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**Explained: Why World Bank** is under fire over set of rankings



Indianisation of our legal system is need of the hour: CJI



iPhone 13 pre-order begins...

→ In brief **←** 

#### **UK** to roll out crucial **Covid treatment** that was given to Donald Trump

service patients in the UK hospitals due to Covid-19 are set to benefit from a life-saving new antibody treatment called Ronapreve, which was given to former US president Donald Trump. A combination of two monoclonal antibodies, Ronapreve, will be targeted initially at those in hospital who have not

mounted an antibody response against the coronavirus. The treatment was used as part of the suite of experimental medicines given to Trump when he tested positive for Covid-19 last year. "We have secured a brand new treatment for our most vulnerable patients in hospitals across the UK and I am thrilled it will be saving lives from as early as next week," said UK Health Secretary Sajid Javid.

#### **Tharoor calls for** permanent president to head Congress

Sabha MP Shashi Tharoor on Saturday called for a permanent president to head the party, which is 'now at an interim stage'. He said all the Congress leaders have sought a permanent president for the party. "We all liked the leadership of Sonia Gandhi. But we are now at an interim stage. For the last two years we haven't had a permanent president. That must be remedied. We need to instil energy in the organisational structure of the Congress party. We all have sought for a permanent president for the party," he said. Tharoor was speaking to reporters after the inauguration of the office of Muvattupuzha MLA Mathew Kuzhalnadan here.

#### **Babu Supriyo dumps BJP for TMC, Centre** downsizes security

lowing hot and cold for several weeks after being dropped from the Modi government, BJP MP Babul Suprivo sprang a surprise on Saturday when he joined West Bengal's ruling TMC and development of the state. Soon after, the Union government scaled down the armed security cover of central paramilitary commandos given to him. Supriyo's security cover has been reduced from the second-highest level of Z category to Y category, after an order was issued by the Union Home Ministry on Friday.

### Month & Paksham:

Bhadrapada & Shukla Paksha

panchangam

Tithi: Chaturdashi 29:27 Nakshatram: Shatabhisha 27:28

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

**Rahukalam:** 4:40 pm - 6:11 pm **Yamagandam:** 12:09 pm - 1:40 pm

**Varivam:** 10:35 am - 12:11 pm

**Gulika:** 3:10 pm - 4:40 pm Good Time: (to start any important work) **Amritakalam:** 8:14 pm - 9:50 pm

Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:45 am - 12:33 pm

#### Vijayawada

**Temp:** 34 Humidity: 67% Sunrise: 6:04 am

**Current Weather Conditions** 

WEATHER Forecast: Partly cloudy **Sunset:** 6:14 pm Updated September 18, 2021 5:00 PM

## **CID** sleuths make first arrest in APSFL scam

Sambasiva Rao in custody after five days of questioning

**C PRADEEP KUMAR** VIJAYAWADA

Five days after they started questioning him, the CID on Saturday arrested senior IRTS officer K Sambasiva Rao in connection with the alleged Andhra Pradesh State FiberNet Limited tender scam.

Sambasiva Rao is currently the Chief Commercial Manager in the South Central Railways headquarters at Secunderabad and had previously served as Managing Director of the AP State FiberNet Limited.

Sambasiva Rao was shifted to the Government General Hospital in Vijayawada for medical tests before being produced before a magistrate.

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan

Reddy on Saturday released a

book titled "Dancing with Dreams", a collection of poems

penned by Chief Secretary Aditya

journey of the poet. The poems

Android dominance in

India, says govt report

Google abused the dominant

position of its Android operating

system in India, using its "huge financial muscle" to illegally hurt

competitors, the country's

antitrust authority found in a

report on its two-year probe,

accessed by news agency Reuters.

"the ability and incentive of device

manufacturers to develop and sell

devices operating on alternative

versions of Android," says the

June report by the Competition

Commission of India's (CCI)

in a statement it looks forward to

working with the CCI to "demon-

strate how Android has led to

more competition and innova-

Google has not received the

The CCI did not respond to a

investigation report, a person

with direct knowledge of the sit-

request for comment on the

The US tech giant told Reuters

investigations unit.

tion, not less.'

uation said.

report.

Alphabet Inc's Google reduced

Google abused

PNS NEW DELHI

The poems reflect the inner

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy releases a book of poems written by Chief Secretary

Jagan releases book of

poems written by CS



He was remanded to 14 days judicial custody.

CID sleuths had started questioning K Sambasiva Rao, the then VC and MD of INCAP and also Vemuru Hari Krishna Prasad, the former technical advisor to the previous TDP government on September 14 as part of their probe into alleged scam in awarding work tenders of APSFL in 2015.

reiterate that whatever may be ten-

sions and tribulations, inner or

outer, one can still remain human.

Chief Minister appreciated Aditya

Nath Das for his passionate liter-

ary zeal. The Chief Secretary pre-

painting featuring one of his poems

Tadepalli police have registered

four cases over the incident that

took place at the residence of

Leader of the Opposition N

Chandrababu Naidu residence on

by T Ramu, driver of MLA Jogi

Ramesh, cases have been filed

against Telugu leaders under the SC

and ST (Prevention of Atrocities)

On the other hand, the police

registered a case under the gener-

al Sections of the PC based on a

complaint lodged by Telugu Desam

Party leaders against Jogi Ramesh

As Jogi Ramesh's driver Ramu

hails from the Schedule Caste

community, atrocity cases have

been registered against TDP lead-

and other YSRCP leaders.

According to a complaint lodged

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Friday.

Praising the endeavour, the

The FiberNet project was meant to provide Internet and telephone services to all households in the state, as part of the Bharat Net project of the Government of India.

Two months ago, the CID had filed an FIR into the case following a complaint from APSFL chairman K Gowtham Reddy.



### 'Humiliated' Amarinder resigns; won't accept Sidhu as Punjab CM

**PNS** ■ CHANDIGARH

Congress veteran Amarinder Singh on Saturday resigned as Chief Minister of Punjab, declaring that he feels "humiliated" and said he won't accept PCC president Navjot Singh Sidhu as the next CM or the party face in the Assembly polls.

The development has come amid a power tussle that polarised the ruling party in the State headed for elections in four months. Sidhu was made the State

Congress chief earlier this year, despite opposition by Amarinder Singh. "I feel humiliated," Amarinder Singh told reporters outside the Punjab Raj Bhavan after submitting his resignation to Governor Banwarilal Purohit.

"I have resigned, let them make



Also, cases have been registered

under various Sections of the IPC

with the Nekarikallu police station

in Guntur district against TDP

leader Ch Ayyanna Patrudu

demanding the arrest of the TDP

Regarding the incident of dam-

age to Jogi Ramesh's car, cases were

registered under four Sections

against TDP executive secretary

Nadendla Brahman. It is learned

that the police have been enquir-

ing about the whereabouts of TDP

activists and leaders since last

On the other hand, the TDP

leaders found fault with the police

for filing cases against them, with-

out taking any action to arrest the

YSRCP leaders despite complaints

being lodged against the ruling

party leaders.

YSRCP, TDP men lodge police

complaints against each other



State Election Commissioner Nilam Sawhney interacts with officials at a review meeting held in Guntur on Saturday ahead of the counting of votes cast for the ZPTCs and MPTCs across the State on Sunday

#### **PARISHAD POLLS**

### 32,264 staff, 11,803 supervisors for counting of votes today

The State Election Commission has appointed 32,264 counting staff and 11,803 supervisors to count the votes cast for 7220 Mandal Parishad Territorial Constituencies (MPTC) and 515 Zilla Parishad Territorial Constituencies (ZPTCs) at 209 centres across the State on The counting process will start

from 8 am and results are expected to be announced later in the day. Panchayat Raj Principal Secretary Gopala Krishna Dwivedi on Saturday said training was imparted to the staff for the counting of votes. He said Covid guidelines will be followed strictly at all

the 209 counting centres.

Dwivedi said that 18,782 candidates are in fray for the 7220 MPTC posts in the State and that of the 10,047 MPTCs, 2,371 were elected unanimously. Due to various reasons, the polling process for 375 MPTCs was paused, among them 81 contestants having passed

Finally, polling was held for 7,229 MPTCs and 18,782 candi-

Jogi Ramesh blames

YSRCP MLA Jogi Ramesh on

Saturday slammed a section of

ing the facts with regard to his

protest and said that the truth

was that it was TDP supremo

N Chandrababu Naidu who

was behind the attack on him.

YSRCP's central office here,

the Pedana MLA said he had

gone to Naidu's residence to

submit a petition and also

stage a protest in front of his

Speaking to media at the

media, accusing it of distort-

Naidu for attack

PNS VIJAYAWADA



dates remaining in the fray. Regarding ZPTCs, polling was held for the 515 ZPTCs and 2058 candidates are in the fray. A total 126 candidates were elected unanimously. Elections were halted to 11 ZPTCs due to the death of the candidates. Elections for the MPTC and ZPTCs were held on April 4, 2021. Due to administrative and legal reasons, counting of votes was suspended, till the AP High Court issued orders allowing it to resume.

### **Covid scare** among counting agents in Vizag

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

The Visakhapatnam district administration went into a tizzy on Saturday after unconfirmed reports said that as many as 45 counting agents of various parties tested positive for Covid-19 during the screening tests ahead of counting of votes for the ZPTC and MPTC polls.

As per the directions of the State Election Commission, the district administration is conducting Covid-19 rapid screening tests on the counting agents.
DMHO P Suryanarayana

said that as per the guidelines, rapid test kits were provided to the counting staff for



### I-T dept alleges Sonu Sood evaded Rs 20 crore in tax

PNS NEW DELHI

The CBDT on Saturday alleged that actor Sonu Sood and his associates evaded tax of Rs 20 crore and claimed that after the Income Tax Department raided him and a linked Lucknow-based infrastructure group, it was found that he routed his "unaccounted income in the form of bogus unsecured loans from

many bogus entities" It also accused Sood of violating the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) while raising donations from abroad.

The department had launched searches against the 48-year-old actor and the Lucknow-based group of industries involved in the infrastructure sector on September 15 and the CBDT said the action was continuing. "During the course of search at

associates, incriminating evidence pertaining to tax evasion has been found. The main modus operandi followed by the actor had been to route his unaccounted income in the form of bogus unsecured loans from many bogus entities," the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) claimed in a statement.

the premises of the actor and his

It added that. so far, use of 20 such entries has been found and the providers of which, on examination, have "accepted" on oath to have "bogus'

accommodation entries (transaction entries in accounts).

### Neeraj s javelin, Borgohain's gloves, get bids worth crores

Sports equipment and gears of India's Olympics and Paralympics stars, including badminton rackets of Krishna Nagar and SL Yathiraj, Neeraj Chopra's javelin and gloves of Lovlina Borgohain, are among Prime Minister Narendra Modi's mementos that are drawing the maximum bids in an e-auction by

the Ministry of Culture. So far, the highest bid has been received for the boxing gloves of Lovlina Borgohain who won a bronze medal at the Tokyo Olympics. It has received a bid of Rs 1.92 crore against a base price of Rs 80 lakh.

Chopra's javelin which gave India its sole gold in the 2020



Olympics has drawn a bid of over Rs 1.55 crore while its base price is



Badminton rackets Paralympians Krishna Nagar and SL Yathiraj and the fence used by

received bids of Rs 10 crore each during the day, but in the evening when the bids were reviewed, they were found to be fake.

As of now, the highest quoted bids for the badminton racquets of Nagar and Yathiraj are Rs 80 lakh and Rs 50 lakh respectively, at par with their base prices.

The bid for the fence used by

Devi also stood at Rs 60 lakh, its base price.

Devi is the first Indian fencer to ever qualify for the Tokyo Olympics.

A javelin autographed by Sumit Antil, the gold medallist at the Tokyo Paralympics, has received a bid of Rs 1,00,08,000 against its base price of Rs 1 crore.

The sharp-shooting glasses worn by Manish Narwal, who bagged a gold medal in the mixed 50m pistol SH1 final at the Tokyo Paralympic Games, received a highest bid of Rs 95.94 lakh during the afternoon, but it was reviewed to Rs 20 lakh at end of the day.

The shooting glasses were presented by him to the Prime Minister.

A badminton racket and bag of Tokyo Olympics bronze medallist PV Sindhu received a bid of Rs 90.02 lakh against its base price of Rs 80 lakh. In this round, around 1,330 mementos are being e-auctioned. The auction began on Friday, Modi's birthday.







# AP, Telangana among top three States in human trafficking cases

As many as 1,714 cases of human trafficking were registered by the government's Anti-Human Trafficking Units in 2020 with sexual exploitation for prostitution, forced labour and domestic servitude being the top reasons behind it, according to the NCRB data.

The data also showed that the case conviction rate of human trafficking was 10.6 percent.

Among states, Maharashtra and Telangana recorded the highest number of such cases at 184 each, followed by Andhra Pradesh at 171, Kerala at 166, Jharkhand at 140 and Rajasthan at 128.

The conviction for cases of human trafficking was recorded at 0 in seven states, while the highest conviction rate of such cases was reported from Tamil Nadu at 66 percent followed by Delhi at 40 percent.

said it started collecting data on human trafficking cases from these Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTU) across the country. As per data provided by States and Union Territories, 1,714 cases of human trafficking have been registered by AHTUs during 2020.

According to the report, 2,278 human trafficking cases were registered in 2018 and 2,260 in 2019, respectively. The report further said that 4,709 victims, including 2,222 below 18 years, were trafficked across the country in 2020.

The maximum trafficking cases were registered for sexual exploitation for prostitution at 1,466 followed by forced labour at 1,452 and domestic servitude at 846.

The data on cases recorded of human trafficking have been provided by anti-human trafficking units through their State Crime Records Bureau

and this data represents only those cases which have been registered by respective

As per the data provided by States/UTs, so far, 696 AHTUs are functional and 20 states/ UTs have achieved their target of setting up AHTUs in all dis-

Roop Sen, founding member of Sanjog, one of the NGOs which is a part of the Indian Leadership Forum Against Trafficking, a national platform by and for the survivors of human trafficking, said the country went into lockdown from March 23 so for majority part of the year all transportation systems, including all major rails and buses, were stopped and there was very strong monitoring of inter-

He said a question can be asked about how the number of trafficking cases is so large.

about completely dwindling businesses, factories, brick kilns were non-functional so by that logic there would have been no demand of trafficked labour in that period," he said.

Jyoti Mathur, executive director, Kailash Satyarthi Children's Foundation, said the number of children rescued since the beginning of the lockdown by their sister organisation, the Bachpan Bachao Andolan, is substantially higher than the number of children rescued during the same period in 2019.

"There is, thus, evidence to show that trafficking of children has increased since the beginning of the lockdown. The increase is due to the loss of livelihood of a large number of families on account of the pandemic," she said.

'We sincerely hope that the Anti-Trafficking Bill is passed in the forthcoming session of

of his ability.

had to resign.

another question.

"I have been in politics for 52

years, so I don't care about

these things, I am in politics

and I will remain in politics,"

he said when asked about the

circumstances in which he

always there, they are never

closed. I can tell you one thing,

I am not going to leave it like

Politics is a very fast moving

Singh was accompanied by

his wife and MP Preneet Kaur

and son Raninder Singh when

he submitted his resignation to

Governor Banwarilal Purohit.

and Ravneet Singh Bittu, ÁG

Atul Nanda and Chief

Principal Secretary to CM

Suresh Kumar were also pre-

sent. "I am proud to accompa-

when he submits his resigna-

tion as CM of Punjab and leads

us as head of our family into a

new beginning," Raninder

MPs Gurjeet Singh Auila

game, he said replying to

"In politics, options are

legislation, it will give teeth to law enforcement agencies and they will be able to prevent, detect and prosecute cases of trafficking more effectively and efficiently," said Mathur.

According to the NCRB data, the conviction rate in human trafficking cases in 2020 was 10.6 percent.

Elaborating on the possible reason behind it, Kaushik Gupta, Advocate, Calcutta High Court, said human trafficking is an organised and an inter-state crime, and local police does not have the resources or means to travel to another state and do the inves-

'Human trafficking is a case of circumstantial evidence and law says that such a case cannot be proved until the entire chain of circumstances is complete. If in the entire chain, one point is missing then the person cannot be convicted," he

### YSRCP, TDP men lodge police complaints against each other

Continued from page 1

TDP activists lodged a complaint in Gudivada I-Town police station in Krishna district seeking immediate action against Jogi Ramesh for attempting an attack on Naidu's residence. The TDP leaders appealed to the police to arrest the Pedana MLA for the conspiracy to attack Naidu's residence.

The TDP leaders allege that Jogi Ramesh attempted to attack Naidu's residence just for the sake of a Cabinet post. The TDP leaders demanded that the police conduct a free and fair investigation and take action against Jogi Ramesh and YSRCP activists who attacked and injured TDP activists while the latter were trying to prevent the attack

### Jogi Ramesh blames Naidu for attack

Continued from page 1

"I went there to register my protest against the derogatory remarks made by Ayya-nna Patrudu against Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy and Home Minister. It was then that TDP leaders and activists attacked my car even before I could get out of the vehicle," Jogi Ramesh said.

The MLA alleged that it was Naidu who was behind the attack on him. He said that Naidu had utilised the services of call money racket offenders, rowdy sheeters and hired goons to attack him and a section of the media is spreading false information in this regard.

Neeraj s javelin, Borgohain's

gloves get bids worth crores

The memorabilia include

sports gear and equipment of

the medal-winning Olympians

and Paralympians, a replica of

the Ayodhya Ram Mandir, Chardham, sculptures and

The wooden model of the

Ram Mandir placed inside a

glass box has received the

highest quoted bid of Rs 3 lakh

paintings among others.

the Ganga River.

The MLA demanded an unconditional apology from Naidu as Ayyanna Patrudu used abusive language and made derogatory comments against the Chief Minister. He said that he planned to bring the issue to the notice of Governor Biswabushan Harichandan. He warned TDP leaders to refrain from using abusive language against the Chief Minister failing which the YSRCP would stage protests in front

of Naidu's residence. He termed Naidu and Lokesh as 'visitors' to the State and said it would be better if the father-son duo fight for people's problems rather than confining themselves to political conspiracies.

### 'Humiliated' Amarinder resigns...

Continued from page 1

The Congress leader, however, in another interaction with the media said he won't accept Navjot Singh Sidhu as the Punjab Chief Minister, describing him as "a total disaster".

The man who could not handle one ministry, can never run entire Punjab, he said. Replying to a question, he

said he will never agree to Navjot Singh Sidhu as the next Chief Minister. "He is a total disaster. When

he was a minister (in Amarinder cabinet), he could not even run one ministry, now can he run entire Punjab? I know that man has no capability at all," said Amarinder

If Sidhu is made the face of the Congress for the Punjab polls, Singh said he will oppose him "tooth and nail".

Earlier in the day after submitting his resignation, when asked about his next course of action, Singh told reporters, "There is always an option and I will use that option when time comes.'

"I have been in politics for the past 52 years and I have been a Chief Minister for nineand-a-half years. I will talk to

He submitted his resignation along with that of his council of ministers, his media adviser said. The resignation has



been accepted by the Governor. Singh's resignation came hours before a crucial meeting of the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) on Saturday evening, pre-empting what was widely being seen as a move to remove him from the CM's post.

In the meeting, Punjab Congress MLAs authorised party's national president Sonia Gandhi to pick a new CLP leader and in a unanimously passed resolution praised Amarinder's contribution for Punjab and the Congress.

"I spoke to the Congress president in the morning and I told her that I am resigning today," Amarinder Singh told reporters.

hev called the MLAs Delhi twice and now convened a CLP here in Chandigarh today," he said.

"I think if there is an element of doubt on me that I could not run (the government) or if there was something else, I feel humiliated the way things have happened," he said.

To a question on joining any other party, he said, "Whatever you have to say, you can say. I can only tell you that I have been a Chief Minister from the Congress. And I am in the Congress and I will consult my colleagues and then we will decide the future course of politics." "I have only resigned for myself," he said.

'I hereby tender my resignation as the Chief Minister, and that of my council of ministers," the one-line resignation letter said.

In another interaction with the media later, Amarinder Sonia Gandhi during his meeting with her a few weeks back that he should be relieved of the charge.

"I had told her that you Singh said in a tweet earlier.



### AP registers 1,174 new Covid cases

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh on Saturday added 1,174 fresh cases to its Covid-19 tally, which now increased to 20,37,353. The latest bulletin said

1,309 recoveries in 24 hours took the total recoveries up to 20,08,639. Nine more deaths pushed the gross up to 14,061, the bulletin added. East Godavari district

added 208 fresh cases, Prakasam 161, Chittoor 159, Krishna 140, Guntur 131 and SPS Nellore 122 in 24 hours. West Godavari reported

80, Kadapa 69 and Visakhapatnam 55 while four other districts logged less Guntur had three fresh Covid-19 deaths, Chittoor two, Kadapa, Krishna, Prakasam and Visakhapatnam one each in a day.



### at conserving and rejuvenating Mizoram U-19 head coach dies in Vizag

Continued from page 1

The javelin used by Neeraj

Chopra in the Tokyo Olympic

Games is among the items with

the highest base price at Rs 1

The lowest priced item is a

small-sized decorative elephant

for Rs 200. The proceeds from

the e-auction will go to the

Namami Gange Mission aimed

Former Bengal left-arm spinner and Mizoram U-19 head coach Murtaza Lodhgar died of cardiac arrest on Friday night in Visakhapatnam, Cricket Association Bengal president Avishek Dalmiya has confirmed.

Lodhgar, 45, was in the port city with the Mizoram colts, who were set to play the league phase of Vinoo Mankad Trophy as BCCI's domestic season is set to commence.

after dinner," Dalmiya told PTI. "Murtu bhai along with team's physio went out for an after-dinner walk and suddenly felt enormous chest pain to the city for the burial.

"The physio and other team

members immediately took him to the hospital where he was declared brought dead late on Friday "I still can't believe that

Murtu bhai is no more. It is a personal loss for me as he was one of the pillars of first division club Rajasthan SC. He was one of the most loved cricketers in our fraternity and also worked with our women's team with distinction. It's an irreparable loss,

The Cricket Association of Bengal is trying to make arrangements so that his family can bring his mortal remains

#### Cong social media wing backs Rahul as party chief

Another interesting memento which has grabbed eyeballs

is the replica of the Rudraksha

Convention Centre in Varanasi

which has got a bid of Rs 40

lakh. Individuals and organi-

sations can participate through

the website pmmementos.

gov.in between September 17

ministry will notify the high-

est bidders through email.

After the auction ends, the

and October 7.

PNS NEW DELHI

The Congress social media department Saturday passed a resolution to make Rahul Gandhi party president at the earliest.

The resolution was passed unanimously at the social media department's national executive meeting "Drishti 2021". This comes after similar resolutions were passed at the national executive meetings of the Indian Youth Congress, the NSUI and Congress SC/ST department.

Rahul Gandhi attended meeting and urged party workers to continue their fight against the ruling dispensation with humility, truth and love.

#### Google abused Android ....

Continued from page 1

Senior CCI members will review the report and give Google another chance to defend itself, before issuing a final order, which could include penalties, said another person familiar with the

Google would be able to appeal any order in India's

Its findings are the latest antitrust setback for Google in India, where it faces several probes in the payments app and smart television markets. The company has been investigated in Europe, the United States and elsewhere.

This week, South Korea's antitrust regulator fined Google \$180 million for blocking customised versions of Android.

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG

Dressed/With Skin

**HYDERABAD** 

**RETAIL PRICE** 

VISAKHAPATNAM 470

### 32,264 staff, 11,803 supervisors...

Continued from page 1

have been made for the counting of votes on September 19. Since ballot papers were used in the elections, the counting process may continue till late evening at some places and results may be declared subsequently. District collectors visited

Consequently, arrangements

the counting centres on Saturday and inspected the arrangements. Senior police officers have

issued orders to maintain law and order and prevent any untoward incident. Processions and victory rallies will be banned on Sunday. Section 144 will be in force in the vicinity of 100 metres from the counting centres. Vijayawada trict Superintendent of Police the district.

### **Covid scare among counting** agents in Vizag...

Continued from page 1

"I have no information about the number of positive cases so far, but it is true that there some positive cases found in the district and they have been isolated. We are allowing agents who have been given two doses of vaccine only," the DMHO told the Pioneer.

Commissioner of Police B Srinivasulu and Krishna dis-

The authorities have also

confirmed that a number of Covid-19 positive cases have been confirmed. The parties have been requested to send replacements, officials said.

With this development, the authorities have directed all Returning Officers to be very careful and ensure RAT tests are conducted on all the staff and counting agents.

Siddharth Kaushal are monitoring the arrangements in

#### Continued from page 1

Citing a complaint filed by APSFL Chairman P Goutham Reddy, the CID said Vemuri Harikrishna Prasad, the then member of the e-Governance Authority governing council, colluded with Tera Software Limited to ensure the tender for Rs 321 crore was illegally awarded to the company.

After a preliminary inquiry, the CID issued notices to Sambasiva Rao, Krishna Prasad and also Tera Software Pvt Ltd MD Tummala Gopichand to appear before the investigation agency.

Accordingly, Sambasiva Rao and Krishna Prasad appeared before the CID sleuths. In the 2015 bidding for work

worth Rs 330 crore related to APSFL by INCAP, Tera Soft emerged the successful L1 bidder and grabbed the contract.

CID sleuths make first arrest in APSFL scam

The then government in April, 2015 authorised INCAP to take up the project of laying of optical fibre over existing electrical towers and poles under phase-I of Fibergrid project. The aim of the project was to provide optic fibre connectivity to villages and towns across the State.

: The Crime Investigation Department of Andhra Pradesh on Saturday arrested a senior IRTS officer K Sambasiva Rao in connection with the Rs 321 crore fibernet

Sambasiva Rao is currently the Chief Commercial Manager in the South Central Railways headquarters at Secunderabad and had previously served as Managing Director of the AP State FiberNet Limited.

The CID had recently filed an FIR on the alleged irregularities in AP State FiberNet Limited, putting the sum involved at Rs 321 crore.

The IRTS officer had served on deputation in AP government during the previous Chandrababu Naidu regime.

The CID named him as an accused in the case and questioned him extensively in the last five days, before arresting him. He was produced before local court that remanded him to 14-day judicial custody. The FiberNet project was

telephone services to all households in the state, as part of the Bharat Net project of the Government of India. In the FIR registered on September 9, the CID named

16 persons and two companies

meant to provide Internet and

as the accused in the case. Citing a complaint filed by APSFL Chairman P Goutham Reddy, the CID said Vemuri Harikrishna Prasad, the then member of the e-Governance Authority governing council, colluded with Tera Software Limited to ensure the tender

for Rs 321 crore was illegally

awarded to the company.

Prasad is also being questioned in the case, along with officials of Tera Software, CID sources said.

## I-T dept alleges Sonu Sood evaded Rs 20 crore in tax

Continued from page 1

₹165 "They have accepted to have issued cheques in lieu of cash. ₹175 Without Skin There have been instances Broiler at Farm where professional receipts have been camouflaged as loans in the books of accounts for the purpose of evasion of RATES ₹/100 tax," the policy-making body for the tax department said. VIJAYAWADA 438

428

These bogus loans, it said, have been used for "making investments and acquiring properties.

evaded unearthed so far amounts to more than Rs 20 crore, the statement and official sources said about Sood.

It also talked about his charity organisation that was established during the Covid-19 outbreak last year. The actor shot to national

prominence after he arranged

free transport through rail, air

and road for numerous migrant

workers to reach their home

states during the nationwide

The total amount of tax lockdown clamped last year to contain the spread of coronavirus pandemic.

The Delhi government, led by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, had also recently declared that Sood will be the brand ambassador of the Aam Aadmi Party government's 'Desh ke Mentors' programme under which students will be

guided in making their career choices. The CBDT said the charity

foundation set up by the actor

was incorporated on July 21, 2020 and has collected donations to the tune of Rs 18.94 crore from April 1, 2021 till

Out of this, it said, the foundation has spent around Rs 1.9 crore for various relief works and the balance of Rs 17 crore has been found lying "unutilised" in its bank account.

It is seen, the statement alleged, that funds to the tune of Rs 2.1 crore have also been raised by the charity founda-

a crowdfunding platform "in violation" of FCRA regula-

It said the actor had entered into a joint venture with the Lucknow-located infrastructure group and "invested substantial funds", and said the taxman has unearthed "incriminating" evidence pertaining to tax evasion and irregularities in

"The search has revealed that the said group is involved

the account books.

tion from overseas donors on in bogus billing of sub-contracting expenses and siphoning off of funds. Evidence of such bogus contracts found so far are to the tune of over Rs 65 crore," it said.

Evidence of unaccounted cash expenses, unaccounted sale of scrap and digital data evidencing unaccounted cash transactions has also been found.

The infra group "has entered into dubious circular transaction to the tune of Rs 175 crore

with an infrastructure compa-

'Further investigations are being carried out to establish the full extent of tax evasion," it said.

The CBDT said Rs 1.8 crore cash has been seized during the raids and 11 lockers have been placed under "prohibitory orders". A total of 28 premises in Mumbai, Lucknow, Kanpur, Jaipur, Delhi, and Gurgaon are being covered as part of the search operation.

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# **Ayyanna Patrudu remarks** deplorable, says Sucharita

Responding to the derogatory remarks made by TDP leader Ayyanna Patrudu, Home Minister Mekathoti Sucharita has said that they are deplorable. The Opposition leaders are still unable to digest the fact that a Dalit woman is the Home Minister, she added.

Speaking to the media here on Saturday, she said the Opposition TDP leaders were using abusive language and speaking ill of Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy and other ministers without any restraint.

She said that Ayyanna Patrudu should be ashamed of the language he used in addressing a Dalit woman Home Minister. "I cannot speak in such a filthy language," she said and asked whether Chandrababu Naidu had respect for women. She sought to know from him what action would be taken against the person who had made those com-



ments. If Chandrababu Naidu really had respect for women, he should take action against

Ayyanna Patrudu, she said. Further, she slammed Ayyanna Patrudu for demanding her to resign and questioned him what authority he had to seek a resignation and clarified that she would resign at any time if the Chief

The Home Minister said that the Opp could ask the govt any question if it thought the former was not performing well and the ministers concerned shall answer their

Minister asked her to do so. She recalled the past incidents during the TDP regime, where law and order in the State were disturbed, and reminded that Vangaveeti Ranga was mur-

queries.

dered during the TDP rule. The Minister said that the Opposition could ask the government any question if it thought the former was not

performing well and the ministers concerned shall answer their queries.

Sucharita lashed out at TDP leaders and said the Opposition had no respect for women and dared to reveal what justice was done to women victims in their government. Several crimes against women were reported during the TDP rule, but there was no effort to put an end to

On the contrary, the Chief Minister had brought in the Disha Act for the safety and security of women. She asked the Opposition to prove its charge that women were not safe in the current government. National Crime Bureau (NCB) records show that crime in the State had dropped by 15 percent, but the Opposition was misleading the public saying that the number of cases in the State had increased by 64 percent by showing 80,000 cases registered for violation of hel-

### TDP dares IPS Assn to debate

PNS VIJAYAWADA

TDP politburo member Varla Ramaiah on Saturday challenged the AP State IPS Officers' Association to an open debate on the overall open debate on the overall functioning of the AP police in the past two-and-a-half years of CM YS Jaganmohan Reddy's suppressive rule.

Ramaiah asserted that their party would strongly condemn the manner in which the IPS Association responded to the comments of former.

ed to the comments of former Minister Ch Ayyanna Patrudu. "Why didn't these officers respond similarly when the ruling YSRCP MLAs and leaders made highly derogatory remarks against the police in the past? The discriminatory approach on the part of the senior police officers is regrettable,"

Addressing a press conference here, the TDP leader said that there was nothing wrong in Ayyanna Patrudu's comments and the senior leader just highlighted the prevailing situation in the State. YSRCP MLA Kasu Mahesh Reddy levelled an objectionable comment that he would not care about the police. The video went viral all over the State but the government and the police did not take any action.

The TDP leader asked the IPS Association why they did not open their mouths when their own police tied ropes on the gates of Chandrababu Naidu's house and prevented them from coming out. When the AP Opposition Leader went to the Ramatheertham Temple, the police created all sorts of problems. The police officers were dancing to the tunes of the ruling YSRCP leaders and filing false cases. Even former ministers and senior leaders were being arrested after cases were foisted on

SEC tells officials to ensure transparency in counting

State Election Commissioner (SEC) Nilam Sawhney has directed the officials concerned to conduct the counting of votes of ZPTC and MPTC elections in a transparent manner and complete the processes smoothly.

The SEC conducted a review meeting here on Saturday for which Collector Vivek Yaday, Election observer Dr. P Lakshmi Narasimham, Guntur range IG Trivikram Varma, Urban SP Arif Afeez, rural SP Vishal Gunni were present.

Speaking on the occasion, Nilam Sawhney expressed satisfaction over the arrangements made for the counting of votes. She asked the officials to involve all the government machinery in the counting as they have a short time to start the process. The counting staff should have complete knowledge of valid votes and invalid

The counting staff should be of utmost alert while mentioning the figures and declaring the results.

Election observer Lakshminarasimham said that the election code of conduct should be followed by all. The counting staff and the agents of candidates must wear face masks in the counting hall. Only those who have RTPCR, Antigen negative reports should be allowed into the

counting hall, he said. Collector Vivek Yadav made a PowerPoint presentation on the arrangements for the counting of votes.

IG Trivikram Varma said that Section 144 was clamped around the counting stations and a three-tier security arrangements had been made. Additional forces were deployed to the rural areas which were vulnerable to violent incidents. Steps were taken to ensure that no candidate takes out a victory rally after the election results are

Later, Nilam Sawnney, IGP,



### MPTC, ZPTC polls: Stage set for counting of votes today

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Elaborate arrangements are

being made for the counting of votes and declaration of results of members, MPTCS and ZPTCs, for which the elections were conducted on April 8, 2021 will be held in the State on Sunday from 8.00 am onwards as per the notification of SEC, said K Kanna Babu, secretary APSEC The State Election Commissioner Nilam Sawhney reviewed the arrangements made by the district administration for the counting, law and order and bandobust, Covid-19 safety precautions to be taken during the counting process, etc., through teleconference on

Saturday with the Collectors & District Flection Authorities Superintendents of Police and Commissioners of Police. The Collectors and SPs/CPs have informed that they have made all arrangements for smooth conduct of counting on Sunday Adequate training was also imparted for the counting personnel and arrangements were made for Covid testing/ vaccination for the officials engaged in the counting process, candidates and their counting agents. Adequate measures were also taken for maintaining law and order including enforcement of Section 144 at the counting centres and closure of liquor

Collector, and election observer inspected the accounting centre located in the ALBED college. The officials explained the arrangements made for the counting of votes tomorrow. Joint Collectors A S Dinesh Kumar, Rajakumari, Anupama Anjali, K Śridhar Reddy were among those who were present

at the meeting.
The SEO also visited Ongole and reviewed with the officials the arrangements made for the counting of votes. She directed the officials to be on high alert till the counting process is completed. She enquired about the training in the counting of votes imparted to the officials and counting staff.

She told the SP that the persons who move suspiciously at the counting centre should be held. She asked the official to install CCTV cameras and monitor them till the process is completed.

Prakasam Collector Pravin Kumar explained to the SEC about the arrangements made for the counting of votes. SP Malika Garg said that special mobile parties were set up to maintain law and order outside the counting centres. Joint Collectors, ZPCE, DRO and other officials were present. Later she inspected counting centres along with the Collector and SP.

### YSRCP leaders complain against Ayyanna

PNS GUNTUR

Congress Party (YSRCP) functionaries, led by MLAs Meruga Nagarjuna and Maddali Giridhar, lodged a police complaint against former minister and Telugu Desam Party (TDP) senior leader Ch Ayyaanna Patrudu for his absurd comments against Chief Minister Y S Jaganmohan Reddy and other leaders.

The YSRCP leaders, including MLAs M Nagarjuna, M Giridhar, MLC Lella Appireddy, Mayor K Manohar Naidu, Mohammad Mustafa and GDCC Bank Chairman Ramu met Superintendent of Police Vishal Gunni here on Saturday and complained to him against the TDP leader.

TDP leader Ayyannapatrudu made some objectionable remarks against the



Mustafa and GDCC Bank Chairman Ramu handing over a complaint against senior TDP leader Ch Ayyanna Patrudu, to SP Vishal Gunni in Guntur on Saturday

in the death anniversary Siva Prasad Rao at received the complaint from Chief Minister and other programme of former Kandlakunta village in the YSRCP leaders and leaders while participating Assembly Speaker Kodela Nakarikallu mandal. The SP assured action.

### APPOA demands apology from TDP leader

PNS VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh Police Officers' Association (APPOA) has strongly condemned the derogatory remarks made by Telugu Desam Party senior leader Ch Ayyanna Patrudu against Andhra Pradesh IPS officers.

APPOA president Janukula Srinivas Rao on Saturday said that Ayyanna Patrudu's comments on IPS officers in his speech made on

the occasion of the death anniversary of former AP Speaker Kodela Siva Prasad Rao were highly

objectionable He said that the police also could also use rude language but decency was restraining them from making such remarks. If Ayyanna Patrudu thought injustice was being meted out to TDP leaders, he was free to knock on the doors

Meanwhile, Andhra Pradesh IPS Officers Association secretary Ch Dwaraka Tirumala Rao, in a press release, said that it was deplorable that a senior political leaders and former minister like Ayyanna Patrudu could make objectionable comments on an SP and strongly condemned them. He said that public representatives must speak decently upholding



AP IPS Officers Association secretary Ch Dwaraka Tirumala Rao

### Elaborate arrangements made in Prakasam PNS ■ ONGOLE

Superintendent of Police Malika Garg has said that elaborate security arrangements have been made for the counting of votes polled in the MPTC and ZPTC elections.

ence here on Saturday, the SP said that elaborate security arrangements were made at the MPTC and ZPTC election counting centres which would begin at 12 centres at 8 AM on

The SP said that Additional SP B Ravichandra was appointed to Chirala and Darsi subdivisions, OSD Chowdeswari to Markapur sub-divisions and AR additional SP T Siva Reddy to



Ongole, Kandukur the subdivisions respectively to monitor the situation.

The SP also said that a DSPlevel officer was appointed as in-charge to each counting centre and two CIs were deployed at each counting centre. She said that a strong three-tier security arrangements were put in place at 11 DSP-level officers,

Inspector-level officers 28, 97 ASIs/ HCs, 614 PCs/WPCs, 382 HGs/WHGs, 125 AR and 124 Special Party personnel. The SP said that special surveillance was kept on most problem villages by setting up 68 pickets and 25 patrolling forces.

The SP suggested to the teachers, police and other employees attending the counting duties to follow Covid norms and conduct the counting process effectively. People were told not to gather in

groups as the 144 Section would be in force near the deploying a total 1,755 police personnel, i.e., three Additional SP-level officers, strictly prohibited within 100 metres of the counting centres. The SP said that spec lance was being put on troublemakers and rowdy sheeters as part of the precautionary mea-

> The SP said that strong arrangements were made to prevent any untoward incident during the counting and asked the public to call Dial-100 or District Police Control Room 9121102276 as soon as they come across any untoward incidents happening or likely to

### Salalith elected governing body member of NRAI

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Rifle Association of Andhra president Tottempudi Salalith was elected as the governing body member of the National Rifle Association of India for the term 2021-2025 here on Saturday.

Speaking to the media, Tottempudi Salalith expressed gratitude to all the governing body members of NRAI for giving him the opportunity and electing him the governing body member of NRAI for the second time.

He said the commitment and hard work of the Rifle Association of Andhra Pradesh would keep promoting the shooting sport in Andhra Pradesh and in India.

### Plantation drive held in Vizag

As part of the Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav, 'Pradushan Se Azadi' (plantation drive) was conducted on Saturday by the Income Tax

Department at Sagar Nagar.

Dr. S V S S Prasad, Chief Commissioner,
Income Tax Officer A K Mohapatra, Principal
Commissioner of Income Tax and D K Sonowala, Commissioner, Income Tax were present at the drive.

On the occasion, the guests mentioned the steps to be taken to protect the nature and environment and also the role to be played by each and every citizen of the country in this regard. M V V Satyanarayana, MP, and Dr. P V



Sudhakar, Principal, Andhra Medical College, were also present and planted saplings.

### Youth dies as car plunges into canal

PNS VIJAYAWADA

One person died and six others were rescued by police with the help of locals as a car plunged into a canal in the wee hours on

Saturday near K Kothapalem. According to police, K Prasanth (25), along with six others, was going to his native village Chirovolu from Vijayawada in the early hours on Karkatta road. The car slipped into the Krishna Eastern canal beside Karakatta road and Prasanth drowned in the incident. Locals rushed to the spot and informed the police of the

incident. The police, led by Nagayalanka sub-inspector K Srinivas, with the help of two tractors and locals, ventured into the canal and pulled the car out with ropes. Unfortunately, they found Prasanth dead and rescued six others. Prasanth was an active activist in the Jana Sena party and participated in numerous protests and agitations. The Jana Sena leaders went to the house of Prasanth and consoled his father K Umamaheswara Rao who is working as a teacher in Mopidevi High School and mother, former ZPTC, Kuala Sivaleela.

### 2 girls killed in road accident

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

Two girl students were killed in a road accident at Cheepurupalli Vizianagaram district on Saturday.

According to police, the victims A Sita (8) and Gnaneswari (6), both sisters, were studying in Class III and II respectively at Siddartha School in Cheepurpalli. As usual, her father took them to school on a motorcycle and when the trio crossed a junction

near a medical shop a speeding lorry hit the twowheeler and dragged it along the road for some distance.

Both girls died on the spot and their father was admitted to hospital with severe injuries. However, the lorry driver did not stop the vehicle and escaped from the spot. Locals tried to catch the driver but in vain. The police rushed to the spot and shifted the bodies for post-mortem examination. Investigation is on.

## APHEPB vows to make higher edu accessible to all

Ministers Suresh and Srinivasa Rao jointly launched the Learning Management

System (LMS) developed by the Board of Higher Education.

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

The Andhra Pradesh Higher Education Planning Board (APHEPB) has decided to make higher education facilities accessible to the students from poorer sections.

The second meeting of the AP Higher Education Planning Board (APHEPB) was jointly organised by Andhra University, Indian Institute of Management, Visakhapatnam and Indian Institute of Petroleum Energy (IIPE) here

on Saturday. Delivering the keynote address, Prof Ramgopal Rao, Director, IIT Delhi, said the universities in the State need to be transformed into multidis-

ciplinary universities. He said that there should be an effort to turn knowledge into wealth. He suggested that applying for patents should work towards the goal of increasing the number of international students.

The freedom and competitiveness are to be run as interdependent systems and the aim should be to provide education, enhance knowledge and make innovations. Research parks would be set up on the varsity campus, people with diverse scientific knowledge would be appointed as professors and industry experts will be appointed as professors on practice, Prof Rao opined.

Education, Andhra Pradesh, Dr. Adimulapu Suresh said every student needs to be groomed as a global citizen. While inaugurating the The planning board has set up meeting, Minister for with the intention that educa-

tion should not be a business. Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy emphasised that poverty should not be an obstacle for any student in the State. Higher education should be accessible

He said the government was not only spending money in the education sector but would also review the progress of the institutions, Suresh said.

Minister for Tourism and Sports M Srinivasa Rao said the State government is giving equal priority to promote sports and games among the students.

Vice-Chancellor of Andhra University, Prof PVGD Prasada Reddy, said that today's education policy should move in a way that prepares the youth for the future. He said the higher education system should embrace new changes. There is an urgent need for students to become enterprising entrepre-

neurs in order to find employment. Efforts are being made to increase the number of engineering seats in the AU, the establishment of the AUCB, the establishment of the AU Trans-Disciplinary Research Hub and the incubation centres to inculcate skills and creativity among

the youth, the Vice-Chancellor

Prof. Hemachandra Reddy, Chairman, AP State Council of Higher Education (APSCHE), Pola Bhaskar, Commissioner, College of Education, Chandrasekhar, Director, IIM Visakhapatnam and Prof K. Ram Mohana Rao, vice chairman, Higher Education

Council, also spoke.

#### **AP Chambers** State panel elected at AGM

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry Federation (AP Chambers) elected the new office-bearers and the executive committee for the period 2021-13 at its annual general body meeting here on Saturday. The AP Chambers has elect-

ed Pydah Krishna Prasad as president, B Rajasekhar as general secretary, S Akkaiah Naidu as treasurer, Kallam Mohan Reddy as vice-president -Central Zone, M Sudheer as Vice-President - Vizag Zone and KV Chowdary as Vice-President Rayalaseema.



# Rajahmundry Mayor asked to prove majority on Oct 5

In a high drama, the officials pasted a notice on the door of the residence of Mayor Sunkara Pavani after serving a notice on her, asking her to prove her majority Council on October 5.

Majority of TDP corporators revolted against Mayor Sunkara Pavani and announced their support to the YSRCP-backed candidate.

As many as 33 corporators submitted a letter to Collector Ch Hari Kiran in this regard on

The municipal, police and revenue officials went to the residence of the Mayor on Saturday. They pasted Form 2 notice on the door of her house. The noconfidence motion would be moved on October 5 and she has to prove her strength to continue as city Mayor.

Earlier, the TDP corporators, along with the YSRCP corpo-



rators, met Collector Ch Hari Kiran and submitted a letter withdrawing their support to the Mayor. They asked the Collector to convene a Council

fidence motion.

TDP has 33 corporators, YSRCP 10 and the BJP three in the Municipal Corporation. There are two independent corporators. The two inde-

pendents and the two BJP corporators joined the YSRCP. Out of the 33 TDP corporators, 26 announced their support to the YSRCP backed Mayoral

NTR Varadhi caves in

#### Rs 20 lakh cash gutted in lightning

PNS ELURU

In a freak incident, Rs 20 lakh worth currency notes were gutted when lightning struck a house at Gurubhatlagudem village in Chintalapudi man-dal of West Godavari district on Saturday.

The lightning struck the house of Mahesh Babu on the night of Saturday resulting in fire in the house. Soon, Rs 20 lakh worth of currency notes were destroyed in the fire, Mahesh Babu said.

Rain accompanied with gales and thunders occurred

#### Telugu Desam Party (TDP) Rajahmundry Rural MLA Gorantla Butchaiah Chowdary has alleged that the Rajahmundry Urban SP was showing partiality towards the ruling YSRCP. The TDP leader wrote a letter to the Urban SP on

I have never gone to the police station and no FIR has been registered against me. But the police stopped me when I was going to meet officials to explain the problems of farmers on Sept 16

Gorantla slams SP for 'bias'

the farmers. The tractor on which he was going was also

seized, he flayed. Chowdary said that RUDA

The TDP leader asked the SP in his letter what the police were doing when YSRCP MLA Jogi Ramesh went to former Minister Chandrababu Naidu's house with his followers wielding

came to Rajahmundry, rallies

were taken out with a huge

convoy but the police did not

object. But the police pre-

vented him when he was

going to submit a memoran-

dum to Tahsildar, he lament-

# Chairman Sharmila Reddy took out two massive rallies. When Bireddy Siddardha Reddy and YV Subba Reddy

### **TS Governor starts giving** shocks to TRS government

SNCN ACHARYULU HYDERABAD

Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan has started giving shocks to TRS government after two years as she setelled in her post. While Two years before to next Telangana assembly elections the actions of the governor worries the ruling TRS. The first shock given by the

governor was by kept pending the recommendation of the Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao's cabinet to nominate P Kaushick Reddy as MLC in governor's quota. The recent shock was calling the 17th September as Telangana " liberation" day to the tune of BJP against the TRS government argument. In the United Andhra Pradesh particularly during the separate Telangana moment both BJP and TRS demanded the then Congress state government to celebrate officially 17th

September as Telangana libera-But after TRS came to power in 2014 it has changed its tune on Telangana liberation day. While BJP is still continuing it's stand on 17th September as Telangana liberation day. Union Home Minister Amit Shah also in the Nirmal public meeting held on Friday said once the BJP will come to power in Telangana their government will celebrate offi-

cialy Telangana liberation day on 17th September. Union minister G Kishan Reddy also said that the BJP after coming to power in 2023 assembly elections the first file to be

signed is declaring the 17th September as Telangna liberation day and also to celebrate official-But now the TRS argument is

that the 17th September is the merger of Hyderabad state in Indian government. The TRS secretary General and TRS Parliamentary party leader K Keshava Rao on Friday said that there was no need for a dispute over 17th September, it is merger of Hyderabad state with the Union government.

#### PNS KAKINADA The NTR Varadhi, known as

Jagannadhapuram bridge, across the Upputeru stream, collapsed on Saturday. However, no one was injured in the incident. The bridge suddenly caved in after an overnight down-

The NTR Varadhi was constructed when N T Rama Rao was the Chief Minister. The officials restricted vehicular traffic on the bridge after it became dilapidated.

About 15 days ago, the officials completely banned vehicular traffic on the bridge after



noticing its decrepit state.

The officials were making arrangements on the bridge for the immersion of Ganesh idols. Interestingly, the second bridge, which was constructed several decades ago during the British rule across the Upputeru, is still intact and the vehicles are moving on it.

### Man held for woman's murder

PNS HYDERABAD

The Jawahar Nagar Police on Saturday, arrested a man on charges of killing a woman, whose body was found with the face mutilated.

The arrested person has been identified as Patinti Anjappa, 43, a resident of Bhajarang Colony in Kapra. The deceased person, Pyatala Sujatha, 35, was a neighbour of

The woman was initially reported missing by her husband. The police registered a

missing person's case and were investigating when the dead body of the missing woman was found in the forest area behind Vikalangula Colony with a severe head injury. The police then altered the case to a murder case and began an investigation.

While verifying CCTV footage, police noticed Anjappa and Sujatha moving closely. While all suspicion pointed at at his residence and brought him to police station. During interrogation, he confessed to

the crime. Police learnt that Anjappa wanted to have an affair with Sujatha but was however rejected many times. When Sujatha wanted á loan of Rs 5,000, Anjappa took her behind Vikalangula Colony claiming that he would give her the money there. However, once they reached there, Anjappa tried to take advantage of Sujatha and rape her. When Sujatha rejected his advances, griidge and bliid geoned her to death using a granite stone, after which, he fled the scene.

#### Man dupes lawyer of Rs 65 L, held

PNS RAJAHMUNDRY

leader

Saturday. He alleged that the police registered false cases against the TDP leaders and

"I have been in politics for 40 years and have been elect-

ed MLA for six times. I have

worked as minister and vice-president of the Planning

Commission. I have never

gone to the police station and

no FIR has been registered

But the police prevented me on September 16 when I

was going to meet officials to

explain the problems of farm-

ers and registered a case," he

The police registered a case

against him when he was going

to meet Kadiyam Tahsildar to

submit a memorandum on

the problems being faced by

activists.

against me.

lashed out.

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Cybercrime police arrested a person named Guttigande Vidyasagar in connection with cheating of a woman advocate by making her believe that he would help her to get government jobs her to get government jobs for her two children.

The Vijayawada cybercrime police, in a press note on Saturday, said that some fraudsters are easily cheating the gullible people by luring them with jobs. In one such case, Vidya Sagar lured a woman advocate saying that he had influence in the Union government and that he could help her two sons get government jobs. Blindly trusting him, the woman transferred Rs 65 lakh into his account.

After realising that she was cheated by Vidya Sagar, she lodged a complaint with the cybercrime police. The police, during the course of investigation, noticed that Vidya Sagar had earlier cheated some other people saying that he would help them get government jobs. The cybercrime police appealed to the fraudsters. The police seized Rs 7 lakh cash and a vehicle from the accused.



### SWC chief serious over burning Disha Act copies

**PNS** ■ GUNTUR

State Women Commission (SWC) Chairperson Vasireddy Padma has slammed Telugu Desam party MLC Nara Lokesh for burning the copies of the Disha Act and termed the act a humiliation to women.

Talking to the media, after visiting the prison here on Saturday, she alleged that the TDP leaders had no respect for the law. She criticised the TDP saying that the party had no sincerity regarding the security of women. The TDP leaders should exert pressure on the Union government in the Parliament for the Presidential approval for the Disha Act, she said.

not been approved by the President of India, the charge sheets were filed in 1.600 cases

inspiration from the Act. The YSRCP government is a prowomen government. Chief Minister Y S Jaganmohan Reddy has launched many welfare schemes especially for women," she said. The YSRCP government is

within one week drawing

responding immediately whenever injustice is meted out to women. The crime rate has come down by 4 percent compared to the previous year. Jaganmohan Reddy is keen on empowerment of women,"

Vasireddy Padma claimed.
The State Women's
Commission would soon hold seminars on the self-reliance of women to which intellectuals would be invited. The seminars would be held on September 23, 24 in Tirupati and on September 28 and 29

in Kadapa, she said.

#### **SHORT TAKES**

### **YSRCP**, TDP doing cheap politics, alleges Kanna

GUNTUR: Former BJP State president Kanna Lakshminarayana has slammed the ruling YSRCP and Opposition TDP for resorting to murky politics. The BJP leader visited a ration shop at Nagarampalem here on Saturday on the occasion of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's birthday celebrations. Speaking on the occasion, he alleged that the YSRCP regime had hiked the power tariff for two times since it came to power. Adding to the woes, the government was collecting true-up charges on the electricity consumers, he criticised. The BJP leader demanded that the government reduce the power tariff. The two regional parties, the YSRCP, and the TDP were degrading themselves with their cheap politics, he charged. State vice-president and Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana State convenor Ravela Kishore Babu said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's image was not arranged at the ration shop despite the Union government providing subsidised rice. The Union government is extending a 30 percent subsidy on the ration being distributed by

#### Two arrested in theft cases

KAKINADA: The police arrested two criminals who committed theft of valuables from the bags of the passengers and recovered Rs 4.71 lakh cash from them here on Saturday. DSP S Rambabu said that the accused committed two offences at the Kakinada bus station. In the first offence that took place on September 12, they stole Rs 80,000 cash from the bag of a woman passenger when she was getting down from a bus. Four days later on September 16, they stole Rs 3.93 cash from another woman passenger by cutting through her bag while she was boarding the bus. The names of the accused were given as Vasamsetty Kumar Swamy (27) and Kora Prahlad (23), both belonging to Visakhapatnam district. The arrested persons were sent to judicial custody after they were produced in court.

#### Rs 1.1 cr. donated to BIRRD

TIRUMALA: A Chennai-based devotee Balu Ramajayan donated Rs1.1 crore to TTDs BIRRD Trust, here on Saturday. The devotee handed over the donation in the form of a Demand Draft to TTD Additional Executive Officer A V Dharma Reddy here. The Additional EO told the media that Ramajayan had donated Rs .1 crore to BIRRD Trust to purchase 200 state-of-the-art beds for the hospital. These

#### **BTech student found hanging**

HYDERABAD: A 20-year-old engineering student committed suicide by hanging herself in her hostel room at Maisammaguda at Petbasheerabad late on Friday night. Officials suspect that the victim was depressed, leading her to take the extreme step. The victim was identified as K Madhavi, a native of Jangaon, she was staying in a hostel at Maisammaguda and was in her third year of engineering at a private college. Madhavi was found hanging in her hostel room, from the ceiling fan. Officials said no suicide note was found at the spot and that her family members also said she had no problems. However, the police said that a few of her friends noticed that she was not herself during the last few days and was downcast. The Petbasheerabad Police registered a case of suspicious death and are investigating the incident. The body was shifted to the Gandhi Hospital morgue for autopsy.

### Cops arrest two chain snatchers

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Meerpet Police apprehend two persons, including a minor, involved in a chain snatching offence and recovered 15 grams of gold ornaments from their possession on Saturday.

The arrested person has identified as been Shanmugam Gowtham, 19, a medicine delivery boy from Saidabad and a child in conflict with the law (CCL).

The police received a complaint from a 70-year-old victim, who said that while she was walking at Sai Nagar of Meerpet, two unknown persons came on a bike, the pillion rider got down from the bike and snatched her chain from her neck and the duo then fled from the scene. The Meerpet Police registered a case and nabbed the accused persons.

### Revanth Reddy throws 'White challenge' at KTR and Konda

PNS HYDERABAD

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee chief A Revanth Reddy has thrown what he calls a 'White Challenge' at IT Minister KT Rama Rao and Chevella former MP Konda Vishweshwar Reddy daring them to undergo drug tests.

While speaking to media persons at Gandhi Bhavan on Saturday, Revanth appealed to political leaders and celebrities. particularly cinema actors, to participate in his 'White Challenge' to send a good message to the youth and protect them from drugs and cannabis

Revanth apparently wants for his anti-drug campaign something similar to Rajya Sabha member J Santhosh Kumar's 'Green Challenge'. He

explained that the one who accepted the White Challenge would have to prove that he was not using drugs by undergoing blood and hair tests and later the same person had to throw the White Challenge to two more celebrities or political leaders.

Revanth offered to come to Gun Park on September 20 at 12 noon. He said that he was ready to come to any hospital chosen by KTR and Konda Vishweshwar Reddy. "Let us go to Osmania Hospital as part of the White Challenge. Let us give blood and hair samples to the doctors for tests. We have the responsibility of protecting the youth", he said.

KTR must spell out why he was not responding to investigations in the drugs and money laundering case and why he did not interfere even as a Minister. He sought to know why the Prohibition and Excise Department was not giving details to the Enforcement Directorate with regard to the drugs case.

Revanth said the state government must tell as to who was the secret person protecting Daggubati Rana and Rakul Preet Singh from the Prohibition and Excise Department case then and now. "Who is the person behind not summoning Rana and Rakul in the year 2017 and who is the person behind summoning Rana and Rakul now for the interrogation? The ED has served notices and conducted interrogation of Rana and Rakul now", he stated.

### From ignoring KTR's text to investing Rs 2,400 cr in TS

Kitex MD more than doubles investment plan, hails state

PNS HYDERABAD

Kochi-based Kitex group on Saturday announced a Rs 2,400 crore investment in Telangana State, with potential to create 22,000 jobs.

Kitex MD Sabu Jacob revealed that he decided to make the investment only because of K T Rama Rao, though initially he had ignored the Minister's text message.

Sharing the details on Saturday, KTR said, 'Jayesh Ranjan through his 5th degree of separation got me Jacob's number and I sent him a text message introducing myself as Minister in Telangana and would like to speak to him". KTR said, "He did not reply as he didn't seem interested or maybe

thought I wasn't the Minister. Jayesh somehow convinced that it's the Minister reaching out to him. I was explaining him all wonderful things in Telangana... I urged Jacob to visit Hyderabad as seeing is believing. Without

thinking, I just said I will send a flight and he was taken aback". He said the Kerala govt would stop him, so he was asked to announce just before departure. This interesting conversation on phone translated to Rs2,400 crore

investment Jacob, acknowledging the reception they got in TS, said: "?When we decided to withdraw from Kerala, I got invitation from almost all the states and other countries too. I am here today because of one person, Minister KTR.

### VMC clears 'Dog Theme Park' amid protests

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

The Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) has approved over 100 items including Pet Dog Theme Park on Saturday. Though several protests were staged against the items on the agenda, including dogs park at a cost of Rs 2 crore in an extent of one acre land, near Chinamushidiwada, implementation of the SC sub-plan at cost of Rs 40 crore and development of the schools infrastructure with Rs13 crore under Smart City, the general body meeting of the ĞVMC has cleared the bills.

Alleging that the GVMC has set aside the basic amenities in the city, the CPM and Jana Sena Party corporators staged protests with dogs in front of the GVMC building. However, with the help of strong membership in the body, the ruling YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) passed over 100 agenda items in the meeting.

The Opposition parties, including TDP, CPM, and JSP, registered their protest on the items on the agenda. However, after counting of the members, Mayor G Hari Venkata Kumari announced that all the items were passed.



#### Newborn baby girl abandoned

PNS HYDERABAD

A newborn baby girl was found abandoned at a temporary shed on the roadside in Rein Bazaar here on Saturday. Police suspect her parents abandoned her soon after birth.

The local residents, who heard the baby crying, checked the shed and found her wrapped in a cloth. They alerted cops, who reached the spot immediately and shifted her to a nearby private hospital, from where she was later shifted to Niloufer Hospital for better treatment.



#### Metro network in India to reach 900 km by 2022: Puri

PNS NEW DELHI

Nearly 740 km of metro lines are at present operational in various cities in India and the network span is steadily scheduled to rise to about 900 km by 2022, Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on Saturday.

He was speaking after inaugurating the nearly 1-km Najafgarh-Dhansa Bus Stand corridor, an extension of the Grey Line of the Delhi Metro, via a video-conference link.

"Nearly 740 km or so of metro lines are operational in various cities in India and the network span is "steadily scheduled to rise" to about 900 km by 2022," the minister said.

Besides, another 1,000 km metro lines are under construction in various cities in the country, so the total span will be close to 2,000 km in

the coming years, he said. Puri lauded the Delhi Metro for its various accomplishments despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

# PM says birthday was emotional for him after 2.5 cr vaccinations

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said he was humbled as over 2.50 crore COVID-19 vaccine doses were administered in the country on his 71st birthday, and called it an emotional and unforgettable moment.

Without naming any party, Modi also said the overwhelming response in the country to the vaccination drive on his birthday on September 17 made a political party experience fever, and react during midnight.

Modi was interacting with healthcare workers and vaccination beneficiaries in Goa via video link to mark the first dose vaccination to the entire eligible population in the state.

"I want to speak my maan ki baat. So many birthdays came and went. I kept away from celebrating them. But in my entire life, yesterday was an emotional day,"

He said people from medical fraternity are associated with the vaccination programme for the last one and a half year, but the record created yesterday is a big thing as over 2.5 crore people received the jab.

"One dose will save one life," he

He said the country was glued to the CoWin dashboard vesterday as every hour more than 15 lakh vaccines were given, which means 26,000 jabs every minute and 415 every second.

"More than one lakh vaccination centres were involved in the



mission," Modi said. The country's vaccination network and skilled manpower reflects in this capability, he added.

Modi said that on his birthday, he had called an elderly friend, who asked him about his age. "I told him, there are 30 more years remaining," he said.

Modi said that states having a large tourist footfall like Goa, Himachal Pradesh, and Sikkim were given importance in the vaccination programme so that the tourism sector opens up.

It is important that our tourism sector opens up and a state like Goa attains an important position in reviving the tourism sector of the country, he said. When everyone from the

hotel industry, taxi drivers, vendors and shopkeepers are vaccinated, people will feel safe to travel that destination," he said.

"Goa is among the international tourist destinations where everyone is vaccinated," he added. He said the spread of the virus has been reduced but people should not take things lightly. "We should give importance to COVID-19 protocol as much as

to vaccination," he said. Modi said the Central government has taken up steps to encourage international tourism by offering sops like free visa for the first five lakh arrivals, Rs 10 lakh loan for hospitality sector companies and Rs one lakh loan for tourist guides.

During the interaction, Modi recalled former Goa chief minister Manohar Parrikar. "Had he been alive, he would have been proud of the achievement of the state," Modi said. Parrikar's legacy of progress has been successfully taken forward by Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, he

Modi interacted with a doctor, nurse, a senior citizen and a social worker on issues like overcoming vaccine hesitancy and logistics involved in transportation of the doses.

### **Wish PM Modi celebrated** his birthday everyday: Cong

Prime Minister Narendra Modi

should celebrate his birthday

every day as some BJP-ruled

states "performed" on the day

and vaccinated many times the daily average, the Congress said on Saturday. The party took a dig at Modi a day after India achieved the highest record of 2.5 crore COVID-19 vaccinations on a single day. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said this is the pace of vaccination the country needs. "Looking forward to many more days of 2.1 crore vaccinations. This pace is what our country needs," he tweeted. Party leader P Chidambaram said he was happy and grateful that 2.5 crore vaccinations were administered on Friday. "But why did we have to wait until the PM's birthday," he asked. Suppose the prime minister's birthday was on December 31, would the 2.5 crore vaccinations have been done only on the last day of the vear. Chidambaram also asked. "Vaccination is not like cutting a cake on a birthday. Vaccination is a programme, it is a process. It has to be accelerated every day, not scale a peak on a



birthday," he said on Twitter. "BJP ruled states -- UP, MP, Gujarat and Karnataka 'perform' on the PM's birthday and vaccinate many times the daily average. On other days, they are 'non-performing' states. "I wish the PM celebrated his birthday every day," the former Union finance minister added. In another tweet, he said, one-third of the adult population was yet to receive its first dose and only 21 per cent had been fully vaccinated. Prime Minister Modi, in a swipe at the opposition, on Saturday said there is talk of fever as a vaccine side-effect, but a political party experienced fever after 2.5 crore vaccines were administered on his birthday



### Govt frames adoption rules under HAMA

The government has brought out regulations to ease inter-country adoptions under the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act (HAMA). According to the Adoption (Amendment) Regulations 2021, families adopting under the Act can receive a NOC from the government's nodal adoption body Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) to take the child abroad.

Until now, the NOC was issued only by a court.

Till now, there were no regulations for CARA regarding intercountry adoptions under HAMA, which covers Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains. The Act deals with the rules for

adopting children as it gives an adopted child all the rights enjoyed by a biological child.

In a notification issued late on

Friday, the Women and Child Development Ministry said CARA shall issue a no-objection certificate for Hague-ratified countries.

CARA will issue the NOC based upon a verification certificate from the district magistrate of the respective region.

In cases of countries outside the Hague Adoption Convention in respect of inter-country adoptions, a letter accepting the adoption from the government department concerned of the receiving country shall be sought by CARA in order to issue the final support letter by the agency.

#### **INDIA CORNER**

### IAF to hold air show over Srinagar's Dal Lake on Sep 26



An air show will be held here on September 26 where IAF's skydiving team Akash Ganga and Suryakiran Aerobatic and Display Team and paramotor flying will maneuver the skies over the famous Dal Lake, officials said on Saturday. The air show will be organised by the Air Force Station Srinagar and the Jammu and Kashmir administration

as part of the ongoing celebrations commemorating 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav', they said. The main aim of the exercise -- under the theme 'Give Wings to Your Dream' -- is to motivate the youth of the valley to join the Indian Air Force (IAF) and to promote tourism in the region, the officials said. The event will be flagged off Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha at the Sher-e-Kashmir International Conference Centre (SKICC) overlooking the Dal Lake. More than 3,000 college and school students are expected to participate in the programme to witness the impressive maneuvers of the IAF, which will motivate them to dream about a career

**Test between Dec 16-Jan 13** 

#### the accused for uploading and streaming obscene content. in the force and in the aviation sector, the officials said. The bail plea also said that there is not a single allegation in **Central Teacher Eligibility**



he Central Board of Secondary Education will conduct the Central Teacher Eligibility Test (CTET) between December 16 and January 13, it said in a statement. The test will be conducted in 20 languages throughout the country in computer based test mode, the board said. The

information bulletin containing details of the examination, syllabus, languages, eligibility criteria, examination fee, examination cities and important dates will be available on the CTET's website https://ctet.nic.in from September 20, according to the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE). Candidates have to apply online only through the CTET website. The online application-process will be start on September 20 and end on October 19. The fee can be paid up to October 20 before 3.30 pm.

### **Delhi University UG cut-off** schedule likely by next week



Delhi University officials will be holding a series of meetings with college principals to finalise the cut-off schedule that is likely to be released by next week officials said on Saturday. The university plans to release its first cut-off on October 1 to accommodate students who are appearing for

improvement or compartment exams, they added. Professor Rajeev Gupta, chairman of the university's admission committee said, "We will finalise the cut-off schedule very soon. October 1 is a tentative date for the first cut-off. We plan to release the cut-off on that day. We will be holding meetings with college principals and nodal officers to finalise the schedule." He said they plan to release a cut-off schedule for at least five cut-offs by next week.

#### 7 girls drown during 'Karma **Puja' immersion in Jharkhand**



Seven girls aged between 12 and 20 years drowned in a pond at a village in Jharkhand's Latehar district on Saturday, officials said. The tragedy occurred at Bukru village within Balumath police station limits when the girls had gone to the pond for immersion after Karma Puia, a maior festival in

Jharkhand, Deputy Commissioner Abu Imran said. Rescue teams were rushed to the scene. Some people were also injured and three of them were hospitalised. The Deputy Development Commissioner of the district has been asked to hold an inquiry, Imran said. Karma is a major festival in Jharkhand related to worship of mother nature.

### Gurudwara Bangla Sahib asked to close over violation of Covid norms

PNS NEW DELHI

The Chanakyapuri district administration has ordered the closure of Gurudwara Bangla Sahib here for alleged violation of COVID-19 norms, prompting outgoing Delhi Sikh Gurudwara Management Committee president Manjinder Singh Sirsa to demand action against the officials concerned.

order by the Chanakyapuri sub divisional magistrate (SDM) was issued on September 16. The order stated that a report submitted by executive magistrate (Chanakyapuri) found that the management of Sahib Gurudwara "allowed visitors/prayers inside the Gurudwara" in violation of



DDMA directions. The order asked the management of Bangla Sahib Gurudwara, one of the most prominent Sikh shrines in the national capital, to be closed for visitors with immediate effect.

Delhi Disaster had earlier ordered reopening of religious places, but visitors were

not allowed to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus infection. Meanwhile, SAD leader and outgoing Delhi Sikh Gurudwara

Management Committee (DSGMC) chief Manjinder Singh Sirsa fumed at the Chanakyapuri SDM order and demanded action from Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal against the district offi-In a video message on Twitter,

he said, "Cheap action by SDM Chanakyapuri by passing this order to close Gurdwara Sri Bangla Sahib for Covid Violations! We condemn this sick mentality of Delhi Govt & demand @ArvindKejriwal Ji to cerned DC & SDM Geeta

#### **PORN FILMS CASE**

### Raj Kundra claims there is no evidence against him, seeks bail

Businessman Raj Kundra, an accused in the pronographic content case, on Saturday moved a bail application in a court here, claiming that he was being made a "scapegoat" and that there was not a single evidence in the supplementary charge sheet of him being actively involved in creation

of alleged questionable content.

The crime branch, probing the case, had recently filed a supplementary charge-sheet against Kundra and three others in the of pornographic films and publishing them through some apps.

approached the metropolitan court for bail, saying that the investigation in the case was practically over.

Kundra, husband of Bollywood actor Shilpa Shetty, was arrested July 19 by after being booked under relevant sections of the IPC and the Information Technology Act. He is currently in judicial custody.

In the bail, filed through advocate Prashant Patil, Kundra claimed that there is not a single iota of evidence till date with the ecution that would connect the app 'Hotshots' with an offence

As per the probe agency, the Hotshots app was being used by

the entire supplementary charge sheet against the present applicant (Kundra) that he was actively involved in any of the video shootings.

In fact, it is a sole discretion of the individual artists to upload their contents on the app, the plea

The contents of the complaint offence against Kundra, the appli-

### SC for Rs 25 cr for Covid-orphaned kids

The Supreme Court is in favour of disbursing the over Rs 25 crore deposited by the Maharashtra government in the apex court registry five years ago to children who lost both parents during the Covid pandemic in the state.

A bench of Justices D Y Chandrachud and B V Nagarathna noted earlier this week that the state has about 19,000 children who lost a parent due to COVID-19 and 593 who lost both their parents.

Maharashtra, one of the worst affected states during the second wave of pandemic earlier this year, had deposited the money in the apex court registry in an old matter related to medical college admissions. The Supreme Court noted that the government of Maharashtra formulated a poli-

that Rs 5 lakh be placed in fixed deposit for children who lost both their parents due to the pandemic and the money will be payable to them after they attain the age of maturity.

'The amount of Rs 20 crores which was deposited (by Maharashtra government) in pursuance of the order dated December 2, 2016 stands enhanced to Rs 25,53,25,548 as a result of accretions of interest," the bench said.

The top court said before it directs the disbursal of the money to the State of Maharashtra, it wants that a concrete statement be placed on affidavit about the manner in which the money will be utilised for the benefit of children affected by the death of either or both parents due to the Covid pandemic.

### Army is fully prepared to meet any challenge from adversaries: Lt. Gen

The Army is fully prepared to meet any challenge, like the use of drones and social media, by adversaries to safeguard the country, Commandant of Chennai-based Officers Training Academy (OTA) Lieutenant General M K Das said on Saturday.

Lt Gen Das, who is also the colonel of Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry (JAKLI) regiment, said the situation in Jammu and Kashmir is getting better with the Army and other security agencies working together to stamp out ter-

Speaking to media persons on the sidelines of the maiden attestation parade of 460 new recruits of the 126th batch after a successful 40-week training period at Dansal here, he said the Indian prepared to give a befitting response to the enemies of the

Responding to a question about the need to introduce special training courses for soldiers in the aftermath of the developments in Afghanistan, the Army officer said "our training is very contemporary as it caters for all the contingencies and unforeseen situations.

"I have no doubt that my young soldiers who have taken the oath to defend the constitution and the country will live up to all the challenges. One of the unique things of this regiment (JAKLI) is that all our troops hail from J&K and Ladakh. Therefore, they have this ingrained quality to be security conscious much more than others," he said. Lauding the regiment for its

in all counter-insurgency operations within and outside the country since its birth in 1947, Lt Gen Das said, "All the situations unfolding in the country or in our neighbourhood, I am more than confident that the JAKLI regiment will continue to excel and be the lead agency in the fight against terror-

Asked about the challenges posed by the use of drones to hit targets and deliver weapons and exceptional and outstanding record narcotics from across the Line of

he said a capsule course on antidrone measures was introduced to deal with the challenge. "On Army Day on January 15,

our chief took the threat seriously and our soldiers are being prepared to deal with the challenge in a better way," he said.

During recruitment training, he said that besides the arms handing and exercises, thrust is also given on science and technology, cybersecurity and other new challenges that are followed by orientation training courses at the respective units where anti-drone measures were also introduced.

He said the misuse of social media by "anti-national" elements is a reality and the new recruits are being trained in cybersecurity during their basic as well as orien-

### Indianisation of our legal system is need of the hour: CJI

PNS BENGALURU

Chief Justice of India N V Ramana on Saturday said Indianisation of the country's legal system is the need of the hour and it is crucial to make the justice delivery system more accessible and effective.

He said Courts need to be litigant-centric, and the simplification of justice delivery should be the pressing concern.

Very often our justice deliverv poses many barriers for the common people. The working and the style of courts do not sit well with the complexities of India. Our systems, practice, rules being colonial in origin, it may not be best suited to the needs of the Indian pop-

ulation," Justice Ramana said. Speaking at an event organised

here to pay tributes to late Supreme Court judge Justice Mohan M Shantanagoudar, he said the need of the hour is the 'Indianisation of our legal system." "When I say Indianisation, I

mean the need to adapt to the practical realities of our society and to localise our justice delivery system. For example, parties from a rural place fighting a family dispute are usually made to feel out of place in the court; they do not understand arguments or pleadings which are mostly in English, a language alien to them," he added

Further noting that these days judgments have become lengthy, the Chief Justice said it further complicates the position of the lit-

"For parties to understand the implication of the judgment they are forced to spend more money. Courts need to be litigant-centric as they are the ultimate beneficiaries. The simplification of justice delivery should be our pressing concern. It is crucial to make jus-

tice delivery more transparent, accessible and effective," he said. Justice Ramana said procedural barriers often undermine access to justice.

"A common man while approaching the court should not feel scared of judges and the courts; he should be able to speak the truth. It is the duty of lawyers and judges to create an environment which is comforting for litigants and other stakeholders," he



'We must not forget that the focal point of any justice system is the litigant, the justice seeker," he said, adding that "usage of alternative dispute mechanisms such as mediation and conciliation would go a long way in reducing

the friction between parties and would save resources. It also reduces the pendency and requirement of having lengthy arguments and judgments.'

Remembering Justice Shantanagoudar who died on April 25 at a private hospital in Gurugram, where he was admitted due to a lung infection, at the age of 62, as an "extraordinary judge", the Chief Justice said these are the topics he used to discuss with him everyday

Expressing "deep gratitude" to Shantanagoudar's contribution to Indian Judiciary and the country's jurisprudence and for his friendship, the Chief Justice said, "in losing him the country has lost a common man's Judge.

I have personally lost a most

cherished friend and a valuable colleague.

Justice S Abdul Nazeer, Justice A S Bopanna, Justice Abhay Shreeniwas Oka, Justice BV Nagarathna, Acting Chief Justice of Karnataka High Court Satish Chandra Sharma, Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai, Law Minister J C Madhuswamy, several present and former judges of Supreme Court and High Court, office-bearers and members of Bar Cou-

ncil, among others, were present. Late Justice Shantanagoudar's family was also present at the

Recalling his long association with him since a young age, Chief Minister Bommai said Shantanagoudar was a down to earth personality.

# Higher investment required in agri R&D, India says at G20 agri meet

India on Saturday stressed at G20 agriculture meeting that there is a need to increase investment in agricultural research and development amid the challenges of climate change and expected increase in food demand by 2030.

The G20 Agriculture

Ministers' Meeting is one of the ministerial meetings organised as part of the G20 Leaders Summit 2021 to be hosted by Italy in October.

Addressing a session on the topic 'Research as a driving force behind sustainability, Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar shared that agricultural research has played a major



role in transforming India from a net food importer to exporter. "Today with an annual production of 308 million tonnes of food grains, India is not only in the realm of food security but is also catering to needs of other countries," he said and revolution in the field of agricultural produce due to the efficient research of scientists.

However, the demand for foodgrain is expected to rise to 350 million tonnes with likely increase in India's population to 150 crore by 2030-32. The demand for food will rise amid depleting natural resources and the challenge of climate change, he said in an official statement.

In this backdrop, the minister said, "There is a need to rethink and adapt agricultural research and development, along with increasing investment in scientific research to achieve adequate and nutritious food along with environmental sustainability."

significantly to the three aspects of food security availability, access and affordability.

To make the country selfreliant, concerted efforts will continue in agricultural research in areas such as genomics, digital agriculture, climate-smart technologies and methods, efficient water use equipment, development of high yielding and biofriendly varieties, systematic production, quality and safety standards among others, he said. The minister also said the strategy to meet the increased demand revolves around increasing productivity and increasing the income of

### US court sets aside proposed Trump-era rule on H-1B visa

PNS WASHINGTON

A US federal judge has struck down a proposed Trump-era rule that aimed to replace the current H-1B cap lottery system with a wage-level-based selection process.

Judge Jeffrey S White of the US District Court for the Northern District of California vacated a Trump-era H-1B cap selection regulation on the grounds that then-Acting Homeland Security Secretary Chad Wolf was not lawfully serving in his role at the time the regulation was promulgat-

The judge on Wednesday granted the US Chamber of Commerce's motion for summary judgment in the its lawsuit challenging the regulation, according to the court order



uploaded by the Chamber's litigation centre.

The H-1B visa is a nonimmigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. Technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from

countries like India and China.

ing applications for consideration is a hybrid of first-come, first-served and a lottery. During former president Donald Trump's final days in office, the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced to do away with the

The number of H-1B visas issued each year is capped at

65,000, plus an additional

20,000 reserved for individu-

als with advanced degrees.

The current system for select-

traditional lottery system in deciding the successful applicants for the H-1B visas.

The USCIS had said it would prioritise wages to protect the economic interests of

American workers, and better ensure that the most highly skilled foreign workers benefit from the temporary employment programme.

### AEPC hails inverted duty structure decision

PNS NEW DELHI

The Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC) on Saturday said the decision of the GST Council to correct inverted duty structure on textiles from January 1, 2022 will lessen the tax burden on manmade fibre (MMF) fabrics and garments.

The GST Council in its latest meeting on September 17 agreed to correct inverted duty structure on footwear and textiles from January 1, 2022.

AEPC Chairman A Sakthivel said the decision will be a big breather to the industry.

"The revision will lessen the tax burden on manmade fibre (MMF) fabrics and garments, he said. He said the inverted duty structure has been an issue with the apparel industry and that the council had made **Nasscom welcomes GST Council's clarification** 

Nasscom on Saturday said the GST Council's clarification on scope of intermediary services will ensure that BPM exports/R&D exports and IT services-related exports are no longer denied the export status by the enforcement authorities. On Friday, GST Council's recommendations included issuance of certain circulars to remove ambiguity and legal disputes on various issues. This included clarification on scope of "intermediary services" and clarification relating to interpretation of the

term "merely establishment of distinct person" with reference to a section of the IGST Act 2017 for export of services. "Nasscom welcomes the decision of the GST Council to issue a circular to clarify the scope of intermediary services. We expect this to lay at rest a long pending issue for the BPM industry and ensure that BPM exports/R&D exports and IT services related exports will no longer be denied the export status by the enforcement authorities," Nasscom said.

recommendations to the government for the elimination of this anomaly that has been resulting in input tax credit accumulation blocking crucial

working capital for businesses. Inputs into the MMF fabric segment (fibre and yarn) attract a GST rate of 18 per cent and 12 per cent whereas the GST rate on the MMF fabric is 5 per cent and that for the finished goods apparel is 5 per cent and 12 per cent, he said.

It creates a tax structure where the rate on inputs is higher than that on the outputs and this increases the effective rate of taxation of MMF fabrics and garments and violates the

principle of fibre neutrality, Sakthivel said.

He also said that the GST Council's decision to extend the validity of GST exemption on transport of goods by vessel and air from India to outside India till September 30, 2022, will partially help soften the impact of the current exorbitant freight costs.

### Jute body hopeful on Tariff Commission report

PNS KOLKATA

The Indian Jute Mills Association is hopeful that the government will implement the long due Tariff Commission report after the recent direction by the Calcutta High Court, a senior IJMA official said on Saturday.

The IJMA, the lobby body of the jute mills, said the Calcutta High Court this month has directed the govern-ment to approve the Tariff Commission report and make payments in line with the report within November 30.

'We are hopeful that after the recent High Court direction, the government will implement the Tariff Commission report soon. It is

long due and still provisional pricing continues. Implementation of new pricing will help the industry survive," IJMA chairman Raghavendra Gupta said.

The report was supposed to be implemented by March 31.

"At present, all jute mills are surviving on an 'ad-hoc/provisional' price. It was given to them in September 2016 by the Jute Commissioner's office. The mills are suffering Rs 3,000-6,000 per tonne loss", a mill owner and former IJMA office-bearer said.

In Kharif monsoon season (KMS) and Rabi monsoon season (RMS) 2021-22, the Union government has placed an order for the supply of almost 45 lakh bales of jute bags.

#### MAS Financial raises Rs 100 cr via market linked debentures

Non-banking financial company MAS Financial Services on Friday said it has raised Rs 100 crore through private placement of market-linked non-convertible debentures (MLDs). The lender has allotted 1,000 MLDs of a face

value of Rs 10,00,000, aggregating up to Rs 100 crore, the company said in a statement The allotment of 1.000 marketlinked NCDs was inclusive of a greenshoe option comprising 500 market-linked NCDs which was activated to retain over subscription, it said

### **MONEY MATTERS**

### **Anand Mahindra says looking** forward to new assignment

eading industrialist Anand Mahindra on Friday said he is looking forward to the assignment for carrying out a comprehensive review of the National Cadet Corps (NCC) in order to make it more relevant. Mahindra has been named in a 15-member panel constituted by the defence ministry to carry out



a comprehensive review of the National Cadet Corps (NCC) in order to make it more relevant. "I look forward to this assignment. Partly because my school-Lawrence, Lovedale, was an active participant in the program and I was in the Air Wing. I still reflexively salute using the Air Force version!" Mahindra said in a tweet. Replying to a tweet which sought disbanding of the organisation, Mahindra noted: "I'm not sure such a drastic conclusion is warranted. And I welcome inputs from all on how to adapt the NCC to today's times and needs..." The committee headed by former lawmaker Baijayant Panda also includes, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Col. (Retd) Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore, Rajya Sabha member Vinay Sahasrabuddhe, Principal Economic Advisor in the Finance Ministry Sanjeev Sanyal and Jamia Millia

### Kerala seeks extension of GST compensation regime past 2022

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Kerala Finance Minister K N Balagopal on Saturday pitched for extending the GST compensation beyond June next year as he highlighted that the state is already grappling with significant revenue shortfall.

He said the state is not get-ting its due in the wake of the 15th Finance Commission devolution recommendations.

Kerala will be receiving GST compensation of over Rs time grant of over Rs 19,000 crore in the current fiscal ending March 2022, he noted.

Former officials of the World

Bank are under pressure after

an investigation found that

they pressured staff members

of the bank to alter data on

global business conditions in

order to favour China and

The World Bank said it

would discontinue its "Doing Business" report in the wake of

the investigation, which was

conducted by the law firm

WilmerHale after internal

questions involving "data irreg-

ularities" in the 2018 and 2020

editions of the report and pos-

sible "ethical matters" involving

cluded that Kristalina

Georgieva, then the chief exec-

utive of the World Bank, and

the office of Jim Yong Kim,

then the bank's president, pres-

WilmerHale's report con-

bank staff.

some other governments.

In case the GST compensation ends next year, then the state will face further revenue shortfall, he said and expressed hope that the compensation regime would be extended.

The regime of paying compensation to states for revenue shortfall resulting from subsuming their taxes such as VAT in the uniform national tax GST will end in June next year.

However, the cess which is currently levied on top of the GST rate on certain luxury compensation amount for states will continue to be levied till March 2026.

### Kaushik Basu shocked at manipulation of World Bank's Doing Business Ranking

PNS NEW DELHI

Terming allegations of manipulation of World Bank's Doing Business Ranking as 'shocking', former chief economist of World Bank Kaushik Basu said on Saturday that pressure was there from governments during his tenure, but the multilateral institution never gave in.

The World Bank Group has decided to discontinue publicareport on country investment climates following allegations of

Inquiry puts ex-World Bank officials under scrutiny on China

sion that she was involved in

pressuring World Bank staff

with the findings and interpre-

tations of the Investigation of

Data Irregularities as it relates

to my role in the World Bank's

Doing Business report of 2018,"

The World Bank, based in

her statement said.

"I disagree fundamentally

members to appease China.



The decision was taken after allegedly due to pressure by some top bank officials to boost China's ranking in 2017

Washington, is among the world's largest sources of devel-

opment funding. "Doing

Business," which evaluates a

country's tax burdens, bureau-

cratic obstacles, regulatory sys-

tem and other business condi-

tions, is used by some govern-

ments to try to attract invest-

The report ranks countries

on such factors as how straight-

forward or burdensome it is to

register a business, legally

enforce a contract, resolve a

bankruptcy, obtain an electri-

cal connection or acquire con-

Timothy Ash, a strategist at

the fixed income manager

BlueBay Asset Management,

said he "cannot overestimate"

the importance of the Doing

Business report for banks and

businesses trying to assess risk

"Any quantitative model of

in a particular country.

struction permits.

ment.

The news of manipulation of World Bank's Doing Business Ranking is shocking. DB was under my charge from 2012 to 2016. There was pressure from govts. We NEVER gave in. Sad that this changed. I may add, to India's credit, I never had pressure from India's govt—current or previous," Basu said in a

He was the chief economist of "After reviewing all the information available to date on 'Doing Business', including

country risk has built this in to

ratings," Ash said. "Money and

investments are allocated on

at a bank or rating agency had

done what is alleged, "I wager

they would be fired and would

be subject to regulatory inves-

past two decades to increase its

influence over international

institutions, including the IMF and the World Health Organi-

The changes made to the

2018 "Doing Business" report followed lobbying by Beijing

for a better ranking and came

ahead of a campaign by the

World Bank to raise capital in

which Beijing was expected to

play a "key role," the report

said. China is the bank's third-

largest shareholder after the

United States and Japan.

sation, and their policies.

China has tried over the

He added that if an analyst

the back of this series."

tigation.'

the findings of past reviews, audits, and the report the bank released today on behalf of the board of executive directors, World Bank Group management has taken the decision to discontinue the Doing Business report," the World Bank Group had said in a statement on Thursday.

The group remains firmly committed to advancing the role of the private sector in developd providing s governments to design the regulatory environment that supports this, it had said.

Oil cos get good

PNS NEW DELHI

response to ethanol

procurement tender

State-owned fuel retailing

firms have received an "over-

whelming" response to the

tender they floated for buy-

ing ethanol for mixing in

petrol, a government state-

Interest (EOI) for signing long-term agreement with

upcoming dedicated ethanol

plants for supply of ethanol has received an overwhelm-

ing response, with 197 bidde-

rs participating in the same,"

it said without giving details

of the quantity manufactur-

ers have committed to supply.

BPCL on behalf of OMCs on

August 27, and it opened on

September 17.

The EOI was published by

"The first Expression of

ment said on Saturday.

#### **Sindhudurg Airport receives** aerodrome licence from DGCA

indhudurg Airport in the Konkan region of Maharashtra has received aerodrome licence from the DGCA, paving way for commercial flight operations from the facility. On September 7, Union

minister Narayan Rane had

Islamia Vice Chancellor Najma Akhtar.



said the Chipi airport in Sindhudurg district of Maharashtra would be

inaugurated by Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia on October 9. Earlier the Shiv Sena, which is ruling the state in alliance with Nationalist Congress Party and Congress, had announced a similar programme by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray. Come up at an investment of Rs 800 crore the first green airport at Chipi in Sindhudurg district, the state is expected to bring economic boom for the region with lots of employment and self-entrepreneurship opportunities for local people, the developer IRB Sindhudurg Airport Pvt Ltd said in a release. IRB Sindhudurg Airport Pvt Ltd is a special purpose vehicle of IRB Infrastructure Developer that was formed and mandated with the task of project development and operations. "IRB Sindhudurg Airport Pvt Ltd, an SPV of IRB Infrastructure Developers Ltd, has received aerodrome licence from the Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA)," the airport operator said in the release. IRB is happy to achieve yet another milestone in the current year and see the airport receive licence to operate after successful completion, said Virendra D Mhaiskar, CMD of the company. "With a concession period of over 90 years and a compelling regional proposition, it offers meaningful avenues of growth," he said.

### Explained: Why World Bank is under fire over set of rankings

PNS WASHINGTON

Under fire for allegations that it bowed to pressure from China and other governments, the World Bank has dropped a popular report that ranked countries by how welcoming they are to businesses.

The report is important to many companies and investors around the world: They use the World Bank's "Doing Business" report to help decide where to invest money, open manufacturing plants or sell products.

Eager to attract investment, countries around the world, developing especially economies, have sought to improve their rankings in the

World Bank's report. Sometimes, nations would

pursue substantive policy sloppy methodology and of changes — by, for example, making it easier for businesses to pay taxes, obtain loans or enforce contracts. Sometimes, they would take a more aggressive tack: Like pushy high schoolers cajoling a teacher for a higher grade, they would lobby the World Bank to provide a higher score on the

sured staff members to change

data on China to support Beijing's ranking in the "Doing

Business" report. These rank-

ings are important to China

and other developing nations

because they can affect their

ability to attract investment

disputed the report's conclu-

In a statement, Georgieva

from overseas.

"Doing Business" report. Countries that have scored a high ranking have often touted their success. In 2017, for example, Prime Minister Narendra Modi took to Twitter to celebrate India's big improvement in 2017. Rwanda's country's development board employs a

"Doing Business economist." But the World Bank has long been accused of using succumbing to political pressure in producing the "Doing Business" rankings. This week, the bank dropped the report after investigators had reviewed internal complaints about "data irregularities" in the 2018 and 2020 editions of "Doing Business" and possible "ethical matters" involving World Bank staff members.

In an investigation conducted for the bank, the law firm WilmerHale concluded that staff members fudged the data to make China look better under pressure from Kristalina Georgieva, then the CEO of the World Bank and now head of the IMF, and the office of Jim Yong Kim, then the World Bank's president.

What is the World Bank?

Founded in 1944, the 189country World Bank makes grants and loans, often to finance big public works projects, and offers economic advice, mostly to developing nations. The bank, based in Washington, has also pledged to reduce poverty around the world.

What is "Doing Business"

report? In 2002, the bank introduced the report, whose annual rankings highlight which

countries have adopted policies favorable to businesses and which haven't - and how much they're improving or regressing. The bank, which collects information from about tens of thousands of accountants, lawyers and other professionals in 190 countries, assesses how easy it is to do such things as start a business, obtain a construction permit or connect to the electrical grid. Last year, New Zealand ranked No. 1 and Somalia No. 190. The United States was No. 6.

Why was the report important?

Its rankings have been interpreted by the media and by investors as a proxy for how much countries welcome foreign investment.

"Any quantitative model of country risk has built this into ratings," says Timothy Ash, an emerging market strategist at the fixed income manager BlueBay Asset Management. "Money and investments are allocated on the back of this series.

Why did 'Doing Business' come under pressure?

Questions surrounding the report date back to at least 2018, when Paul Romer, then the chief economist of the World Bank, who would go on to win a Nobel Prize in economics for his earlier work, resigned after complaining about how "Doing Business treated" Chile.

As a result of methodological tinkering, Chile plunged in the rankings while socialist Michelle Bachelet occupied the presidency, rebounded under conservative Sebastian Pinera, then slumped again when Bachelet returned to power. The ups and downs occurred despîte little actual change in policy.

### **Zydus Cadila gets USFDA nod** to sell depression drug in USA

rug firm Zydus Cadila on Saturday said it has received approval from the US health regulator to market Vortioxetine Tablets, used to treat depression, in the American market The company has received final approval from the **US Food and Drug** 



Administration (USFDA) to market Vortioxetine tablets in the strengths of 5 mg, 10 mg, 20 mg, Zydus Cadila said in a statement Vortioxetine is used to treat depression. It works by helping to restore the balance of a certain natural substance (serotonin) in the brain. The drug will be manufactured at the group's formulation manufacturing facility at the SEZ, Ahmedabad, Zydus Cadila noted. The group now has 322 approvals and has so far filed over 400 abbreviated new drug applications (ANDAs) since it commenced the filing process in FY 2003-

VIJAYAWADA, September 19, 2021

# TAMING THE DRAGON

Unravelling the many aspects of China's statecraft, Blinkers Off serves as an important tool in understanding that the threat Beijing poses is multi-dimensional, and response to it should also be the same, writes MAJ. GEN. DHRUV C KATOCH (Retd)

he transformation of China under the Fourth Generation's leadership has indeed been incredible. China sees itself as taking the lead in world affairs by the middle of this century and towards this end, it seeks to establish the country's primacy in the Asia-Pacific region while concurrently moving towards establishing concurrently moving towards establishing Chinese leadership of the international order. In Asia, Delĥi is Beijing's only economic and geo-strategic rival. No surprise then, that Beijing's policy towards Delhi will continue to be shaped by its desire to achieve pre-eminence in the region.

If successful, what will China's international leadership look like? It would certainly aim at a different world order, in which Chinese interests remain paramount. That, of course, is an objective which all nations strive for. In the case of China, however, it perceives itself as the 'Middle Kingdom', and the 'centre of the universe, around which all other nations revolve. Here, competition would most certainly lead to confrontation. While the Chinese would, in all probability, seek to avoid war with the US, though this does not include proxy wars, they may seek a limited military engagement with India, when they feel that they have the capacity to achieve a decisive result in their favour. That makes a future war scenario with India a certainty, though not so with

In China's world view, they would aim at forcing the US to not just accept, but respect China's authority as the global leader and refrain from harming Chinese interests. The consequences of Chinese success in strategic competition could be severe for the United States and disastrous for India. So what should India and the international communities do, to remain relevant in the world stage?

This book, Blinkers off: How Will the World Counter China (Pentagon Press), authored by senior journalist Gaurie Dwivedi, gives a perspective on a counter strategy. It rests on a fundamental premise that unlike the Cold War, where America was able to take on erstwhile USSR on its own due to its economic and political might, Washington now needs partners to address the challenge of an autocratic and



expansionist Beijing which poses a threat not just to India and the United States, but to the present world order.

Divided into four segments, Dwivedi documents China's rise as it spread its tentacles from Asia to Europe to Africa and makes a case that Beijing's "long term waiting game" was to topple the very institutions of the liberal world that aided its growth. From the WTO to the WHO to the UNHRC; Dwivedi highlights specific instances when China was successful in 'gaming the system'.

Though written prior to the developrising China. It presents a 360 degree perspective on building deterrence against an gests that the world has now firmly tilted

towards a bipolar scenario, with China forming a nexus with other authoritarian and likeminded nations like Pakistan, Iran and Russia. The present security climate in Kabul seems to be testimony to the altered geo-political outlook that Dwivedi mentions to be the primary driver for building strong deterrence. Failure to create them would see China further building on its strengths, continuing its wolf warrior diplomacy and pushing the pedal on its hegemonic agenda. This would adversely impact not just India and Asia, but will destabilise the world. For it to be effective, Dwivedi says, the deterrence must encompass both military and nonmilitary aspects of engagement with China. İt also highlights the role India will play in any such global endeavour. Nonmilitary challenges like trade, technology, and information are highlighted as key domains for any potential clash with China, since these may not elicit a sharp response from India, US and others due to the non conventional nature of warfare. Even before the pandemic, the book points out instances when China used such domains to further its global political and military objective.

India, due to its geo-political and geoeconomic potential is expected to contribute significantly. In the Indo-Pacific,

where China has gained clout on the back of its large infrastructure investments; Blinkers Off suggests a more active maritime and economic role by India. Enhanced utilisation of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands beyond the present focus on reconnaissance, larger investments in its naval capabilities and identifying opportunities for collaboration are some of the recommendations for India to counter China's enhanced influence. To provide an alternative for the BRI investments in the Indian Ocean Region, which is India's geo strategic orbit, the books suggests New Delhi could tie up with Japan and America to provide sustainable infra

**BLINKERS OFF: HOW WILL** THE WORLD COUNTER CHINA **Gaurie Dwivedi** Pentagon Press, **₹79**€

funding to the smaller nations.

By combining useful insights with vivid language, Dwivedi has presented a case for global cooperation against China and identified newer age dimensions of warfare. Perhaps most interesting is the argument that India could leverage its trade deficit against China since it has been following the same template against other following the same template against other economies. It is the nature of India's trade with China, where it predominantly exports raw materials, needs to undergo a change, rather than the fact that New Delhi is a net importer.

Unravelling the many aspects of China's statecraft, Blinkers Off serves as an important tool in understanding that the threat Beijing poses is multi dimensional, and response to it should also be the same. It is hence a must read for those dealing with foreign policy in the government of India, to all in the Indian military fraternity, the think tanks, the educational institutes as also to all China watchers in the lay public.

The reviewer is Director, India Foundation and Editor,

#### THE DON'T-DIET PLAN: A NO-NONSENSE GUIDE TO WEIGHT LOSS

Kavita Devgan Rupa, ₹295

Say goodbye to fad diets, restrictive eating or other forced behaviours that do not come naturally to you. Weight loss is a journey that must be traversed with patience, over time (just like you gained weight over time). In this book, you will learn how to: lose weight in a sustainable, permanent way; stop living in the fear of food; make small changes that would lead to big paybacks; and draw from your ancestors

about hearty eating habits. Bestselling author Kavita Devgan offers strategies that she has tried and tested as a practising weight-loss consultant with over thousands of patients. With her practical advice that are easily inculcated, you will be able to make simple lifestyle changes that will lead to a more vibrant, confident and healthier you.

#### **VULTURES OF PARADISE**

Atulya Misra Rupa, ₹495

A story of greed, love and sacrifice narrated in the backdrop of a crippling human tragedy. Acclaimed author Atulya Misra tells a gripping and powerful story that traverses numerous cultures and geographies.



The story follows the life of Neha, who, at first, is driven by blind ambition. The heights she achieves in business dissipate once she starts spiralling in the opposite direction. Just when she appears to be an abysmal failure in the eyes of everyone, Neha creates a corporation to counter the biggest threat to the planet—the human propensity to consume endlessly and create more and more waste. Her enterprise becomes so large and successful that it becomes a danger to the very people who created it. Humanity has been a parasite for long enough on this planet. It's time we become vultures and clean up our habitat.

# Becoming a National Champion

Swimming Against the Tide: True Story of Para Swimmer by Madhavi Latha Prathigudupu is a true story of an extraordinary sportsperson who challenged her circumstances and physical disability to overcome the odds to emerge as a winner. An edited extract

any of my friends suggested that I try my luck in Paralympics. I learned from the Internet that Dr Dabas was the head of Para Swimming Federation of India. His contact number was also available on Google. So I contacted him and expressed my wish. He informed me that he used to frequently visit Chennai for some work and promised to let me know when he would plan his next visit.

After a few months, I contacted him again. He told me that he was about to call and inform me about his forthcoming visit to Chennai. I thought it would be great if I arranged a get-together with all our well-wishers when he would visit Chennai; I needed a venue for the same. So I requested Gita, the head of corporate affairs at my work, for her permission to arrange the meeting in our office. She accepted my request and also agreed to make all the arrangements,

including to provide refreshments.

I invited all our well-wishers and the people who had approached me after reading the article in The Hindu; Anand, Dr Karthik (who was my pool mate), Mr Narsa Reddy, Father Antony Samy, Dr Rema Devi, Ms Uthira and Sai were also there. Dr Dabas attended the meeting and explained his efforts to promote para swimming in India through a nice presentation. We then explained our contributions so far and elaborated on our plans to create and increase awareness on hydrotherapy/swimming in Tamil Nadu. The guests also shared their experiences in supporting our efforts. Dr Dabas suggested us to form Tamil Nadu State-level Paralympic Swimming Association and send the participants for the forthcoming nationals to be ĥeld in Kolhapur, Maharashtra.

We took Dr Dabas to the Andhra Club pool. Our swimmers exhibited how we practised swimming and sought his guidance to improve our skills. He gave his valuable suggestions to us and appreciated our efforts. We also introduced our coach Gopi to him.

I had a discussion with Anand, Preetha, Dr Rema Devi, Ms Uthira, Sai and other well-wishers. We started the Paralympic Swimming Association of Tamil Nadu informally, with Dr Rema Devi as president, Ms Uthira as vice-president, Preetha as treasurer, myself as the general secretary, Sai as joint secretary, Dr Ponraj as medical direc-tor and Anand as technical director. With great efforts, we





Left: Participation that made us champions; Right: PSATN family (Standing from left—Preetha, Anand, Dr Ponraj, Ms Uthira, Sai Krishnan, Sitting—me and Dr Rema Devi

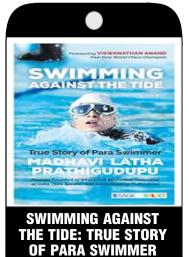
president. They treat us like their children, so we all thought their guidance would help us in taking this initiative forward successfully. Mr Narsa Reddy accepted to be our patron. We started to practise swimming vigorously. We tried hard to find more people to train but ended up with only four swimmers: Uthira aunty, Venkatesh, Jyothi and myself.

We all went to Kolhapur along with our coach Gopi. At that time, I was feeling a little under the weather as my stomach was upset. I consulted a doctor and took the prescribed medicines. My friends asked me to reconsider my participation but I didn't want to lose the opportunity. Our transit time from Chennai to Kolhapur by train was almost 2 days, with a 10-hour layover at Bengaluru. During the layover, we had to wait at the railway station itself. We were all very tired by the

time we reached Kolhapur.

Local organizers told us that they could not make the arrangements as planned, as they did not receive the promised funds from the sponsors. We decided to find an accessible hotel for our stay, as we were not comfortable with their stop-gap arrangements.

By the time we reached there, I started to feel better. It was the 11th National Para Swimming Championship, and our team won eight medals. Venkatesh and I won the championship in our respective categories. It was an amazing moment in my life — winning three gold convinced Rema Devi aunty to be our medals (50-m freestyle, breaststroke and



backstroke) and becoming a national champion at the age of 40+ years. It was an unbelievable achievement even for me. My joy knew no bounds.

Madhavi Latha Prathigudupu

Sage, ₹

There, I could see persons with different types of disabilities to swim with ease. When I saw blind swimmers maintaining a straight line in the pool, I was very surprised. If I close my eyes for a few seconds, I cannot maintain the line of direction in the pool. I was unable to understand how they managed to do it. sympathy towards adaptive sporting

We noticed that there were very few participants from South India in the championship. I thought that it might be due to the general notion that these sports are dangerous for persons with disabilities. In my experience, when I tried to encourage participation of children with disabilities, often their parents were reluctant as they thought that swimming was risky for their children. If I tried to convince them by giving my example, they would respond saying that it was possible for me because I was a superwoman and it may not be the case for their kids. As I drive, swim, work for an MNC etc., they thought that I had some extraordinary skills.

Dr Dabas put up the proposal to host the next nationals to various states; I strongly wanted to accept his offer with three aims. First, to create more awareness in South India. Second, to give confidence to the parents of children with disabilities, officials, and the general public. Parents because, I hoped that by seeing the participation of persons with different types of disabilities and differ-ent levels of abilities, they would understand the benefits of hydrotherapy and participation in sports. Also, if the concerned officials understood the benefits and the possibility, then the persons with disabilities would get more support. Finally the third, to conduct championships at par with other Olympic sports events. I observed an inferior feeling and

events among the public instead of treating it like any other sporting event.

Anand also agreed with my views, and we thought of discussing with our association members. On the way back, our coach told us that IITM had a pool with international standards, and if we requested accommodation there, it would be easy to host the event in Chennai. After coming back to Chennai, we called for a meeting with all our members. We all knew that it was going to be a very challenging task. In the meeting, we decided to first register our association officially, and soon thereafter started that process. Dr Rema Devi, with the support of her husband, arranged for an office address and to fulfil all the statutory requirements to register the association

and for its functioning.
Also, after coming back to Chennai, we got a lot of media coverage on our achievements in the championship. I gave so many interviews. Everyone wanted to take a video or a photograph of me while swimming for an article. It gave me an opportunity to create more awareness about hydrotherapy/para swimming. Till then, I was the one to reach out to the media, schools and colleges. But now, they started to approach me. It made my job to create more awareness much easier. These articles reached a wider audience, and I received a few invitations from

outside Chennai. At that time, I got an opportunity to ve a talk at IITM. I felt very happy. I was looking for an opportunity to connect with them so I could request them to allow us to host the national championship in their pool. My talk was received very well, and I got a standing ovation. Later, I came to know that their pool was under renovation. All my hopes were shattered.

After my talk, many professors wrote to the director of IITM, Professor Bhaskar Ramamurthi, to incorporate the suggestions I gave in my talk to make their pool accessible; he responded to their suggestions positively. The concerned staff from IITM were in touch with me. Later, I connected them with Dr Hutzler for his guidance on the accessible swimming pool, whom I met at a conference in Coimbatore.

Excerpted with permission from Swimming Against the Tide: True Story of Para Swimmer by Madhavi Latha Prathigudupu, published by SAGE Publications India

You have to be the best of whatever you are, but successful, cool actresses come in all shapes and sizes

Taming the dragon

Blinkers Off serves as an important tool in understanding that the threat Beijing poses is multi-dimensional, & response to it should also be the same



9

**Mu-tation worry** 

Even as cases of the COVID-19 delta variant continue to spike the world over, a new variant, Mu, has become a variant



If streaming services are looking at making profits in India, they should adapt to regional realities, start thinking creatively and take a leaf out of what has worked globally, writes AJAYYA KUMAR

he Covid-19 induced lockdown might have given a shot in the arm for streaming services, but making substantial profits in the Indian market still remains an elusive dream for most of them. In the financial year 2020, Netflix India recorded a revenue of Rs 924 Crore and managed to eke out a marginal profit of Rs 9 crore. The streaming giant's overall profits globally for the same year stood at a whopping \$2.8 billion.

Disney+Hotstar in India, on the other hand, recorded revenue to the tune of Rs 1629 Crore with losses amounting to Rs 362 crore. Hotstar is currently India's largest streaming platform with a subscriber base of 300 million.

According to an analysis by Media Partners Asia, India's online video market is projected to grow at a CAGR of 26 per cent over 2020-25 to reach US\$4.5 billion. Another report by Boston Consulting Group notes that the OTT video streaming market alone in India is set to touch US\$5 billion by 2023. And for a share of this pie contend not just Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Disney+Hotstar, but around 30 streaming platforms including AltBalaji, Zee5, SonyLiv, MXPlayer, ManoramaMax, Neestream, and so on.

The right revenue model still remains an enigma, thanks to the uniqueness of the Indian market. There are no proven models in the Indian media industry to show that subscription-led growth is if at all possible. Be it the newspapers or entertainment channels, the advertisement brings in the lion's share of the revenue. While Netflix and Amazon Prime banks entirely on subscriber revenue, Disney+Hotstar which has a base of both paid and unpaid subscribers see its share of ad revenue coming in through the advertisements shown to the unpaid subscribers. While it is yet to be cracked which of these models would ultimately work, there are few things streaming platforms could work on meanwhile

#### **EXPLORE THE UNEXPLORED**

On June 1, 2021, a review of the Malayalam Movie 'Joji', starring Fahadh Fazil and directed by Dileesh Pothan, appeared in The New Yorker magazine. This wasn't the first time the international magazine reviewed an Indian movie. In fact, on April 15 it had published Richard Brody's take on Duvidha, the 1973 film by Mani Kaul. But Joji was different. For one it was a regional language movie. And rarely has international media recognised non-Hindi movies, probably with the exception of the works of Satyajit Ray, as Indian movies. To take a review seriously or not is one thing. But to me, it was the beginning of a change; Undeniably the world is starting to take note of Indian regional content, especially from the South. Now, this is a moment to be seized; not only by the language movie industry but also by the OTT players that are looking to turn profitable in the Indian market.

If Joji premiered on Amazon Prime, The Great Indian Kitchen, yet another Malayalam movie that garnered critical acclaim from across the world, made its first appearance on Neestream, a regional OTT platform. The movie later became available on Amazon Prime too. Nayattu and Jagame Thandhiram streaming on Netflix, C U Soon, Kuruthi and Karnan streaming on Amazon Prime and Netrikann streaming on Disney+Hotstar are some of the notable movies from regional productions that premiered on international OTT platforms during the pandemic season. Some of the other notable Malayalam films currently streaming include Aarkkariyam and Santhoshathinte Onnam Rahasyam, while the Tamil movie industry came together to produce the anthology Navarasa now running on

Meanwhile what particularly stands out is the glaring absence of any noteworthy productions from the behemoth that is Bollywood. Clearly, it is the regional language movies that have helped the streaming platforms to offer a diverse range of content and cash in on the subscription surge during the pandemic. This is a signboard. The first step towards profitability for OTT platforms is to spot the industries that are nimble, agile, dynamic and quick to adapt to the changing socio-economic circumstances. But the efforts shouldn't stop at simply sourcing the content. Given the diversity of movie industries in India, streaming platforms are looking at a cornucopia of possibilities

Let's start from the South. Given the high literacy rates in the Southern states, OTT platforms are looking at a large market for their English and international content. While *The New Yorker* might have reviewed *Joji* this year, what is to be noted is that there already exists an international audience for Malayalam movies and a Malayali audience for international movies, thanks to IFFK and various other film festivals.

Then there is the large Indian diaspora outside the country. According to a report by the United Nations, India has the world's largest diaspora population — 18 million — living outside the country. A large part of them is Malayalis, Tamils, and Punjabis. In other words, by exploring regional content, streaming platforms would be striking a goldmine.

#### OFFER MORE DIVERSITY, LEARN FROM WHAT HAS WORKED INTERNATIONALLY

Streaming services in India should take a leaf out of what has worked internationally for their global counterparts.

According to news reports, French show *Lupin* streamed on Netflix held the number one spot in countries like Brazil, Argentina, Germany, Italy and Spain and the number two spot in the US. This only means one thing — out there, there seems to be a genuine and ever-increasing demand for premium non-Anglophone content. In this sense, India is a

ACCORDING TO AN ANALYSIS BY MEDIA PARTNERS ASIA. INDIA'S ONLINE VIDEO MÁRKET IS PROJECTED TO GROW AT A CAGR OF 26 PER CENT OVER 2020-25 TO REACH US\$4.5 BILLION. ANOTHER REPORT BY BOSTON **CONSULTING GROUP** NOTES THAT THE OTT VIDEO STREAMING MARKET ALONE IN INDIA IS SET TO TOUCH US\$5 BILLION BY 2023. AND FOR A SHARE OF THIS PIE CONTEND NOT JUST NETFLIX, AMAZON PRIME, AND DISNEY+HOTSTAR, BUT AROUND 30 STREAMING PLATFORMS INCLUDING ALTBALAJI, ZEE5, SONYLIV,

NEESTREAM, AND SO ON

MXPLAYER,

MANORAMAMAX,

goldmine for streaming services with its linguistic diversity.

But linguistic diversity alone doesn't serve the purpose. Barring a handful of shows or movies, Indian content has not been able to create much of a ripple in the international arena, owing to the relatively poor quality of

Now here is something to consider. One of the features that have set Netflix a class apart from its competitors globally is its huge investment in original content. Reports suggest that in 2019 about 85% of its new spending was set apart for original content, more than any of its competitors dared to. In India too Netflix has taken a lead by setting up its first global post-production facility in Mumbai.

Producing original content of all hues and (Indian) languages with strict quality checks for a pan-Indian and international audience could work magic for Indian streaming services. Keep experimenting and do not hesitate to disrupt your own revenue/content models if need be. Because now this is a bus that OTT platforms cannot afford to miss.

#### ROPE IN THE STALWARTS

What streaming platforms should further aim is to bring traditional producers into their folds. If the initial focus of OTT platforms was to license existing content, the pandemic has changed their course of action to producing original content and premiering movies. But there is still a large section of producers who are wary of these platforms. These traditional producers have been deciding the ways of the industry for a long time. Many of them are actors and even superstars controlling production, distribution, and the overall dynamics of the industry. Alienating them or even appearing as a threat to their business would in no way bode well for the new-age players.

But if streaming platforms could come up with ways to accommodate them and make a business model around it, it would be a winwin for all. OTT services so far have more or less been working with the new crop of movie makers from the regional cinema and have been able to successfully give shape to new movie aesthetics and language. Roping in the traditional players would be the cherry on top and will help attract a wider segment of the audience. For example, consider streaming services tying up with AMMA, the Association of Malayalam Movie Artists. Such a partnership would mean that now the streaming services would get to enjoy the benefits of the clout wielded by the stalwarts of the industry, while the industry reaps the benefits of being in alliance with platforms that are international, sophisticated, and professional. If streaming services this way get a dip at the massive pool of talent, for artists and technicians it would mean more work even during crisis times like the pandemic and therefore more stability.

Such partnerships would also help to usher in a world where theatres do not view OTT platforms as a threat. It would open up a new world of complementary existence where theatres would still benefit from the rush during the initial release and for sustained viewing and wider reach, there would be the OTTs. And no doubt, the ultimate winner would be the movie itself which would get the grand release it deserves without worrying about 'running' days being cut short as new movies come in.

In a nutshell, being creative in the ways it associates with the movie industry and its stakeholders should be the way forward for OTT services.

#### EXPERIMENT WITH DYNAMIC CONTENT

While all that is said about static content, what still remains unchartered territory for streaming services is dynamic content. Exploring live content like music concerts and stand-up comedy will help the OTT players further their reach and bring in a new audience who have been deprived of live shows during the pandemic. It is in fact surprising that such programmes are still largely hosted on video communication platforms like Zoom given that the pandemic has been the perfect opportunity for the Netflixes and Amazon Primes of the world to experiment with it

If you are further looking to expand your reach, ever thought of news and the popularity of news programmes in India? Sure, there may be regulatory issues for OTT channels to broadcast news as of now. But, learn from the radio. In India, All India Radio holds the right to broadcast news and current affairs programmes, and private broadcasting stations are prohibited from airing the same. But several FM stations have found workarounds in the form of programmes that are satirical takes on current affairs or other fun variations which are essentially not news programmes, but yet manage to pass on the news to the audience. To sum it up, be creative. If OTT platforms could come up with shows similar to that of 'Last Week Tonight with John Oliver' it is bound to capture the attention of a huge section of the audience.

There is also a growing audience for art and science content. Although streaming services have covered this to an extent, to make it a more balanced mix would be a welcome

All that said and done, ultimately the success and profitability of OTT platforms would depend on how well they can gel with our lifestyles. Movies and theatres succeeded by doing the same, by being our oases of entertainment and our weekly escape from reality. Streaming services should pull all stops to replicate the same and leave no stone unturned in this journey.

The writer is an ethical Investor, start-up mentor, art curator and author

# Mu-tation worry

Even as cases of the COVID-19 delta variant continue to spike the world over, a new variant, Mu, has become a variant of interest for the WHO. This new strain appears to have mutations with the potential to evade immunity provided by a previous COVID-19 infection or vaccination. Could Mu be a variant of concern? SUPRIYA RAMESH speaks with experts to tell you more

ince the COVID-19 pandemic hit the globe last year, there has been no let up either in the number of cases globally nor in the emergence of new variants. When the second wave hit India, there was talk of how the third wave would affect the children more. But now, it appears that there are more worries ahead. A new varient — Mu — that had been detected in Colombia, South America is the new worry — not just for India but for the entire world.

The good part is that the Government has said that the variant has not been found in India vet, there is no telling when it may enter the country and wreak havoc.

The country reported its first COVID-19 case in Kerala on January 27, 2020, and the country has been cuffed by the virus ever since and coming out of this pandemic dungeon looks only like a distant dream. Since the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the Delta variant as the Variant of Concern (VOC) on May 6, 2021, the country has seen a new wave of cases and death worldwide, slowing down the nation's recovery, threatening economic stability and severe social and political impacts.

The new variantis getting more attention now as it has started to spread around parts of the country and it is something to make a note of. Mu is not only being seen in high numbers or high percentages but it is being detected in different places throughout the US with highest prevalence of the variant in Colombia cur-

It carries a cluster of mutations in the genome of COVID in the genetic structure. According to the WHO, it is still a Variant of Interest (VOI) and no samples have been detected in India yet.

"From Colombia it has spread to other South American countries such as Ecuador (13%) and Chile (around 40%). The Mu variant has now been detected in 43 countries including the United States, United Kingdom, South Korea, Japan, Ecuador, Canada and parts of Europe. So far, it has not been detected in India," says Dr Rahul Pandit, Member, COVID-19 Task Force, Maharashtra Government.

He further adds that there are more than 4700 cases of the Mu variant worldwide. Although with 2000 cases, the US has recorded the highest number of Mu cases, it is not yet as an immediate threat

'A VOI becomes a VOC when we see documented evidence that there is an increase in transmissibility of the virus, it is more dangerous, have more resistance to vaccines, and higher infectivity rate," says Dr Ankita Baidya, Consultant, Infectious Diseases, Manipal Hospital, Dwarka, New Delhi.

Despite making its first presence in January 2021, and being around since, the Mu variant doesn't seem to be as bad as Delta, which is the dominant variant across most of the world. But Mu has mutations which possess the potential of evading the protection we get from the

However, the concern is that it can lead to immune escape phenomena in the form that the existing antibodies through natural infection might not be able to protect us from this infection. "When we see such novel strains circulating in the world, it becomes a concern especially with so many mutations in it that can evade our immunity and can also reinfect a person who has already recovered from the virus from

some different strain," Baidya tells you. The WHO has said, "The Mu variant has a constellation of mutations that indicate potential properties of immune escape. Preliminary evidence shows that these mutations may allow it to escape vaccine- and convalescent serum-

induced antibodies, similar to the Beta variant." Dr Shomeshwar Singh, Lead Consultant, ENT, Madhukar Rainbow Children's Hospital says that though the reports have suggested its



decline in most of the world apart from South America lately, we have to watch carefully how this strain spreads.

The exact infection rate as of now is not well established and requires more data because there have only been sporadic cases. "With the mutation that it is carrying, there are chances of having a more severe infection from this strain as it is showing some sort of immune escape phenomena, which means that the previous antibody is not working and it can result in high-

er infectivity rate," says Baidya.

Talking about the efficacy of vaccines, there is still a lot of research to be done in order to confirm whether the existing vaccines will be effective against the Mu strain or not. Simultaneously, the risk that it can lower the vac-

cine's effect is also present.

Baidya says that the signs and symptoms of the mu strain are very much similar to the Delta variant. It also has a good amount of gastrointestinal symptoms along with the normal viral symptoms of upper respiratory tract that is the cough and cold, mild fever, loose motions, abdominal symptoms, nausea and dyspepsia. There can also be some headache, leg pain and body pain as with the other viral symptoms.

- A report from England's public health agency last month suggested the mu variant might be as resistant to vaccines as the worrisome beta variant first seen in South Africa, but said more real-world data was needed
- WHO officials said the mu variant appears to be rising in some countries in South America, but that the delta variant still

Currently, only symptomatic treatment is

Many of us are wondering how quickly the

given for any variant, similar to that of exist-

ing strains. The treatment is mostly designed

according to the severity of the disease whether

virus mutates and with every new variant emerg-

it is mild, moderate or severe.

spreads far more easily ■ The mu variant doesn't seem to be spreading quickly: It accounts for fewer than 1% of COVID-19 cases globally

- In Colombia, it may be responsible for about 39% of cases
- Scientists monitor emerging COVID-19 variants based on suspicious genetic changes and then look for evidence to determine whether the new version is more infectious or causes more severe illness
- Viruses evolve constantly and many new variants often fade away

ing, recovering from this deadly pandemic seems difficult and looks like a far-fetched dream. On the other hand, we are learning to live with the pandemic and now consider it as a part of life. The virus will continue to undergo mutation in the genetic structure to evade the immune response, to evade the antibody

pressure and to evade the antiviral pressure. The new mutations may be less or more severe than the existing strains but at the same time we should not stop from taking adequate infection control precautions like wearing a mask, practising hand hygiene and maintaining social distancing. "Today, the world is a smaller place since people travel far and wide in a matter of hours, this helps the virus spread. We need to exercise carefully drawn up social isolation and quarantine measures to fight the virus spread. Vaccination is very important," Singh tells you.

The Mu variant has severe mutations such as T95I, Y144S, Y145N, R346K, E484K, N501Y, D614G, P681H, Y144T, K417N and D950N in the spike protein. Some of these mutations have been detected in the variants of concern. The N501Y and P681H mutations are also present in the Alpha variant (B.1.1.7, first detected in the UK) and have been linked to rapid transmission. The N501Y mutation is also present in the Beta and Gamma variants of concern (VOC). The E484K and K417N mutations, which also occur in the Beta variant (B.1.351, first detected in South Africa) are associated with immune escape. However, the significance of other mutations is not yet known.

### 'To prevent new variants, get swiftly vaccinated'

he World Health Orgaization (WHO) has added a fifth variant of interest (VOI)— B.1.621.1 and labelled it - Mu variant - on August 30, 2021. The other four present VOIs are Eta (B.1.525), lota (B.1.526), Kappa (B.1.617.1) and Lambda (C.37).

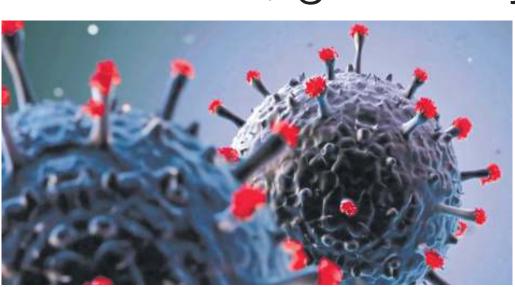
The Mu variant was first identified in Colombia in South America in January 2021, where Mu has been detected in 39 per cent of the samples analysed. From there, it has spread to other South American countries such as Ecuador (13per cent) and Chile (around 40 per cent).

The Mu variant has now been detected in 43 countries including the US. the UK. South Korea, Japan Ecuador, Canada and parts of Europe. So far, it has not been detected in India

According to Dr Dr Rahul Pandit, Member, COVID-19 Task Force, Maharashtra Government there are more than 4,700 cases of the Mu variant worldwide. Although with 2000 cases, the US has recorded the highest number of Mu cases, it is not yet regarded as an immediate threat.

Last month, the WHO has said that the Mu variant has a constellation of mutations that indicate potential properties of immune escape. "Preliminary evidence shows that these mutations may allow it to escape vaccine- and convalescent seruminduced antibodies, similar to the Beta variant." Dr Pandit says.

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The Delta variant (B.1.617.2) continues to be the predominant variant across the world and the major cause of resurgence of cases in many parts of the world. At present, the Mu variant accounts for only 0.1 per cent of

cases globally, even though it has been around since January this Although it is not a variant of concern (VOC) yet, it is being closely monitored to detect any changes that would make it more

transmissible than the delta variant, cause more severe disease and make vaccines less effective. If this happens, it may be re-categorised as a VOC

"The best strategy to prevent emergence of new variants is to swiftly vaccinate as many people as possible. The larger the vaccinated population, the less the vulnerable population for the virus to infect and mutate," Dr Pandit says.









### UK eases rules for vaccinated; benefit for India-UK route

 $T^{\text{he UK government on}}_{\text{Friday announced a}}$ major relaxation of international travel rules for vaccinated people coming in and out of England, with longhaul routes between India and the UK set to benefit.

From October 4, the current traffic light system of red, amber and green countries based on levels of COVID-19 risk will be scrapped and replaced with one red list only.

The scrapping of an amber list, which is what India is currently on, means reduced cost burden for travellers - especially for the Indian people vaccinated in the UK - related to compul-

However, an expanded list of countries whose vaccines are recognised in England does not include India, which means that Indians vaccinated with Covishield the Serum Institute of India produced

Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine - would still be required to undergo a pre-departure PCR test and further tests on landing in the UK.

From October 4, travellers from 17 additional countries with eligible vaccines, including Japan, Singapore and Malaysia, will no longer need to take pre-departure PCR tests for travelling into England.

#### 100 world leaders to meet for UN event

 $S_{\rm return} = 100$  world leaders descend on New York next week in a partial return of the annual UN extravaganza despite Covid concerns, with progress sought on pressing global problems -- starting with the pandemic. The UN General Assembly will also look to build momentum to reach an ambitious climate agreement and seek unity after the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan, in the shadow of high tension between the United States and China. "We need to re-establish confidence. The current geopolitical division in the world is an obstacle," Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told AFP ahead of the summit. The world "is really in a very dangerous situation," he said. "We need to sound an alarm to wake up political leaders."



### **US Tycoon Robert Durst guilty of best** friend's murder

Robert Durst was Friday convicted of killing his best friend to prevent her talking to police about his wife's dis appearance.

Durst, a multi-millionaire who was the subject of explosive HBO documentary "The Jinx," had always denied that he shot Susan Berman in the back of the head in 2000 at her Beverly Hills home.

But a jury in Los Angeles took a total of just eight hours to find the 78-

year-old guilty of the execution-style slaying.

Prosecutors had said he murdered crime writer
Berman in December 2000 to prevent her from being questioned by New York police over the dis-appearance of his wife Kathleen two decades ear

Berman, the daughter of a Las Vegas mobster, had acted as a spokeswoman for Durst after he became a suspect in Kathleen's disappearance. Durst, an estranged

York's wealthiest and most powerful real estate dynasties, was never charged in his wife's case.

He was arrested in March 2015 in a New Orleans hotel room in connection with Berman's murder, hours before the final episode of the HBO documentary "The Jinx: The Life and Deaths of Robert Durst" aired.

In the documentary's stunning finale, Durst is heard muttering to himself, "There it is, you're caught" and "Killed them all, of course" -- apparently unaware that a micro-phone remained switched on while he used the restroom.

The series also delved into the 2001 death of Durst's neighbor in Texas, Morris Black, who was found dismembered.

Durst admitted the dismemberment, but claimed the killing was selfdefense. He was acquitted. Durst testified for 14

days in a trial that gripped

Faliban say Afghan boys' school no mention of girls

A fghan schools will open for boys from Saturday, the new Taliban ministry of education said in a statement that gave no indication of when girls might be able to go back to their classes.

More than a month after the movement seized the capital Kabul, most educational institutions have remained closed as the Taliban have

struggled to reopen the economy and restore normal life in the cities. At some of the schools that have managed to operate, girls up to the sixth grade have attended, and women students have gone to uni-

versity classes. But high schools for girls have been

Taliban officials have said they will not replicate the fundamentalist policies of the previous Taliban government, which banned girls' education, and they have promised that girls will be able to study so long as they do so in segregated

classrooms.
While the Taliban did not order schools to close after their takeover, the movement has said the security situation meant that many activities for women and girls were not yet possible, and the latest statement did not mention girls at all.

### WHO emergency approval for Covaxin delayed till Oct 5

World Health Organisation's (WHO) approval for the emergency use authorisation (EUA) to COVID-19 vaccine Covaxin, developed by the Hyderabadbased Bharat Biotech, is likely to be delayed till

October 5.
As per WHO, the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization (SAGE) will be meeting on October 5 to granting EUA to Covaxin. Hanna Nohynek, SAGE

member will be introducing session objective setting, an update on regulatory decisions and an overview of Working Group deliverables.

The session will recommend EUA based on the clinical data on Covaxin from phase 1, 2, 3 trial and post-marketing studies on safety, immunogenicity, efficacy and effectiveness. It will update on global, regional and country-level plans for vaccine safety moni-





### 'Won't sell UAE villa...': Singer Honey Singh on **Court order**

Singer Honey Singh, after recording his statement at a Delhi Court on Friday, assured the court that he will not create any third party rights on his UAE Property. The court vacated the status quo order issued on September 15, 2021.

On the last date of hearing, the court had restrained Honey Singh from alienating or creating any third party interest owned directly or through his companies and had directed him to file all the documents of his companies registered abroad along with other details. The same was not filed on Friday by Honey Singh.

### 'UNACCEPTABLE': FRANCE RECALLS US, **AUSTRALIA ENVOYS**

 $F^{\text{rance on Friday recalled its}}_{\text{ambassadors to the United}}$ States and Australia for consultations in a ferocious row over the scrapping of a submarine contract, an unprecedented step that revealed the extent of French anger against its allies.

President Emmanuel Macron

ordered the recalling of the envoys after Canberra ditched a deal to buy French submarines in favour of UŚ vessels, Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said.

Le Drian said in a statement that the decision was made to "immediately" recall the two French ambasousness of the announcements made on September 15 by Australia and the United States.'

The abandonment of the oceanclass submarine project that Australia and France had been working on since 2016 constituted "unacceptable behaviour among allies and



### iPhone 13 pre-order begins in India

• Phone 13 series was launched earlier this **▲**month. The range includes iPhone 13 mini, iPhone 13, iPhone 13 Pro, and iPhone 13 Pro Max. All the phones are set to go up for preorders starting today, September 17, with sales starting from September 24. Alongside India, the pre-orders for the iPhone 13 series will go live later today in Canada, Ćhina, Dubai, Singapore, the UK, the US, and more than 30

other

coun-

and regions around the world. iPhone 13 mini and iPhone 13 come with dual rear cameras whereas iPhone 13 Pro and iPhone 13 Pro Max feature triple rear cameras. Here is a low-

down on the prices of iPhone 13 mini, iPhone

13, iPhone 13 Pro, iPhone 13 Pro Max phones in different countries, including

#### iPhone 13 series price

The new iPhone 13 mini is priced starting at Rs. 69,900, Rs. 79,900, and Rs. 99,900 for the 128GB, 256GB, and 512GB storage options, respectively. iPhone 13 is priced in India starting at Rs. 79,900, Rs. 89,900, and Rs.

1 09 900 for the

options,

128GB, 256GB, and

512GB storage espectively. 76th UN General
Assembly.
Along with Satyarthi,
STEM activist Valentina
Munoz Rabanal,

goals advocate UN chief Antonio Guterres on Friday appointed Nobel Laureate Kailash Satyarthi as new Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Advocate

Satyarthi appointed UN

sustainable development

Microsoft President Brad Smith and K-pop super-stars BLACKPINK were appointed as new SDG Advocates, said a press release issued by the UN. Satyarthi has fought tirelessly for decades against child labour, slavery and trafficking. "We are at a pivotal

make now could put us



on a path towards break-down and a future of perpetual crisis; or breakthrough to a green-



### 'New' dark energy could solve Universe expansion mystery

Cosmologists have found signs that a second type of dark energy — the ubiquitous but enigmatic substance that is pushing the current Universe's expansion to accelerate might have existed in the first 300,000 years after the Big Bang.
Two separate studies

— both posted on the arXiv preprint server in the past week1,2 — have detected a tentative first trace of this 'early dark energy' in data collected between 2013 and 2016 by the Atacama Cosmology Telescope (ACT) in Chile. If the findings are confirmed, they could help to solve a long-standing conundrum surrounding data about the early Universe, which seem to be incompatible with the rate of cosmic expansion measured today. But the data are preliminary and don't show definitively whether this form of dark energy really exist-

"There are a number of reasons to be careful to take this as a discovery of new physics," says Silvia Galli, a cosmologist at the Paris Institute of Astrophysics.

The authors of both preprints — one posted by the ACT team, and the other by an independent group — admit that the data are not yet strong enough to detect

early dark energy with high confidence. But they say that further observations from the ACT and another observatory, the South Pole Telescope in Antarctica, could provide a more stringent test soon. "If this really is true — if the early Universe really did feature early dark energy — then we should see a strong signal," says Colin Hill, a co-author of the ACT team's paper1 who is a cosmologist at Columbia University in New York City.

Both the ACT and

the South Pole Telescope are designed to map the cosmic microwave background (CMB), primordial radiation sometimes described as the afterglow of the Big Bang. The CMB is one of the pillars of cosmologists' understanding of the Universe. By mapping subtle variations in the CMB across the sky, researchers have found compelling evidence for the 'standard model of cosmology'. This model describes the evolution of a Universe containing three primary ingredients: dark energy; the equally mysterious dark matter, which is the primary cause of the formation of galaxies; and ordinary matter, which accounts for less than 5% of the Universe's total mass and energy.