



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

P
6



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

P
5



iPhone 13
pre-order begins...

P
10

In brief

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

Thousands of vulnerable health 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

Senior Congress leader and Lok 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

Blowing hot and cold for several weeks after being dropped from the Modi government, BJP MP Babul Supriyo sprang a surprise on Saturday when he joined West Bengal's ruling TMC and asserted he will work for the 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.

TODAY

ALMANAC

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

Variyam: 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 WEATHER

Forecast: Partly cloudy

Temp: 34

Humidity: 67%

Sunrise: 6:04 am

Sunset: 6:14 pm

Current Weather Conditions

Updated September 18, 2021 5:00 PM

OBTUSE ANGLE



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.



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.

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.

2

'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 anyone (next CM)," he said.

2

YSRCP, TDP men lodge police complaints against each other

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

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 Friday.

According to a complaint lodged by T Ramu, driver of MLA Jogi Ramesh, cases have been filed against TDP executive secretary Nadendla Brahman. It is learned that the police have been enquiring about the whereabouts of TDP activists and leaders since last night.

On the other hand, the police registered a case under the general Sections of the PC based on a complaint lodged by Telugu Desam Party leaders against Jogi Ramesh and other YSRCP leaders.

As Jogi Ramesh's driver Ramu hails from the Schedule Caste community, atrocity cases have been registered against TDP leaders, police said.

2

Jogi Ramesh blames Naidu for attack

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP MLA Jogi Ramesh on Saturday slammed a section of media, accusing it of distorting 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.

Speaking to media at the 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 house.

2

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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 Rs 1 crore.

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

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

the premises of the actor and his 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.

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 given "bogus" accommodation entries (transaction entries in accounts).

2



CA Bhavani Devi at the Olympics 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 medalist 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 medalist 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.

2

AP, Telangana among top three States in human trafficking cases

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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.

The NCRB, in its report, 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 AHTUs.

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 districts.

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-state travel.

He said a question can be asked about how the number of trafficking cases is so large. "...even sex workers talked

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 Parliament. If the Bill becomes

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 investigation.

"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 said.

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 on Naidu's residence.

Jogi Ramesh blames Naidu for attack

Continued from page 1

"I went there to register my protest against the derogatory remarks made by Ayyanna 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.

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.

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

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 crore.

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 at conserving and rejuvenating

the Ganga River.

The memorabilia include sports gear and equipment of the medal-winning Olympians and Paralympians, a replica of the Ayodhya Ram Mandir, Chardham, sculptures and paintings among others.

The wooden model of the Ram Mandir placed inside a glass box has received the highest quoted bid of Rs 3 lakh so far.

Another interesting memento to 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 organisations can participate through the website pmmemtos.gov.in between September 17 and October 7.

After the auction ends, the ministry will notify the highest bidders through email.

‘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 Singh.

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 nine-and-a-half years. I will talk to my colleagues, supporters," he said.

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.

"They called the MLAs to 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.

"Thereby 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 Singh said he had already told 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

relieve me of this charge because I cannot work in this way where Mr Sidhu is pulling right and I am pulling left. In that meeting, Congress general secretary (Harish) Rawat was also present. Sonijai then said no I want you to carry on," said Amarinder Singh.

The Congress leader said he performed his duty to the best of his ability.

"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 had to resign.

"In politics, options are always there, they are never closed. I can tell you one thing, I am not going to leave it like this," he said.

Politics is a very fast moving game, he said replying to another question.

Singh was accompanied by his wife and MP Preet Kaur and son Raninder Singh when he submitted his resignation to Governor Banwarilal Purohit.

MPs Gurjeet Singh Auja and Ravneet Singh Bittu, AG Atul Nanda and Chief Principal Secretary to CM Suresh Kumar were also present. "I am proud to accompany my father to Raj Bhavan when he submits his resignation as CM of Punjab and leads us as head of our family into a new beginning," Raninder 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 than 20 new cases each. Guntur had three fresh Covid-19 deaths, Chittoor two, Kadapa, Krishna, Prakasam and Visakhapatnam one each in a day.

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 case.

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

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	₹165
Without Skin	₹175
Broiler at Farm	₹135

EGG RATES ₹/100	
VIJAYAWADA	438
HYDERABAD	428
VISAKHAPATNAM	470
RETAIL PRICE (IN VIJAYAWADA)	₹4.38

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

Continued from page 1

Consequently, arrangements 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 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

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.

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.

Commissioner of Police B Srinivasulu and Krishna District Superintendent of Police

Siddharth Kaushal are monitoring the arrangements in the district.

CID sleuths make first arrest in APSFL scam

Continued from page 1

Citing a complaint filed by APSFL Chairman P Goutham Reddy, the CID said Vemuri Hari Krishna 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 Tummalala 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.

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 fiber net 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.

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 a local court that remanded him to 14-day judicial custody. 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.

In the FIR registered on September 9, the CID named 16 persons and two companies as the accused in the case.

Citing a complaint filed by APSFL Chairman P Goutham Reddy, the CID said Vemuri Hari Krishna 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

"They have accepted to have issued cheques in lieu of cash. There have been instances where professional receipts have been camouflaged as loans in the books of accounts for the purpose of evasion of tax," the policy-making body for the tax department said.

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

The total amount of tax 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

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 date.

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 foundation

from overseas donors on a crowdfunding platform "in violation" of FCRA regulations.

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 account books.

"The search has revealed that the said group is involved

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 company based in Jaipur".

"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.

Ayyanna Patrudu remarks deplorable, says Sucharita

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

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.



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 queries.

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

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 murdered 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 them.

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 per cent, but the Opposition was misleading the public saying that the number of cases in the State had increased by 64 per cent by showing 80,000 cases registered for violation of helmet rule.

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 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 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," he said.

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 them.

SEC tells officials to ensure transparency in counting

PNS ■ GUNTUR

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 Yadav, 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 votes.

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 declared.

Later, Nilam Sawhney, 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 Election 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 shops.

YSRCP leaders complain against Ayyanna

PNS ■ GUNTUR

YSR 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 Ayyanna 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 Ayyanna-patrudu made some objectionable remarks against the Chief Minister and other leaders while participating



YSRCP leaders, including MLAs M Nagarjuna, M Giridhar, MLC Lella Appi Reddy, Mayor K Manohar Naidu, Mohammad 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 programme of former Assembly Speaker Kodela

Siva Prasad Rao at Kandlakunta village in Nakarikallu mandal. The SP

received the complaint from the YSRCP leaders and 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 of the courts.

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 human values.



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.

Addressing a press conference 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 Sunday.

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



Ongole, Kandukur the sub-divisions respectively to monitor the situation.

The SP also said that a DSP-level 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 each counting centre by deploying a total 1,755 police personnel, i.e., three Additional SP-level officers, 11 DSP-level officers, Inspector-level officers 28, 97 Civil/AR Sub Inspectors, 341 ASIs/ HCs, 614 PCs/WPCs, 382 HCs/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 counting centres. The SP said that agents must bring their ID cards and the access for people unrelated to the counting be strictly prohibited within 100 metres of the counting centres. The SP said that special surveillance was being put on trouble-makers and rowdy sheeters as part of the precautionary measures.

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 occur.



Salalith elected governing body member of NRAI

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Rifle Association of Andhra Pradesh 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

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

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 few 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 of 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 Siddhartha School in Cheepurupalli. 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 two-wheeler 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

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 inter-dependent 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.

While inaugurating the meeting, Minister for



Ministers Suresh and Srinivasa Rao jointly launched the Learning Management System (LMS) developed by the Board of Higher Education.

Education, Andhra Pradesh, Dr. Adimulapu Suresh said every student needs to be groomed as a global citizen. The planning board has set up 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

to all, he detailed.

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-

neers 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 added.

Prof. Hemachandra Reddy, Chairman, AP State Council of Higher Education (APSCHE), Dr. Pola Bhaskar, Commissioner, College of Education, Prof 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 elected Pydah Krishna Prasad as president, B Rajasekhara 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

PNS ■ KAKINADA

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 Saturday.

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 no-confidence 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 meeting to move the no-con-

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 candidate.



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 mandal 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 in the area.

Gorantla slams SP for 'bias'

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) senior leader and 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 Saturday. He alleged that the police registered false cases against the TDP leaders and activists.

"I have been in politics for 40 years and have been elected 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 against me.

But the police prevented me on September 16 when I was going to meet officials to explain the problems of farmers and registered a case," he lashed out.

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



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

Chairman Sharmila Reddy took out two massive rallies. When Bireddy Siddardha Reddy and YV Subba Reddy came to Rajahmundry, rallies were taken out with a huge convoy but the police did not object. But the police prevented him when he was going to submit a memorandum to Tahsildar, he lamented.

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

the farmers. The tractor on which he was going was also seized, he flayed. Chowdary said that RUDA

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 settled 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 liberation day.

But after TRS came to power

in 2014 it has changed its tune on Telangana liberation day. While BJP is still continuing its 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 officially 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 Telangana liberation day and also to celebrate officially.

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.



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 convener 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 the State government, Kishore Babu said.

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 beds will be very useful for the patients," he said.

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.

NTR Varadhi caves in

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 downpour.

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 murderer, said the police.

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 Vikalangu 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 him, police apprehended him 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 a loan of Rs 5,000, Anjappa took her behind Vikalangu 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, he bore a grudge and bludgeoned her to death using a granite stone, after which, he fled the scene.

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 been identified as 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 during 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.



GVMC 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 GVMC 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

PNS ■ PANAJI

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.

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 added.

He said the country was glued to the CoWin dashboard yesterday 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 added.

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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 year, 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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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 inter-country 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 in the force and in the aviation sector, the officials said.

Central Teacher Eligibility Test between Dec 16-Jan 13



The 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 Puja, a major 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.

The 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 Bangla 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. The Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) 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 officials.

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 take strictest action against concerned DC & SDM Geeta Grover."

PORN FILMS CASE Raj Kundra claims there is no evidence against him, seeks bail

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Businessman Raj Kundra, an accused in the pornographic 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 case pertaining to alleged creation of pornographic films and publishing them through some apps.

PORN FILMS CASE

After that, the accused 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 prosecution that would connect the app 'Hotshots' with an offence under law.

As per the probe agency, the Hotshots app was being used by the accused for uploading and streaming obscene content.

The bail plea also said that there is not a single allegation in 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 said.

The contents of the complaint do not disclose any prima-facie offence against Kundra, the application said.

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

PNS ■ JAMMU

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 terrorism.

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

Army is aware of the challenges and prepared to give a befitting response to the enemies of the nation.

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 exceptional and outstanding record



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 terrorism."

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

Control and International Border, he said a capsule course on anti-drone 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 handling and exercises, trust 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 orientation courses.

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 delivery 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 population," 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 litigants.

"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 justice 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 said.



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

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

the pioneer agenda

FROM THE INSIDE



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



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

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



MAKING OTT PLATFORMS PROFITABLE IN INDIA

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

The 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 *Navarasam* now running on Netflix.

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 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 CONTENT NOT JUST NETFLIX, AMAZON PRIME, AND DISNEY+HOTSTAR, BUT AROUND 30 STREAMING PLATFORMS INCLUDING ALTBALAJI, ZEE5, SONYLIV, MXPLAYER, MANORAMAMAX, NEESTREAM, AND SO ON



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 the content.

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 be 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 win-win 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 uncharted 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 move.

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

Since 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 variant — 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 yet, 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 variant is 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 currently.

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 regarded 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 COVID vaccines.

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 higher 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 vaccine'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 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

Currently, only symptomatic treatment is given for any variant, similar to that of existing strains. The treatment is mostly designed according to the severity of the disease whether it is mild, moderate or severe.

Many of us are wondering how quickly the virus mutates and with every new variant emerg-

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’

The World Health Organization (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), Iota (B.1.526), Kappa (B.1.617.1) and Lambda (C.37).

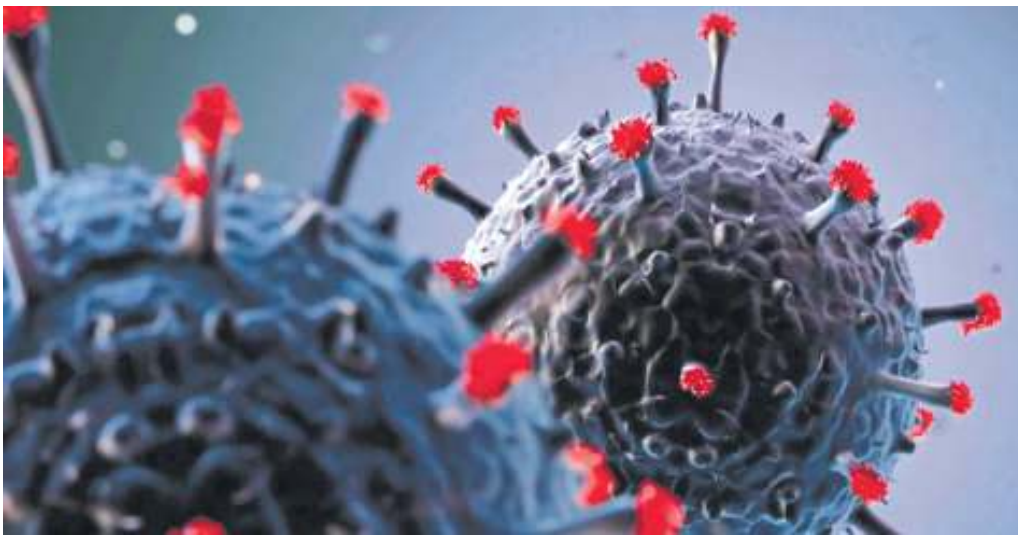
The Mu variant was first identified in Colombia in South America in January 2021, where Mu has been detected in 39 per cent of the samples analysed. From there, it has spread to other South American countries such as Ecuador (13 per cent) and Chile (around 40 per cent).

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 serum-induced antibodies, similar to the Beta variant," Dr Pandit says.

The Mu variant has severe mutations like 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," Dr Pandit tells you.

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 year.

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

The UK government on Friday announced a major relaxation of international travel rules for vaccinated people coming in and out of England, with long-haul 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-

sory PCR tests.

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

Some 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."



'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.

iPhone 13 pre-order begins in India

iPhone 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 pre-orders 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, China, Dubai, Singapore, the UK, the US, and more than 30 other countries

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 India.

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 128GB, 256GB, and 512GB storage options, respectively.



US Tycoon Robert Durst guilty of best friend's murder

US real estate scion Robert Durst was Friday convicted of killing his best friend to prevent her talking to police about his wife's disappearance.

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 disappearance of his wife Kathleen two decades earlier.

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

member of one of New 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 microphone 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 self-defense. He was acquitted.

Durst testified for 14 days in a trial that gripped local media.

ordered the recalling of the envoys after Canberra ditched a deal to buy French submarines in favour of US 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 ambassadors due to "the exceptional seri-

ousness of the announcements made on September 15 by Australia and the United States."

The abandonment of the ocean-class submarine project that Australia and France had been working on since 2016 constituted "unacceptable behaviour among allies and partners," the minister said.

'UNACCEPTABLE': FRANCE RECALLS US, AUSTRALIA ENVOYS OVER SUBMARINE ROW



Satyarthi appointed UN sustainable development goals advocate

UN chief Antonio Guterres on Friday appointed Nobel Laureate Kailash Satyarthi as new Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Advocate ahead of the start of the 76th UN General Assembly.

Along with Satyarthi, STEM activist Valentina Munoz Rabanal, Microsoft President Brad Smith and K-pop superstars 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 moment. The choices we make now could put us

Taliban say Afghan boys' school to reopen, no mention of girls



Afghan 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 closed.

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 Hyderabad-based 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 monitoring.



'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 week -- 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 existed.

"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 paper 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.