jagananna Housing colonies. He asked the officials to take action against those who resorted to irregularities in digitalisation of lands.

Minister Adimulapu Suresh made it clear “The Veligonda project was not figured in the Gazette notification due to printing error. Chief Secretary

Adityanath Das has written a letter to the Union Government on the Veligonda project construction to do away technical and legal hurdles. The digging up of the tunnel and the colony construction under R&R package are being carried out in a speedy manner. The Krishna

water will reach the district in the next year.”

MP Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy asked the officials to send the DPR to the Union ministry at the earliest in order to include the Veligonda project in the Gazette notification. The MP denied the Telangana state’s allegations on the Veligonda project.

Collector Pravin Kumar said that Jagananna colonies would be provided with all basic amenities. Steps were taken to resolve the revenue and land-related disputes within two months. “70 percent of grievances we receive in the Spandana programme are land-

related. A special drive will be conducted to take land-related grievances in all secretariats. We are conducting land auditing and seizing all the government lands”, the Collector said.

Mr.Pravin Kumar said that on the directions of the Chief Minister land identification work is being taken up for the construction of the airport at Martur. The district would achieve massive development with the construction of Ramayapatnam seaport, the Collector said. MLA Manugunta Mahidhar Reddy, MLCs Yandavalli Srinivasula Reddy and MLC Potula Sunita also spoke.



TDP demands fair deal for farmers

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) activists staged the ‘Rythu Kosam’ protest demonstrations and rallies across the district in response to the TDP high command’s call demanding that the government withdraw the ‘anti-farmer’ policies.

The TDP activists organised protest demonstrations in all the Assembly constituencies in the district on Wednesday. They submitted memorandums to the officials concerned. The TDP leaders took out rallies with bullock carts and tractors at various places in the district.

Addressing the gathering, the TDP leaders deplored that the farmers were unable to get remunerative prices for their produce. The farmers at many places turned into labourers. They recalled that during the TDP regime the government

had waived agriculture loans and also provided agriculture equipment and tractors at subsidised price to the farmers. The YSRCP government assured to set up Price Stabilisation Fund by allocating Rs 3,000 crore and Natural Calamity Fund by allocating Rs 4,000 but failed to do so.

MLA Vegula Jogeswara Rao and former MLAs V Konda Babu, Pilli Anantha Lakshmi, SVSV Varma and ZP former chairman Jyotula Navin Kumar were among those who participated in the programmes.

In Bhimavaram in West Godavari district, the TDP activists, led by Narasapuram Parliamentary constituency president Thota Sitamahalakshmi, organised a ‘Rythu Kosam’ dharna on Ballepalli road at Veeravasaram village. The TDP leaders submitted a

memorandum to Tahasildar.

Addressing the gathering, Sitamahalakshmi said that the farmers were facing an unprecedented crisis in the state now. When the YSRCP was in the opposition, it had made many assurances to the farmers but when it came to power it ignored all the assurances.

The TDP would not tolerate the anti-farmers policies of the YSRCP regime and continues to fight against them. TDP senior leaders M Parthasarathi, AMC former chairman Kolla Nageswara Rao, Veeravalli Chandrasekhar lamented that the farmers were not getting remunerative prices for the produce and subsidies on fertilisers were reduced. TDP town convener Vendra Srinivas and Veeravasaram mandal president Kollipara Srinivas were among those who participated in the programme.

110 kg ganja seized, 4 held

PNS ■ KAKINADA

The police seized 110 kg ganja while being transported illegally in a van at Chintur village on Wednesday. The accused were identified as Sabhavat Naik (31), Vallepuram Sudhakar (29) and Velpula Regan (28) all from Medak, Pindimadugula Suresh (26) is from Hyderabad.

They reportedly confessed that they were smuggling the ganja from Sileru in Visakhapatnam district to Medak in Telangana state. All the accused are being sent for judicial remand, police said.

Man held for beating up woman

PNS ■ NELLORE

In a swift action, the police arrested the accused who beat up a woman with a stick and videographed the incident which later went viral.

SP Vijaya Rao told the media that the video of a man beating a woman with a stick went viral in the social media. The news was also telecast by the electronic media. Special teams were formed to nab the accused and the teams were sent to Rapuru and Kaluvai, Somasila and Ramakotaiahnagar.

The police arrested the two accused in connection with the case. Rowdy sheet would be opened against them. The charge sheet would be filed in seven days, he said. Cases under sections Cr.No.298/2021



U/s 363, 341, 324, 354(A), 506, 509 r/w 34 IPC and 67 (A) IT ACT were registered against the accused in Vedayapalem police station. The accused was marriage and he deserted his wife.

The SP said that the woman befriended the accused. However, she maintained distance from him as she did not

like his behaviour. Three months ago, he took her to a secluded place and hit her with a stick 13 times. The accused got video graphed the heinous incident which later went viral in the social media. Though the police did not receive any complaint on the incident, they filed a suo motu case.

‘Volunteer system helping public’

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Minister for Panchayat Raj Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy has said that the government is reaching out to people through the secretariat and volunteer systems which attracted the attention of various states.

The Minister, along with housing minister Ch Sriranganadha Raju and MPs Ayodya Rami Reddy and L Sri Krishnadevarayalu, inaugurated the village secretariat, Rythu Bharasa Kendra (RBK) and YSR Village health clinic building at Dechavaram village in Nakarikallu mandal on Wednesday.

Addressing the gathering on the occasion, he said that a secretariat, RBK, health



clink, digital library and bulk milk chilling unit building were being set up for every 2,000 population in the State. “The secretariat and volun-

tary systems have attracted the attention of various states which are studying the function of the systems. Despite the Coronavirus pandemic,

MPs Ayodya Rami Reddy, Lavu Sri Krishnadevarayalu, MLAs P Rama Krishna Reddy, Ambati Rambabu, Gopireddy Srinivasa Reddy, B Brahma Naidu, Kasu Mahesh Reddy and N Shankar Rao, MLC Dokka Maniyaka Vara Prasad were present.

Drunk driver held for crash

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Shabad Police on Wednesday arrested the driver of the container truck following a road mishap in which two youngsters were killed under the lorry at Sardarnagar village in Shabad. The arrested person was identified as Syed Mathin, 35, a driver from Erragadda in Shaikpet. The owner of the truck, Mahammad Azhar, is absconding, said the police officials.

On 8 September, Syed Mathin drove a container truck in a rash and dangerous manner and under the influence of alcohol. Mathin lost control of the truck and it fell on a two-wheeler killing the rider and the pillion rider instantly. The deceased persons, Papireddydyudem Pavan and Mutpuri Vikranth, were two 18-year-old mechanics and were passing by Tirumala wines at Sardarnagar village in Shabad, when they were killed on the spot due to the negligence of the truck driver, said



the police.

Mathin’s blood alcohol test reading was 237 mg/100 ml of blood, whereas the legally permissible limit in India is only 30 mg/100 ml of blood. The Shabad Police registered a case and began an investigation. Police officials said that Mathin drove the vehicle under the influence of alcohol and at a high speed in a dangerous manner, knowing clearly that it was highly dangerous and

can cause serious accidents, which amounts to culpable homicide not amounting to murder. The owner of the container lorry, Mahammad Azhar, does not possess valid vehicle insurance and is punishable under the Motor Vehicle Act.

Mathin was arrested and remanded to judicial custody for a period of 14 days, while a hunt is on to nab Azhar, said the police.

TTD EO directs officials to get Ayush licence

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Tirumala Tirupati Devas thanam (TTD) Executive Officer Dr. KS Jawahar Reddy has directed the officials to make arrangements for marketing 15 Panchagavya products of TTD by this December.

Addressing a review meeting at his chambers in TTD Administrative Building on Wednesday morning, the TTD EO instructed officials to expedite efforts to procure a license from the Ayush department for the Panchagavya products and also finalise the designs of the products as well.

He asked the officials to make necessary preparations to procure raw materials, install machinery and also complete all civil, engineering and electrical works on a war footing.

Brain dead cop’s heart gives new lease of life to painter

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The surgeons at Nizam’s Institute of Medical Sciences (NIMS) have successfully conducted a heart transplant surgery on a 30-year-old painter on Wednesday.

The donor heart, which was retrieved from a 34-year-old constable M Veerababu, who was declared as brain dead at Yashoda Hospitals, Malakpet, was transported in 12 minutes after traffic authorities created a green channel and cleared traffic between Malakpet and NIMS Punjagutta. The donor heart was transported in an ambulance, which started at around 1.44 pm from Yashoda Hospitals and reached NIMS by 1.56 pm on Wednesday.

Veerababu, who was working at Kondapur, was on leave and went to his native

Khammam on personal work. While returning, his two-wheeler was hit by a bus at Gollagudem, Khammam. The constable was immediately rushed to a local hospital and later shifted to Yashoda Hospitals, Malakpet.

According to the attending neuro-physicians, despite providing intensive treatment to revive the constable, the prognosis continued to remain poor. With no improvement in sight, the neuro-physicians had to declare Veerababu as brain dead due to severe head injuries. A series of grief counselling sessions later, the family members including his wife, decided to donate the organs of Veerababu to needy patients under Jeevandana organ donation initiative.

This is for the first time that a donor heart has been allotted to a patient at NIMS from

a private hospital. Due to the chronic heart condition of the painter, the transplant surgeons at NIMS had registered his name in Jeevandana on Tuesday and within a day, the hospital was allocated with a matching donor heart under Jeevandana.

In the last few years, the surgeons at NIMS have successfully conducted five heart transplants. However, all the five heart transplants were from the donor hearts retrieved from patients who were declared as brain dead at NIMS.

“We thank the traffic authorities for creating the green channel, which ensured the donor heart was transported to NIMS quickly. Despite the Covid pandemic, organ transplant surgeries have continued to be taken up in Hyderabad.

Rapid tests for malaria, dengue

PNS ■ KAKINADA

In the wake of the dengue and malaria fevers, the civic authorities have taken up measures to contain the spread of the seasonal diseases and set up rapid test facility in all the 13 urban health centres.

Municipal health officer Dr Pridhvi Charan told the media here on Wednesday that the services of 13 Lab technicians were requisitioned from the district medical and health office.

The required testing kits were also provided to these centers and people suffering from fever can utilise the testing facility to diagnose malaria and dengue at the nearest urban health centre, he added.

False Covid vaccine messages create confusion in Chittoor

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The development of safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines is a huge step forward in our global effort to end the pandemic but there are still some people who are skeptical about COVID-19 vaccines. On the other hand, the people who have taken the vaccine are in confusion because of the messages related to the vaccination.

At a time when the State government has been increasing the anti-Covid vaccination coverage in the State, many beneficiaries have alleged that they have taken the jab for one variety of vaccine and got the certificate for another one. Not only that, there are people who have received messages about completion of their Covid-19

vaccination, though they did not get even the first dose. After taking the first jab, several residents complained that their names have neither been registered in the CoWIN software nor did they receive any certificate, causing difficulty in getting their second dose.

Many vaccine beneficiaries in the district have said that they started getting messages that they have completed the course by receiving second doses without actually getting them. Beneficiaries get messages about completion of Covid-19 vaccination without getting their first or second dose and even their vaccination certificates were generated in the CoWIN portal.

An employee of BSNL received her first Covid-19 vac-

cine dose in July and looked forward to his second jab. But a month later after she received her first dose, she got a message on her mobile phone that her vaccination has been completed. “Now I have the final vaccination certificate without getting the second dose of vaccination vaccine,” said Malathi.

A resident of KK Layout said, “I was planning to visit the local health centre for the second dose after 84th day, but I got a message about completion of the vaccination. Now I am confused whether they will give me the second dose at all.”

Many vaccine beneficiaries in the district have said that from August, they started getting messages that they have completed the course by receiving second doses without actually



getting them. The messages contain a link through which they can get the final vaccination certificate. Some of them

have downloaded the certificates which have names of the PHC staff, who administered them the first dose, confirming

that the second has also been given.

DM&HO Dr Sree Hari said that he came across such com-

plaints about wrong messages of vaccination. “We have heard that people in the district have received the messages without getting the second dose,” he said. “We are trying to determine the source of the error. I would suggest the person who received the SMS to visit the vaccination centre immediately and furnish the certificate and get the second dose,” he added.

Mohan Kumar said he received an SMS and vaccine certificate in May without even getting his first dose of vaccination. “I was supposed to take the vaccine on September 5, but the scheduled slot was cancelled for some reasons. Later, I got the message that I was vaccinated with first dose of Covishield,” he said.

A housewife received her first dose of Covishield in mid-July, but recently got the message from the vaccine centre that he was administered Covaxin. Such errors and glitches have left the beneficiaries confused as the gap between first and second dose of Covishield and Covaxin is different. For Covaxin, the second dose should be taken after four to six weeks whereas the second dose of Covishield is given almost after 12 weeks of the first shot.

“This kind of error is due to negligence leading to harassment of citizens. The government should pay attention to such errors. There should be some provisions to rectify these errors as well,” Says Rajini of Padmavathipuram.

INDIA CORNER

400 families left homeless in Malda as villages fall prey to Ganga erosion

Around 400 families were left homeless in West Bengal's Malda district as their villages on the bank of the Ganges were washed away due to erosion, officials said on Wednesday. Large parts of Sarkatola, Mukundatola and Lalutola villages in Birnagar 1 panchayat of Kaliachak 3 block were washed away due to river erosion, they said. The affected families, around 400, have been provided shelter in different schools and a field in the area, they added. As relief, they have been provided rice, chura (flattened rice) and jaggery, said panchayat head Sima Halder. A number of houses, a temple, an overhead water tank, a road and paddy fields went into the river due to erosion, she said. An area of 500 m in length and 150 m in width was lost due to the erosion that happened over 10 hours on Sunday, she added. The total number of displaced people is around 3,000, officials said. Minister of State for Irrigation Sabina Yasmin visited the spot along with District Magistrate Rajarshi Mitra to take stock of the situation. Yasmin said the erosion of the Ganges is a national problem and the Centre should immediately take steps to arrest it. "I have already spoken to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee over the issue," she said.

BJP-RSS 'fake Hindus', they 'use' religion: Rahul Gandhi

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday attacked the BJP-RSS, alleging that they were 'fake Hindus' who use religion for their benefit. Addressing the foundation day of the All India Mahila Congress here, Gandhi said that the ideology of the Congress was completely opposite of the BJP-RSS and only one of the two ideologies can rule the country. Asserting that Goddess Lakshmi stands for the power that helps one attain one's goals and Goddess Durga stands for the power that protects, the former Congress chief said while his party had strengthened these powers when in government, the ruling BJP dispensation have diminished these powers. "Ye kis prakr ke Hindu hain. Ye jhoote Hindu hain. Ye Hindu dharm ka prayog karte hain, ye dharm ki dalali karte hain, magar ye Hindu nahin hain (What kind of Hindus are they? They are fake Hindus. They use Hindu religion, they are brokers of religion, but they are not Hindus," Gandhi said, attacking the BJP-RSS.

Cabinet apprised of India-Italy MoU on disaster management

The Union Cabinet was on Wednesday apprised about an MoU signed between the NDMA and an Italian government entity for cooperation in the field of disaster risk reduction and management. The memorandum of understanding (MoU), signed in June 2021, seeks to put in place a system, by which both India and Italy will benefit from the disaster management mechanisms of each other. The meeting of the Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was apprised about the MoU between the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and the Department of Civil Protection of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers of the Italian Republic on cooperation in the field of disaster risk reduction and management, an official statement said. The MoU seeks to put in place a system, whereby both India and Italy will benefit from the disaster management mechanisms of each other and it will help in strengthening the areas of preparedness, response and capacity building in the field of disaster management, it said.

Terror suspect nabbed by Delhi cops had links with 'D- Company'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad on Wednesday claimed that terror suspect Jaan Mohammad Sheikh, arrested along with five others by the Delhi Police, had links with the 'D-Company' about 20 years back. 'D-Company' is a term used to refer to the underworld criminal syndicate controlled by fugitive don Dawood Ibrahim. The Delhi Police's Special Cell on Tuesday busted a Pakistan-organised terror module with the arrest of six men, including two Pak-ISI trained terrorists, officials said. The terrorists were allegedly planning several blasts across the country, including Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra, during the festivals of Ganesh Chaturthi,



Navratri and Ramleela, they said. Out of the six arrested men, Sheikh (47) hails from Mumbai and his family here was questioned and his home was searched by the Mumbai Police and the Maharashtra

On Wednesday, Maharashtra ATS chief Vineet Agarwal told reporters here that Sheikh was a 'henchman of the D-Company' and followed directions "from the other side of the border" when he was connected with it. The official said they have come across a "link of Sheikh with the D-Company almost 20 years back". A case had been registered against Sheikh by Pydhonie police here (at that time) in connection with firing and vandalism in the city, the official said, adding that like other accused, Sheikh was also on the radar of police. On September 13, he boarded the Golden Temple train (from Mumbai) to go to Hazrat Nizamuddin (in Delhi), but he was caught by the Delhi Police when he reached Kota in Rajasthan, the state ATS

Delhi HC notice to EC over PIL on offer of cash transfer

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court Wednesday questioned the Election Commission why it was "shying away" from taking action against political parties who are in violation of its guidelines on "corrupt practices" and sought its response on a PIL to declare offer of cash transfer in manifestos as a corrupt electoral practice. "Why are you shying from taking action? Start taking action. Don't just issue notices and letters. Let us see what action you are taking. Proposed actions also, you can state," said a bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh. The remarks were made by the bench after the counsel for the poll panel said that it has already issued guidelines in relation to "corrupt practices" and sent the same to the political parties. The bench said the Election



Commission should start taking action in view of the guidelines. The high court also sought response from the Centre on the petition which said such "note for vote" promises are in violation of Section 123 of the Representation of Peoples Act which deals with corrupt practices and bribery. The bench also sought the stand of two political parties - Indian National Congress (INC) and Telugu Desam Party (TDP) -- as the petition said that "INC and TDP in 2019 general election offered cash to certain section of the society.

The INC (announced) the Nyuntam aay Yogyna -- NYAY scheme and offered to put Rs 72,000 (yearly)." It was hearing the public interest litigation (PIL) filed by two advocates -- Parashar Narayan Sharma and Capt. Gurvinder Singh -- whose counsel contended that offering of cash without any work in election manifestos has to be declared illegal. The high court, which posted the next hearing on September 24, was told by senior counsel Soumya Chakraborty, appearing for the petitioners, that "when cash is offered, not against any labour, it is not supported by any policy." In COVID, funds were put in accounts of people. (But) it was an extraordinary situation. If political parties start the trend of giving money not against any work, our industries, agriculture will finish," he submitted.

India hits out at Pakistan, OIC for raising Kashmir

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Wednesday hit out at Pakistan as well as the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) for raising the Kashmir issue at the UN Human Rights Commission and said the grouping has "helplessly" allowed itself to be held "hostage" by Islamabad. At the 48th session of the human rights council, India said Pakistan has been globally recognised as a country openly supporting, training, financing and arming terrorists including UN proscribed terrorists as a matter of state policy. India's response was delivered by Pawan Badhe, first secretary in India's permanent mission in Geneva. Exercising India's rights to respond to comments made by Pakistan and the OIC on Kashmir, Badhe said it does not need lessons from a "failed state" like Pakistan which is the "epicentre of terrorism and worst abuser of human rights". He said it has become a habit for Pakistan to misuse the platforms provided by the council to propagate its false and malicious propaganda against India. "The council is aware of Pakistan's attempts to divert the

council's attention from serious human rights violations being perpetrated by its government, including in the territories occupied by it," Badhe said. "India, as not only the world's largest democracy but a robustly functional and vibrant one, does not need lessons from a failed state like Pakistan which is the epicentre of terrorism and worst abuser of human rights," he said. The Indian diplomat said Pakistan has failed to protect the rights of its minorities, including Sikhs, Hindus, Christians and Ahmadis. "Thousands of women and girls from minority communities have been subjected to abductions, forced marriages and conversions in Pakistan and its occupied territories," Badhe said in his statement. "Pakistan has been engaged in systematic persecution, forced conversions, targeted killings, sectarian violence and faith-based discrimination against its ethnic and religious minorities," he said. Badhe said incidents of violence against minority communities, including attacks on their places of worship, their cultural heritage, as well as their private property have taken place with impunity in Pakistan.

Gaganyaan mission likely to be launched by 2022

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's 'Gaganyaan' mission is likely to be launched by the end of 2022 or early 2023, Union minister Jitendra Singh said on Wednesday. The mission, originally scheduled for a launch by 2022, was delayed due to coronavirus pandemic. It aims to launch a manned mission in the Lower Earth Orbit. "We could have actually done this (launched Gaganyaan by 2022). We had planned to time it along the 75th anniversary of India's Independence, but it could not happen that way because of the inevitable delay caused due to COVID-19. "But I am sure, maybe by the



end of next year or may be (by) the beginning of 2023, we would be able to do that as well," he said. Singh, the Minister of State in the Department of Space, was addressing a webinar on 'Future of India-Oceania Space Technology Partnerships' organised by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) here.

He further said a brain-storming exercise by space scientists and government officials in 2015-16 helped them understand where space technology could be used. "Space technology has a role to play, virtually, in every sector," he asserted. Space technology has come very handy in the area of disaster management, the minister said, adding that space medicine is also deeply connected in the endeavour to send three Indians to space. According to the government, four biological and two physical science related micro-gravity experiments from academic institutions are shortlisted for unmanned mission of the Gaganyaan programme.

Jal Jeevan Mission: Union Minister to chair meet today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat on Thursday will chair a one-day conference to discuss the planning, implementation and progress of the Jal Jeevan Mission in the eight north-

eastern states. This will be attended by ministers-in-charge of public health engineering departments (PHED) of all these states and senior officials, the Jal Shakti Ministry said in a statement. The Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM)

is a flagship programme of the Centre and it is being implemented by the ministry's department of drinking water and sanitation, in partnership with states, to provide tap water connection to every rural household across country by 2024.

The conference, which is to be held at the Assam Administrative Staff College in Guwahati, will be streamed live so that all stakeholders, including chief, executive, assistant and junior PHED engineers in these states can benefit from the deliberations,

the ministry said. "The conference is being organised to discuss planning, implementation and progress made so far as well as the way forward so that all remaining households in northeastern states get tap water connections at the earliest," it said.

Delhi govt bans storage, sale, use of firecrackers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi government on Wednesday banned the storage, sale and use of firecrackers during Diwali owing to the "dangerous pollution levels" in the national capital around the time of the festival. Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said that like last year, it was essential to implement the ban in order to save lives. "In view of the dangerous condition of pollution in Delhi during the Diwali period for the last three years, and like last year, a complete ban is being imposed on the storage, sale and use of all types of firecrackers. So that people's lives can be saved," he said in a tweet in Hindi. "Last year, a complete ban on firecrackers was imposed late after assessing the seriousness of the situation. This caused losses to the traders. It is an appeal to all the traders that this time in view of the complete ban, please do not stock," he said.

Crimes against women, children dropped in 2020

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Coronavirus pandemic and subsequent lockdown resulted in a drop in traditional crimes like theft, robbery, and assault on women and children in 2020, but there was a drastic jump in disobedience to government orders, primarily arising due to violations of COVID-19 norms, official data showed. According to the latest report of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) on 'Crime in India - 2020', a total of 66,01,285 cognisable crimes comprising 42,54,356 Indian Penal Code (IPC) crimes and 23,46,929 Special and Local Laws (SLL) crimes were registered in 2020. It shows an increase of 14,45,127 (28 per cent) in registration of cases over 2019 (51,56,158 cases), while the crime rate registered per lakh population increased from 385.5 in 2019 to 487.8 in 2020. During 2020, registration of



cases under IPC increased by 31.9 per cent whereas SLL crimes rose by 21.6 per cent over 2019. Percentage share of IPC cases was 64.4 per cent while that of SLL cases was 35.6 per cent of total cognisable crimes during 2020. Major increase was seen in the cases registered under disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant from 29,469 cases in 2019 to

6,12,179 cases in 2020 and under 'other IPC crimes' from 2,52,268 cases in 2019 to 10,62,399 cases in 2020, the report said. Similarly, under SLL category, more cases were registered under 'other state local acts' — from 89,553 in 2019 to 4,14,589 in 2020. These together have resulted in 16,43,690 more cases registered in 2020 as compared to 2019. "These cases are primarily

those arising out of violations of Covid norms. Effectively therefore, there is a decrease in registration of traditional crime by about two lakh cases," it said. During 2020, a total of 55,84,135 IPC cases (13,27,167 cases pending from previous year, 42,54,356 reported during the year and 2,612 cases reopened for investigation) were under investigation, of which 34,47,285 cases were disposed of by police including 26,11,925 cases which were charge-sheeted, resulting in the charge-sheeting rate of 75.8 per cent. The country remained under complete lockdown from March 25 to May 31, 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic (first wave), during which movement in public space was very limited. The cases registered under crimes against women, children, and senior citizens, theft, burglary, robbery and dacoity declined, whereas Covid-related enforcement resulted in an increase of cases registered

under 'disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant (Sec. 188 IPC)', under 'other IPC crimes' and under 'other state local acts', it said. A total of 10,47,216 cases of offences affecting the human body were registered which accounted for 24.6 per cent of the total IPC crimes during 2020, of which hurt (5,78,641 cases) accounted for the maximum cases -- 55.3 per cent -- followed by cases of causing death by negligence (1,26,779 or 12.1 per cent) and cases of assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty (85,392 or 8.2 per cent). The cases registered under offences against human body depict a marginal decrease of 0.5 per cent in 2020 over 2019 (10,52,016 cases) and the crime rate has declined from 78.6 in 2019 to 77.4 in 2020. A total of 29,193 cases of murder were registered during 2020, showing a marginal increase of 1 per cent over 2019

(28,915 cases) with 'disputes' (10,404 cases) being the motive in the maximum cases followed by 'personal vendetta or enmity' (4,034 cases) and 'gain' (1,876 cases). A total of 84,805 cases of kidnapping and abduction were registered during 2020, showing a decrease of 19.3 per cent over 2019 (1,05,036 cases). A total of 88,590 people (14,869 males and 73,721 females) were reported kidnapped or abducted during 2020, of which 56,591 (8,715 males and 47,876 females) victims were children and 31,999 (6,154 males and 25,845 females) were adult. During 2020, a total of 91,739 kidnapped or abducted people (22,872 males and 68,867 females) were rescued, of which 91,458 people were rescued alive and 281 found dead. A total of 3,71,503 cases of crime against women were registered during 2020, showing a decline of 8.3 per cent over 2019 (4,05,326 cases).

NIA court seeks case diary on bomb attack

PNS ■ KOLKATA

A special NIA court on Wednesday directed the Barrackpore police commissionerate to submit the case diary on the September 8 bomb attack outside BJP MP Arjun Singh's residence in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district on a prayer by the agency, which is conducting a probe into the matter. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) submitted a copy of the FIR it registered in the case before the chief judge of city sessions court and in-charge of the special NIA court, Partha Sarathi Sen. The agency's lawyer, Shyamal Ghosh, said that the judge has directed the

Barrackpore police to submit the case diary in three days and produce the accused arrested in connection with the incident before the court on September 21, when the matter will be taken up again for hearing. The NIA has been told to present a report on the incident and related issues during the next hearing. B o m b s exploded outside the Barrackpore MP's Bhatpara house twice this month, first on September 8 and then on September 15. The Union Home Ministry, after the first attack, instituted an NIA inquiry into the incident.



FIRST COLUMN

NOW IS THE NEED FOR A REALITY CHECK



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

Almost all of the global women's movements have dried up in the dreary desert sand of disinterest

There are many ways in which decision-making can be structured or planning can be done. There are many ways in which the struggle for the control of the decision-making processes takes place. Ultimately, those who emerge victors in the various competing ways of doing something carry the day. The articulate in the group become cheer leaders and those who care or dare to oppose are either eliminated or left to languish or perish. This happens in matters big and small. The last few weeks have seen the emasculation of an army which was proclaimed to be one of the finest equipped in the world. The current ruling elite in Afghanistan have made no bones about their distaste for matters such as democratically elected governance. They are in control and some of the mightiest powers in the world are ready to encourage this regime. Clearly the jury has not even convened, let alone 'be out' for a decision. The international system has yet again proved



its ineptness in sufficiently holding out values and making worthwhile moves to push for them. Even the so-called cause of women's rights in Afghanistan has not echoed much in any significant part of the world. Staunch proponents of gender equality can be seen occasionally demonstrating in some city, somewhere. Indeed, counter collectives reportedly have gathered of women in Afghanistan proclaiming, in effect, that the country's establishment's views on the status of women is indeed correct and must prevail. Philosophy has little scope to sort out a seemingly contentious views especially when there are few listeners. The international bodies including the United Nations are observing a thundering silence on this issue. Almost all of the global women's movements have suddenly dried up in the dreary desert sands of abject disinterest.

This is the story not just of women's rights. It is also the story of other human rights. The existence in China of alleged concentration camps, meant for certain religious minorities, is another subject of popular global neglect. Globally, even their co-religionists are rarely raising any attention about this. This is in sharp contrast to other kinds of concerns that are being raised. One wonders whether 'politics' predominantly determines what is flagged for attention and what is not. Like the gender movement, the cause of human rights for all, including minorities, is conspicuously marked by selective outrage. In the meanwhile, the expenditure on armaments amongst the so-called super powers continues to escalate. Some media channels have been showing the might of certain super powers to link power of artificial intelligence and incredible destructive capacity of nuclear devices. The powerful nations write their own rule books. In the last three decades or so, proclaimed aggression has been practiced to eliminate the so-called 'weapons of mass destruction' and more. Reportedly, the armorial dash was for control of oil resources. The sheer ability to cover up crass commerce with lofty principles of progress seems to be the hallmark of many powerful. The time has come to realise some of the underpinning driving the truth of our times. Unless the truth is placed, squarely, on the table, any reversal of this sorry logic — where the powerful grab what they want with or without attempts at camouflage — is likely to continue.

(The writer is a well-known management consultant. The views expressed are personal.)

Taxing the new-age digital companies

Foreign digital companies sell goods in India but do not pay taxes as they are not physically present in the country and that is a key concern



HIMA BINDU KOTA

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


Digital technology has not only changed the way the world works, it has also made inroads into the country's taxation system.

For years, any company which is a resident of India came under the purview of taxation laws. However, a company need not now be a resident of a country to engage in economic activity. Technology and internet have made it possible a company to be present in one country and operate in another. This has caused concerns for countries where the consumers are located as they are deprived of their share of tax collection due to archaic laws requiring physical presence of companies to levy taxes.

This inconsistency has led to an urgent need to amend

international taxation laws. To work around this issue, several attempts have been made by international organisations to derive some common consensus, particularly by Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) under Base Erosion and Profit Sharing (BEPS) Action Plan I, which recommended certain interim opportunities to tackle tax challenges arising out of the new age digital economy.

One such option is the concept of 'significant economic presence' (SEP) that could be defined in two ways. First, any transaction in respect of any goods, services, or property carried out by a non-resident with any person in India, including provision of download of data or software



in India, if the aggregate of payments arising from such transaction or transactions during the previous year exceeds ₹2 crore. Secondly, systematic and continuous soliciting of business activities or engaging in interaction with 300,000 users in India. The concept of SEP was introduced within the ambit of 'business connection', which is an on-going and continuous business relation between any

two enterprises resulting in the profit of a non-resident entity.

According to the recommendation of BEPS Action Plan 1, a non-resident enterprise would be taxable if it has a SEP in that country, engaged in a focussed, continuous and sustained engagement with the economy with the help of technology and automation.

Interestingly, India has been one of the early movers in this direction. As amending the existing tax laws is a time-taking process, a committee was set under the guidance of the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), the apex tax administrative body in India, that recommended, in 2016, an equalization levy of six percent as a viable option for India in online advertising and ancillary services. Later on, by

2020, the domain was extended to include online sale of goods and services. This will become effective from 2022 onwards.

For example, Alibaba, the internet giant, selling goods worth millions of dollars in India, is presently not taxed as an enterprise because it is not physically present in India. With the introduction of the concept of SEP, Alibaba would be taxable for the sales made in India. In addition, according to the second condition of SEP, the mere act of soliciting business from Indians and not even actual sales can subject any enterprise to taxation in. This brings companies driven by information feeds and news like Facebook and Instagram, and social networks and other engagement-based platforms, like Whatsapp, WeChat and Tiktok, under the ambit of Indian taxation rules, subject to their incomes or user base crossing the prescribed thresholds.

The SEP is also applicable to any liaison office set up in India as they are also involved in the continuous soliciting of business, bring them under its purview. This may push several foreign companies to set up their wholly owned subsidiaries to circumvent these conditions and to take advantage of lower tax rate of 25 percent as compared to 40 percent tax rate for foreign companies.

Overall, the business connection and significant economic presence will be applicable subject to the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) India has with the home country of the business enterprise in question. DTAs generally have specific clauses defining the conditions under which a host country can tax foreign companies located in their countries. And since DTAs override any domestic tax regulations, it would be complicated taxing foreign companies in situations when the concept of significance economic presence in not mentioned in the same. However, such a move shows the intent of India to tax companies in this new age of digital technology. A global consensus in determining the commonly accepted thresholds for defining significance economic presence will go a long way in taxing new age digital companies.



Import duty cutback on Tesla is no good



ASHWANI MAHAJAN

Lower duties on EVs will incentivise companies to merely import from foreign markets and sell in India, and that does not add value to the Indian economy

Proposed import duty concessions for the import of electric cars manufactured by Tesla, an American electric car manufacturing company, is in public debate, having linkages with the domestic automobile industry. Whereas lobbying efforts are on for this proposal, the domestic automobile industry is vehemently opposing the same.

The American electric car company has sought lowering of import duty to 40 percent from the current 60 percent on fully assembled electric cars priced below \$40,000 and 60 percent from the current 100 percent on vehicles valued above that amount. The interesting part of the story is, there is no tangible offer from the company to begin manufacturing of this car in the country.

From newspaper reports it is being learnt that several ministries of the government have supported Tesla's proposal to lower import tariffs. Today, the Indian automobile industry is worth ₹8.2 lakh crore. Nearly 49 percent of manufacturing GDP comes from this sector, which constitutes 7.1 percent of overall GDP. The sector provides direct and indirect employment to nearly 3.7 crore people. It exports nearly \$27 billion worth of automobile products in different segments. It provides 15 percent of the total GST collected, apart from catering to the needs of the country with regard to vehicles of different types and in different segments. Along with this, a substantial auto components manufacturing sector has simultaneously developed, with significant production, employment and exports.

Today, electric vehicles account for less than one percent of the annual car sales. The Government of India has been giving a big push to the manufacturing of electric vehicles (EVs) in the country aiming to reduce dependence on the imported fossil fuels and to reduce carbon foot prints. To achieve this objective of manufacturing EVs, import duty on EV parts and components, batteries, etc., is kept between 10 and 15 percent, which is much less than import duty on components for conventional automobiles. Using this duty concession, the established Indian companies and start-ups have started creating local value additions in the country. Efforts are also being made towards long-term localisation program.

Looking at the push given by the government to EVs, it seems that India will soon be able to start meeting domestic requirements of these vehicles. If the past is any guide, we understand that protection given to the domestic automobile sector has been the key to the development of this sector, which today is not only meeting the domestic requirements, but is also exporting automobiles to the rest of the world. It is also successfully procuring most of the components from within the country. It is notable that the Indian auto components industry is also worth ₹3.95 lakh crore. The Indian auto component turnover constitutes 2.3 per cent of GDP and provides employment to five million people and exports to

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TODAY, ELECTRIC VEHICLES ACCOUNT FOR LESS THAN ONE PER CENT OF THE ANNUAL CAR SALES. THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN GIVING A PUSH TO THE MANUFACTURING OF ELECTRIC VEHICLES TO REDUCE DEPENDENCE ON IMPORTED FOSSIL FUELS AND REDUCE CARBON FOOT PRINT

(The writer is Professor, PGDAV College, University of Delhi. The views expressed are personal.)



the tune of \$15-16 billion or ₹1.06 lakh crore.

India's luxury car market is relatively very small. In the year 2019-20, the total number of luxury cars sold was 40,637, which was down to 19700 during the COVID-hit 2020-21. This is because a very small section of the population can afford these luxury cars beyond rupees ₹15 lakh or, say, \$20,000. And a very minuscule segment of the population can afford to buy cars beyond ₹30 lakh. If duty concession is given to Tesla, those who can afford will obviously buy imported Tesla electric cars and there will hardly be any incentive for the company to establish a manufacturing facility in India; and the country would be deprived of capacity creation in EVs.

India has launched a flagship Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme to give a boost to domestic production of goods for which, so far, the country is dependent on foreign nations. Thirteen sectors have been included in this scheme. Prior to this, the phased manufacturing programme (PMP) was launched. It is a known fact that in telecom and IT hardware sectors, Indians lost the opportunity to become a manufacturing hub due to faulty policies of lowering of tariffs, and dumping by China and other countries. Thanks to PMP earlier and now PLI scheme, this sector has started showing some gains in domestic manufacturing.

If we reduce tariff on fully-assembled electric cars and cars of other companies, say, Volkswagen — who have also started staking

claim for lower tariffs on their cars — would we not be committing the same mistake of the past and miss the bus in manufacturing and technology development of electric vehicles, which we are looking forward to?

First, any reduction in custom duty on EVs will incentivise companies to merely import from the foreign markets and sell in the Indian market. This will not help in any value addition to the economy and such a move would jeopardise India's efforts to increase domestic manufacturing.

Secondly, domestic automobile companies and start-ups are consistently investing in R&D and product development and contributing to the growth of the sustainable economy. Rather than creating a disturbing policy atmosphere of favouring imports of electric cars, it would be appropriate to support and leverage the local component ecosystem by long-term policy of the central and State Governments.

Thirdly, Ola company backed by venture capitalists has launched its first electric scooter, with more than one lakh bookings on a single day. Ola and other two-wheeler (Original Equipment Manufacturers) OEMs are on the verge of setting upstate-of-the-art manufacturing plants. Any tariff reduction for Tesla will discourage future endeavours in this direction.

Fourthly, we should not also forget that Tesla's business model company does not give any opportunity to the domestic auto components manufacturers.

In the words of Elon Musk, "We have a massive amount of internal manufacturing technology that we built ourselves.... It's like okay, what are the things we want to make, design a machine that will make that thing, then we make the machine." Firstly, we do not need lowering of tariffs on assembled cars; we rather need leveraging fiscal and non-fiscal support for EVs. Lowering GST, registration fee, permit fee, road tax, PLI, tightening of regulations to motivate shift to EVs are some such measures.

Secondly, rather than discouraging investment in Research and Development by allowing direct imports of EVs, we should create an environment to increase investment in R&D. If we allow Tesla Cars to be imported with tariff reduction, we would be hampering the development of the EV ecosystem.

Thirdly, we must leverage the fastest growing unified market in the world to our advantage of long-term technology building in and by Indian companies. There is a larger opportunity and value capture in developing not-yet-mature technologies such as EVs. For example, we could have been leaders in mobile phones if we had developed our capabilities in India for mobile phones in the early 2000s. We require this technological foundation to cater to global markets in the future, and increase the exports by the automobile sector to record highs; and in any case not reduce import duty on Tesla cars.

POINT COUNTERPOINT



THE BJP HAS LOST THE MORAL RIGHT TO TALK ABOUT THE APPROPRIATENESS OF HOLDING POLITICAL RALLIES IN COVID TIME.
— SENIOR TMC LEADER FIRHAD HAKIM

HOW CAN THE TMC TAKE OUT A RALLY IN TRIPURA IN VIOLATION OF THE COVID NORMS IMPOSED BY THE ADMINISTRATION?
— WEST BENGAL BJP PRESIDENT DILIP GHOSH

Benchmarks surge to all-time highs

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Sensex and Nifty vaulted to fresh lifetime peaks on Wednesday, boosted by telecom and auto stocks which saw brisk buying after the government announced packages for the sectors.

A rebounding rupee and persistent foreign capital inflows added to the momentum, traders said.

Rising for the second day, the 30-share BSE Sensex surged 476.11 points or 0.82 per cent to close at its new all-time high of 58,723.20. It touched an intra-day record of 58,777.06.

Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty climbed 139.45 points or 0.80 per cent to its fresh closing record of 17,519.45. During the session, it touched an all-time peak of 17,532.70.

NTPC was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, rallying 7.16 per cent, followed by Bharti Airtel at 4.53 per cent.

HCL Tech, Titan, SBI, PowerGrid, TCS and IndusInd Bank also notched up gains.

On the other hand, Axis Bank, Asian Paints, UltraTech Cement, Nestle India, Sun Pharma and HDFC Bank were



among the laggards, shedding up to 0.38 per cent.

In big bang reforms, the Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved a relief package for the telecom sector that includes a four-year moratorium on payment of statutory dues by telecom companies as well as allowing 100 per cent foreign investment through the automatic route.

The Cabinet also approved a Rs 26,058 crore production linked incentive (PLI) scheme for the auto, auto-components and drone industry to enhance India's manufacturing capabilities.

"The measures announced for the telecom and auto industry are sweeping with potential for far-reaching beneficial impact. A four-year moratori-

um on dues of the telecom sector which covers AGR, spectrum dues and interest payment will bring big relief to the cash-strapped sector. This is positive for banks, too, since banks' exposure too will decline significantly," said V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services.

The Rs 26,058 crore PLI

scheme for automobiles, auto components and drones is a major initiative to attract advanced auto technology and supply chains into India, he noted.

"This is a timely policy when global supply chains are looking for markets outside China for shifting supply chains. The PLI scheme's goal of investment of Rs 42,500 crore in 5 years is ambitious but achievable. In brief, bold reforms," he added.

All BSE sectoral indices closed in the green, led by telecom (3.45 per cent), utilities (2.29 per cent), power (2.01 per cent), tech (1.81 per cent), and consumer durables (1.62 per cent).

In the broader markets, the BSE midcap and smallcap gauges advanced up to 0.86 per cent.

On the global front, markets were weighed by weak China retail sales data amid a resurgence of Delta variant cases in the country.

However, US inflation data showed a slower-than-expected rise in prices, giving room to the Fed to continue with its accommodative stance.

FM asks IBA to play pivotal role in resurgence of economy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Finance Ministry on Wednesday asked Indian Banks' Association (IBA) to play a pivotal role in the resurgence of the economy in the 75th year of India's independence.

"At this juncture I would urge the IBA Chairman to scout for good competent resources and technology adoption for capitalisation. IBA should not be merely an association that passes banking issues to the RBI, it must rather strive to integrate with economic reforms for boosting growth," Financial Services Secretary Debasish Panda said.

Inaugurating the Delhi office of IBA, the secretary suggested that the Association can also look at providing training and skilling to middle management banking professionals so as to unburden banks in the same task.

"IBA has a pivotal role to



play in terms of research and key banking issues and a significant role to play in the resurgence of the economy in the 75th year of India's independence," he said.

During the occasion, IBA Chairman Rajkiran Rai said IBA's transformation started in 2018 and is now more closely involved in the business side operations than mere advocacy. IBA is involved in finding

new solutions for the customers especially during the pandemic and has come up with guidelines for the cohesive functioning of the entire banking system, IBA CEO Sunil Mehta said. The Association has pushed reforms including the corporate lending system, dealing with issues like syndicate lending and multiple financing, he said.

MONEY MATTERS

Tata drives in XPRES-T EV for fleet segment at Rs 9.54 lakh

Tata Motors on Wednesday said it has launched its first electric sedan under XPRES brand – the XPRES-T EV, exclusively for fleet customers, with a price starting at Rs 9.54 lakh (net price after FAME subsidy). The sedan would come in two trims – XpresT 165 and



XpresT 213, with a range of 165 km and 213 km, respectively. The two variants of XpresT 165 are tagged at Rs 9.54 lakh and Rs 10.04 lakh, while the XpresT 213 trims are priced at Rs 10.14 lakh and Rs 10.64, respectively. Targeted at mobility services, corporate and government fleet customers, the XPRES-T EV will come with an optimal battery size, captive fast charging solution, which will ensure outstandingly low cost of ownership in addition to safety and passenger comfort, making it a comprehensive and attractive proposition for fleet owners and operators," Tata Motors said in a statement. The XPRES-T electric sedan packs a high energy density battery of 21.5 kilowatt-hours (kWh) and 16.5 kWh for two trims.

Ola commences sale of electric scooter S1

Ola Electric on Wednesday commenced the sale process of its electric scooter S1. The electric scooter, which comes in two trims – Ola S1 and S1 -, is available to purchase on the Ola App only currently, and not on the website. While the sale was to start on September 8, it postponed the process by a week to September 15, as it faced "technical difficulties" in making the website for purchases live for customers. Ola is starting the purchase in batches, and prioritising users based on their dates of reservation, the company said in a statement. "You will need to pay an advance of Rs 20,000 for purchasing your Ola S1/Ola S1 Pro, and the rest before shipment. You can also avail convenient EMI options when you make the rest of the payment. "Your advance is completely refundable if you wish to cancel your booking. Cancellation is allowed only till the scooter is shipped from the Ola Futurefactory," it said in a blog post. Deliveries will start from October 2021.



Gold jumps Rs 438; silver climbs Rs 633

Gold in the national capital on Wednesday jumped Rs 438 to Rs 46,214 per 10 grams reflecting overnight gains in international precious metal prices, according to HDFC Securities. In the previous trade, the precious metal closed at Rs 45,776 per 10 grams. Silver also gained Rs 633 to Rs 62,140 per kg, from Rs 61,507 per kg in the previous trade. "Spot gold prices for 24 carats in Delhi surged Rs 438 reflecting overnight gains in COMEX gold prices," said HDFC Securities Senior Analyst (Commodities) Tapan Patel. In the international market, both gold and silver were trading flat at USD 1,802 per ounce and USD 23.79 per ounce, respectively. "Gold prices traded steady with spot gold prices at COMEX trading above USD 1,800 per ounce on Wednesday," he added.



Financial bids received for Air India disinvestment

The government on Wednesday said it has received multiple financial bids for buying national carrier Air India. Meanwhile, a Tata Sons spokesman told PTI that it has put in a bid for the airline.

"Financial bids for Air India disinvestment received by Transaction Adviser. Process now moves to concluding stage," DIPAM Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey tweeted. The government is seeking to sell 100 per cent of its stake in the state-owned national airline, including Air India's 100 per cent shareholding in AI Express Ltd and 50 per cent in Air India SATS Airport Services Private Ltd. The stake sale process, which begun on January 2020, faced delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In April 2021, the government asked potential bidders to put in financial bids.



Telecom shares in demand; Bharti Airtel jumps over 4%

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Telecom shares were in demand on Wednesday and jumped up to 5 per cent even as the Union Cabinet approved a relief package for the sector.

Bharti Airtel jumped 4.53 per cent and Vodafone Idea rose 2.76 per cent on the BSE.

Shares of Tata TeleServices (Maharashtra) gained 4.94 per cent and Tata Communications 1.38 per cent. In big bang reforms, the Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved a relief package for the telecom sector that includes a four-year moratorium on payment of statutory dues by telecom companies as well as allowing 100 per cent foreign investment through the automatic route.

Briefing reporters on the decisions taken by the Cabinet, Telecom Minister Ashwini



Vaishnav said nine structural reforms for the telecom sector were approved.

The definition of adjusted gross revenue (AGR), which had been a major reason for the stress in the sector, has been rationalised by excluding non-telecom revenue of telecom companies.

AGR refers to revenues

that are considered for payment of statutory dues.

The minister said 100 per cent FDI (foreign direct investment) in telecom via the automatic route was approved by the Cabinet. Among the measures approved were a four-year moratorium on unpaid dues, AGR and spectrum dues, he said.

Lupin launches arthritis drug in US market

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Drug firm Lupin on Wednesday said it has launched generic Duexis tablets used to treat the symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis in the US market.

The company has launched an authorised generic version of Horizon Medicines LLC's Duexis tablets, 800 mg/26.6 mg, Lupin said in a regulatory filing. According to IQVIA MAT July 2021, ibuprofen and famotidine tablets had an estimated annual sales of USD 765 million in the US, it added. The product, "is indicated for the relief of signs and symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis and to decrease the risk of developing upper gastrointestinal ulcers.

MG unveils Astor

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

MG Motor India on Wednesday marked its entry into the highly competitive mid-sized SUV segment in the country, with the unveiling of its all-new model – MG Astor. The model, which comes with a personal AI assistant and first-in-segment Autonomous (Level 2) technology, would compete with the likes of Hyundai Creta, Kia Seltos and Skoda Kushaq.

Astor is based on the MG's successful global platform, ZS and comes with two engine options – the Brit Dynamic 220 TURBO petrol engine with a six-speed AT (automatic) delivering a 140ps of power and VTi Tech petrol engine with a manual transmission and an eight-speed CVT, delivering 110ps of power.

The five-seater mid-size model would be on display at MG showrooms from

September 19, and bookings will start soon thereafter.

"The segment is highly competitive and that is why we needed to differentiate; and from that perspective, we have tried to come out with a very very compelling offering where we have many industry-first, segment-first features. The car is loaded, the car is powerful, the design is expressive," MG Motor India President and Managing Director Rajeev Chaba said. With its elegant exteriors, luxurious interiors and futuristic technology, the company believes that Astor is a desirable package that will strike a chord with the customers, he added. MG Astor's personal AI assistant depicts human-like emotions and voice.

The Paralympic athlete Deepa Malik has lent her voice to the personal AI assistant, thereby humanising the experience.

Trust between Government and industry increased, says Rajnath

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The trust between the government and the industry has increased following the scrapping of the retrospective taxation regime, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Wednesday.

In a virtual address at the Indo-US Economic Summit organised by a leading industry chamber, Singh listed a range of measures initiated by the NDA government to boost economic growth and said the global investors are now receiving "red carpet" welcome in India instead of "red-tapism".

"We have formulated progressive and investor-friendly tax policies. We have said 'Good Bye' to retrospective taxation.

"The trust between the government and the industry has increased following the scrap-



ping of the retrospective taxation. By doing this, we have rectified the mistake of the earlier government (UPA)," Singh said. He said the government is preparing for 'dynamic growth' in this entire decade and noted that there is a lot of scope for American and Indian defence firms to go for co-production and co-development of military

equipment. "The coronavirus pandemic has brought newer challenges in terms of disruption to supply chains, a downturn in industrial activities, negative growth in travel and tourism industry and there is no doubt that the Indo-US cooperation will go a long way to restore normalcy and further boost economic dynamism," Singh said.

Household debt may have declined to 34% in '22

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The household debt as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) may have declined to 34 per cent in the first quarter of 2021-22, according to an estimate by the State Bank of India's research report Ecowrap.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a spike in household debt to the GDP rate. As per the report, it rose sharply to 37.3 per cent in 2020-21 from 32.5 per cent in 2019-20.

"We estimate that household debt as a percentage of GDP has declined to 34 per cent in Q1 FY22 with the commensurate rise in GDP in the first quarter, though it has increased in absolute terms," the research report released on Wednesday showed.

In absolute numbers, the household debt has increased to Rs 75 lakh crore in the first quarter of FY22 from Rs 73.59 lakh crore in FY21, it said.



It said the recently released India Debt & Investment Survey (AIDIS) report for 2018 showed an increase in the average amount of debt among rural as well as urban households between 2012 and 2018.

The average amount of debt increased by 84 per cent and 42 per cent, respectively, for rural and urban households for the six-year period ended 2018, the SBI research report said.

The state-wise trend indicates that the rural households' average debt more than doubled in 18 states for the six-

year period ended 2018, while seven states witnessed the same for urban households.

Importantly, five states, including Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Assam, witnessed a simultaneous doubling in average debt across urban and rural households during this period, the report said.

As per the AIDIS report 2018, the average amount of debt among rural households stood at Rs 59,748 and in urban households, it was Rs 1.20 lakh.

"In 2021, the rural household debt is expected to increase to Rs 1.16 lakh and urban to Rs 2.33 lakh, indicating that COVID impacted the households significantly," according to the SBI research report.

It said the debt-asset ratio, which is an indicator of household indebtedness, has increased to 3.8 in 2018 from 3.2 in 2012 for rural households. For urban households, the ratio has risen from 3.7 to 4.4.

Kerala, Madhya Pradesh and Punjab were the three states that witnessed a deterioration of at least 100 bps (basis points) in debt asset ratio over the six-year period ended 2018, the report said.

"The good thing is that in rural India, the share of outstanding cash debt from non-institutional credit agencies has declined significantly to 34 per cent in 2018 from 44 per cent in 2012," it noted.

Notably, almost all states

have registered a steep decline in non-institutional credit in rural areas, indicating the increase in formalisation of the economy, the report said.

The share of non-institutional credit has declined significantly in the case of Bihar, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Haryana and Gujarat. In Haryana and Rajasthan, which witnessed loan waiver schemes, the share of non-institutional credit declined contrary to popular perception, it said.

"This could be explained by a significant increase in penetration of KCC (Kisan Credit Cards) in these two states. Our estimates show that the number of KCC cards has jumped by 5 times over the 7 year period ended 2020," the report said.

The report believes that the recent reforms in agriculture could further help in the formalisation of the economy, despite the political cacophony.

Rupee settles 18 paise higher at 73.50 against \$

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The rupee closed 18 paise higher at 73.50 (provisional) against the USD on Wednesday, tracking a firm trend in domestic equities and sustained foreign fund inflows.

At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened flat at 73.68 against the greenback. During the session, the domestic unit witnessed an intra-day high of 73.50 and a low of 73.74. The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.17 per cent to 92.46 after softer-than-expected US inflation numbers. "Indian rupee appreciated after two days of downward swing following weakness in dollar index, foreign fund inflows, better than expected economic data and risk-on tones," said Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst.

A photograph of a man and a woman standing in a rural setting with two water buffaloes. The man, on the left, is wearing a light blue shirt and a green dhoti, and is holding the head of a white water buffalo. The woman, on the right, is wearing a grey sari and is holding the head of a black water buffalo. Both buffaloes have large, curved horns. The background shows a field with some trees and a fence.

Two headshots are shown side-by-side. On the left is Jennifer Aniston, smiling, with blonde hair, wearing a white dress. On the right is David Duchovny, with dark hair, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and dark tie.

A cartoon panel showing a boy in a yellow shirt with a large blue 'S' and a girl in a yellow jacket. The boy is on the left, looking at the girl. The girl is on the right, looking tired with sweat drops on her forehead. They are in a room with a checkered floor and a black trash can.

YOU LOOK WORSE THAN USUAL.

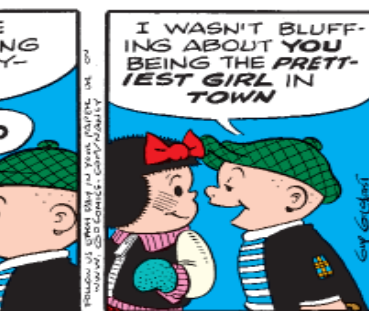
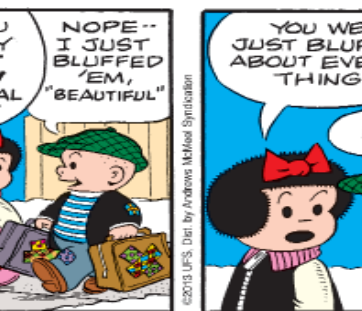
I AM! I'M EXHAUSTED!



SOMETIMES I JUST CAN'T SLEEP



FRITZI FINISHES HER STORY...
HOW SLEUGO MET NANCY -- SAVING HER FROM THE BULLIES---



It's all "business" in the front, party in the rear.

A 15x15 crossword puzzle grid. The grid consists of white squares for letters and black squares for empty space. The numbering is as follows:

- 1: Top-left corner (1,1)
- 2: (1,3)
- 3: (1,10)
- 4: (1,12)
- 5: (1,14)
- 6: (2,8)
- 7: (3,1)
- 8: (3,7)
- 9: (4,5)
- 10: (5,2)
- 11: (6,1)
- 12: (6,11)
- 13: (7,5)
- 14: (8,3)
- 15: (8,14)
- 16: (9,1)
- 17: (9,10)
- 18: (10,1)
- 19: (10,7)

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

SOLUTION

	R	E	P	E	A	T	I	N	G	
	X	A	A	A	U					
D	A	T	E	S	L	A	R	G	E	
F	R	I	V	K	S	N				
C	O	A	L		D	E	F	E	A	
I		P		D						
B	R	A	G	O	N		F	O	U	
E	C	L	H	F						
S	C	O	W	L		A	C	T	O	
	H	O	I	N						
	A	N	S	W	E	R	I	N	G	



ART TO SATIATE HUNGER

RACHEL DAMMALA

Art has always been known to heal. It was always looked to, for reasons, solutions, and solace. Today, things aren't very different. Making perfect use of the love people have for art is a Hyderabad-based NGO, Neighbourhood Foundation. Working towards the betterment of health, education sectors, while also addressing social issues, the organisation, recently started 'Feed by Art', a nation-wide art

competition for school-going students, to raise funds for its hunger relief project. To be held virtually, the competition accepts registration and submission of arts till September 25, 2021. How does it work? "The registration fee of Rs 100 will go to fund the foundation's Feed@100, a hunger-relief project, the uniqueness of which is that for every Rs 100 donation, it feeds

three people and two animals at one time!" So art lovers' contribution goes to not just children but animals on the street too. Talking about the art competition, R. Hemanth, founder of Neighbourhood Foundation, tells us, "According to a 2019 report of the Food and Agriculture Organisation, around 14.5% of the Indian popula-

tion is in the underfed category. In other words, over 18 crore Indians go to sleep without food every day. We believe that the Feed by Art competition will create awareness among school-going students about the havoc hunger wreaks in the lives of fellow Indians. It will encourage them to visualise a hunger-free India. While the emphasis is laid on consuming nutrition-rich food, students will also be taught the importance of not wasting food. They will also understand the connection between the food choices they make and their health and that of the planet." The art competition too was not vaguely thought of.

It is organised to mark the forthcoming World Food Day 2021, which falls on October 16 every year. It invites submissions under four categories, each having a theme of its own - all of

them working towards healthy eating - for you and Mother Earth. Category 'I' is meant for class I-III students, and the theme for the category is 'No Junk Food'; and for category 'II', which seeks participation from class IV and V students, the theme is 'Don't Waste Food'. The third category (class VI-VIII) and fourth category (class IX-XII) feature the theme of 'Healthy

Food, Healthy Planet', and 'Hunger-Free Nation', respectively. The organisation hopes to have lakhs of students take part in the competition. A hopeful Hemanth shares, "The entire proceeds of the registration fee of Rs 100 from each participant will go to our Feed@100 hunger relief project that aims to mobilise finance and create an infrastructure that will enable it to feed about 6,000 people, and 4,000 animals every day! We are striving to realise this dream before the end of 2021."

Neighbourhood Foundation has lined up eminent artists to be in the panel of judges to evaluate the submissions. With the Feed by Art competition, the foundation is attempting to get an entry in Limca Book of Records, Indian Book of Records, Asia Book of Records, World Book of Records, and Guinness World Records for conducting an art competition with the highest number of students. Each student participating in the competition will get an e-certificate with records mention and winners in each category will be awarded cash prizes, medals, and trophies. In addition, the artworks of the first prize winners of all four categories will be recreated on the walls in one or more metro cities. The registration can be made over the phone/WhatsApp (7200741106) or by visiting the foundation's website, <https://nhf-global.org/feedbyart/>. So go do your bit to feed children and the voiceless animals!



The changing face of digital marketing

Marketing, a decade ago, was an expensive affair. It involved a very high investment which consisted of A-list celebrities, sky-high billboards, TVCs, etc. Crores of rupees were put at risk in order to develop a campaign that in return provided zero consumer input. Many a time, these high budget campaigns tanked in the market, incurring major losses for the company. Then came digital renaissance that gave birth to the concepts of social media and digital marketing. Digital marketing has turned out to be the biggest blessing for all the newer age brands as it requires little to no investment, helps monitor your performance, and is powered by the most accurate tool in the world — the consumer. The producer can get real-time feedback from its targeted consumer, something which wasn't possible through traditional marketing. This feedback is essential to understand the demand of the consumers. With the market being so saturated, there's no space for medioc-



ity, companies will now have to push their limits and present something exciting to the consumer. Companies have now moved on to incorporating different technologies that help them understand the mind of the consumer. The penetration of artificial intelligence has revolutionised the way we look at technology. AI solutions aid customers to navigate easily in the digital world. Companies that have taken up 'machine learning' have seen remarkable growth in their revenues. How does AI work? There's a lot of aspects attached to it but one were to summarise, Machine learning feeds computer data

and uses statistical techniques to help it "learn" how to get progressively better at a task, without having been specifically programmed for that task, eliminating the need for millions of lines of written code. Content-based marketing has also seen a major boost in recent times. With the help of platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, companies are now able to influence the masses through content creators and influencers. Since these influential people cater to a niche audience, brands tend to capitalise on their credibility to attract new customers. This technique worked miraculously well in the pandemic as most people were glued to their phones, consuming social media content for hours. Influencer marketing has shown the best results within the fashion and beauty community. Luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton, Prada, and Clinique are constantly hiring trendy fashion, beauty influencers to upgrade their existing consumer base aka the Gen Z. Gen Z is all about utility, it



doesn't appreciate Interrupt Marketing. Pop-up ads, large banner ads, and other messages that hinder web browsing and social media feed are now considered reasons for annoyance. The youth, today, demands a seamless blend between marketing and news — an example of the same could be the success of topical posts. Effective marketing campaigns are now appreciated by the netizens. Avid social media users don't fall prey to gimmicks anymore. The concepts of racism, homophobia and colourism are not tolerated in the social media space. A vigilant consumer, today, will support brands that align with his thought process. A brand that supports different malpractices is prone to harsh criticism and will not withstand the test of time. Hence, the branding and marketing of a product, service, concept should work in tandem with the morals, virtues of the

company. It's safe to say that the modern consumer is on the lookout for products, brands that are relatable. The same should be reflected in its marketing. Minimalism is the key to success today. Misleading claims, faulty advertising, and celebrity association only ensure temporary engagement. With newer brands entering the market almost everyday, bigger brands are not only turning their existing customers into loyalists but are also constantly working towards widening their consumer base — none of which is possible without an effective digital marketing strategy. Digital marketing is always going to be very relevant in a post-pandemic world as it perfectly encapsulates the innovations made in the field of technology. (The writer, Anoushka Adya, is the Founder of Grow, a Mental Health Platform and Lajja Diaries (NGO).)

Talking about life after marriage



K RAMYA SREE

Thanks to the lockdown, many of us are now addicted to binge watching web series, movies, shows, and everything that is available on OTT platforms. *Ankahi Kahaniya* is one such interesting anthology that will start streaming on Netflix from tomorrow. The feature, directed by Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari, Abhishek Chaubey and Saket Chaudhary, narrates tales of love, loss and longing in Mumbai. Produced by Ronni Screwvala's RSVP Movies, *Ankahi Kahaniya* (meaning Untold Stories), stars Abhishek Banarjee, Zoya Hussain, Kunal Kapoor, Nikhil Dwivedi, Palomi, Rinku Rajguru and Delgad Hiwale in pivotal roles. The cast and crew can't wait to know how the audiences will receive the show. Meanwhile, *The Pioneer* catches up with director Saket Chaudhary, the man behind *Hindi Medium*, *Shaaadi Ke Side Effects*, and his actors Kunal Kapoor and Zoya Hussain, to know more about the project.

Well, it's Saket Chaudhary and it is obvious that his part of the anthology is surely something to do with family, drama and emotions. His thoughts and style reflects exact the same even in this anthology. "At some point every couple wants their marriage to fail. But it is not easy for women to end relationships. Relationships are not your identity..." goes the trailer.

Saket's part of the story deals with love after marriage and infidelity. Elaborating further on how he came up with the concept, Saket tells us, "To start off, we watched a lot of anthologies on Netflix and I wanted to know how it feels to make one. Because we are feature film directors, I didn't have a lengthy story. It was just in 30 minutes that I got to convey my concept. Zeenat Lakhani, with whom I have written *Shadi Ke Side Effects* and *Hindi Medium*, and I started discussing what is it about love and relationships that we want to talk about. We discussed about the challenges people face after marriage and came up with a concept, 'Infidelity is the reality of modern marriage'. It started off with the concept of how infidelity affects marriage. Is infidelity a definite ending to a story or will it give a new beginning to the story?"

Like many others, even they were affected by the pandemic as lockdown was announced a week before the commencement of their shooting. "Everything went into pass mode for six to seven months. But we got more time to develop the script further and we started all over again. We shot during the first and second lockdowns," says he.

Saket points out that his story is quite complex and layered, as it is not a simplistic take on infidelity but a very complex one. Because his characters were very dark, exploring the story and bringing that out the real was a challenge as well as fun,

says Saket.

How did he manage to tell his story in the 30-minute slot given to him? Saket shares, "Because the story is based on a small meeting between these characters, we tried to stay true to what their interaction would be, which won't last for more than two to three days. Hence it became somewhat easy for us."

Kunal Kapoor, known for his chiseled looks, is the man of the show. The actor found the script so beautiful that he immediately jumped on board the film. He says his preparation for his role was just reading the script over and over again.

Kunal shares, "The script was so beautifully written and my character was well fleshed out that it didn't need any external preparation. This is a character, I found very relatable. What is most interesting is that the man I play has a lot of potential when he was young, but failures leading him to lower self esteem, and taking up a secure job giving up on his Tech firm. This happens often with people even in real life. A few failures, and we look forward to do something more secure rather than taking risks and doing what we love and enjoy."

However, for Zoya, constant chatting is how she prepped for the role. The actress says, "This character for me is very different from what I usually play and that's why I was very interested in doing this. The woman I play is very sweet, naïve and silly but through the journey of the film, she discovers her inner strength and perseverance that she channels in the wrong things."

Kunal Kapoor known for his stint in films like *Bachna Ye Haseeno*, *Rang De Basanti*, is also an award winning Bollywood actor. Yes, you heard it right. The actor was seen playing an antagonist in Nagarjuna, Nani starrer *Devadas*, for which he was even nominated for Best Actor in a Negative Role award. Sadly that seemed like his first and last Telugu film as he was not seen in any of the Bollywood films afterwards.

When asked why he kept himself away from the Telugu cinema despite having a great debut, he blames it on the scripts that came his way. "I would love to do more Telugu cinema. There is nothing interesting coming my way except for a typical villain role, who tortures the hero and gets beaten up in the end. Given the fact that many wonderful films are coming up from south, I want to do more of them, but it has to be interesting and is not 'typical'. Not a usual villain who loses in the end. I don't want to do any of those," says Kunal who is also running a Tech company and plans to start another tech firm on AI.

Meanwhile, Kunal also turned producer and is writing a few scripts as well. "I am very occupied these days with a lot of things are happening. I'm trying to figure out how I can make my life easier, but my curiosity always gets the better of me. I am trying to get simpler but I don't think that will happen," he concludes.



Virat, Rahul static at 4th & 6th



PTI ■ DUBAI

India captain Virat Kohli and star batsman KL Rahul maintained their fourth and sixth place respectively among the batsmen while no Indian bowler featured in the top-10 in the ICC T20 rankings.

The top seven batsmen led by England's Dawid Malan maintained their rankings while South African keeper-batter Quinton de Kock is now ranked eighth while West Indies Evin Lewis has dropped a place to be ninth

in the list.

Among bowlers, Tabraiz Shamsi still holds the pole position followed by Wanindu Hasaranga and Rashid Khan.

India's top ranked bowler in the list is veteran pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar at 12th while injured off-spinner Washington Sundar is the other in the top-20 at 18th place. Yuzvendra Chahal is the only bowler who has shown improvement and is now 25th although he has been dropped from the Indian team for the T20 World Cup.

In the all-rounders' list, the only Indian among the top-20 is Hardik Pandya, who is just about managed to make the list with 98 points.

The Indians last played a T20 series in Sri Lanka and hence haven't played any games in the shortest format.

Bangladesh fast bowler Mustafizur Rahman has moved up two places to eighth after finishing with eight wickets in the series against South Africa while Nasum Ahmed (up 25 places to 15th) and Mehedi Hasan (up four places to 20th) have also made notable

progress.

However, Shakib Al Hasan has conceded the top spot for all-rounders to Afghanistan's Mohammad Nabi.

In the ODI rankings for batters, Jaskaran Malhotra of the United States, who struck sixes in an over from Papua New Guinea's Gaudi Toka in a World Cup Super League 2 match, has rocketed 169 places to 132nd.

In the bowlers' list, Nepal leg-spinner Sandeep Lamichhane is now in top-100 at 91st place.

Limited spectators allowed at IPL

New Delhi: Limited spectators will be allowed into the stadiums when the much-awaited Indian Premier League resumes in the UAE this weekend, the event's organisers announced on Wednesday.

The IPL, which was suspended midway in May due to COVID-19 cases in its bio bubble, will resume from Sunday with defending champions Mumbai Indians taking on Chennai Super Kings at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium. "This match will be a momentous occasion as IPL will welcome the fans back to the stadiums after a brief hiatus owing to COVID-19 situation," an IPL statement said.

"Matches will be played at Dubai, Sharjah and Abu Dhabi with limited seating available keeping in mind the COVID protocols and UAE government regulations," it added.

It will be the first time since 2019 when the IPL will be played in front of an audience.

Last year, the league was played behind closed doors in the UAE while the first half of the 2021 edition was also played inside a strict bio-bubble. Although the league organisers did not specify the exact number of fans who would be let in but sources said their presence would be 50 per cent of the stadium capacity.

"Fans can buy tickets starting September 16 for the remainder of the tournament on the official website www.Ipl20.Com. Tickets can also be purchased on PlatinumList.Net," the league organisers said.

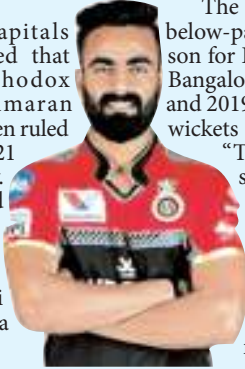


Delhi Capitals include net bowler Khejroliya in main squad

PTI ■ DUBAI

Delhi Capitals on Wednesday inducted left-arm seamer Kulwant Khejroliya in the main squad for the upcoming second half of this year's IPL after left-arm orthodox spinner Manimaran Siddharth was ruled out of the tournament due to quadriceps strain.

"Delhi Capitals today announced that left-arm orthodox bowler Manimaran Siddharth has been ruled out of the IPL 2021 due to an injury. The 23-year-old incurred a quadriceps strain during training in Dubai," Delhi Capitals said in a release.



Left-arm medium fast bowler Khejroliya, who is already part of the Delhi Capitals team's bio-bubble as a net bowler, was readily included in the main squad.

Khejroliya, who plays domestic cricket for the Delhi state side, has so far taken 17 wickets in 15 T20 matches at an average of 23.29.

The 29-year-old had a below-par IPL debut season for Royal Challengers Bangalore in the IPL 2018 and 2019 seasons, taking 3 wickets in 5 IPL matches.

"The DC support staff is currently overlooking Manimaran Siddharth's rehabilitation programme in Dubai," the release added.

Manika Batra not in India squad



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Star paddler Manika Batra was on Wednesday left out of the India squad for the Asian Championships beginning September 28 in Doha after she did not attend the mandatory national camp in Sonapat.

In the absence of the world number 56th player, 97th-ranked Sutirtha Mukherjee will lead the women's team. The other members are Aihika Mukherjee (ranked 131) and Archana Kamath (132).

Veteran Sharath Kamal (ranked 33) will spearhead the men's challenge in the compa-

ny of G Sathiyam (38), Harmeet Desai (72), Manav Thakkar (134) and Sanil Shetty (247).

Powerhouse China is not taking part in the event, raising medal hopes in the men's team event. Singles and doubles competitions will also be conducted. The Table Tennis Federation of India had made it clear that any player not attending the camp will not be considered for selection. The team was picked on Wednesday and was subsequently published on TTFI website. The federation had made attendance in camps compulsory following the

Will try and replicate 2017 Champions Trophy final: Hasan Ali

PTI ■ KARACHI

Pakistan seamer Hasan Ali is confident that his team can beat arch-rivals India in the opening match of the ICC T20 World Cup, replicating its convincing win in the 2017 Champions Trophy final at the Oval. Since then, Pakistan has played India twice in the 50-over format and got thrashed both times — at the 2018 Asia Cup in Dubai and the 2019 ODI World Cup in England.

Before every global event, there is always a lot of hullabaloo from the Pakistan corner but till date, they haven't beaten India in either 50-over or T20 World Cup games.

In fact, they have also failed to beat India in practice games.

"When we won the Champions Trophy (in 2017), it was a very good time for us and we will try to beat them again in the T20 World Cup.

We will give our best. Playing against India is always a pressure game because of the expectations of fans from both countries," Hasan told a virtual media conference on Wednesday.

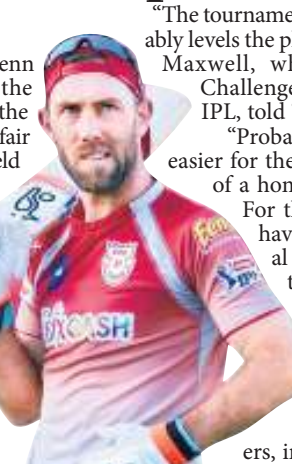
IPL in UAE will level playing field for T20 World Cup: Maxwell

PTI ■ DUBAI

Star Australian all-rounder Glenn Maxwell believes having the Indian Premier League in the UAE will level the playing field "a fair bit" in the T20 World Cup to be held at the same venue next month.

The IPL will resume on September 19 in the UAE after being suspended in May due to the second wave of COVID-19 in India, which led to multiple cases inside its bio-bubble.

It will be followed by the T20 World Cup from October 17.



"The tournament being in UAE probably levels the playing field a little bit," Maxwell, who plays for Royal Challengers Bangalore in the IPL, told 'icc-cricket.Com'.

"Probably makes it a little bit easier for there not to be as much of a home ground advantage. For the IPL to be there to have a lot of international players that are potentially going to be in that World Cup over there playing, I think it's probably levelled the playing field a fair bit."

Australia's top players, including Steve Smith,

David Warner, Aaron Finch and Pat Cummins, have not competed in the last few months and will be back in action at the IPL. Maxwell said the IPL stint will help the preparation of the Australian players.

"The fact we've got a lot of guys going over for the IPL as a preparation, get a few games in those conditions, it's going to do wonders for our batters," he said.

"Our bowlers are going to be up and firing by the time the tournament starts. I can assure you everyone is looking forward to hitting the ground running over there."

Australia will have to battle it out against defending champions West Indies, world number one England and South Africa in a tough group in the Super 12 stage.

Juventus beats Malmö 3-0 for 1st win since Ronaldo's exit

AP ■ MALMO (SWEDEN)

Juventus claimed its first win of the post-Cristiano Ronaldo era by beating Malmö 3-0 in the Champions League after a flurry of first-half goals. Alex Sandro's 23rd-minute opener was followed by goals in the space of 60 seconds by Paulo Dybala — from the penalty spot — and Alvaro Morata on the stroke of half-time in the south of Sweden on Tuesday.

Juventus has failed to win any of its three games in Serie A this season, the last two being losses that came after the departure of Ronaldo to Manchester United.

A trip to the Swedish champions offered some respite from its domestic problems for Massimiliano Allegri's team, which can take some momentum into a big match in the Italian league against AC Milan on Sunday. "We came here after some bad results, but we knew that this is another competition and we knew what to do," Dybala said.

"We did it, playing with serenity." Sandro's goal — a stooping header from a right-wing cross from Juan Cuadrado that was flicked on by Rodrigo Bentancur — came just as Malmö was starting to apply some pressure on Juventus. After that, the visitors dominated.

Bayern beats Barcelona 3-0 for 1st loss of post-Messi era

AP ■ BARCELONA

Bayern Munich showed Barcelona exactly how dreary life will be without Lionel Messi when it dealt the Spanish team its first loss since the exit of the star forward.

Thomas Müller scored a goal and Robert Lewandowski added two more to help Bayern ease to a 3-0 victory at Camp Nou in their Champions League opener on Tuesday.

Müller's 34th-minute strike took his career tally to seven goals against Barcelona, including the two he netted in the 8-2 shellacking Bayern dealt Barcelona the last time they met in August 2020.

Without Messi to rely on as it had for years, Barcelona was running scared from the start as it focused on protecting itself from another embarrassing



ing defeat. The final score hid the total dominance of the Bundesliga powerhouse. Julian Nagelsmann's team turned the once great attacking juggernaut of Barcelona into a jittery bunch hunkered down in their own area.

Lewandowski capitalized on Bayern's complete control

with goals in the 56th and 85th, both times putting in rebounds from shots that came off the post to the striker.

"We gave little away at the back," Müller said.

"Going forward, we could have scored one or two more. It's a lot of fun playing here, the boys enjoyed it."

Performance in first match will set tone for DC this IPL, says Kaif

PTI ■ DUBAI

Assistant coach Mohammad Kaif reckons the first match in the second half of the Indian Premier League will set the tone for the rest of the tournament for table toppers Delhi Capitals. The second leg of the T20 league, which was suspended in May due to the increasing COVID-19 cases in India and multiple infections in the IPL bio-bubble, is scheduled to resume in the UAE from September 19.

The Capitals are currently perched on top of the points table with 12 points from eight matches.

"There has been a big break after the first half of the IPL, but we are fortunate that most of the players have been playing international cricket regularly," Kaif was quoted as saying in a media release.

"We have a well-balanced side as there are players with international cricket experience and domestic players, who have been putting in good performances. The first match is going to be crucial for us."

"Our performance in the first match will set the momentum for us," he said.

Players picking up bits of information on UAE conditions in IPL will help SA at T20 WC: Boucher

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Head coach Mark Boucher hopes South Africa's T20 World Cup bound players can pick up "bits of information" about the UAE conditions during the Indian Premier League which he feels will stand the team in good stead during the marquee ICC event.

The 44-year-old emphasised that the players need to manage themselves during the league so that they can peak at the right time as a unit for South Africa.



"We've spoken to the guys going to the IPL. They need to stay quite disciplined and realise we want to peak at the right time as a unit," Boucher was quoted as saying by 'ESPNCricinfo'.

"They'll be picking up bits of information about playing in those conditions that will really get them ready for a big tournament and if they manage themselves well and get some good time in the nets and get used to facilities it will stand us in good stead."

The IPL, which was suspended midway in May due to multiple cases of COVID-19 in its bio bubble, is scheduled to be held in the UAE from September 19 to October 15.

The T20 World Cup is slated to begin on October 17 in Oman and UAE.

Have deepest concerns on 'place of boxing' in Olympics: IOC



PTI ■ LAUSANNE

The International Olympic Committee on Wednesday "restated its deepest concerns" on boxing's place in the 2024 Paris Olympics, citing "unresolved" issues with the International Boxing Association's governance structure, financial situation and the scoring system even as the AIBA promised to "exceed" the laid down criteria.

In a letter addressed to AIBA President Umar Kremlev, IOC Director General Christophe De Kepper said the Olympic body's Executive Board has asked him and its

Chief Ethics and Compliance Officer to "follow up" on the situation. The AIBA responded by saying that it is doing everything that that IOC expects from it.

"AIBA has been working on comprehensive reform for some time now and is grateful for the IOC's public acknowledgment that a step forward has certainly been taken in terms of good governance..." the AIBA stated in an e-mail to PTI, responding to the IOC letter. In the four-page communication, IOC expressed dissatisfaction with the work done by the AIBA to address concerns related to its governance,

finances and the refereeing and judging system that has been under intense scrutiny since the 2016 Rio Olympics.

"On the basis of the above, the IOC Executive Board restated its deepest concerns and reiterated its previous position regarding the place of boxing in the programme of the Olympic Games Paris 2024 and future editions of the Olympic Games," the letter stated.

The AIBA said it would do more than what has been mandated to regain the IOC's confidence. "Wide-ranging reforms are already underway in terms of financial integrity, good governance and sporting integrity, including all the areas mentioned by the IOC and more," the AIBA said.

"Independent experts are involved in each of these sectors. AIBA is confident these reforms will see AIBA meet and even exceed the criteria laid down by the IOC for reinstatement." The IOC said while it acknowledges that AIBA has taken "a step forward in the direction of better governance" but several concerns remain unaddressed.

Naveen's next with debutant director

Young Sensation Naveen Polishetty, who's on sky-high with the success of *Jathi Rathnalu*, finally gave his nod for his next project.

The film, said to give the best dose of fun and entertainment, will be helmed by debutante director Kalyan Shankar, with whom the actor earlier worked with, during *Jathi Rathnalu*.

in the most entertaining way, assured Suryadevara Naga Vamsi, of Sithara Entertainments.

The film is being co-produced by Sai Soujanya, wife of ace director Trivikram Srinivas under their banner Fortune Four Cinemas.

Further details about the cast and crew will be announced.



LISTENING TO UNHEARD VOICES

SHIREYA SRIKONDA

Bringing in something new to the scene, *Unheard* is a web series that is based on the Indian freedom struggle in a format you definitely have not seen before in Telugu! Starring Srinivas, Priyadarshi, Ajay, Chandni Chowdhary, and Baladitya, the series was written and directed by Aditya KV and produced by Radhika Lavu of Ellanar films. The cast and makers of the series sit down for an interview with *The Pioneer*, and talk about how the story came to life. Aditya KV says that though he penned down the story for *Unheard* in 12 days, the preparation leading up to it took almost a decade!

"The preparation for this series started when I was in my final year of degree college. I've always had an inclination towards history, but the freedom struggle is not the most riveting topic for an 18-year-old. Still, I chose to research Gandhi for my project because all my ideas for my management course were rejected for not being 'moral' enough. I fell in love with the topic. Coupled with my pre-existing romance with the city of Hyderabad, it was an easy marriage of ideas. There's a lot of stories that need to be explored from Hyderabad."

The show is a conversational drama, and therefore is heavily dependent on powerful dialogues. The director says that while his philosophies were put on paper by him in English, they had brought in help to translate them into the Telugu and Urdu of that time.

Actor Priyadarshi Pulikonda recalls how the first reading of the script made him feel, says, "When I saw the project for the first time, I read it in English. The dialogues are word-heavy, but when you delve deep into the character, you realise there's much more than just the words. It wasn't too hard, because we focused a lot not only on the characters and dialogues,

but also on the entire time period in which the story is set. When you get into the character from that perspective, you can really understand roles like Badri, Mallesha, Anwar or Padma."

Chandni Chowdhary had a different experience. The actress of *Colour Photo* and *Bombhaat* fame exclaimed, "It was difficult for me. The first reading we had made me go 'what? My tongue can't twist this way! So I really had to do my homework. We had limited time, and I couldn't spend too much time on set trying to learn my lines. When shooting, it's very obvious that an actor hasn't perfectly learnt their lines if they're trying to remember them while performing. So it had to come naturally. I spent a lot of time making sure that I got the diction and dialogues right. I could've woken up from sleep and gotten the dialogues right!"

Srinivas Avasara, the actor fresh off the *Nootokka Jilala Andagadu* hype, says that since he previously only spoke Telugu on-screen, remembering lines was never an issue.

"Listening to the script for the first time, it was definitely an unusual story. It was the quickest yes I ever said in my life! That's because I knew I was going to be part of something unique. One episode of this series is completely in Urdu. Urdu of 1906, even. I started to appreciate non-Telugu actors more after that."

Producer Radhika Lavu, speaking on how she feels bringing in experimental formats into the industry, says, "Conversational pieces have not come into the market yet, so I had my doubts. But when I first heard the story I immediately said yes and decided that it should be worked upon. It was a journey that started last year."

Srinivas Avasara concluded the conversation saying, "Every actor hopes to experiment and experience something new with every role they take up, and I hope going forward, I get more opportunities to do something different from what I've done before."

Regina's Nene Naa trailer is to look out for

The trailer of actress Regina Cassandra's *Nene Naa*, in which the actress will be playing a double role, has been garnering many eyeballs.

The trailer of the film was unveiled by Nidhi Agerwal, Makkal Selvan Vijay Sethupathy, and star director Lingusamy.

Directed by Caarthick Raju, the trailer shows a horrific incident that took place 100 years ago, and is now repeating itself. While Regina is shown as a queen 100 years ago, she is now an archeologist and has come to resolve a mysterious case.

Simultaneously made in Telugu and Tamil, major portions of the bilingual have been shot in and around the locales of Courtallam, in Tamil Nadu. Sam CS is composing music and Gokul Benoy is handling cinematography. Sabu is the editor and Super Subbarayan has been roped in to be the stunt master.

Apart from Regina Cassandra, the others in the cast include Vennela Kishore, Akshara Gowda, Tagapothu Ramesh, Jaya Prakash, and few more prominent artists.

The film is currently in its post-production phase and the release date will be announced soon.



Team F3 back in action



demic and Varun Tej wanted to complete the shoot of his boxing drama *Ghani*. Venky too wanted to take a refreshing break. Hence, the shoot of *F3* is all set to commence from the first week of October. Sources tell us that the entire second half of *F3* will be shot in a single schedule. The makers initially wanted to shoot the pending portions in Mysore but the situation has not been favourable. The makers also had plans to erect a special house set for the film. But the plans, we hear, have now been changed. The rest of *F3* will be shot in the prestigious Taj Falaknuma Palace in Hyderabad. A long schedule has been planned and most of the pending shoot will be wrapped up in Falaknuma Palace.

Devi Sri Prasad is the music director for the film and Dil Raju's Sri Venkateswara Creations will be bankrolling the film.

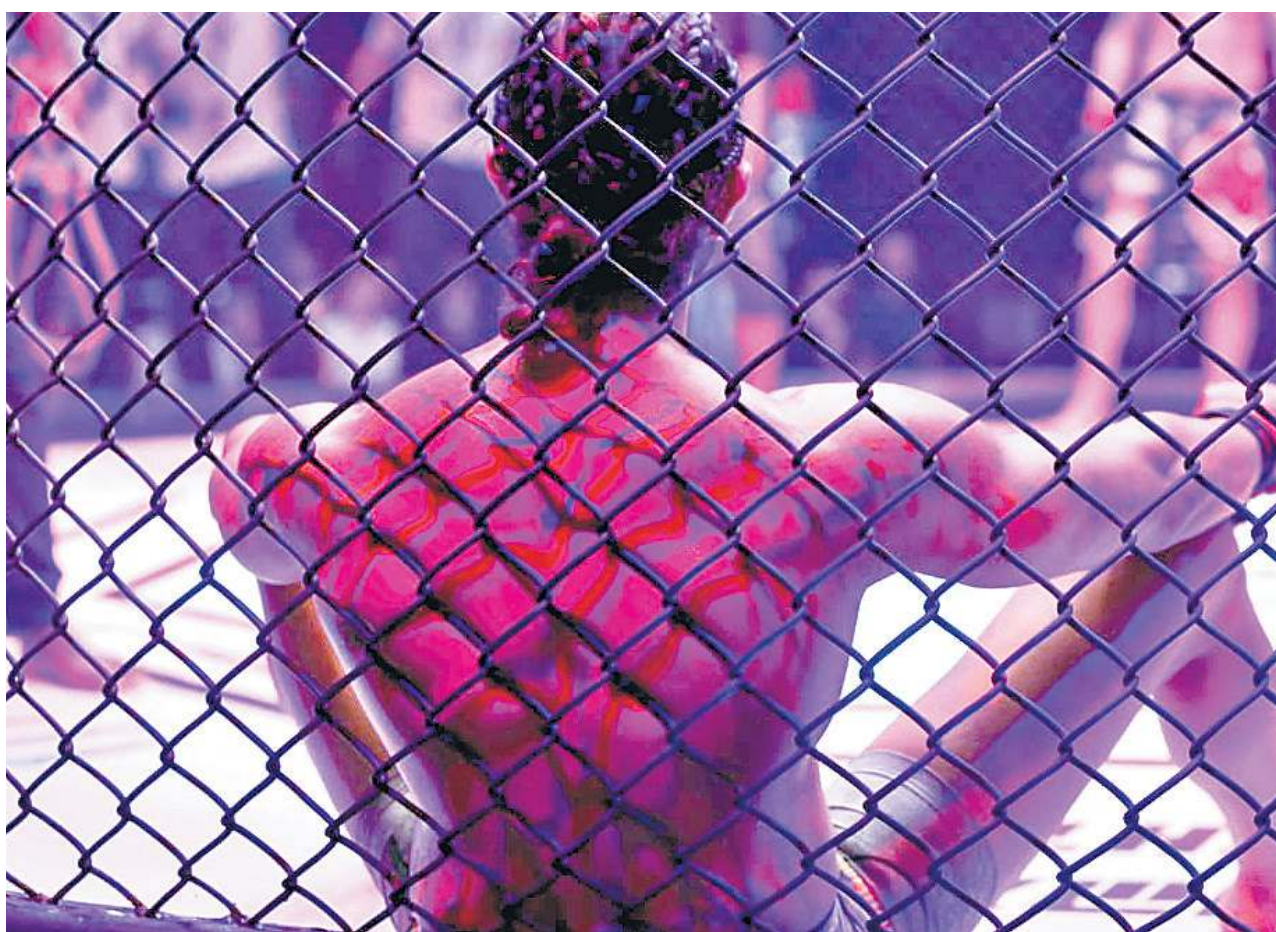
The film is aimed for a release during Sankranti 2022. Anil Ravipudi revealed that *F3* will have double entertainment throughout the film.

Talented writer and director Anil Ravipudi is all set with the sequel of

F2 titled *F3*. All the lead actors Venkatesh, Varun Tej, Tamannaah, and Mehreen will reprise

their roles from the original. The shoot of the film had been kept on hold due to the second wave of the pan-

BLOOD, SWEAT, AND VIOLENCE



Actor Vijay Deverakonda is back in the ring. The actor is shooting for his next big film *Liger* directed by Puri Jagannadh. The film which has a sports background, required Deverakonda to undergo rigorous training to make scenes look more natural. On Wednesday, the film's team released a picture of the actor in the boxing ring. "Back to the ring.. With the motto. BLOOD SWEAT VIOLENCE #LIGER #Salaacrossbreed," tweeted the team.