

ANALYSIS 7
USING SCIENCE FOR
A SELF-RELIANT INDIA**MONEY 8**
HOUSING DEMAND TO RISE ON SBI'S
DECISION TO OFFER LOAN AT 6.7 PC**SPORTS 11**
NZ PUT OFF PAK TOUR OVER
SECURITY

VIJAYAWADA, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3



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SAMANTHA SAYS
YES TO A NEW
PROJECT?

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**FEARS OVER SHARP RISE IN FUEL
PRICES AS GLOBAL OIL RATES SURGE**

A surge in international oil prices may translate into an increase in the retail selling price of petrol and diesel in India as oil companies face extreme margin squeeze, sources said. Petrol and diesel prices have remained unchanged for 12 days but now the international rate surge is exerting pressure. Current prices of petrol and diesel in the international market are higher by around USD 4-6 per barrel as compared to average prices during August. However, no increase in retail prices has been affected by oil companies so far, sources said.

**I GET RS 4 LAKH ROYALTY PER MONTH
FROM YOUTUBE FOR VIDEOS: GADKARI**

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Friday said he gets Rs 4 lakh every month as royalty from YouTube, as viewership of his lecture videos posted on the platform has increased during the pandemic period. Gadkari said his ministry has started rating road contractors and consultants. "I became a chef and started cooking at home and giving lectures through video conference during Covid. I delivered more than 950 lectures online, including lectures to foreign universities students, which were uploaded on YouTube, which now pays me Rs 4 lakh per month as royalty," he said.

**PADMANABHASWAMY TEMPLE ADMIN
SAYS SHRINE UNDER FINANCIAL STRESS**

Shree Padmanabhaswamy temple in Kerala is in great financial stress and the offerings are not sufficient to meet the expenses, its Administrative Committee told the Supreme Court on Friday while seeking an audit of the temple-related Trust run by the Travancore royal family. All temples in Kerala are closed and while this temple's monthly expenses are Rs 1.25 crore, "we are able to hardly get 60-70 lakh rupees. Therefore, we have sought certain directions", senior advocate R Basant, appearing for the Committee, told a bench headed by Justice UU Lalit.

**INDIA ADMINISTERS OVER TWO CRORE
VACCINE DOSES ON MODI'S BIRTHDAY**

India set a record on Friday by administering over two crore Covid-19 vaccine doses, in a major push to the inoculation drive on the occasion of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's birthday. The cumulative doses administered in the country reached 2,03,68,343 at 5.27 pm, according to data on the Co-WIN portal. The total number of doses administered in the country has crossed 78.72 crore. "A gift to the PM on behalf of health workers and people of the country. India has administered 2 crore vaccine doses in a day," said the Union Health Minister.

Council decides not to bring fuel under GST ambit 'for now'

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Much to the dismay of commuters but major relief to States like Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and others, the 45th GST Council meeting chaired by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in Lucknow on Friday resolved to continue the status quo and not bring petrol and diesel under the ambit of Goods and Services Tax.

The proposal to consider bringing petrol and diesel under the GST was added in the agenda following the direction of Kerala High Court to consider the request of a petitioner to bring petroleum products under the GST to give relief to consumers. However, all the States said that they did not favour the proposal.

The States collect VAT on petrol and diesel in addition to the excise duty levied by the Centre. This imposes a considerable burden on consumers every time the prices of petrol and diesel are revised.

However all the States without exception said the situation was not right for even considering the proposal as VAT on petrol and diesel bring considerable revenue to the States at a time when the economies



were hit adversely under the impact of Covid-19.

The all-powerful GST Council however took other key decisions, including charging food delivery platforms such as Swiggy and Zomato a tax even as it extended concessional tax rates on certain Covid-19 drugs by three months till December 31.

The Council, which comprises the Union Finance Minister and her state counterparts, decided to continue keeping petrol and diesel out of the GST purview as subsuming the current excise duty and VAT into one national rate would impact revenues.

Briefing reporters on the decisions taken by the Council, Union

AP wants compensation to States beyond 2022

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

AP has opposed bringing petrol and diesel under the GST ambit.

Making the stand of the State government known at the 45th GST Council meeting held at Lucknow on Friday, AP Finance Minister Buggana Rajendranath said: "With regard to subsuming petrol and diesel in GST as per the observations of the Kerala High Court, that the two products are in the sole domain of the State and they should not be subsumed in GST."

During the course of the

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said GST has been exempted on muscular atrophy drugs like Zolgensma and Vileptso, which cost crores of rupees. It extended the period of conces-

meeting, Rajendranath raised several other issues also which impact the revenues of Andhra Pradesh, the taxation powers of the State under federal structure enshrined in the Constitution and also the functioning of trade and industry in the State.

With regard to extension of providing GST compensation beyond 2022, Rajendranath stated that the revenues of the State under GST do not match the revenues under the earlier VAT regime.

sional GST rates on certain Covid-related drugs till December 31 but decided not to give the same benefit to medical equipment.

State to seek Centre's support to build infra in tribal areas

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The State government has decided to seek the Centre's contribution towards building necessary infrastructure facilities in tribal areas across the State.

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Friday held a high-level meeting with officials of the Home and Tribal Welfare Departments regarding the upcoming meeting on Left-Wing Extremism to be organised by the Ministry of Home Affairs on September 26.

It was decided to seek Centre's help in building necessary infrastructure facilities in tribal areas across the State, which includes construction of roads, transforming schools and hospitals under Nadu-Nedu initiative, and comprehensive Internet and mobile-telecom facility.

Jagan's pep talk to Ministers fuels rumours of snap Assembly polls

SNV SUDHIR
■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy reportedly telling his Cabinet colleagues on Thursday to get into poll mode even before the government completes half of its term has led to intense speculations that the YSRCP supremo is contemplating advancing the Assembly polls in the State.

Analysts believe that a better performance in the Assembly polls may help the YSRCP win a majority of the Lok Sabha seats in the State, elections for which will be held later.

A similar manoeuvre of separating the Assembly elections from the Lok Sabha polls helped TRS supremo K Chandrasekhara Rao storm to a massive electoral victory in 2018. Instead of going for polls in 2019 after completing his full five year term, KCR dissolved the Telangana



Assembly in September 2018 and went for polls in December. It is widely believed that KCR did this to offset any anti-incumbency against his government and also to checkmate the Congress and especially the BJP that was riding high on the 'Modi factor'.

After Thursday's Cabinet meeting, Jagan is believed to have asked his Ministers to get into poll mode and hinted that teams belonging to poll strategist Prashant Kishor's

IPAC will start working on the ground for the YSRCP. He also asked them to cooperate and coordinate with these teams.

Though Prashant Kishor is expected to join Congress, he is expected to continue as mentor for IPAC. Headed by Kishor, IPAC played its role in catapulting YSRCP to power in 2019 polls with an unprecedented majority.

IPAC's teams will start assessing the situation on the ground and provide feedback to Jagan's personal team. Based on the feedback, Jagan can make any course correction if needed in the areas that need attention to improve the prospects of YSRCP and also retain power.

Political observers are baffled and are pointing out such feedback can be obtained or generally is obtained a year before the polls but not two-and-a-half years before.

GRMB, KRMB subpanels get going on gazette implementation

ML MELLY MAITREYI
■ HYDERABAD

Setting in motion the process for implementation of the gazette issued by the Centre bringing all the projects of Krishna and Godavari basins under the jurisdiction of the respective boards, the Subcommittees of both the Boards held separate meetings with officials of the Telugu States at Jal Soudha here on Friday.

The Godavari River Management Board Subcommittee directed the Telugu States to submit details of the staff required for maintenance of projects within a week to 10 days.

Further, the Subcommittee made it clear that the States should get approvals within six months for the projects taken up without required approvals in the Godavari Basin.

The GRMB Subcommittee held its meeting with Irrigation Department officials of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh here on Friday. GRMB members too participated in the meeting.

As the gazette notification will come into force from October 14, it requested both the States to



extend cooperation for its implementation.

The Krishna River Management Board Subcommittee, which also met later at Jal Soudha here on Friday with RK Pillai as the convener, discussed the finalisation of an action plan for the implementation of the gazette.

The meeting was attended by KRMB members, Inter-State Water Resources Chief Engineers and GENCO officials of AP and Telangana.

The KRMB Subcommittee sought details of maintenance of projects in both the States within 10 days. It also sought details of contracts worth more than Rs 1

- Seek details of projects, staff within 10 days
- Gives six months' time to get approvals for unapproved Godavari basin projects
- KRMB sub-committee to make field visits if required

crore and directed the States to submit the details to the Board.

Once all the provisions listed in the notification are discussed and agreed upon, the issue of CRPF security would be taken up.

AP officials said that Banakacherla Head Regulator would not come under the jurisdiction of the Board but Telangana did not agree, insisting that it also should be brought under the ambit of the Board.

Pillai, who heard the views of officials from both the States, said that he would undertake a field visit if required.

No devotees at this year's Brahmotsavams,

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The Navaratri Brahmotsavams of Lord Venkateswara hill temple, scheduled to begin on October 7 at Tirumala, will be conducted without the participation of devotees, due to the anticipated third wave of Covid-19, said a top functionary of the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) that governs the hill temple.

TTD chairman YV Subba Reddy on Friday said that the decision to conduct the Brahmotsavams without devotees has been taken in the wake of the Centre once again issuing guidelines in view of a possible Covid third wave.

He said that darshan will continue with a limited number of slots every day and steps are being taken to issue online tokens in about a week's time.

AP, TS likely to get new Chief Justices

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Andhra Pradesh and Telangana States are likely to get new Chief Justices.

The Supreme Court Collegium on Friday recommended eight names to the Centre for appointment as Chief Justices of different High Courts across the country, sources said.

They said besides Allahabad, the High Courts of Calcutta, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Telangana, Meghalaya, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh will get new Chief Justices.

The Collegium has recommended transfer of Chief Justice of Andhra Pradesh High Court Justice Arup Kumar Goswami to the Chhattisgarh High Court, Chief Justice of Madhya Pradesh High Court Justice Mohd Rafiq to the Himachal Pradesh High Court.

They said names of Justices Prakash Srivastava, Prashant



Kumar Mishra and Ritu Raj Awasthi have been recommended for appointment as Chief Justices of the High Courts of Calcutta, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.

Names of Justices Satish Chandra Sharma, Ranjit V More, Aravind Kumar and RV Malimath have been recommended for appointment as Chief Justices of High Courts of Telangana, Meghalaya, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, the sources said.

Counting of parishad votes on September 19

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The counting of votes cast for the ZPTCs and MPTCs will be done on Sunday, September 19, said Chief Secretary Aditya Nath Das here on Friday.

At a virtual meeting, Das directed District Collectors and SPs to make all the necessary arrangements for the smooth counting of votes of the ZPTC and MPTC across the state.

On the occasion, the Chief Secretary said that staff at counting centres would ensure strict compliance of Covid rules. Das said that all counting staff and counting agents would be fully vaccinated.

The SPs were directed to impose Section 144 in the radius of 100 meters of the counting centres on the day of counting and ensure that appropriate measures are in place to avoid crowding.

Das told the district Collectors and SPs to chalk out a plan to ensure smooth counting. Collectors were

**SEC releases
detailed guidelines
for vote counting
process**

directed to appoint a district level officer in-charge to oversee the arrangements at each counting centre and hand over full responsibilities to the Joint Collectors in the counting process.

Gopala Krishna Dwivedi, Principal Secretary, Panchayati Raj and Rural Development Department, said that they would be available along with the State Election Commission officials to clarify any doubts pertaining to the counting of ZPTC and MPTC votes.

TDP, YSRCP activists clash at Naidu's home

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

High tension prevailed at the residence of Leader of the Opposition N Chandrababu Naidu at Undavalli on Friday after TDP and YSRCP activists attacked each other with sticks, pelted stones and hurled abuses.

It all began with YSRCP MLA Jogi Ramesh reaching Naidu's residence along with YSRCP activists, demanding an apology for the derogatory remarks made by senior TDP leader Ch Ayyanna Patrudu against Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy.

Getting to know about this, TDP activists, led by MLC Buddha Venkanna rushed there and attacked the YSRCP activists, who till that time were protesting in a peaceful manner.

The activists of both the parties attacked each other with sticks, hurled stones, and grabbed clothes in the scuffle that ensued. TDP activists also pelted stones at Jogi Ramesh's car, causing damage to it. They also pelted stones at the YSRCP activists who had come



An angry party activists, suspected to be a sympathiser of the Telugu Desam Party, uses a stone to smash the windscreen of the car belonging to YSRCP Jogi Ramesh, in front of the residence of TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu on Friday.

along with him.

Police personnel managed to bring the situation under control, using their canes to disperse the mob. However, Jogi Ramesh squatted on the road along with his followers and more police personnel were called in to diffuse the situation.

Reacting to the incident, YSRCP leaders of all hues strongly condemned what they said was an attack of Jogi Ramesh "by TDP leaders and goondas".

YSRCP leaders lodged complaints with DGP Gautham D Sawang against Naidu and TDP leader Ch Ayyanna Patrudu and

demanding their arrest.

Talking to the media at the spot, Jogi Ramesh spewed venom at Naidu, saying that he was the one provoking TDP leaders. "It was Naidu who instigated TDP workers to pelt stones at me deliberately," Jogi Ramesh said, challenging the TDP supremo to emerge from his home. The YSRCP MLA also warned the former chief minister of dire consequences if he did not apologise.

YSRCP Anakapalli MLA Gudivada Amarnath alleged that the TDP activists attacked Jogi Ramesh. "Why will there be attacks if there is a peaceful protest" he asked. He said that the TDP leaders could not tolerate the High Court verdict on Parishad election process, which allowed counting of votes for the MPTC and ZPTC elections.

Lella Appireddy said that Naidu was the main reason behind Ayyanna Patrudu making such derisive statements against the Chief Minister.

1,393 fresh
Covid cases,
8 deaths in AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh recorded 1,393 fresh cases of Coronavirus, taking the total to 20,36,179 on Friday.

According to the latest bulletin, 1,296 persons got cured of the infection, pushing the recoveries up to 20,07,330. In the 24 hours ending 9 am today, eight persons succumbed to Covid-19, taking the death toll to 14,052.

The number of active cases in the state now stood at 14,797, the bulletin added.

Chittoor district reported the highest 272, East Godavari 206, SPS Nellore 201, Krishna 162, Guntur 132, West Godavari 129 and Prakasam 120 fresh cases in 24 hours. Kadapa registered 60, Visakhapatnam 51, Srikakulam 28, Anantapur 18, Vizianagaram 9 and Kurnool 5.

Chittoor reported three more Covid-19 deaths, Krishna and Prakasam two each and East Godavari one in a day. Nine districts did not report any fresh fatality in 24 hours.

SEC releases guidelines for vote counting process

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

State Election Commissioner (SEC) Nilam Sawhney on Friday issued a detailed notification for the counting of votes cast for the ZPTC and MPTC on September 19, a day after the AP High Court gave the green signal to continue with the election process.

The SEC had given wide instructions about the norms and regulations to be followed during the counting of votes by officials and staff.

The SEC directed the Collectors, who are also the District Election Authority, to appoint one of the Joint Collectors as the Nodal Officer to ensure adherence to the Covid-19 norms with the assistance of the District Medical & Health Officer.

The counting centres shall be disinfected before, during and after the counting of votes.

Also, no candidate or his or her counting agents shall be allowed inside the counting



hall without undergoing Rapid Antigen Test or RT-PCR Test or without being fully vaccinated.

No one having any symptoms of Covid-19 shall be allowed to enter the counting hall. Thermal scanning of all persons shall be carried out and masks, sanitiser, face-shields and gloves shall be provided to every counting official and security personnel in addition to other prescribed items.

On the other hand, social

distancing shall be maintained inside the counting hall, seating arrangement of counting personnel / counting agents, etc. PPE Kits shall be maintained in the counting hall for needy staff involved in mixing of ballot papers.

The counting hall should be sufficiently big to maintain social distancing and should have proper ventilation, windows, exhaust fan, etc., as per available protocols of NDMA/SDMA. Appointment of additional Assistant

Returning Officers may be considered in case of increased counting halls for Covid-19 safety precautions. For counting of Postal Ballots, an additional number of AROs may be appointed.

The SEC instructed that not more than two persons shall be allowed to accompany the winning candidate to receive the certificate of election from the Returning Officer.

No public gathering outside the counting venue shall be allowed during the process of counting.

No victory processions shall be allowed after counting and declaration of results. Any person violating the instructions on Covid-19 measures will be liable to be proceeded against as per the provisions of Sections 51 to 60 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, besides legal action under Section 188 of the IPC, 1860 and other legal provisions as applicable of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Counting of...

Continued from Page 1

He said a 24/7 control room was being set up at the state Panchayat Raj Commissioner's office.

Dwivedi directed the Collectors to make strict arrangements and make appropriate measures to ensure smooth conduct of the counting.

Ravi Shankar, Additional DGP said that Section 144 will be imposed at all counting centres and tighter security measures would be taken to maintain peace. He also explained that arrangements are being made for continuous CCTV surveillance monitoring at all the counting centres.

Girija Shankar, Panchayati Raj Commissioner directed the collectors to set up control rooms at each counting centre and district centre, following guidelines of counting.

He said arrangements should be made for uninterrupted power supply at the counting centres and generators should be kept handy. The process of bringing the ballot boxes from the strongroom should be covered by CCTV.

Jagan's pep talk to Ministers fuels...

Continued from Page 1

They point out that though Jagan was successful in consolidating his poll position in the last two years with his welfare agenda and the back-to-back victory in both rural and urban local bodies, he is facing the heat of funds crunch due to several reasons, including the Covid-induced economic crisis across the globe.

With dwindling revenues in the last one-and-a-half years, mounting debt, unable to borrow from the open market due to several reasons including fiscal norms, they point out that it is highly difficult to fund and sustain the ambitious welfare agenda and schemes to the poor that form the major chunk of the State's vote bank.

"To tide over the crisis of funds crunch, if Jagan starts snapping or downsizing the welfare schemes it will altogether turn the fortunes of the party.

It will take at least another

two to three years for the entire world, not just Andhra Pradesh, to overcome the prevailing Covid crisis and for the economy to revive. Barring welfare, there has been no visible development taking place in the state.

In this scenario Jagan might be contemplating to go for snap polls to ride over the feel good factor of implementing welfare schemes even before it becomes difficult for him to fund the schemes.

However, it's too early to predict or comment on such a scenario," a senior political analyst who wished not to be named due to the sensitivity of the issue told The Pioneer.

Jagan is believed to have told his Ministers that some of them would be dropped from the Cabinet and will be given party responsibilities.

He asked them to ensure better coordination between MLAs, party and government, and IPAC teams that will help YSRCP retain power.

AP wants compensation to...

Continued from Page 1

While the State recorded an average annual growth of 14 percent to 15 percent for three years prior to introduction of GST in 2017, the average growth of GST in the last four years - after introduction of GST - was around 10 percent, necessitating provision of compensation in every year.

Added to this, the two pandemic years - 2020-21 and 2021-22 - saw tax revenues, including GST, of the State plummeting, seriously affecting the developmental and welfare activities in the State.

"Though it is predicted that the revenues of the state will rebound next year, such a rebound may not be to the extent of 14 percent to 15 percent growth.

Therefore, AP requires additional funds in the form of compensation from the Government of India," the Finance Minister added.

Rajendranath stressed the need to extend the compensation beyond 2025 for a few more years assuring 14 percent growth every year.

The other issue raised by him was the rate of tax on napa slabs.

He stated that as per the existing notifications and the proposals of the Fitment Committee constituted by the GST Council placed on the table, rate of tax applicable to polished napa slabs was 18 percent. Rajendranath, while pointing out that similar low end stones produced in other States such as kota (kota stone) of Rajasthan, the rate of tax applicable to polished stones was only 5 percent except those with mirror finish.

Rajendranath while pointing out that napa slabs are not amenable to mirror finish, the entry lacks clarity that 18 percent tax is applicable only to polished napa slabs with mirror finish.

He requested the Council to consider the case of napa slabs favourably and reduce the tax on polished napa slabs to 5 percent by way of clarification.

The other goods and services on which he requested the Council to reduce the rate of tax were solar power plants and on job work in liquor manufacturing activity. Rajendranath requested reduction of the tax rate to 5 percent on these. He also requested a study whether to treat spice water on par with aerated drinks which attract 28 percent GST + 12 percent compensation cess.

Rajendranath also met the Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and submitted representations on all the issues and also requested to release the compensation due to Andhra Pradesh for the period till August, 2021 expeditiously as the State is hard pressed for revenues to carry on its welfare measures.

Maoist activities decreased in AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Director General of Police Gautam D Sawang on Friday described the activities of the Maoists in the State, and said that their activities have come down significantly, where the strength of the armed Maoists was limited to 50.

Currently, the Maoist activity can be seen only in Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam, East Godavari and West

Godavari districts. He said that many welfare schemes and programmes which are being carried out by the government are having a significant impact on the lives of the tribals, including the distribution of RoFR deeds.

The DGP said that the tribal youth were not showing any interest in recruitment attempts by Maoists as the State government was already reaching them through various initiatives.

ED quizzes actor Tanish on money laundering

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Actor Tanish appeared before sleuths of the Enforcement Directorate here on Friday in connection with the inquiry into drugs-cum-money laundering case. He was questioned by the officials on his bank transactions. The officials enquired about his relations with Calvin and other drug peddlers.

Tanish was questioned by the Excise Department officials in 2017 in the Tollywood drugs case. The Enforcement Directorate officials have summoned him now in the context of suspected money laundering in the procurement of drugs.

The officials grilled him on the transactions with drug peddler Calvin and others. They questioned him about the parties at F Club, where drugs were distributed.

Apart from figuring in the Tollywood drugs case, recently the actor's name cropped up with regard to a party host-



ed in Karnataka, where drugs were distributed. He was questioned by the Karnataka Police in March 2021.

After being questioned by ED on Friday, Tanish said: "I have cooperated with the Enforcement Directorate officials and I am ready to come, whenever they want again".

The ED's inquiry has come to a head. Only actor Tarun's examination is left now and that is scheduled for 22nd September.

Until now, the ED sleuths have questioned Puri Jagannath, Charmi Kaur, Ravi Teja, Nanduru, Rana, Rakul Preet Singh, Navdeep, F Club Manager and Tanish.

Continued from Page 1

The State government has been improving schools and hostels in 36 scheduled mandals under Nadu-Nedu along with renovating state-run hospitals in those regions. In this regard, the Chief Minister asked the officials to seek adequate support for these programmes from the Centre, by preparing an action plan.

Further, the Chief Minister asked the telecom officials to do mapping of the towers being set up in the tribal areas. The officials informed

that they are providing telecom facilities to 900 villages through nearly 400 towers. The Chief Minister also instructed the authorities to design a policy to provide Internet and mobile-telecom facilities to every single tribal village.

He said that steps should be taken to have a post office wherever there are village secretariats and also stressed on recognising village secretariats as Aadhaar centres as a majority of the tribals lack Aadhaar cards.

He further said that steps should be taken to start the

Tribal University soon.

The Chief Minister stated that the government had given RoFR pattas to tribal farmers like never before, besides providing Rythu Bharosa every year along with other welfare schemes like Aasara, Cheyutha, Amma Vodi, Vidya Deevana, Vasati Deevana for the uplift of tribals. The Chief Minister said that 31,155 acres of DKT deeds were given to 19,919 tribals and a large number were recruited in village secretariats and as volunteers by providing reservations.

TDP, YSRCP activists

Continued from Page 1

He alleged that the TDP was looking to create conflict in the name of castes and religion. "TDP activists attacked the YSRCP MLA and the cadre who were staging the protests in a peaceful manner," Appireddy alleged.

MLA Alla Ramakrishna Reddy said that Ayyanna Patrudu stooped to making despicable comments against the Chief Minister. "It was unfortunate that Jogi Ramesh was brutally attacked by the TDP mob. Naidu instigated Ayyanna Patrudu to speak in vulgar language. The people are aware of the TDP's anarchy," he said, demanding action against Naidu and Ayyanna Patrudu.

MLA Merugu Nagarjuna too accused Naidu of being behind the incident and demanded his arrest.

MP Nandigama Suresh said that the TDP leaders are not bothered about the development of the State. He alleged that Naidu was creating unrest among the people with false propaganda and had instigated Ayyanna Patrudu to hurl abuse at the Chief Minister.

Council decides not to bring fuel...

Continued from Page 1

The concessional regime for certain medical equipment will end on September 30.

Sitharaman said 5 percent GST will be levied at the point where the delivery is made by Swiggy and Zomato.

Also, the Council cut GST rate from 12 percent to 5 percent on cancer-related rugs and on fortified rice kernels to 5 percent from 18 percent.

GST rate on bio-diesel for blending in diesel was reduced to 5 percent from 12

percent, while the national permit fee for goods carriage has been exempt from GST.

Import of leased aircraft was also exempted from payment of I-GST, Sitharaman said.

"GST Council felt it was not the right time to include petroleum products in GST," she said.

The panel decided to levy 18 percent GST on all sorts of pens. Specified renewable sector devices will be charged 12 percent tax. GST Council also recommended new footwear and textile rates from January 1.

AP, TS likely to get new Chief Justices...

Continued from Page 1

They said the eight names include Acting Chief Justice of Calcutta High Court Justice Rajesh Binal, who has been recommended to be transferred as the Chief Justice of Allahabad High Court.

The sources said the three-member Collegium, headed by Chief Justice of India NV Ramana, has also recommended that Chief Justice of Tripura High Court Justice Akil Qureshi be transferred to the Rajasthan High Court.

Besides the CJ, the three-member Collegium that deals with appointments in High Courts includes Justices UU Lalit and AM Khanwilkar.

They have decided to rec-

ommend transfer of five Chief Justices and 28 other High Court judges to other High Courts, sources said.

"The decision on major reshuffle and appointment of Chief Justices in High Courts have taken place following marathon meetings," a reliable source told PTI, adding that meetings in this regard took place on Thursday and Friday.

The Collegium decisions, containing the names and details of the judges, are yet to be uploaded on the apex court's website.

They said the Collegium has recommended transfer of Chief Justice of Rajasthan High Court Justice Indrajit Mahanty to the Tripura High Court and Meghalaya High Court Chief Justice Justice Biswanath Somadder

to the Sikkim High Court.

Besides Justice Binal, the Collegium has recommended names of Justices Prakash Srivastava, Prashant Kumar Mishra, Ritu Raj Awasthi, Satish Chandra Sharma, Ranjit V More, Aravind Kumar and R V Malimath for appointing them as Chief Justices of different High Courts across the country, the sources said.

The latest recommendations have been made close on the heels of a historic decision to recommend 68 names in one go for judgeship in 12 High Courts across the country.

Recently, the Collegium recommended 10 names to the Centre for appointment as permanent judges in the Karnataka High Court.

These recommendations assume significance in view of the statement made by the CJ in a recent function of the Bar Council of India that it has been his endeavour to address the issue of vacancies in the higher judiciary on an "urgent basis".

Referring to nine appointments in one go in the apex court bench, Justice Ramana had said, "Similarly, after I took over, the Collegium has recommended, if I am not wrong, 82 names to various High Courts.

I hope the government will ensure that the names are cleared at the earliest just the way the nine names were cleared for the apex court. It is an ongoing process. We hope to live up to the Herculean challenge

of filling nearly 41 percent vacancies existing in all the high courts," he had said, adding that in another month, he expected that 90 percent of vacancies will be filled.

The 25 High Courts of the country have a combined sanctioned strength of 1,080 judges.

Prior to this, in a historic decision on August 17, the five-member Collegium headed by the CJ had recommended nine names for elevation as judges of the Supreme Court, including three women.

The names were cleared with significant pace by the Centre leading to the swearing-in ceremony on August 31 when the new judges were administered oath of office as apex court judges.

No devotees at this year's Brahmotsavams...

Continued from Page 1

Subba Reddy said that like last year, this year's Navaratri Bhrahmostavams too would be observed inside the temple without the congregation of the devotees and celestial processions in view of the health safety of devotees and TTD staff.

The decision was taken in adherence to new Covid guidelines issued by the Central and State governments in view of the possibility of Covid third-wave that is likely to hit in October, he added.

However, the ceiling on the entry of devotees for darshan of Lord Venkateswara would continue as usual during

Brahmotsavams too, Subba Reddy said. Between 15,000 to 20,000 would be allowed to the shrine until the pandemic situation comes to normalcy, Reddy added.

Meanwhile, a TTD release said that a US-based devotee, Poosala Viswanath working with Facebook has made an offering of Rs 1 crore to Lord Venkateswara temple with a request to TTD to utilise the fund for TTD-run charitable institutions.

On behalf of the devotee, his father P Anjaneyulu, a retired TTD official here, handed over the Demand Draft for the amount to TTD Executive Officer K S Jawahar Reddy today, the release added.

GRMB, KRMB subpanels get going...

Continued from Page 1

It may be mentioned here that in the recent KRMB meeting, both the States had sought the constitution of a Subcommittee in place of the Coordination Committee to

resolve the issues concerning the implementation and supervision of the provisions of the gazette.

The Subcommittee can also co-opt Central government officials and other experts for technical and other issues.

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TDP targeting CM: YSRCP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP leaders have come down heavily on TDP leader Ayyanna Patrudu for venting his frustration on the State government by using abusive language against Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy and condemned the attack on MLA Jogi Ramesh by TDP members.

Addressing a press conference here on Friday, MLA Gudivada Amarnath said that Chandrababu Naidu was indulging in diversionary politics fearing the results of ZPTC and MPCT elections which will be out in the next 48 hours. He slammed Chandrababu Naidu for inciting his party leaders to attack MLA Jogi Ramesh, who was on peaceful protest against the remarks made by former minister Ch Ayyanna Patrudu. He said that Chandrababu Naidu has been using Ayyana Patrudu for gaining political mileage with cheap politics.

MLA Amarnath said that Chandrababu Naidu is afraid of direct elections and could never win the people's vote with his dirty politics. He questioned whether



Chandrababu Naidu or his son Nara Lokesh would dare speak on election results. Condemning the remarks made by Ayyanna Patrudu, he said that YSRCP leaders will not spare if they speak ill of the Chief Minister or the State gov-

ernment. In the last 26 months, Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy has taken public welfare to the next level which was never seen in the history of Andhra Pradesh and seeing the good governance, the opposition has been spewing poison out of sheer jealousy, he said.

Meanwhile, speaking at a separate press conference, Chief Whip Gadikota Srikanth Reddy slammed TDP leader Ayyanna Patrudu for using abusive language against the Chief Minister, Home Minister, SPs and other police officials and demanded an apology from him.

Attack on Naidu residence engineered by CM: Lokesh

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP national general secretary and MLC Nara Lokesh on Friday said that the latest attack on Opposition Leader N Chandrababu Naidu's residence had exposed how Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy was stooping to new lows out of fear and frustration over the rising unpopularity of his rule.

Lokesh termed it a 'cowardly act' that CM Jaganmohan Reddy sent his party's 'blue goondas' led by a sitting MLA to carry out the stone attack on the TDP leaders. The Chief Minister was feeling so insecure that he was not able to take even the slightest criticism. He was hiding in his Tadepalli den and shivering with fear at the increasing resentment against his policies.

In a statement here, Lokesh slammed CM

Jaganmohan Reddy for 'masterminding' attacks on the TDP rather than coming out of his house to understand and solve public problems. The day was not far off when all sections of the AP people would revolt against the atrocious regime. The unpopularity of his rule was the reason why the deeply agitated CM was provoking his party gangs to attack the opposition leaders.

Lokesh asserted that the people had realised that CM Jaganmohan Reddy was just doing drama action but not genuinely committed to their well-being. His kisses given to the people before the elections had started raining like heavy blows on the same people who brought him to power.

The TDP would pay back with 'multiple interest' if the YSRCP continued its attacks, false cases and arrests out of political vendetta.

TDP maligning State: Buggana

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Affirming that TDP leaders are misinterpreting the State's financial situation, Finance Minister Buggana Rajendranath said that the public could not be deceived by distorting the data to show the state in poor light.

Buggana Rajendranath criticised his predecessor Yanamala Ramakrishnu for misleading the public with his 'vast experience' and acting without basic social responsibility. He said that the TDP leaders have been trying to deceive the people by telling favorable statistics without disclosing the growth rate of the agricultural sector. He said that the opposition has been trying to malign the government's image to gain political advantage.

In a statement on Friday, drawing comparison with the previous government, the finance minister listed out that in 2018-19, the growth rates in agriculture, industrial and services sectors were 7.91 percent, 10.24 percent and 6.20 percent. He said that by the end of the TDP term, the growth rate of GSDP had been declining, whereas the growth rate of 10.09 percent between 2017-18 had fallen to 4.88 percent in 2018-19, registering as the lowest among the major states in the country. However, under the leadership of Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy, the state achieved a the positive growth rate in spite of the Covid impact.

Further, the Minister said that Andhra Pradesh was ranked third in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Index for 2020-21 and as per



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Further, the Minister said that Andhra Pradesh was ranked third in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Index for 2020-21 and as per

Niti Aayog's report the state ranked 5th and 6th in Poverty Eradication and Inequality Reduction. He said that the state stood at 4th place in SDG index for the year 2018-19 next to Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, and Tamilnadu. However, it climbed to third place during 2019-20 and 2020-21, improving from the performance category to being a front runner.

Refuting the TDP's false allegation on the unemployment rate, he stated that the unemployment rate declined from 5.7 percent in 2018-19 to 5.1 percent in 2019-20. The unemployment rate of the country was at 6.2 percent in 2018-19 and decreased to 5.2 percent in the following year 2019-20, he added.

Jagan responsible for bid to besiege Naidu's residence: TDP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) leaders on Friday condemned the attack with stones and sticks by the ruling YSRCP leaders on the residence of TDP national president and former Chief Minister N Chandrababu at Undavalli.

The TDP accused Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan

Reddy of turning Andhra Pradesh into 'Afghanistan' even as the ruling YSRCP goondas were behaving like the Taliban. The factionist CM was responsible for the latest attempt to lay siege to the house of Opposition Leader Chandrababu Naidu, who had also served as Chief Minister for 14 years and who was in Z plus category security.

In a statement here, TDP State president K Atchannaaidu termed 'atrocious and brazen' the attempt made by the YSRCP gangs to barge into Naidu's house. CM Jaganmohan Reddy was encouraging all these attacks on the opposition leaders by keeping the police under his iron grip. The factionist regime had destroyed the

whole State in every way possible in the past two and half years. Was it a crime to raise voice against the misdeeds of the Government? How can the ruling party leaders attack everyone just for questioning people's problems?

Atchannaaidu demanded that the AP police immediately arrest YSRCP MLA Jogi Ramesh for masterminding and personally

leading the latest attack on Naidu's house. The TDP would take up State-wide agitation if action was not taken against the goondas responsible for the stone pelting at the former Chief Minister's house. The YSRCP goondas had physically attacked and pelted stones on the TDP activists and leaders who tried to prevent them from storming into Naidu's residence.

APHEPB second meet today

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The second meeting of the Andhra Pradesh Higher Education Planning Board (APHEPB) will be held on Saturday in the city, Andhra University, IIM Visakhapatnam and IPE Visakhapatnam are jointly conducting the meeting. "Expansion, Equity and Quality in Higher Education" is the theme of the meeting.

Director, IIT Delhi, Prof. V Ramgopal Rao, is the chief guest of the meeting which will be inaugurated by Minister for Education Dr. Audimulapu Suresh. During the second APHEPB meeting, the APSCHE Learning Management System (LMS) would be launched.

Jumbo TTD board against sentiments of Lord Venkaeswara devotees: Naidu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Leader of the Opposition N Chandrababu Naidu on Friday urged the YSRCP government to cancel the 'jumbo board' that was constituted with 81 members for the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) in total 'disregard' for the sentiments of the devotees and pilgrims.

Naidu advised Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy not to misuse a world-renowned place of divinity like the TTD for taking political and selfish personal advantage.

The TDP chief wrote a letter to the Chief Minister here, warning that anybody who

would tarnish the glory of 'Venkanna' would have to repent in the future. Selfish interests were clearly evident in the appointment of the Board. It should be revoked and a new Board should be constituted in accordance with the traditions and sentiments of the devotees. Importance should be given to those known for their devotional fervour and a spirit of 'Swamivari Seva'. Appointment of accused persons in CBI cases as members of the Board was highly objectionable.

Naidu told the CM that the prestige and divinity of Tirumala was being undermined and defiled in the past two and half years. The cen-



turies-old TTD shrine never had a jumbo Board with 81-members in its long history. The TTD shrine was famous the world over for its devotion-al and spiritual eminence. The TDP would strongly condemn the filling of the TTD Board

with businessmen with questionable credentials, corrupt persons, criminals and tainted individuals. No other Chief Minister in the past had even thought of appointing such a jumbo-sized Board.

Decrying the 'lowering standards' at TTD, Chandrababu Naidu said that these days, all sorts of unwanted restrictions were being imposed for a free and smooth darshan for the common pilgrims. A few individuals were getting all the services and benefits. The latest decision had hurt the image of Tirumala at the national and international levels. The sentiments of crores of devotees were hurt.

Waltair division tops the charts in freight loading, says DRM

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Waltair Railway Division of East Coast Railway (ECOR) Zone has achieved the best ever freight loading during the period from April to August in the present fiscal. During April - August, this year, the Indian Railways has done an incremental loading of 131.00 MT out of which 6.82 MT (5.21 percent) has been contributed by Waltair Division. The Waltair Division is operating 37 pairs of originating trains for the convenience of the public apart from handling more than 50 pairs of coaching trains passing through the division.

Divisional Railway Manager Anup Kumar Satpathy on Friday informed that safety was given priority by converting the level crossing gates to Limited Height Subways (LHS), enhancing the sectional speed to 130 km by carrying the track modernisation works. The bridges were also rehabilitated with changing 750 steel channel sleepers and other related works, the DRM said.

The doubling works in Kottavalasa-Kirandul line, Koraput-Rayagada line and the third line works of Vizianagaram-Titlagrah line are in progress and would be completed in a span of four

years. While explaining the importance of LHB coaches, the DRM said that four pairs of trains originating from Waltair Division and one train passing the division have been converted to LHB coaches and more trains would be converted in a phased manner. The Indian Railway has allocated 300 LHB coaches to the division, the DRM detailed.

Talking about the passenger amenity works, he said that 'divyangjan' toilets, coach indication boards, lifts, high-level platforms, foot overbridges, quick watering facilities and roof-top solar panels at stations for renewable energy management is under progress.

The DRM said that Waltair Division had emerged the best division by adopting innovative policies to provide quality amenities at stations like Health Kiosk, Robotic Spa, Pandemic Preventive Gears Stall, packaging of parcels and passenger luggage with the optional facility of door pickup and door delivery the facility, train branding with NMDC, and rental bikes for visitors.

Additional Divisional Railway Manager (ADRM) Sudhir Kumar Gupta was also present.

Naidu held responsible for Kodela death

PNS ■ GUNTUR

YSRCP spokesperson and MLA Ambati Rambabu held former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu responsible for the death of former Assembly Speaker Kodela Shiva Prasada Rao.

At a press conference on Friday, Ambati Rambabu condemned the remarks made by former Minister Ch Ayyanna Patrudu. He said that the YSRCP does not tolerate if absurd language is used to denounce Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Rambabu said that Kodela Shiva Prasada Rao attempted suicide one month before his death and he was admitted to a hospital belonged to his son-in-law. But Chandrababu Naidu did not visit him which



exposed that Naidu wanted to get rid of Kodela. Finally unable to bear the harassment from the family members, Kodela Shiva Prasada Rao committed suicide, he said.

Ambati Rambabu demanded that Ayyanna Patrudu tender an apology for his absurd comments against the Chief

Minister.

Narasaraopet MP Lavu Srikrishnadevarayalu said that the TDP leaders should discuss the development done by Kodela Siva Prasada Rao instead of criticising the YSRCP leaders.

MLC Dokka Manikya Vara Prasada said it was not prop-

er for senior leader Ch Ayyanna Patrudu speaking like that. He should withdraw his comments, he demanded.

YSRCP state secretary Nimmakayala Rajanarayana, Market yard chairman Rayapati Purushottama Rao and councillor Achyuta Siva Prasad also spoke.

Stop 'harassing' residents, VARWA tells GVMC officials

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Visakhapatnam Apartments Residents Welfare Association (VARWA) demanded the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation to stop the harassment of the residents by the GVMC staff and Ward Volunteers. The GVMC staff and Ward Volunteers are threatening the residents that water supply would be stopped, if the residents did not make payment of user charges for garbage collection, the VARWA President and General Secretary N.Prakasa Rao and B.B.Ganesh informed to the Commissioner, GVMC.

Termining an example, the association said that the GVMC authorities have deducted Rs.120 from a resident's SB account in TPT Colony without taking her consent. In some areas, residents were threatened that the garbage would be dumped in front of their apartments if they did not make payment of the charges, the association alleged.

The Mayor, GVMC, on the VARWA request, assured that reduction of the charges from poor and lower middle class people would be exempted. But the authorities are not looking at the facts, threatening the residents, the association alleged.

Parliamentary panel on women visits Vizag Port, ENC

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Empowerment of Women, headed by Dr. Heena Vijay Kumar Gavit, on Friday visited the Visakhapatnam Port. The Parliamentary Committee was taken for a launch cruise wherein Chairman of VPT K Rama Mohana Rao, explained the port operations, facilities and infrastructure available.

The Chairman made a presentation on the infrastructure facilities available, capacities in handling of cargo, modernisation and mechanisation, covered storage facilities, solar power, STP water treatment for industrial purpose, investment potential and zone of opportunities in exploring imports and export improvements in the Port.



The Committee had a discussion with VPT officials on the CSR activities exclusive for women undertaken by the port. As a part of the two-day visit in the port

city, the Parliamentary Committee on Women Empowerment visited the Eastern Naval Command (ENC). The members of the Parliamentary Committee, along with officials of the Lok Sabha/Rajya Sabha Secretariat, were given an overview of Naval Operations and women in the Indian Navy. On arrival, the Parliamentary Committee members paid homage to the Naval personnel who made the supreme sacrifice, in the line of duty to the nation at the 'Smaram Sthal' Memorial in Naval Dockyard and were given a guided tour of indigenously built Stealth Frigate INS Satpura, a guided missile Corvette INS Kora and a submarine. The team interacted with Vice Adm Ajendra Bahadur Singh, AVSM, VSM, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, ENC and women officers posted at ENC.



Prakasam officials gear up for counting of ZPTC, MPTC votes

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Prakasam District Collector Pravin Kumar has directed the revenue and election officials to make all preparations for the counting of votes of ZPTC and MPTC elections on September 19.

The Collector held a meeting virtually here on Friday with SP Malika Garg, assistant returning officer, assistant returning officer and revenue officials on the preparations to be made for the counting of votes.

The Collector said that as per the High Court verdict the counting of votes should be taken up across the district. He said that all AROs, MPDOs, Tahsildars, EOs, PRDs and Mandal Praja Parishad officials should take part in the counting of votes.

He said that counting of votes should be taken up for 41 ZPTCs and 367 MPTCs in 52 mandals. Mr.Pravin Kumar said that the counting of votes would begin on Sunday at 8 am. The required tables and other material should be made ready for the purpose, he directed the officials. The Collector directed the officials to make counting with dummy



ballot papers as mock counting. The ballot boxes should be opened in the presence of candidates.

SP Malika Garg directed the police to take all steps for the smooth counting of votes. She directed them to ensure that no law and order problem arises during the counting of votes. She asked the police officials to take stringent steps to check the import of liquor from neighbouring districts. Joint Collector T S Chetan, K Krishnaveni, ZPCE O Devananda Reddy and ASP B Ravinchandra were among those who were present.

In Eluru, Collector Kartikeya Mishra said that counting of votes would be taken up in CRR Engineering College here, ASR College of engineering in Tanuku, SRKR Engineering College in Bhimavaram, Nova

Engineering college in Jangareddygudem in the district. He said that out of the 48 ZPTC candidates, two were elected unanimously and the Penugonda candidate died. The results would be declared for 45 ZPTC candidates. Out of the 876 MPTCs, 73 were unanimous while 9 candidates died and elections were not held for 13 MPTCs. Election results would be declared for 781 MPTC candidates, the Collector said. Mr.Kartikeya Mishra asked the officials to make the required arrangements to take counting of votes.

He said that Section 144 clamped at counting centres and people assembly near counting centres was not allowed. He asked officials to ensure the electricity is supplied without interruption.

SP inspects counting centres

ONGOLE: Prakasam district SP Malika Garg has visited the counting centres set up at QUIS Engineering College (2 centres), DRRM Municipal High School and PVR Municipal High School in Ongole and personally inspected the counting arrangements and conveyed various instructions to the police officers. The counting of votes will start from 8.00 am on 19.09.2021. The SP made strict arrangements to ensure that the counting of votes goes smoothly without any interruptions or untoward incidents. The SP said that three-tier security arrangements have been made at the counting centers in colleges and schools located in 12 areas of the district for MPTC and ZPTC seats. She informed that five or more people are not allowed to congregate near counting cen-

ters as Section 144 is in force at the counting areas, persons within a kilometre of the counting centres are not allowed to turn around with sticks and other fire arms, and candidates attending the counting process are required to comply with the provisions of Section 30 of the Police Act. She stated that candidates, leaders of the respective parties and their followers are not allowed to hold victory rallies, processions or fireworks and warned of strict legal action against those who violate the restrictions. Similarly, the SP suggested that teachers, police and other government employees to follow Covid norms and conduct the counting process. The SP said that a fortified police bandobust be set up at the counting center to prevent any untoward incidents.



Urban SP's surprise visits leave anti-socials on the edge

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Superintendent of Police (Urban) Arif Hafeez's surprise visits to various places in the city during nights has evoked an overwhelming response from the public. The SP's initiative has instilled fear in the minds of anti-social elements and alerted the police personnel of various police stations.

The SP has been making surprise visits in the city at various places during the night time by walking in the streets to gain first-hand knowledge of the crime situation and then tackle it effectively. The SPs vis-

its have sent a strong warning to anti-social elements.

The SP, during his surprise visits, inspects the vehicles and questions those who move on the roads suspiciously. When the SP starts visiting a place, the CIs and SIs of the local police station become alert and rush to the place to join the SP. The CIs and SIs of all police stations in the city are on high alert after the SP's new initiative of making random visits.

Arif Hafeez interacts with the people and knows their problems personally. He asks them to call him if they face

any problem to get the police help immediately and assures them of help if they call him.

The Urban SP counsels those who wander on the roads. Besides, he takes a serious note of opening bars and eateries after 10 pm and ensures that cases are registered against them.

"The SP has set a new trend of visiting every street on foot to maintain law and order and send a strong warning to the anti-social elements. We welcome his initiative and hope he will continue making surprise visits," a few denizens told this correspondent.

Disha app comes to rescue of minor girl

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The 'Disha' mobile app has once again come to the rescue of a minor girl, resulting in the arrest of a man who attempted to rape her.

The incident took place in Kanipakam mandal of Chittoor district on Thursday night. An elderly man, who tried to rape the girl, was arrested by the police within three minutes after receiving information through the Disha app.

According to Kanipakam SI Ramesh Babu, a girl (9) who was playing in the street in front of her house at Chigarapalle Dalit colony in the mandal, was taken to a deserted place by the man who tried to rape her around 9 pm on Thursday.

However, when the girl raised an alarm neighbours came to her rescue and the man fled the place. The local women then complained to the police through the Disha app.

Kanipakam police reached the village within three minutes and arrested the old man while he was trying to escape. Later, the girl was shifted to the Chittoor Government Hospital.

A case has been registered by the police.

Deputy CM Sreevani indisposed

PNS ■ ELURU

Deputy Chief Minister Pamula Pushpa Sreevani indisposed when she was going to Visakhapatnam from Vijayawada. She was admitted to the ASRAM Hospital.

The doctors conducted various tests. However, since it was a minor ailment, she proceeded to Visakhapatnam.



Prisons dept gets a Rs 50,000 donation

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Former minister Sidda Raghava Rao donated Rs 50,000 to the Prisons department for their All India Duty Meet to be held from October

1 to 4 in Tirupati.

Sidda Raghava Rao handed over the cheque for Rs 50,000 to the Prisons department SI Chinna Subbaiah at his residence. He donated the amount for the release of the souvenir.



Effigy of MLA Jogi Ramesh burnt

PNS ■ ELURU

The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) activists burnt the effigy of YSRCP MLA Jogi Ramesh in protest against his attempt to lay siege to the house of TDP chief and former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu.

The TDP activists led by

Badeti Radhakrishnaiah here on Friday burnt the effigy of Pedana MLA Jogi Ramesh. The TDP activists raised slogans against him. TDP leaders Dasari Anjaneyulu, N Ganga Raju, former deputy Mayor Chode Venkataratnam, former market yard chairman P Niranjan, T Venkateswara Rao and other leaders were present.

TTD's 'darshan' ticket policy under fire from ex-member

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Former TTD board member O V Ramana has slammed the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) management for not issuing free darshan slots to the pilgrims.

At a media conference here on Friday, he questioned the rationale behind the TTD's decision to allow the devotees with paid 'darshan' and 'VIP break Darshan' tickets in large numbers.

Ramana alleged that the decision taken by the TTD authorities of building new 'kalyanakattas' in Alipiri, Srinivasa Mangapuram and Appayagunta is hurting the devotees' religious sentiments. He further said that hair tonsure or hair offering is a very important offering in Tirumala. Every year, lakhs of devotees fulfil their



vows in Tirumala which is a major source of income to TTD apart from Hundi.

Ramana further said that the TTD decision to lease TTD properties in various places is strongly objected to by the devotees.

He said it is highly objectionable to lease the properties of temples and go about it in a secretive manner. He pointed out that 33 acres of land leased to private parties by TTD in Alipiri to build

Kanna inaugurates vax drive

GUNTUR: BJP former State president

Kanna Lakshminarayana inaugurated a mega Covid vaccine programme here on Friday on the occasion of the 71st birthday of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. District president P Rama Krishna, former ministers Ravela Kishore Babu and Shenakkayala Aruna were among those who were present.



241 fresh Covid cases, 2 deaths

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana on Friday reported 241 new Covid cases, pushing the tally to 6,63,026, while the toll rose to 3,902 with two more fatalities. The GHMC accounted for the most number of cases with 68, followed by Karimnagar (23) and Nalgonda (16) districts, a bulletin said, providing details as of 5.30 PM today.

1,428 liquor bottles seized, two held

PNS ■ GUNTUR

The Special Enforcement Bureau (SEB) personnel seized 1,428 liquor bottles worth Rs.17 lakh when they hoarded a house at Gujjanagundla.

Additional SP, SEB, Bindu Madhav said that the liquor bottles were purchased at a liquor shop in Medchal in Hyderabad, brought here ille-

gally and being sold.

The police found that the liquor bottles were hoarded in the house of Narra Ashok. The police arrested Narra Ashok, Chennai Reddy and Venkata Ramana and launched a search for another accused. Meanwhile, the police also seized 1170 liquor bottles when they were brought in a car from Telangana state at Dacheepalli.



590 kg ganja seized, one held

PNS ■ ELURU

The police seized 590 kg ganja, worth Rs 11.8 lakh, while being transported in a van at Kapavaram village in Kovvuru mandal. DSP B Srinath told the media in Kovvuru on Friday that on a tip-off the police conducted checking of vehicles. The police found about 590 kg of ganja being transported to Hyderabad in a van. The police arrested a person named Paan Singh and seized Rs11.80 lakh worth of ganja and the van. SP Rahul Dev Sharma appreciated the police personnel and recommended their names for reward.



Resolve farmers' problems at RBKs, officials told

PNS ■ ONGOLE

District Collector Pravin Kumar has directed the officials concerned to take steps to ensure that the problems of farmers are resolved at the Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBK) and the eligible farmers receive the benefits of welfare schemes.

The district level Agriculture Advisory Council meeting was held here on Friday. Officials of the agriculture, fisheries, animal husbandry and marketing departments explained their targets and achievements through a powerpoint presen-

tation. Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that the State government is giving priority to the farm sector and the welfare of farmers.

New schemes are being implemented for the welfare of farmers and the officials should create awareness among farmers to utilise the schemes, the Collector told the officials. Pravin Kumar asked the officials to go through the GOs thoroughly and prepare reports.

MLC Potula Sunita said that the fishermen at eight villages located in Chirala division

were not getting the benefits of welfare schemes.

She asked the Collector to take steps to ensure that all the fishermen families at the villages would receive the welfare schemes. She also urged the Collector to ensure that irrigation water of Kommamooru canal reaches to tail end fields.

Kandukuru MLA M Mahidhar Reddy asked the Collector to take steps to audit the fishermen societies and stabilize the prices in the market yard. The MLA also asked the Collector to take steps to release the allocated water

from the Somasila project to the Rallapadu reservoir.

District level agriculture advisory council chairman Alla Ravindra Reddy underlined the need of removing creepers and plants in the canals as they were inhibiting the flow of water.

DCMS Chairman Padmavati asked the officials to provide remunerative prices to aqua farmers.

Animal husbandry Joint Director J D Babyrani, Agriculture JD Srinivasa Rao and DWMA PD S Reddy and NABARD DD M Venkataramana were present.



INDIA CORNER AIMIM MP attends Marathwada liberation day event, ducks queries

AIMIM leader and local MP Imtiaz Jaleel on Friday attended a flag-hoisting here on the occasion of Marathwada Liberation Day but evaded a question about why he did not attend such events in the past. Large parts of the Marathwada region in central Maharashtra were under the Nizam rule prior to 1948. The day commemorates local people's struggle for merger with independent India. Jaleel attended a ceremony at Siddharth Garden here where the national flag was hoisted. Asked by reporters why he attended an event to mark liberation day six years after he became MP, Jaleel said, "I can justify why I didn't come for the ceremony in the past. But my question is what great feats those who attended this ceremony in the past achieved," he said, without adding anything more.

PM'S 71ST BIRTHDAY Shah: Modi was 1st to recognise seriousness of climate change

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday said that Narendra Modi was the first chief minister in the country to understand the seriousness of the climate change phenomenon and he had set up a separate ministry for it in Gujarat.

Shah also said that the internal security of the country cannot be imagined without the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), whose more than 2,000 jawans have sacrificed their lives for the country so far. He was speaking after planting a sapling at the CRPF training ground at Mudkhed in Nanded district of Maharashtra, which helped the security agency achieve the target of one crore sapling plantations in the country.

"When Modi was the chief minister of Gujarat, he was the first to understand the seriousness of climate change and ensure its institution-alised management. Many chief ministers focus on building roads, ensuring education facilities and drinking water schemes. But Modi also worked on climate change



On Modi's birthday, Union Minister Pashupati Paras likens him to 'God'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union minister and Lok Janshakti Party leader Pashupati Kumar Paras called Prime Minister Narendra Modi "another form of God" on the latter's birthday, and said he was the most successful head of government in India since independence. "He is another form of God. Nobody has seen God but Prime Minister Narendra Modi is in our midst who is seen as God and also decides the country's fate," Paras said, noting that the day coincided with Vishwakarma Puja. "It is such an auspicious day. Our prime minister was also born on the same day. I think he is present among us as another form of God," he said.

and for planting saplings," he said.

"If we want to maintain the balance between nature and carbon emission, tree planta-

tion is the only way out. When Modi was Gujarat's CM, he introduced a portfolio of climate change for the first time," Shah added.

Ahmedabad civic body plants saplings for a 'Modi forest'

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

The Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation on Friday undertook a drive to plant 71,000 saplings to mark the 71st birthday of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, with participants including Gujarat Chief

Minister Bhupendra Patel. The tree plantation, based on Japanese techniques to ensure they grow close to each other so that the plot resembles a forest, was carried out near Lal Bahadur Shastri Lake, officials said. The plot is being called the Narendra Modi for-

est, they said, adding that the drive was part of the civic body's aim to plant one million trees this year.

"The trees will help increase the green cover in the city. We should plant as many trees as possible to reduce pollution," CM Patel said.

Noted theoretical physicist Padmanabhan dies of cardiac arrest in Pune aged 64

Noted theoretical physicist and recipient of Padma Shri award, Professor Thanu Padmanabhan died due to cardiac arrest in Pune on Friday, a former colleague said. He was 64. Padmanabhan suffered a cardiac arrest and was rushed to a hospital, where he died during treatment, sources said. The renowned physicist is survived by his wife and daughter. A distinguished professor at the Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA), Padmanabhan had conducted research on gravitation, structure formation in the universe and quantum gravity. He wrote over 300 papers in international journals and also authored several books. "Today is one of the saddest days in the history of the Inter-University Centre for Astronomy & Astrophysics and the Indian scientific community. Professor Thanu Padmanabhan, a distinguished professor at IUCAA, passed away this morning as a result of a cardiac arrest," Somak Raychaudhury, director of IUCAA, said in a social media post. The Kerala State Council for Science, Technology and Environment had recently awarded Padmanabhan the 'Kerala Sashtira Puraskaram', a lifetime achievement award.



Supreme Court allows Kerala govt to hold physical exam for Class 11

The Supreme Court Friday allowed the Kerala government to hold physical exams for Class 11 amid the COVID-19 pandemic and expressed satisfaction over the steps being taken by it to ensure that no untoward situation is faced by students. The top court said holistic approach has to be taken in the matter and the authorities concerned are conscious of their duties. A bench of Justices A M Khanwilkar and C T Ravikumar dismissed an appeal filed by advocate Rasoolshan A, challenging the Kerala High Court order refusing to interfere with the state government's decision to hold offline exams. The apex court said a detailed affidavit has been filed by the state and it is taking all measures related to the coronavirus protocol. "We are convinced by the explanation offered by the state and trust authorities will take all precautions and necessary steps so that no untoward situation is faced by students who are of tender age and appearing for the proposed examination. Dismissed," it said. The apex court said it had intervened on the earlier occasion as there was a possibility of a third wave of corona by September. "Third wave is not in offing immediately," it added.



Vijay Rupani-led govt in Gujarat voted out by BJP high command, says Chidambaram

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader P Chidambaram on Friday took a swipe at the BJP, saying the Vijay Rupani-led government in Gujarat was voted out of office by a no-confidence motion passed by the "BJP High Command of One".

Claiming that the Rupani government would have been

voted out of power by the people of Gujarat in 2022, he said the new dispensation led by Bhupendra Patel too will meet the same fate when it seeks people's vote of confidence.

"The Rupani-led BJP government in Gujarat was voted out of office by a no-confidence motion passed by the BJP High Command of One. Thank god it was done before

the people of Gujarat voted it out in December 2022," he said on Twitter.

"When the new Bhupendra Patel-led government seeks a vote of confidence from the people, it will be voted out too," he also said.

The BJP on Thursday inducted 24 members, including 21 who debuted as ministers, into the four-day-old

Bhupendra Patel-led ministry, discarding all ministers in the previous Vijay Rupani-led regime in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home state of Gujarat.

The new ministry, which came a year ahead of the Assembly polls, does not have the post of deputy chief minister, held by Nitin Patel in the Rupani-led ministry.

Afghanistan development will impact India too: PM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said the recent developments in Afghanistan will have the greatest impact on neighbouring countries like India and continuing instability in that country will encourage terrorist and extremist ideologies all over the world.

In a virtual address at an SCO meeting on Afghanistan, Modi said there was a need for regional focus and cooperation on the situation in the country.

"The recent developments in Afghanistan will have the greatest impact on neighbouring countries like us. And therefore, there is a need for regional focus and cooperation on this issue," he said.

Modi warned that if "instability and fundamentalism" persist in Afghanistan, it will encourage terrorist and extremist ideologies all over the world. "Other extremist groups can also be encouraged to gain power through violence," he said, adding the change of power in Afghanistan is not inclusive and has happened without negotiation.

SP, BSP, Congress have no mass base in Uttar Pradesh: Naqvi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The SP, BSP and the Congress are competing for power in Uttar Pradesh without any base among the masses, Union minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said on Friday, asserting that the opposition parties were fighting to become a "landlord without land".

He said the mafias that were flourishing under the previous governments in Uttar Pradesh have been put behind bars during the Yogi Adityanath dispensation, and asserted that there was a sense of security in the state.

While participating in various programmes on 'Seva Diwas' in Uttar Pradesh's Rampur, Naqvi told reporters that Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath was taking "stringent action against goons and mafias" due to which "their political protectors are being hurt the most".

For the people of the state it is a choice between "apradhiyon ki hirasat (detention for criminals)" versus "apradhiyon ki hifazat (protection for criminals)".

The people of Uttar Pradesh are living with a sense of security under the Adityanath



government, but this has made those people restless who had been 'reaching the throne of power by sitting on the shoulders of these goons and mafias', Naqvi was quoted as saying by a statement from his office.

The Samajwadi Party, the Bahujan Samaj Party and the Congress are in a competition for power without any base among the masses, he said, adding that they are fighting to become a "landlord without land".

Indian politics has taken a positive turn due to the "politics of commitment to performance, good governance and integrity" being practiced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Naqvi said.

Priyanka contesting won't matter: Giriraj Singh

PNS ■ AMETHI (UP)

Union minister Giriraj Singh here on Friday claimed that Priyanka Gandhi Vadra won't make a difference even if she contests the upcoming Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls as he and cabinet colleague Smriti Irani took potshots at the Gandhi family. In an apparent reference to the Gandhis, Giriraj Singh told reporters that "one family" exploited people of Amethi for years and did nothing for its development. Before the 2019 Lok Sabha polls when Irani defeated former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi from here, members of the Gandhi family held the seat for several parliamentary elections. It is said that even after so many years of Independence, there is not a proper hospital in Amethi, the Union rural development and panchayati raj minister said on the sidelines of a wrestling championship inaugurated by Irani.

Anticipatory bail plea of fake lawyer denied

PNS ■ KOCHI

The Kerala High Court on Friday dismissed the anticipatory bail plea of a woman accused of misrepresenting herself as a qualified lawyer and practicing in a district court here without a license for nearly two years.

Justice Shircy V dismissed the plea and asked her to surrender before the investigating officers.

The court, which had earlier rejected her plea against arrest, asked police to arrest her in case she refuses to surrender.

The state had opposed the anticipatory bail plea on the ground that the woman appeared as a lawyer in various

criminal cases, contested in bar elections and was elected as the association's librarian and also accepted a few briefs of the state government, all on the basis of her fake and forged documents which portrayed her as a qualified lawyer.

The state told the court that the woman has been booked for offences which are non-bailable and therefore, no interim protection from arrest should be granted to her.

The woman had earlier attempted to surrender before a magisterial court in Alappuzha under the belief that she would be released on bail, but when the likelihood of getting any relief appeared bleak, she fled from the courtroom.

SC miffed over 78 adjournments by lower court, orders trial in 6 months

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Miffed over 78 adjournments granted by a lower court in Dehradun, the Supreme Court has directed it to complete the trial within six months in a 2014 case of cheating and forgery against three persons.

Noting that the trial court has not moved an inch despite having taken cognizance of case almost seven years back, a bench headed by Justice A M Khanwilkar directed the Investigating Officer to ensure that the witnesses are made available on the scheduled dates for being examined by the trial court.

"We direct the trial court to ensure that the trial is concluded not later than six months from the date of receipt

of the copy of this order.

"We are required to issue this direction as we have noticed that the trial court, despite having taken cognizance almost seven years back, has not moved in the matter even an inch thereafter, including to frame charges, as may be necessary, despite 78 adjournments in the case," the bench, also comprising Justices Dinesh Maheshwari and CT Ravikumar, said.

The bench also enlarged the accused -- Manish Verma, Sanjeev Verma and Neetu Verma -- on bail on terms and conditions



which were imposed by the trial court and directed them to extend full cooperation in the case for early disposal of the matter.

"In case, the trial court is of the opinion that the private respondents are not cooperating in the progress of the trial or are taking unnecessary adjournments, it must record that opinion in the roznamcha (diary) and if that is a persistent approach of the private respondents, it will be open to the trial court to consider cancellation of bail in accordance with law," the bench said.

Needless to observe that the order of cancellation of bail of the

private respondents will not come in their way and the trial must proceed on its own merits and in accordance with law, it said. The apex court's order, dated September 15, came on an appeal filed by Dr Atul Krishna against the Uttarakhand High Court order dismissing his plea seeking early disposal of the case.

As per the appeal, an FIR was registered in 2012 by the petitioner at police station Jaani in Meerut district against the respondents for commission of offence under section 420 (cheating), 406 (Penishment for criminal breach of trust), 467 (Forgery of valuable security, will), 468 and 470 (Forged document or electronic record) of the Indian Penal Code at Meerut with regard to a land deal.

Big storm over short pants: Girl forced to 'cover up'

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

A 19-year-old girl appearing for an examination in Assam was made to wrap a curtain around her legs by an invigilator who chafed at her wearing shorts, provoking outrage and allegations of gender bias, and prompting university authorities to order an inquiry. The girl's family has, however, decided against taking the matter further in the interest of her mental well-being and academic future.

The incident occurred on Wednesday when the girl had gone from her hometown Biswanath Chariali to Tezpur to

appear for the entrance examination of the Assam Agricultural University (AAU). She had unhindered access to the venue but an invigilator inside the examination hall objected to her wearing short pants. Her father Babul Tamuli told PTI on Friday that after the invigilator at Girijananda Chowdhury Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences (GIPS) told her that she will not be allowed to appear for the exam wearing shorts, she took up the matter with the authorities there and insisted no dress code was mentioned on the admit card. She also told them she had appeared in the NEET exams recently



in shorts.

However, as they were unrelenting, the girl rushed to her father waiting out-

side the venue. Tamuli made a dash for the nearest market to buy a pair of trousers. But before he could return with trousers the authorities had provided the girl a curtain to wrap around her legs which she did and wrote her paper.

"My daughter was traumatised and spoke to a few local journalists about the humiliating incident and the issue became viral on social media. There are many who have condemned the incident but many have attacked my daughter for not following a dress code in an educational institution which has left her more mentally disturbed," Tamuli said.

Unholy matrimony?

The issue of interfaith marriages in certain States, especially in UP, is a simmering cauldron

As Uttar Pradesh slowly gears up for next year's Assembly elections, there is a concern that any communal polarisation adopted by political parties can draw undue attention to interfaith marriages, instilling a sense of fear and apprehension in young couples in love. "Love jihad" is the pejorative term the right-wing groups use to describe such marriages. The phrase has a negative resonance all over the State and interfaith couples either wanting to marry, or immediately after marriage, seek the protection of the courts to escape the anger of the parents and the fury of the vigilante groups. The Allahabad High Court on Thursday for the umpteenth time reiterated that two adults have the right to choose whom they wish to marry, irrespective of their religion. A Division Bench of Justices Manoj Kumar Gupta and Deepak Verma passed the order while granting protection to an interfaith couple worried about the anger of their parents over their relationship. The court also clarified that since the two individuals are major, "nobody, not even their parents, could object to their relationship". It is significant to note that the said court receives numerous petitions from young couples every week. A survey of orders the court passed showed that it had granted relief to over 100 couples of interfaith and inter-caste marriages in the month of November 2020. Many of these cases related to interfaith marriages, involving the conversion of one of the partners.

These included some cases where the court quashed criminal cases filed against the male partner alleging the girl had been kidnapped. As "love jihad" theories abounded in UP around that time, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath stated his Government's decision to bring a law against it. The statement came in the wake of a single Bench of the Allahabad High Court saying in a case that religious conversion for the sake of marriage was invalid. However, a higher Bench of the same court overruled the verdict a few days later, stating that "the right to live with a person of his/her choice, irrespective of religion professed by them, is intrinsic to right to life and personal liberty". This order quoted a 2006 Supreme Court ruling that upheld the couple's right to marry partners of choice and that the couple is "not harassed by anyone nor subjected to threats or acts of violence". The UP Government promulgated the UP Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religious Ordinance, 2020, criminalising religious conversion by marriage, around the same time. With a few other States also bringing in such a law, the Supreme Court was moved to review it. With the election fever gripping UP, interfaith marriages have the potential to draw the attention of vigilante groups on the question of conversion. In the case related to Thursday's verdict, the woman had also applied for conversion from Islam to Hinduism. However, it is cases where the girl applies for conversion to Islam from Hinduism that become controversial.

PICTALK



Dense clouds form over the fields after a heavy rain spell, in New Delhi

Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

Love and hate

The influential Church is taking up cudgels against elements that seek to 'divide' people in Kerala

The virus of communal hatred has come out in the open in Kerala following the startling disclosure made by Mar Joseph Kallarangatt, the Bishop of Pala Diocese. Addressing thousands of Catholic devotees who had gathered for a religious congregation at the ancient Marth Mariam Church in Kuravilangadu, the Bishop warned the laity about the dangers of "love jihad" and "narcotics jihad" that have done irreparable damage to the community. Thousands of Christian girls, many of them conservative Catholics, have fallen prey to these jihads over the last few years, said the Bishop. Elaborating on the *modus operandi* of the aggressors, the spiritual leader said that some elements of a particular religion were out in the open to liquidate the non-believers as part of their mission to establish a Caliphate in India. This is not the first time a statement like this is being made. The Christian community has been on a warpath against the State administration because of the alleged callousness of the police and other law-enforcing agencies towards their complaints that girls belonging to their sect were being

targeted through the two "jihads" and are trafficked to west Asian nations.

There were many instances of Christians staging demonstrations across Kerala to highlight their plight which were ignored by the mainstream media and liberals, labelling these as part of the "Sangh Parivar agenda" to divide Christians and Muslims. While Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan feigned ignorance about "narcotics jihad", Opposition leader VD Satheesan warned the Bishop from issuing irresponsible statements. But Bishop Kallarangatt was joined by Bishops of the Changanassery and Irinjalakuda dioceses, who too expressed their fear over the phenomenon haunting the laity. The Bishops' statements come immediately after the Kerala Catholic Bishops Council announced anxiety over the depleting Christian population in the State due to factors like family planning and migration. The Church even announced incentives, including financial as well as educational allowances, to couples who raise more children. Kerala is known for communal amity and this should not be overturned as part of appeasement and vote bank politics. Most of the de-addiction centres in Kerala are under the Church's management and they keep track of the number of persons getting addicted. Hence, the Bishops are speaking from a position of strength and the administration should listen seriously to what they say.

In the end, the game is the winner

The controversy over the cancelled fifth Test in England notwithstanding, gentle nudges by well-meaning seniors mean that cricket is in happy hands



VIJAY LOKAPALLY

Cricket is a wonderful, Indian game and the point was driven home well by Virat Kohli and his ambitious team in an exciting summer season. The English came to admire the stuff that India produced during a phase that began with the World Test Championship in June and culminated at Old Trafford with the fifth and final Test being cancelled on account of COVID fears. India led the series 2-1.

When the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) president Sourav Ganguly revealed that the Indian team was reluctant to play, he was only confirming the backing the players had. Health and safety of the players is paramount but the decision did not go down with the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) which insisted that the match be treated as forfeited by India and the result should go in their favour to tie the series. It hangs in balance as the matter rests with the International Cricket Council (ICC) following a claim by the ECB to grant them the match.

Overflowing audiences at the venues marked the fare. Test cricket was at its glorious best and it was just the advertisement to keep the administrators and the broadcasters happy. Cricket was entertaining. The royal battle between England's legendary James Anderson and the cream of Indian batting should rank as classic in the folklore of the game. It was breathtaking and evoked memories of some fascinating contests that India and England have been locked in, notably the 1971 thriller at The Oval in 1971 when India won on the strength of leg-spinner BS Chandrasekhar's striking blows to register their first ever win on English soil.

The 2021 series was projected as the most-awaited in a long time since it featured some of the modern greats of the game —Anderson and Virat Kohli— with charmers like Joe Root and Jasprit Bumrah bringing a touch of exciting personal rivalry. Root was exemplary and Bumrah unplayable at times, setting benchmarks to last ages. It was



hard to estimate the degree of excellence between Root and Bumrah.

Anderson won his personal battles with Kohli but the latter came out tops as he marshalled India to win two Tests in a remarkable show of temperament. Nothing was beyond India as the team once again established itself as an enviable combination. For India, the takeaways were rich.

There was much to celebrate in the rise of KL Rahul as an opener, who promises to make huge strides and the return to form of Rohit Sharma. The two hit a century each and importantly assured the selectors of their investment. With Cheteshwar Pujara coming to grips with his capabilities, India benefited at the opportune time to enjoy more dominating sessions than the home team.

True, England swept India off their feet at Headingley in an embarrassing innings defeat for the touring team but the match that stood out saw India win a regal contest at The Lord's. The home of cricket saw Rahul crack a majestic century and Mohammed Siraj produce

“A REMINDER FROM FORMER CAPTAIN SUNIL GAVASKAR REKINDLED THE MEMORIES OF CRICKET FANS OF THE GESTURE BY ENGLAND WHEN THEY RETURNED TO COMPLETE THE TOUR HALTED BY THE MUMBAI TERRORIST ATTACK IN 2008

unforgettable spells of four wickets each in the two innings. India made a remarkable fightback through a last-wicket stand of 89 runs between Mohammed Shami and Bumrah. This pair highlighted the tenacity of the team on the final day of the match as England succumbed after having begun the day in a commanding position.

Two half centuries by Shardul Thakur at critical stages of the fourth Test at The Oval propelled the team into a position of strength to call the shots, courtesy the fast bowlers. Criticised for not playing off-spinner Ravinchandran Ashwin even once in a Test against England, Kohli stood tall for his decision to play four fast bowlers. They did not let him down and it was down to the final Test. Sadly, the circumstances played havoc and the match had to be called off.

It was an unprecedented development and reports emerged of the two Boards drifting away from their acclaimed healthy association to honour each other's commitments. A reminder from Sunil Gavaskar rekindled memories of the cricket fans

of the gesture by England when they returned to complete the tour halted by the Mumbai terrorist attack in 2008. The former India captain wants India to return the favour by travelling to England next year to play the cancelled Test.

In these difficult times, it is important to spare a thought for players' mental health, who were driven to take the decision of "refusing" to play the final Test. Their fears of getting infected were genuine and the Indians were not the only one to be compelled into taking such a stand. Australia postponing their tour to South Africa was among the prominent fixtures that failed to take off.

Spending long periods in quarantine has taken its toll on all sportspersons. The Indian Premier League 2021 has seen quite a few players withdrawing from the competition in Dubai. And Kohli deciding to quit T20 captaincy after the World Cup this year sums up the cricket in the pandemic — it is too exacting.

(The writer has been a sports journalist for 35 years with The Hindu and Sportstar. He has authored five books on cricket.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

TAPPING THE RIGHT POTENTIAL

Sir — A bird sitting on a tree is never afraid of the branch breaking because her trust is not on the branch but on its wings. Likewise, every business today is at the mercy of its IT infrastructure. A rigid infrastructure can render some organisations incapable of tapping into new opportunities. Server Message Blocks (SMBs) today are challenged by the increasingly complex and demanding modern requirements put on their IT infrastructure. To overcome these hurdles, SMBs are implementing next-generation Hyper Converged Infrastructure (HCI) solutions that bring increased agility, flexibility and growth to meet demands such as sustainable IT costs, better application performance and better data storage scalability and efficiency.

This enables SMEs to combine agility and flexibility with the control, visibility, and performance of an agile environment. Thus, you can streamline IT operations with fast, efficient, resilient and intelligent hyper-converged platforms when you choose consistency and simplicity. Having faced lockdown and other hurdles, it is time to look for a win-win situation. We should be able to win over a tight situation.

MR Jayanthi | Coimbatore

THE BIGGER PICTURE

Sir — It is no doubt that Virat Kohli is India's most celebrated player in cricket. He, as a Captain, performs best in every format of the game, whether it be World Cup, ODI or T-20 series. But it is appreciative that he himself came forward to name Rohit Sharma, and decided to quit T-20 captaincy for the best of the team. Kohli made a good decision for the team by himself creating space for his comrade Rohit, who is also exceptionally successful in the T-20 format.

The trend of change in captaincy is the ultimate law of change. What earlier MS Dhoni and other captains did, needs to be done by Virat also. As a player, it is more important to ensure the victory of the team rather than personal records.

Humanity proves costly



The raids, euphemistically called 'search operations' and 'surveys' at the houses and offices of Sonu Sood and Harsh Mander by the Income Tax Department and the Enforcement Directorate respectively were politically motivated and typical of the Modi Government. These were just the latest in a series of raids conducted by central agencies as part of intimidatory tactics. Sonu Sood and Harsh Mander are patriotic men who serve their country well; they are much loved and highly respected for their service to the

society. Sonu Sood has been extolled as a 'real life hero' for arranging food and transportation to migrant workers during lockdowns and oxygen supply to hospitals treating Covid-19 patients amid the oxygen crisis.

It is unfortunate that the Government unleashes central agencies on those who do not side with it or toe its line as a matter of routine. It has not spared even a well-known public intellectual and a tireless campaigner for human rights as Harsh Mander. The Government seems to think that anyone who is not with it is against it and deserves to be proceeded against and painted in a bad light. The irony is that real economic offenders enjoy political patronage and get off scot-free. The raids of this kind smack of witch-hunt and do our democracy no proud. Sonu Sood and Harsh Mander deserve recognition for their good work; the Government can make amends to them for the raids by conferring them on them.

G David Milton | Maruthancode

After all, a player cannot place himself superior to his team. Placing Rohit Sharma as captain is a good decision. Rohit and Virat are almost equivalent in terms of talent and quality. Rohit Sharma is a calm and talent loaded player, no doubt that he will definitely lead the men in blue in a prominent way.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

AN ALARMING PHENOMENON

Sir — Since time, immemorial man and environment are intrinsically linked as the progress and development of the former hinges on the latter. However, human activities over the last few decades like rapid urbanisation, excessive mining, vehicular pollution, indiscriminate cutting of forests etc have altered the balance beyond recognition. In recent years, the increasing trend of forest fires engulfing many parts of the world, floods, droughts and frequency of cyclones becoming a routine affair can be attributed to climate change. This has a tendency to alter our

biodiversity, which is an alarming signal.

Climate change is a universal phenomenon which can be gauged from the recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). According to the report, global temperatures might rise by 1.5 per cent by 2030 due to excessive harnessing of nature. The global climate architecture is now governed by the Paris Agreement of 2015. The World Ozone Day is celebrated on September 16 every year to commemorate The Montreal Protocol signed in 1987 to limit and phase out man-made ozone-depleting chemicals like CFCs in a time-bound manner. The ozone layer lies in the stratosphere which prevents harmful ultraviolet rays from entering the earth's surface. The climate crisis can only be overcome by global cooperation and shifting to green and low carbon energy.

Vijay Adhikari | Nainital

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

The Indian Constitution has been amended as many as 127 times, so why can it not be amended once again to scrap the farm laws?



Punjab Chief Minister

—Amarinder Singh

If a comprehensive Government is not formed in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran will suffer more than any other country.

Iranian President

—Ebrahim Raisi

Success for me is offering listeners a song that transports them to the zone of the song. I think 'Kanta Laga' did just that.



Singer

—Honey Singh

Virat has been a true asset for Indian cricket. He is one of the most successful captains in all the formats.

BCCI president

—Sourav Ganguly

We can bring our start-ups and entrepreneurs together to create the innovative spirit towards making India a stakeholder in emerging technology.



Prime Minister

—Narendra Modi

FIRST COLUMN

AUTO-EUGENICS IN AMERICA

Most Americans dying of COVID are not vaccinated, and most of them are Republicans



GWYNNE DYER

Eugenics was a 20th-century pseudo-science that purported to improve the human breed by weeding out the 'least fit', often by measures like compulsory sterilisation or, in the case of the Nazis, death camps. But this is the 21st century, and now people can do it for themselves. 'Auto-eugenics' is the just-named phenomenon in which the excessively gullible and the intellectually challenged are weeding themselves out. It's most prominent in the United States, where 28 per cent of Americans say they do not plan to get vaccinated against coronavirus or are unsure whether they will do so. The only country in the developed world where vaccine refuseniks are more numerous is Russia, where they at least have the excuse that the state lies to them about everything all the time. Covid deaths in the United States last week were running around two thousand a day, whereas in Canada, right next-door, they were around thirty. President Joe Biden was on national television a few days ago urging unvaccinated Americans to



get the jabs, and declaring 'vaccine mandates' that oblige federal employees and companies that employ more than one hundred people to do so. He even allowed himself a little anger towards the more than 80 million Americans who are still refusing vaccination. But there's a puzzle here. Deep down, Biden must realise that the unvaccinated are doing him a favour by dying in large numbers. More than 97 per cent of those two thousand dead a day are not vaccinated, and it's a safe bet that at least 90 per cent of them are Republicans. The vast majority of anti-vaxxers who are still alive by next year's mid-term elections will vote Republican, and if they all make it that far then the present ultra-thin Democratic majorities in both houses of Congress could easily evaporate. In the circumstances, therefore, Biden's attempt to keep Republican voters alive borders on the quixotic. Or does it? A more cynical analysis suggests that he may be making a two-way bet. He is getting credit for doing his duty as president and trying to protect all Americans' lives, but at the same time the added pressure that his new measures put on anti-vaxxers is likely to drive them even deeper into their rejection of science and logic.

Republican governors from Georgia to Arizona are already planning to make legal challenges to his new vaccine mandates, and at the least they will probably manage to tie them up in the courts long enough to ensure that lots more Republican voters die. So in the end it comes down a kind of race. On the one hand, almost all Republican-controlled states are passing new voter-suppression measures to make voting harder for Democratic supporters, and especially for those who are poor and/or non-white. On the other hand, a significant proportion of Republican voters are striving to remove themselves from the gene pool by refusing to be vaccinated, and they can't vote Republican if they are dead. Losing an extra 50,000 guaranteed Republican voters to Covid-19 each month is bound to have an impact in at least some marginal elections next year. Which trend will shift the needle more strongly remains to be seen, but it is bound to a topic of furious in-house debate among Republican electoral strategists. You can safely assume that they have the relevant numbers at their fingertips, but that they are finding it almost impossible to shift the ideology. It's generally seen as insensitive to talk about this sort of thing in public, but admit it: wouldn't you like to be a fly on the wall when they debate this matter among themselves?

(Gwynne Dyer's new book is 'The Shortest History of War'. The views expressed are personal.)

India and Australia: Emerging global leaders

In the post-COVID order, the US alone may be unable to guarantee international peace and security, and India and Australia have to step in

The inaugural Australia India 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue between the Australian Defence Minister Peter Dutton, Foreign Minister Marise Payne and their Indian counterparts Rajnath Singh and S Jaishankar was held when the constellation of bilateral and strategic determinants could not have been more favourably placed. Bilateral ties, elevated to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in June 2020, have reached a historical high, emerged as an important cog in the rapidly evolving world hierarchy, as Jaishankar once argued. New Delhi and Canberra have hitched on to the tide that propels bilateral, trilateral and quadrilateral engagements.



ASHUTOSH MISRA

(The writer is the CEO, Institute for Australia India Engagement and Editor-in-Chief, India News Australia. The views expressed are personal.)

The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has initiated a timely and well-advised review of the Peter Varghese's report, 2018, An India Economic Strategy to 2035, in the context of altered international diplomatic and economic settings. There was a need to recalibrate bilateral trade strategies and diplomatic engagements. On the other hand, India's Australia Economic Strategy authored by Anil Wadhwa has been launched at the right time. The two reports together are critical for realigning business and trade strategies amid rising bilateral tensions with China and in sync with Australian Senator Simon Birmingham who said, "Australia must look into



alternative markets in the European Union and India". There is no denying that bilateral bonhomie has been driven by COVID-19's impact and Australia's growing tensions with China over the treatment of Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang, Hong Kong crackdown, alleged foreign interference in Australia's internal political functioning, tariff wars and impact of the pandemic on the one hand, and India's

troubled ties with China, especially military conflict in Doklam and Ladakh, on the other. Senator Marise Payne has been a vociferous critic of China, and Member of Parliament Peter Dutton unsparing in accusing China for cyber-attacks on Australia. Jaishankar has reiterated that ties are independent of their respective relationships with China, and both sides have dismissed Quad as a future "Asian NATO". Both the US-India and India-Australia ties are seen as 'natural' partnerships, for upholding democracy, respect for territorial sovereignty and unrestrained access to global common goods. Quad's evolution as a rising "concert of democracies", which Australia has described

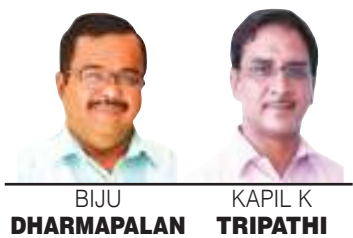
as an "anchor of peace and stability in the region" has bolstered bilateral understanding. The 2+2 joint press statement reaffirms this realization, while anchoring the defence ties on three Cs - comfort (of the bilateral relationship in strategic and security spheres), convergence (over security matters) and commitment (to free, open and rules-based Indo-Pacific). The re-entry of Australia in the Malabar exercise and the Mutual Logistical Support Agreement are two key developments denoting fresh thinking in not only New Delhi and Canberra, but also in Washington and Tokyo on the Indo-Pacific. At a trilateral front, India's 'Act East' policy, Australia's 'Pacific Step-up'

and Indonesia's 'Global Maritime Fulcrum' (GMF) complement one another. India employs to elevate its Act East policy based on commerce, culture and connectivity, in sync with the seven-point Indo-Pacific Vision that PM Modi articulated at the Shangri-La Dialogue in 2018, and vision SAGAR (Security and Growth for all in the Region). Act East policy complements Australia's 2018 Pacific-Step Up too in addressing challenges related to states' sovereignty and regional stability, security and prosperity. Similarly, Indonesia's 2014 GMF affirms Indonesia's vital interests as an archipelagic state at the crossroads of contending major power interests. The GMF prioritized the strength-

ening of the regional architecture to prevent the hegemony of major powers and promote comprehensive maritime cooperation in the Indian Ocean, including the Indian Ocean Rim Association. Similarly, the Australia-Japan-India and the India-France-Australia trilaterals also adhere to the Quad-based commitments. In sum, while Australia and India ties turned a new leaf in the early 2000s, what has changed in 20 years is a growing convergence of bilateral and strategic interests and a realisation that in the evolving post-Covid-19 order, the US alone may not be able to guarantee international peace and security, for which they will have to step-up their desired roles.

Using science for a self-reliant India

From agriculture to artificial intelligence, Indian science has seen a resurgence over the last one year and made notable contributions to several domains



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

KAPIL K TRIPATHI

The clarion call for Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan (self-reliant India campaign) by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has brought about a tremendous transformation in the nation's scientific landscape. The scientists from our public sector research institutions took up the call and initiated many projects in mission mode to nurture an ecosystem that promotes research and innovation.

From agriculture to artificial intelligence, Indian science has seen a resurgence during the past one year. The scientists have come out with great innovations that can compete with any in the western world. The quantum of research output produced during the Covid-19 pandemic is commendable. India became the first country to come out with a DNA-based coronavirus vaccine.

Science will gather acceptance only if it reaches the masses. In order to disseminate these research outputs to public, the India Science Channel, the national Science channel of our country, is producing a series of short movies under the category 'Science for a Self-Reliant India' since January 2021, through OTT platform.

The programmes are telecast both in Hindi and English so that they reach the maximum viewers. During the pandemic, the channel has produced several programmes to disseminate information regarding the covid research coming out from our research laboratories. Programmes like Tackling Covid-19: Masks, Diagnostic kits, Ventilator, An indigenous Covid-19 vaccine, India's Battle for Oxygen Supply, Vaccine: India Fights Back, The Mystery of SARS-CoV-2 Mutations, Battling Covid-19: Dynamic Interventions, Covid-19 Vaccines and Road Ahead, highlighted the our efforts in tackling the deadly disease.

India has also developed an impressive track record in genomic research and biotechnology. The Department of Bio-Technology has been working on mission mode to provide a roadmap and an added impetus towards the growing field of genomics research in areas like cancer, hereditary diseases like diabetes to the sequencing of viruses like Covid-19.

The episode "India's Genomics Mission" highlights the contributions of National Centre for Microbial Resource (NCMR), which is a part of the National Centre for Cell Science, Pune, Centre for Brain Research at the Indian Institute of Science and Centre for DNA Fingerprinting and Diagnostics, Hyderabad.

The episode highlights some of the flagship programmes towards making India a leader in genomic research programmes like the Genome India Project, the Human Microbiome Initiative and the National Genomic Core.

Tremendous developments have



AS INDIA'S URBAN POPULATION RAPIDLY GROWS — THE COUNTRY FACES MAJOR ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH THE QUANTUM AND KIND OF WASTE GENERATED EACH DAY. THE WASTE NOT ONLY HAS A DIRECT IMPACT ON OUR HEALTH AND THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMY, BUT ON THE ENTIRE ECOSYSTEM

(Biju Dharmapalan is a popular science writer. Kapil K Tripathi is a scientist at Vigyan Prasar, New Delhi. The views expressed are personal.)



made in the field of alternative energy sources like Solar Energy.

The episode on "Solar Energy" tracks the science that propelled the indigenous photovoltaic cell and solar panel. In order to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels government has initiated e-mobility project. The 'Going Electric' focus on the movement to transition to electric vehicles in India, a critical move that will help both the environment and the economy.

The Government of India has a multipronged strategy to reduce imports by increasing indigenous production of biofuels in the Indian energy basket-like blending ethanol to petroleum by 20 per cent and biodiesel to diesel by five per cent. Multiple initiatives to increase indigenous production of biofuels have been taken up. The movie 'India's Push for Greener and Cleaner Fuel' highlights the contributions made by CSIR-Indian Institute of Petroleum in the field of biodiesel production.

Agriculture, including the animal husbandry sector, which is the back bone of our rural economy, also made tremendous developments to improve productivity. The programmes like 'Improving oilseed production', 'Transforming Lives Through Temperate Horticulture', 'The Fragrance Economy', 'The Cattle factor', 'High Altitude Animal Husbandry', 'Cold Water Fishery in Kashmir', 'India's Milk Story', etc., telecast on the channel highlighted how science is transforming rural economy.

The country has been at the fore front of developing assistive

devices for the disabled. The episode 'Assistive Devices for the Disabled' explores how technology can power assistive devices that help people with disability overcome some of the barriers they face in life.

As India's urban population rapidly grows - the country faces major environmental challenges associated with the quantum and kind of waste generated each day. The waste not only has a direct impact on our health and the country's economy, but on the entire ecosystem. The movie, 'India's Solid Waste Management Strategy', showcases few innovative techniques and technologies for Solid Waste Management (SWM) implemented by various municipal corporations as part of Swachh Bharat Mission.

Mobile usage in India is on the rise. By 2023, over 55 per cent of our population will be using not just any phone, but a smart-phone.

The problem is that people are buying imported phones and accessories, not Indian ones, to meet our smartphone needs. The episode 'The Indian Mobile Phone Sector' track how India is upping her manufacturing capacity in the mobile phone sector.

Indian has made notable contributions in infrastructure developments especially in high altitude Roads, bridges and tunnels. They are of vital importance for a nation to grow, develop, protect and indeed become Atmanirbhar. The episode 'Sela Tunnel Project - Making the Impossible Possible' takes viewers to the Balipara-Chardwar Tawang Road

or BCT, which connects the hinterland to the border areas of Tibet and China. The episode also covers the Sela Tunnel Project being excavated and built at over 13,000 feet and highlights the contributions of Border Road Organization in nation building.

Science should be propagated among the children if we need to develop scientific temper in our society. Toys can be used as a perfect teaching model to promote science education among children, unfortunately most of scientific toys are imported. In the episode 'Science Through Play', the indigenous toy-making industries like Stemrobo and Smartivity are highlighted.

The future of science belongs to AI technology as it is going to transform our society. The episode 'Robotics in India' highlights the advancements made by India in this sector. The contributions of start-up companies like Gridbots from Ahmedabad, Asimov Tech from Kerala, are showcased in this episode.

The country has indeed made commendable achievements in every field of science and technology.

The India Science channel has been at the forefront in dissipating the scientific information and acts as a bridge between scientists and society. The channel within a short span of time has emerged as the most wanted source of reliable scientific content for the academic community as well as the common man. The channel also uses social media platforms effectively in its effort to make science more popular.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

BENGAL WILL PROTECT HINDUSTAN AND WILL NOT ALLOW IT TO BECOME PAKISTAN OR TALIBAN. —WEST BENGAL CM MAMATA BANERJEE



SHE SHOULD SAY THIS 'PAKISTAN THING' TO HER MINISTER FIRHAD HAKIM, WHO TALKS ABOUT 'MINI PAKISTAN'. —BJP LEADER PRIYANKA TIBREWAL



Housing demand to rise on SBI's decision to offer loan at 6.7 pc

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's residential property market is expected to witness a strong consumer demand during the festival season with various banks, including SBI, providing concessional interest rates on home loans, according to real estate developers and consultants.

They also hoped that other public and private banks would soon announce their festival offers on interest rates on home loans and processing fees.

On Thursday, the country's largest lender State Bank of India announced various festive offers for prospective home loan customers, including a credit score-linked home loan starting at 6.70 per cent, irrespective of the loan amount. Earlier, a borrower availing a home loan above Rs 75 lakh had to pay an interest rate of 7.15 per cent.

Anarock group Chairman Anuj Puri said: "This is an



extremely competitive move by SBI, and it virtually negates all the previous limitations which applied to special home loan interest rates. Instead of focussing on just budget housing, this new interest rate is genuinely democratic as buyers from any budget bandwidth will benefit."

Puri termed the SBI's decision as "aptly timed" ahead of the festive season.

"This year, we are likely to see significantly improved traction in the housing segment

during this period. Waiving of processing fees and occupation-linked interest premium are added levels of savings," he said.

Puri expected other lenders to follow SBI's footsteps in order to remain competitive.

Vikas Wadhawan, Group CFO, Housing.com, Makaan.com and Proptiger.com, said the reduction in home loan interest rates by SBI will help the sector gain further momentum.

"Prices are already subdued

and buyers will be able to save a little more money," he added.

Amit Goyal, CEO, India Sotheby's International Realty, said the rate cut by some of the country's leading banks will act as a catalyst for faster decisions.

"SBI decision to offer lower interest rate irrespective of the prices of the unit or loan amount is likely to benefit buyers in the luxury segment as well. Given the upcoming festive season, which is considered auspicious by a large number of Indians to make big-ticket purchases, the timing of reduction in interest rate couldn't have been better," he added. Raul Kapoor, COO Andromeda, said the reduction in interest rates by major banks is expected to give a boost to the resurgent real estate market, especially during the busy festive season.

Signature Global founder and chairman Pradeep Aggarwal said: "The market is already on the up, and we expect that the recent decision

by the SBI will help turn the table and lead to a substantial increase in sales."

Nayan Raheja, Executive Director, Raheja Developers, said the demand for affordable and mid-segment houses will go up as affordability improves.

"This will be a double dose of benefit for buyers as developers have already kept the prices on a leash, even though construction cost is going up," Raheja added.

Noida-based ABA Corp Director Amit Modi hoped that other private and public sector banks would also announce similar initiatives to revive the market confidence.

"The market has already started seeing sales increase post-May 2021, and the home loan interest rate reduction will further boost the buying sentiment. We are looking forward to a faster recovery and hope the measure will expedite the sector to reach pre-COVID levels sooner than expected," he added.

Reform package will sustain telcos' biz, support 3+1 players structure

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The telecom sector reforms package announced by the government will sustain telcos' businesses, is credit positive for operators, including Airtel and Jio, and provides support for 3+1 players structure, Moody's Investors Service said on Friday.

The views come against the backdrop of a blockbuster relief package announced earlier this week for the telecom sector that includes a four-year break for companies from paying statutory dues, permission to share scarce airwaves, change in the definition of revenue on which levies are paid, and 100 per cent foreign investment through the automatic route.

The measures, aimed at providing relief to companies such as Vodafone Idea that have to pay thousands of crores in unprovisioned past statutory dues, also include the scrapping of Spectrum Usage Charge (SUC) for airwaves acquired in future spectrum auctions.



In a statement on Friday, Moody's said the change in the AGR definition to exclude non-telecom revenue will ultimately boost sectorwide EBITDA (Earnings before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation and Amortisation) as it will reduce licence fees paid by telcos.

All in all, it said, the reforms are credit positive for Indian telecom companies, including Bharti Airtel and Reliance Jio (the telecom arm of Indian conglomerate, Reliance Industries) because they free up cash flow for reinvestment, enable further investment in next-generation technologies and provide support for a

three private plus one state-owned telecom operational structure.

Bharti's leverage has been improving over the last 12 months on the back of better profitability of its core Indian mobile business and capital interventions, it noted.

"Should Bharti opt for the moratorium on payments for past spectrum purchases and AGR (Adjusted Gross Revenue) statutory fees, we expect this could free up around Rs 120 billion-Rs 130 billion (Rs 12,000-13,000 crore) of cash flow annually, which could be used to reduce debt further," it said.

Markets pull back from record highs

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmarks surged to fresh lifetime peaks on Friday but finished with modest losses, snapping their three-session winning streak, as investors rotated out of RIL, metal and IT stocks at higher levels.

After gyrating 866 points during the day, the 30-share BSE Sensex settled 125.27 points or 0.21 per cent lower at 59,015.89. It had surged to a lifetime high of 59,737.32 in the morning session.

Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty slipped 44.35 points or 0.25 per cent to close at 17,585.15, after touching an intra-day record of 17,792.95.

Tata Steel was the top laggard among the Sensex com-



ponents, tumbling 3.57 per cent, followed by SBI, TCS, HUL, Reliance Industries, Sun Pharma and ICICI Bank.

In contrast, Kotak Bank, HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, Maruti, Nestle India and Bajaj Finserv were among the

prominent winners, climbing as much as 5.26 per cent.

During the week, the Sensex surged 710 points or 1.21 per cent, while the Nifty advanced 215.90 points or 1.24 per cent.

"While the pace of vaccination and encouraging export data helped bulls get closer to the 60K mark amidst the FTSE and MSCI rebalancing of flows, profit-taking took away all the gains ahead of the outcome of GST Council meet," said S Ranganathan, Head of Research at LKP Securities.

Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said despite a strong opening, domestic indices gave up early gains to trade flat, driven by profit booking and mixed global sentiments.

ECL instals 250 kW rooftop solar project

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Eastern Coalfields Ltd (ECL), a subsidiary of Coal India, has commissioned a 250-kilowatt (kW) rooftop solar power project, ramping up its total installed solar rooftop capacity to 692 kW, according to a statement.

The project was commissioned on Wednesday, Coal India Ltd (CIL) said in a statement.

"ECL, the West Bengal-located coal-producing subsidiary of Coal India Ltd, commissioned a 250-kW rooftop solar power project on Wednesday ramping up its

total installed solar roof top capacity to 692 kW," the statement said.

The implemented through the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI), the newly installed 250 kW plant set up at ECL's headquarters in Sanctoria for captive consumption, has an average generation of 3.65 lakh units per annum.

This is sufficient to meet 12 per cent of the entire average annual power consumption of ECL's headquarters which is 30 lakh units.

The project cost is Rs 65 lakh, excluding SECI's incentive.

PFRDA pension subscriber base rises 24 pc to 4.53 cr till August

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) on Friday said subscriber base under its flagship pension schemes rose by 24 per cent in August this year to over 4.53 crore.

The PFRDA administers two pension schemes -- National Pension System (NPS) and Atal Pension Yojana (APY).

"The number of subscribers in various schemes under the National Pension System (NPS) rose to 453.41 lakh by



end-August 2021 from 365.47 lakh in August 2020 showing a year-on-year increase of 24.06 per cent," the PFRDA said in a release.

The numbers of subscribers under APY grew by 33.20 per cent to 304.51 lakh as of

August 31, 2021, showed PFRDA data.

Asset wise, at August-end, total pension assets under management stood at Rs 6,47,621 crore, showing a year on year growth of 32.91 per cent, it added.

Of this, the assets under APY stood at Rs 18,059 crore, registering a growth of nearly 33 per cent from a year ago.

NPS mainly caters to the organised sector including the central and state government employees, autonomous bodies, private corporations, among others.

Gold tumbles Rs 1,130; silver declines Rs 708

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold in the national capital on Friday tumbled Rs 1,130 to Rs 45,207 per 10 grams reflecting overnight decline in international precious metal prices, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous trade, the precious metal had settled at Rs 46,337 per 10 grams.

In the international market, gold was trading in the green at USD 1,762 per ounce and silver was flat at USD 22.95 per ounce.

"Gold prices traded firm with spot gold prices at COMEX (New York-based

commodity exchange) trading half a per cent up near USD 1,762 per ounce on Friday.

"Gold pared some losses on Friday after falling to five-week lows following strong US retail sales data," said HDFC Securities Senior Analyst (Commodities) Tapan Patel.

Navneet Damani, vice-president (commodities research) of Motilal Oswal Financial Services, said, "Gold prices saw a slight recovery, although it continues to hover around the one-month lows it made in the (previous) session, amid the rise in dollar, and positive US economic data."



AXA launches free telemedicine helpline in India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Global insurance major AXA on Friday said it has launched a toll-free helpline with NGO partner Sewa International in Delhi NCR, Haryana, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan to provide telemedicine services.

The telemedicine helpline will be for medical ailments and information on the availability of critically needed healthcare supplies in response to the COVID-19 crisis in India.

The helpline, Supportive Action Across Telemedicine and Healthcare (SAATH), is a joint corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative between AXA entities with local operations including AXA France Vie Reinsurance branch, AXA GO Business Operations and AXA XL in India. In addition to telemedicine services, it will provide information on: availability of hospital beds and oxygen cylinders; ambulance assistance; home Intensive Care Unit setup information; food supplies for COVID-19 patients; access to psychologists; and more.

Redington to retail iPhones from its over 3,500 stores

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Redington, a supply chain solutions provider, will offer the latest range of iPhone 13 Pro and 13 Pro Max at its retail stores in 3,500 locations across the country.

The city-based company has partnered with private sector HDFC Bank to provide cash back offers on the full range of iPhones, the company said in a statement on Friday.

iPhone 13 and 13 Pro Max were recently launched by the Cupertino-based Apple Inc. Powered by the A15 bionic

chip, the handset would be available in the 3,500 retail locations in various colours, the release said.

In view of Covid-19 pandemic, the company said it was providing time slots for those customers who pre-book the device to make their purchase.

Apple recently unveiled iPhone 13, iPhone 13 mini, iPhone 13 Pro and iPhone 13 Pro Max with prices ranging from Rs 69,900 to Rs 1,79,900. Customers and regions would be able to pre-order the phones from Friday, Apple said in a statement.

PNB cuts repo-based lending rate by 25 bps to 6.55 percent

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Punjab National Bank (PNB) on Friday said it has slashed the repo-based lending rate by 25 basis points (bps) to 6.55 per cent.

"The repo-linked lending rate (RLLR) has been changed from 6.80 per cent to 6.55 per cent, with effect from September 17, 2021 (Friday)," PNB said in a regulatory filing.

The RLLR was introduced in October 2019. It is a floating rate-based personal or



retail loan that is linked to external benchmarks, such as the repo rate of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

Repo is the rate at which the RBI lends money to commercial banks for their short-term requirements.

UK hopes to complete FTA talks with India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The UK on Friday expressed hope that it will be able to soon complete the negotiations for the proposed Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with India, a move aimed at further enhancing trade and investment ties between the two countries. "I can confidently predict that we will complete the India-UK FTA before we see an India-EU FTA completed," UK Investment Minister Lord Gerry Grimstone said.

Social media influencers to corner Rs 900 cr in '21

PNS ■ MUMBAI

With the trend of peddling brands over social media platforms catching up, influencer marketing is pegged to be a Rs 900 crore market in India by the end of the year, according to a report by media buyer Groupm.

The fledgling category is expected to grow 25 per cent annually to become a Rs 2,200 crore industry by 2025, the INCA India Influencer Report said.

It can be noted that with the growth in internet penetration, the proliferation of social media platforms has grown,



which has been seized up by brands by engaging with influencers to push their message.

A self-regulatory body of advertisers has also come out with operating guidelines for

such 'influencers'.

The influencer marketing industry is undergoing a transformation triggered by the pandemic as well as the rise of brands looking to connect with

consumers directly, the Groupm report said.

Even before the pandemic, India had 400 million people on social media platforms and the number has skyrocketed during the last 18 months, it said, adding there is a shift in consumer behaviour as well.

"The key factor that has got brands interested is the bond of trust and authenticity that influencers share with their audiences, thus helping brands associate with an influencer to leverage the same," Groupm's chief executive for South Asia Prasanth Kumar said.

The report said top four categories - personal care (25 per

cent), food and beverages (20 per cent), fashion and jewellery (15 per cent) and mobile and electronics (10 per cent) - contribute 70 per cent volume of influencer marketing.

Interestingly, celebrities corner only 27 per cent of the marketing dollars while a bulk 73 per cent are taken by influencers, it said.

Nearly two-thirds of the Indian population follow an influencer, it said.

Brands are able to interpret that influencers and creative storytelling correlate with brand differentiation, a key advantage as attention spans get shorter, the report said.

Wholesale edible oil prices showing declining trend

The Centre on Friday said prices of eight types of edible oils in the wholesale markets across the country are showing a declining trend over the last week after it took several measures to boost domestic supply and curb hoarding.



The wholesale prices of groundnut, mustard oil, vanaspathi, sunflower oil, palm oil, coconut oil and sesame oil declined during the week ended September 14, it said in a statement. According to Consumer Affairs Ministry, the wholesale price of palm oil fell 2.50 per cent to Rs 12,349 per tonne as on September 14 from Rs 12,666 per tonne a week ago. While wholesale price of sesame oil slipped 2.08 per cent to Rs 23,500 per tonne, coconut oil eased by 1.72 per cent to Rs 17,100 per tonne. Similarly, wholesale rate of sunflower oil fell 1.30 per cent to Rs 15,965 per tonne as on September 14 from Rs 16,176 per tonne a week ago."

Rupee settles 4 paise higher at 73.48 against US dollar

The rupee closed 4 paise higher at 73.48 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, tracking the broad weakness of the American currency in the overseas market.



At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened flat at 73.49 against the greenback. During the session, the domestic unit witnessed an intra-day high of 73.42 and a low of 73.55. In the previous session, the rupee had settled at 73.52 against the US dollar. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.12 per cent to 92.82. "Indian rupee recovered after Thursday's weakness on back of FTSE rebalancing related inflows and weakness in dollar against Asian currencies. Rupee manages to find some ground this week after two weeks high voltage price action," said Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities.

Tata Motors drives in Safari Gold Edition at Rs 21.89 lakh

Tata Motors on Friday said it has launched a special edition of its flagship model Safari priced at Rs 21.89 lakh (ex-showroom) to further spruce up the range ahead of the festive season. The Safari Gold Edition, which comes in two carefully crafted special colour schemes -- The White Gold and The Black Gold -- is set to be showcased at the upcoming second leg of the VIVO IPL 2021. The interiors have been further enhanced with premium features like leather seats with ventilation on both the first and second rows, wireless charger, air purifier, Android Auto & Apple Carplay over Wifi, making it the most impressive version of the Safari yet, the auto major said in a statement.



"In less than five months after its launch, our premium flagship SUV, the new Safari reached the milestone of its 10,000th rollout and today is among the highest selling SUVs in its segment. "The Safari has received immense love from our customers and keeping in mind the response, we are delighted to announce the introduction of the prestigious Safari #Gold Edition."



K-pop defining pop culture today

AISHWARYA D

K-pop, very unexpectedly, this term has become a part of our daily lives. So much so, that at least one K-pop fan shook the life out of you to listen to this new genre of music. Fans, also called the Army, have been going wild over the Korean artists! They find them so alluring that despite a looming Coronavirus around us, many deeply wished to have a K-pop concert in the city. Any breaking news about K-pop becomes a sensation. That is how pertinent it has become in our lives.

Discussing more about the insights on K-pop, who hasn't heard about the bands 'BTS', 'NCT', 'BlackPink', etc.? *The Pioneer's* correspondent dives deep into the subject and finds out from admirers across the city on how K-pop is easing out here in Hyderabad.

Originated in South Korea as part of their culture, it is the abbreviation for Korean popular music, which started gaining popularity in the 2000s. As per reports, most people, in general, found no interest in foreign language music

before, hence when K-pop was introduced, some music lovers called it cringy! Eventually, people actually started going crazy over the music, choreography, and its singers! There are a few large entertainment companies like SM, Big Hit which have now changed to (Hybe), JYP because they roll in Korea right now.

A keen K-pop lover from the city, Ranjana Verma shares, "My friend introduced me to K-pop. Initially, it was maddening but after a while, the melody and the music were so likable, that it got registered in my mind to the effect of me being addicted to it. Their music, visuals are really good-looking, the musicians put in a lot of effort, they practice and work hard to make it a success and you can watch their efforts through their vlogs and reels that they put online. If you must know, most of the singers have pre-recorded concerts but these guys have their concerts live and it's energetic, they sing and dance with coordination, it's fun and most importantly the public enjoys seeing them. Their only motto is to make fans happy."

The change in people's views has actually given

this new genre of music a new curvature; it has expanded the possibilities of more bands to emerge. Another fan of K-pop Jannath Sherin says, "I fully got into it in 2019 but when *Gangnam Style* went viral in 2013, nobody knew it was a Korean track. Much later when 'BTS' started performing in AMAs, it just blew up. Korean songs, I feel, have a lot of deep meaning to them, it really motivates the listener if they are under stress, which really was what attracted me. At the moment, I am listening to 'NCT'. I can relate to their music, they make the music with so much intensity and effect."

"The Oscar-winning *Parasite* gave even more popularity to the Korean language, whilst K-pop has low budget releases. No two songs have similar choreography or concept, is what I have noticed. They enjoy what they do," adds one more K-Pop devotee named Tejaswini. The hype is increasing and so is the fandom! With little more additions such as K-drama, their food, culture, and movies, this new love has made Hyderabadis glued to most things Korean and they are enthusiastically waiting their upcoming albums!



SHIKHA DUGGAL

Sports are the pride of our nation and we have seen many of our fellow Hyderabadis making names for themselves in this fraternity. The widely known Hyderabad Football Club co-owned by the Tollywood biggie Rana Daggubati reiterates why we Hyderabadis have such affinity towards the sport of football. Putting the sport back on the map, there came a big announcement where we saw the merger of football crazies with notable personalities — Ajay Devgn starrer *Maidaan*, the new biopic on the well-liked football coach Syed Abdul Rahim is going on floors soon!

Varun Tripuraneni (proprietor of the football club in the city), Amit Sharma (director), Boney Kapoor, Akash Chawla, and Arunava Joy

Sengupta (producers) were all present at the event and so elated about the fact that all over again, a sports biopic is all set to take over the film industry and this time, with an interesting collab, the Hyderabad FC way! "Hyderabad was the most preferable choice for us to set up a football club here, the history of the sport in this region is so deep-rooted! Based on the legacy and glory that our city carries in terms of football has brought us closer to this wonderful project called *Maidaan*," shared Varun.

Since there are so many new football clubs coming up and the youth's interest is building up too, Ajay Devgn exclusively reveals how his nephew advised him to definitely essay the character of Syed Abdul Rahim for all the football lovers out there! He reveals, "Like any other home, my nephew is also a fan of Messi and Ronaldo! When the

producers came through, I made my nephew sit through the narration. When he heard what our Indian football team achieved, he pushed me to do it so that every Indian knows what happened. I had the privilege to meet some of the team members during the shoot, their insights were quite helpful. The reverence they had for their coach left me awestruck! I hope that with the help of Hyderabad FC, our movie reaches all 'maidaans', 'gullies', colleges and every footballer strikes more for the country."

Evidently, the fifties and sixties were dominated by Syed Abdul Rahim, who lovingly was called 'Rahim Saab' in the football arena, and since then, this sport has kicked on from there. There are many more sports biopics in the pipeline, which hints towards the fact that audiences are drawn towards this genre of movies too and that is how the director Amit

Sharma was also keen on making one; however, Boney Kapoor and the other producers were the ones to lunge into this subject as disclosed by the director. The 'Badhaai Ho' director tells us, "I always wanted to make a sports film, football was the right choice to explore more because it has 'action'. The coach's inspirational saga let me know now that India had a rich legacy in football too!" The director, who himself had played from the 'goalkeeper' position, has got so much into the subject of his upcoming film that he says he's all set to meet Messi for interaction too (he laughs).

Whether it was an opportunity to build upon the youth's interest in the sport or the profound love for football itself, *Maidaan* will give a

boost to the grassroots of this sport. Boney Kapoor was found narrating his fondest memories of football from his days, and he said, "I was a football follower, the locality where I used to reside in, considered the sport to be a 'religion'. 'Tilaknagar' was the common ground! My friend and I were the only fortunate guys who had the privilege of having slippers and we turned that into a goalkeeping post (he bursts into laughter), our clothes would get so grimy, we would have bruises, but we dived deep into it."

Bringing the unheard story of the famous Hyderabad coach, *Maidaan* has completed eighty percent of the post-production and it truly is a pompous moment for our city to collaborate with the movie's team.

SHIKHA DUGGAL

A Hyderabad woman is making noise across the world; she's none other than renowned philanthropist Sudha Reddy. Her charitable disposition landed her at the Met Gala and *The Pioneer* grabbed the chance to exclusively get in touch with the buzzing lady to know more about her association with the city of Hyderabad and her stint at the Met Gala 2021. An avid connoisseur of art and fashion, Sudha Reddy is considered amongst the well-heeled jetsetters of South India. She has made the city proud as she is the first Hyderabad based non-film luminary to attend the hotly anticipated global affair. Looking at the headlines of every news portal, it has definitely made our chests swell with pride to see her representing our country so well in her colourful costume signifying this year's Met Gala theme — American Independence.

Landing at the Met Gala 2021 as the only Indian can leave you with surrealism all your life, Sudha Reddy was beyond excited as she was always looking forward to putting India on the world map, and here she is. For her, this was an opportunity to showcase not just her personality but represent her country and her city Hyderabad too! While Met Gala is the greatest fashion night, for her it was an opportunity to propel the cause of benevolence and align with individuals who see the merit and potential in the concept of giving

back to society. "I was slightly nervous at first but I wasn't afraid. I was not sure if I would bump into any other Indian celebrity because you're technically in a sea full of people who you've never met and it takes time to build a personal bond. Since I'm a very private person, being very forthcoming doesn't come very easy to me but I met many like-minded people like Donatella Versace, Gigi Hadid, Karl Lagerfeld, Anna Wintour, and Lil Nas X, so it all went well. I had carried my little Ganesha clutch along with me so all my apprehensions automatically dis-

appeared," she explains. Everyone's talking about her golden embellished outfit! She opted for an opulent haute couture by Indian fashion designer duo Falguni Shane Peacock. Sudha's outfit was a bright gold sculptured gown with a dramatic four-meter metallic train that had a medley of hues borrowed from the American flag! What fully went into the making of the gorgeous outfit, Sudha tells us exclusively, "The dress is inspired by the American Revolution, it took over 250 hours of work to be handcrafted. It was accented with 3D embellishments of Swarovski crystals, sequins, and bugle beads along the gown's train. I wanted to imbibe a lot of

Indianness in my look and since Indians love over-the-top outfits at most outings, I requested Falguni Shane Peacock to be forward-thinking in their approach. We had artisans working round the clock to deliver the outfit in time and the designers were very kind to fly down to Hyderabad on multiple occasions for the fittings!"

When we went on to ask who she thought was the best-dressed celebrity at the occasion, the benefactress says she believes that a costume gala and fashion in every form must be celebrated. Instead, she revealed to us that she was pretty intrigued by Kim Kardashian's choice of outfit and felt she was bang on in bringing to the fore the resilience of the fashion community after a pandemic challenged two whole years, despite all the criticism she's been facing at the moment. She

Philanthropy is my life's purpose too and something that I hold very close to my heart. I have always aspired to shine the spotlight on various socio-economic causes faced by the less fortunate sections of society in India on a global platform, through my various appearances and associations. I hope I fulfilled the cause even this time." Well, we must let the humanitarian know that she definitely surpassed the benefits of business at the event and proceeded towards learning to give! In the end, she also reveals to us that the whole celebrity culture was very understated in the West, the 'paparazzi' were well behaved and there were no starry tantrums or obnoxious showcase of wealth and fame! It was a pure showcase of 'celebrity' and she enjoyed every bit of it.

Falguni Shane Peacock have done a tremendous job again and created a novel, edgy military-inspired look that blends well with the overall theme of the Met Gala. The design resembled fifty independent states of America! Even the clutch that she carried with the outfit was designed in the shape of an embellished Ganesha idol by Judith Leiber, which caught everyone's attention. As a supporter of fine arts, and widely known for her charitable disposition, her presence at the 2021 Met Gala was praised by many!

On a concluding note, Sudha shares, "The Met Gala has been one of the most aspirational landmark events in the world of style, one that is keenly admired by fashion greats.

Monday evening's intimate gathering was special and memorable. It was an extremely rewarding outing for me as I was able to exchange notes with many notable personalities, some of who are extremely keen to explore socio-economic welfare campaigns in association with the Sudha Reddy Foundation in the future. I am extremely humbled and honoured to have received this opportunity to represent my country at this eclectic fashion parade."

THE INDUSTRIES OF FASHION AND ENTERTAINMENT CAN LEND TO LARGER CAUSES GIVEN THE INDUSTRY'S VAST POPULARITY. IT WAS AN HONOUR TO BE INVITED TO SUCH A PRESTIGIOUS GLOBAL EVENT WHERE ECLECTIC MINDS CONGREGATE FOR A CAUSE LARGER THAN THEMSELVES, THAT OF PHILANTHROPY.

also loved the way Rihanna, Billie Eilish, Iman, and Kendall Jenner dressed up for the occasion. The event has indeed gone into the books of history now, Sudha Reddy can admire this chapter all her life! She's so elated about it that she happily tells us, "The industries of fashion and entertainment can lend to larger causes given the industry's vast popularity. It was an honour to be invited to such a prestigious global event where eclectic minds congregate for a cause larger than themselves, that of philanthropy."



MAIDAAN FINDS GROUND IN HYDERABAD

Lagadapati Padma breaks stereotypes, forays into real estate

The real estate industry has most often been male-dominated with very few women in leadership positions. This slowly seems to be changing today and Lagadapati Padma is a huge part of that. The entrepreneur surprised people as she forayed into real estate.

She, along with three others, Prabhakar, Ramesh Patel and Nishant Chawda, announced their ambitious project — RNP Stellar Projects. The launch saw the presence of several women entrepreneurs of the city, including Uma Chigurupati, Chairperson FLO Hyderabad, Usharani Manne of Polmon Instruments Pvt. Ltd; Rekha Reddy, Nidhi Swarup, Maya Patel, Uma, and Manjula Reddy, among others.

"It is our special journey of creating boutique lifestyle homes in Hyderabad," said Padma, a former FLO Chairperson. "Our vision is to create best in class landmark properties to transform 'Community Living' by creating luxury homes," Ramesh Patel added.



"The project is a 195 flats residential 3 BHK high-end project. This G+15 floor high rise venture is coming up at Kondapur," informed Prabhakar. Nishant Chawda, a senior Principal Architect in the industry for more than 20 years, a successful technocrat with interest in diverse businesses says it will be one of the landmarks in the city people will look up to.

The location, promoters, the combination — architects, builders, designers and project management of Tata is their USP, believes Padma. "I have been into construction, real estate, fabrication, biodegradable products manufacturing, she informs. This will be our signature

project; a landmark in the city which people will be proud about," Padma shared. Women are known to be good at balancing work and family, they are known to multitask, which is a critical aspect in real estate, owing to the complex nature of the industry. They tend to bring in a perfect combination of compassion, focus, assertiveness, and determination in various segments of the sector. Thus, women have rightfully started gaining momentum and accepting prominent roles in real estates like never before.

Padma reportedly has ambitious plans and said will share them at an appropriate time, and we can't wait to know what they are!

NZ put off Pak tour over security



FIANS ■ RAWALPINDI

New Zealand have called off their white-ball tour of Pakistan because of security concerns ahead of the first of three ODIs at Pindi Cricket Ground in Rawalpindi on Friday. New Zealand were visiting Pakistan for the first time after 18 years for a white-ball tour featuring three ODIs which were to be followed by five T20Is in Lahore.

Players and support staff members from both sides did not come out of the hotel and were asked to stay in their rooms. Spectators were not allowed to enter the stadium. After a period of uncertainty and chaos caused by the delay apart from rumours of COVID-19 outbreak in either camp, a statement from New Zealand Cricket (NZC) was issued.

"However, following an escalation in the New Zealand Government threat levels for Pakistan, and advice from NZC

security advisors on the ground, it has been decided the BLACK-CAPS will not continue with the tour. Arrangements are now being made for the team's departure," read the NZC statement.

The chief executive of NZC David White said it was simply not possible to continue with the tour given the advice he was receiving. "I understand this will be a blow for the PCB (Pakistan Cricket Board), who have been wonderful hosts, but player safety is paramount and we believe this is the only responsible option."

New Zealand Cricket Players Association chief executive Heath Mills echoed White's sentiments. "We've been across this process throughout and are fully supportive of the decision. The players are in good hands; they're safe -- and everyone's acting in their best interests."

NZC also said it will not comment on the details of the security threat nor the updated

arrangements for the departing squad. New Zealand, led by Tom Latham, had arrived in Islamabad on September 11 after losing a five-match T20I series to Bangladesh 3-2. Since the start of this century, New Zealand first came to Pakistan in 2002 under Stephen Fleming. They had to abandon the tour on the morning of the second Test in Karachi after a bomb exploded outside their team hotel. The last time New Zealand toured Pakistan was in 2003 for a five-match ODI series, which they lost 5-0.

The PCB issued a statement shortly after NZC released one, saying that no security threat of any kind existed for the visitors. "Earlier today, New Zealand Cricket informed us they had been alerted to some security alert and have unilaterally decided to postpone the series."

"Pakistan Cricket Board and Pakistan Government made foolproof security arrangements for all visiting teams. We have

Pak Minister links New Zealand tour cancellation to Afghanistan

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

Hours after the New Zealand cricket team called off its tour of Pakistan just before the start of the first ODI in Rawalpindi, Pakistan Interior Minister Sheikh Rasheed Ahmad said on Friday that the tour was cancelled under an international 'conspiracy', Express Tribune reported.

Addressing a press conference in Islamabad, Ahmad said that he will not name the conspirators. However, he added that some forces want to make Pakistan a scapegoat



after what has been happening in Afghanistan.

The New Zealand authorities do not have substantive proof of a threat in Pakistan, the minister said, hours after the Kiwis cancelled their tour of Pakistan, Geo TV reported.



National Open Athletics: Harmilan Kaur sets national record in 1500m

AP ■ WARANGAL

Punjab's Harmilan Kaur Bains stole the thunder from the sprinters by breaking Sunita Rani's long-standing national record in the 1500 metres on the second day of the 60th National Open Athletics Championships in the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Hanamkonda on Thursday.

The 23-year-old start-to-finish specialist cruised home in 4:05.39 to erase the mark set by Sunita Rani at 4:06.03 in the Asian Games in Busan in 2002. She also shattered OP Jais's meet record of 4:11.83 set in Delhi in 2006. Del's KM Chanda gamely shadowed Harmilan until the Punjab runner sped away at the bell to win by a sizable margin. Harmilan, undefeated in eight national-level 1500m races since January 2020, has shown rapid progress, improving from 4:14.68 in the Khelo India University Games in Bhubaneswar last year to 4:08.70 and 4:08.27 in the Federation Cup (March 16) and Indian Grand Prix 4 (June 21)

respectively in Patiala. On Thursday, she capped it with a National mark, the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) said in a release on Thursday.

It needed such a strong effort to push a couple of good sprint events to the shade. Naresh Kumar (Andhra Pradesh) and Delhi's Tarandeep Kaur took the honours as the fastest male and female athlete of the meet by winning the 100m dash Naresh Kumar's 10.30 seconds win came with the second-fastest time by an Indian in 100m this year behind Gurindervir Singh's 10.27 seconds in Patiala on June 26. It also gave the 23-year-old from Guntur a place among the five fastest sprinters in Indian history. Quite inevitably, it gave him the meet record, improving on Anil Kumar's 10.37 seconds set in 2001.

The race produced personal bests for Assam's Amlan Borgohain and Harjit Singh (Services) with times of 10.34 seconds for both, a photo finish separating them by six-thousandths of a second to secure the silver medal for the former.

England's tour of Pakistan next month in doubt now: Reports



FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

England's tour of Pakistan next month was thrown into doubt on Friday after New Zealand abandoned their international series there on security grounds.

According to a Daily Mail report, the Black Caps did not leave their hotel for the first one-day international and no spectators were admitted to the stadium in Rawalpindi after the country's cricket board received security advice. Before the scheduled time of the toss for the day-nighter, confirmation came that the tourists would be returning

home before a ball had been bowled.

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) then said that they will decide on whether next month's tour of Pakistan can go ahead in the next 48 hours.

"We're aware of New Zealand's decision to pull out of the Pakistan tour due to a security alert," a spokesperson was quoted as saying by standard.co.uk. "We are liaising with our security team who are on the ground in Pakistan to fully understand the situation. The ECB Board will then decide in the next 24-48 hours whether our planned tour should proceed."

Shiva sails into last-16, Gaurav Bidhuri bows out of National Championships

PTI ■ BELLARY

Five-time Asian medallist Shiva Thapa (63.5kg) stormed into the pre-quarter-finals with a knockout victory but former world championship bronze-winner Gaurav Bidhuri (57kg) exited after an opening loss in the men's National Boxing Championships here on Friday.

Representing Assam, Thapa knocked out Shubham Mamta of Steel Plant Sports Board (SPSB) in the opening round of his bout. Shubham was attended to by the medical team after the body shot threw him off balance in the ring.

"There is pain but he should be alright. He will be assessed again tomorrow," a top official at the tournament told PTI. However, Bidhuri (Railways Sports Promotion Board) was upstaged by Haryana's Sachin, who prevailed 4-1 in the bout. Sachin is the reigning youth world champion. Another Haryana pugilist and South Asian Games champion Ankit Khatana made his way into the 75kg quarter-finals after he



out-punched Himachal Pradesh's Dharm Pal in unanimous victory.

Telangana's Savio Dominic Michael (54kg) and Goa's Ashok Patil (67kg) too progressed to the last-eight stage with identical 4-1 victories.

While Savio defeated Jharkhand's Krishna Jora, Ashok Patil got the better of

Himachal Pradesh's Mohan Chander.

Chandigarh's Kuldeep Kumar (48kg) and Sachin were among the other boxers to make progress on the third day of the Championships.

Kuldeep booked a berth in the quarter-finals after an easy 4-0 win over Rajasthan's Sushil Sahran.

Sharath named chairman of BCCI junior selection committee

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian cricket board (BCCI) on Friday appointed the national junior selection committee with former Tamil Nadu batsman Sridharan Sharath as its chairman.

While S. Sharath is the representative selector from South Zone, former Gujarat wicket-keeper-batsman Pathik Patel is the selector from West Zone and former Bengal medium-pacer Ranadeb Bose is from East Zone. Former Punjab batsman Krishan Mohan, who is now with Himachal Pradesh in coaching capacity, is the North Zone selector while ex-Madhya Pradesh pacer Harvinder Singh Sodhi is the selector from Central Zone.

"Former Tamil Nadu captain Mr Sharath Sridharan will head the committee," said a statement from the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI). The first cricketer to play 100 Ranji Trophy matches for Tamil Nadu, Sharath scored 8700 runs, including 27 centuries and 42 half-centuries in 139 first-class matches with an impressive average of 51.17, during his 15-year-long domestic career.

Not getting selected for T20 World Cup not the end of it all: Pacer Siraj



FIANS ■ MUMBAI

Indian pace bowler Mohammed Siraj has said that the recently-concluded Test tour of England was a "great experience" and that he was happy that he could repose the faith of his captain Virat Kohli during the series.

Siraj played a key role in India taking a 1-0 lead in the series, notching eight wickets in the Lord's Test, which led to the visitors winning the tie by 151 runs.

"The England tour was a great experience by any stretch of imagination. I am glad that I could repose the faith of my captain Virat bhai, head coach Ravi Shastri, the support staff and the entire team," the 27-year-old, who has so far amassed 30 wickets in the nine Tests, told Sportstar on Thursday.

Siraj though said that he was a bit disappointed at not being selected in the side for the ICC T20 World Cup in the UAE and Oman in October-November this year.

"Well, selection is not in our hands. It was certainly a dream to play in the T20 World Cup. But, again, that is not the end of it all. I have many more goals -- the biggest being to play a lead role in helping the team to win matches," said Siraj.

"I will take things as they come for I believe in destiny and be content in whatever opportunities I get even as the pursuit for excellence at the highest level continues," he added.

Siraj said that sharing the ball with the likes of pace stalwarts Ishant Sharma and Mohammed Shami was a great experience.

Elyse Perry set to return to new-ball role against India women

FIANS ■ MACKAY

Australian women's team pace bowler Elyse Perry, who is set to return to her role as new-ball bowler after her career over the past 18 months was hampered by hamstring injury, has termed the forthcoming ODI series against India as an opportunity.

"With Megan Schutt missing for this series, there might be more opportunity there with the new ball, especially initially," said Perry ahead of the ODI series against Indian women's team that begins on Tuesday (September 21).

Perry, who has picked 298 international wickets across 246 Tests, ODIs and T20s, is just one of seven bowlers to have taken 150 wickets in women's ODIs.

She barely bowled during the one-day series against New Zealand in March-April, sending down just six overs in the first two matches as first change. She didn't bowl in the third ODI.

F1 drivers Vettel, Stroll to remain with Aston Martin for next season

FIANS ■ LONDON

Formula 1 team Aston Martin have confirmed an unchanged pairing of Sebastian Vettel and Lance Stroll for next year.

Vettel had joined Aston Martin from Ferrari at the start of this season, netting the team's first podium at the Azerbaijan Grand Prix. The four-time champion will continue his journey with the British team next year alongside Canadian driver Stroll, as Formula 1 moves into its new era of regulations.

"I am really looking forward to racing the new generation of Formula 1 cars," said Vettel. "Their look is very different and the new technical regulations should give us cars that can race much more closely than recently," the German told formula1.com on Thursday.

"More exciting racing will be great for the drivers as well as for the fans. The changes are so big that every team will be starting from a new beginning, so it will be a great opportunity for us at Aston Martin? I believe in the strength of our new growing team, so I am already looking forward to 2022."

Stroll, meanwhile, added, "Next season I will be embarking on my sixth year in Formula 1, alongside my teammate Sebastian? and I greatly look forward to continuing the journey with him



next year. We have not achieved what we set out to do this year, but that has only amplified our hunger and drive for success next season."

Vettel was signed to Aston Martin on a 'one plus one' contract, giving the team an option on his services for 2022, which they decided to take up. Speaking of his driver line-up for 2022, Team Principal Otmar Szafnauer said, "Lance is one of the most gifted drivers in modern Formula 1, and to that raw talent he is now adding serious racecraft."

"A four-time world champion, having driven 271 Grands Prix, of which he has won 53, Sebastian is also a massive asset to our team, and next year we expect both of them to race well in what will be a very different formula from the current one."

Academic & sporting excellence achievable: Paralympic medallist & IAS officer Suhas

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

Suhas Yathiraj lives by the philosophy of 'sports helps you conquer your own self'. And he lived by his own words by clinching a silver medal in badminton at the Tokyo Paralympics. Significantly, his achievement also helped break a common stereotype in India that does not equate sporting excellence with academics.

Yathiraj is an officer in the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), having achieved success in one of the toughest examinations in the country at the very first attempt.

It was only in 2015/16 that he turned into a professional parabadminton player and has since then been managing his duty as the District Magistrate of Gautam Buddha Nagar and his training as a sportsperson to good effect.

"I think this (Tokyo Paralympics) medal was celebrated by everyone in the country. The amount of reception that we got in New Delhi airport (shows that)," Yathiraj told Olympics.com. "I think the myth that studies and sports can't be pursued together has



been broken. Many are surprised that a person can be good in both studies and sports.

"Parents also want their children to be good in studies and sports. They look at studies as the more stable option. I think many of the youth can at least get the confidence to pursue both," he added.

The celebration at home around his achievement at the Paralympics medal also makes him believe that the Tokyo Olympics

and Paralympics was a watershed moment for India as it helped to develop a sporting culture.

"The amount of support, love that everyone is showing is great. There was a time when celebrities in the country used to be film stars and only cricketers," Yathiraj said.

"But I think now, the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics would be a watershed moment in the history of India, because of the amount of adulation and recognition the Olympians and Paralympians are getting. I think it's definitely heart-warming," he added.

And badminton remains a spiritual experience for him. He, however, is extremely methodical in his approach towards the sport and likes to work on its crucial details.

"Badminton is meditation for me. I am extremely methodical, I develop my attack skills, defense skills, my reach. I work minutely on that part and also how I would cope up in the match. I visualize matches in my head. So yeah, I do have methods that give me comfort while playing," Yathiraj explained. Moreover, he is not active on

social media and stays away from it, in part because of his professional role and because he believes that it doesn't add value to his life. "I am not at all a reserved person. Because of the administrative job that I hold, I have intentionally kept myself away from social media because I don't see any value addition through it. I have always believed that we should not go behind fame or money or anything," Yathiraj said.

Yathiraj, 38, also considers the silver medal at Tokyo Paralympics will motivate him to go one better at Paris Paralympics in 2024.

Yathiraj, who has an impairment to his ankle, overcame the challenges thrown at him to excel in badminton. And he has several international achievements to his name.

He became the first-ever serving Indian bureaucrat to represent and win a medal for India at the global level when he won gold at the 2016 Asian Para Badminton Championships. That journey has now taken him to the Paralympics where he was just beaten in the final of the SL4 category men's singles by Lucas Mazur of France.

ANASUYA TO HEADLINE SAMPATH NANDI'S NEXT PROJECT



Anchor-turned-actress Anasuya Bharadwaj is one talented actress who is working on a series of interesting films. She was last seen playing the lead role in *Thank You Brother*. As the anchor seems to be doing exceptionally well in films, we hear that director Sampath Nandi has roped in Anasuya Bharadwaj for his upcoming production venture, which is touted to be an intense family drama. The actress, sources say, could play the female lead!

Sampath Nandi produced a Telugu web series, *Black Rose*, with Bollywood actress and Miss India crown winner Urvashi Rautela in the lead, which is yet to be released. He is planning to produce a movie with one of his associates. Sources say that very soon the official announcement regarding Sampath Nandi and Anasuya Bharadwaj's project will be made. Currently, Sampath Nandi is basking in the glory of his recently released directorial venture *Seetimaarr* which has Gopichand and Tamannah Bhatia in the lead role. The sport-based



movie was released on September 10 and has been doing decent collections at the box office.

Meanwhile, Anasuya is playing an important role in Ravi Teja-starrer *Khiladi* and is also part of Allu Arjun and Rashmika Mandanna starrer *Pushpa: The Rise*.

Aparichitudu Hindi remake in tough waters

A couple of months ago, it was announced that Bollywood actor Ranveer Singh has been roped in for the Hindi remake of *Anniyan/Aparichitudu*. The movie will be helmed by Shankar and bankrolled by Jayantilal.

Even as the news excited fans, the original producer Aascar Ravichandran has moved to court against Shankar and Jayantilal.

Ravichandran had claimed that he owns the copyright of *Anniyan* and the movie cannot have a remake without his consent.

"I own the copyright of the film and no other person has the right over it as I am the author of the movie," Ravichandran had reportedly said.

Ravichandran shared the latest update in the matter. He said that the South Indian Film Chamber is in support of him and will soon send the letter to Shankar and

his team. He further added that he is also remaking *Anniyan* and the announcement will be bigger than that of Shankar's film.

"Yes, I am also remaking *Anniyan* and it will be on a grand scale," he said in the statement. He added that his film will have one Bollywood and one international artist, and will be remade in Hindi and English respectively. "Everybody is thinking I have asked for money, I have never asked for money. It is my property. Somebody is misguiding producer Jayantilal Gada. Before December the big announcement will be made, that's why I kept quiet all the while," said he.

He concluded that he was shocked when Gada announced the Hindi remake: "And I have been waiting for the opportunity for ten years".

Shankar and Jayantilal Gada had announced in April 2021 that they will be remaking the film in Hindi with Ranveer Singh playing the lead.

Rana's look reveal as Daniel Shekar gets a date



While works of *Bheemla Nayak*, the film starring Power Star Pawan Kalyan and Rana Daggubati, is going on at a brisk pace, the makers are all set to release a character video of Rana who is playing Daniel Shekar.

The film is the official Telugu remake of the Malayalam hit film *Ayyappanum Koshiyum*. The first look of *Bheemla Nayak*, starring power star Pawan Kalyan, was met with thunderous applause.

The team had earlier mentioned that they would release the first look of the Rana as Daniel Sekhar, and on Friday, they officially announced the date. "Get ready to experience the #BLITZofDANIELSHEKAR, @RanaDaggubati from 20th Sept #BheemlaNayak @pawankalyan #Trivikram @saagar_chandrak @MenenNithya @MusicThaman @dop007 @NavinNooli @vamsi84 @sitharaents @venupro @adityamusic" the tweet read. In the freshly released poster, only half of Rana is shown in

traditional attire, similar to that of Pruthvi Raj in the original version.

Rana Daggubati and Pawan Kalyan will reprise their roles as Biju Menon and Prithviraj Sukumaran, respectively, from original version, in *Bheemla Nayak*. Samuthirakani, a National Award winner, plays a pivotal part in the movie. Suryadevara Naga Vamsi's Sithara Entertainments is producing the movie, which will have Thaman's soundtrack. The film is slated to hit theaters on January 12, 2022, during Sankranti.



RANA CHILLS WITH THE HAASAN SISTERS

A refreshing picture of Tollywood hunk Rana Daggubati chilling with the Haasan sisters has been going viral on the internet. Shruti Haasan, daughter of versatile actor Kamal Haasan, who is an active Instagram user, took to her profile to share a selfie with Rana Daggubati and her sister Akshara Haasan.

The *Vakeel Saab* and *Krack* actress came up with an interesting caption, "Good people = good days made something special today that makes me so excited to make art and I get to be around truly beautiful people."

Shruti also shared a video on her stories and said, "I am so excited, I can not wait to share this with you guys, such a special day." The actress then shared a hilarious video with Akshara Haasan, where she asks her sister, "What did you think of the shoot, the special secret shoot," and her sister replies with, "Super!"

While Rana Daggubati is awaiting the release of *Virata Parvam* that was scheduled for release on April 30, but was postponed due to the rising number of Covid-19 cases across the country, Shruti Haasan will soon be seen in Prashanth Neel's directorial venture *Salaar* with Prabhas as her co-star.



Samantha says yes to a new project?

Even as a lot is being written and said about Samantha Ruth Prabhu's personal life, the actress has been maintaining a dignified silence on these rumors.

Meanwhile, we're told that the talented star her focus tight on her career.

After a good gap, Samantha, sources tell us, has now signed a new Telugu film which will be launched in November or

early December. Touted to be a female-centric story, the film will be bankrolled by producer Krishna Prasad of Sri Devi Movies, which recently produced films like *Sammohanam* and *Gentleman*. The film is likely to be helmed by a newcomer.

Samantha is said to have liked the script, and if all goes as planned, this will be the first film she will sign after the completion of Gunasekhar's *Shaakuntalam*.

AKHANDA'S MUSIC promotions to begin soon

Nandamuri Balakrishna and director Boyapati Srinu's *Akhanda* is all set to hit the theaters soon. The film, which is in its final leg of shooting, currently is shooting its songs on the lead pair, Balakrishna and Pragya Jaiswal.

Meanwhile, the makers have begun promotions for the songs. The first song *Adiga Adiga* will be unveiled on

Saturday. Thaman has composed music for the film. Miriyala Ravinder Reddy is bankrolling *Akhanda* on a grand scale. The film also has actress Poorna in a key role. Jagapathi Babu will be seen playing an antagonist.

Akhanda is one of the most-awaited movies by Nandamuri fans. It marks Balakrishna and Boyapati's combination for the third time, after *Simha* and *Legend*.

