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## HOLIDAY NOTICE

We, at **The Hans India**, wish all our readers, patrons and well-wishers a happy Ganesh Chaturthi. As our offices and press remain closed on August 22, Saturday, there will be no edition dated August 23, Sunday.

## WINDOWS



The 100-kg laddu prepared for Khairatabad Ganesha by Suruchi Sweet House of Tapeswaram in East Godavari district

## Tapeswaram laddu for Khairatabad Ganesha coming

**Hyderabad/Rajamahendravaram:** Khairatabad is always known for installing the tallest idol of Ganesha during Ganesh Chaturthi in Hyderabad. A large number of devotees participate in the Ganesh Navaratri festival and thousands of people from other parts of the state and country also visit Khairatabad to have a glimpse of Ganesha. Keeping in view the large turnout of devotees, a huge laddu is arranged to distribute among the devotees as prasadam. In 2013, a 59-feet Ganesha idol was installed to mark the completion of 59 years of celebrations and a 4,200-kg laddu was kept in the palm of Ganesha. As the number of devotees increased by 2015, the size of laddu too had gone up and mega laddu of 6,000 kg was offered to the Lord. But this year, due to corona pandemic, the size of the idol Ganesha has gone down, so also the size of the laddu to only 100 kg. As usual, this year too, the special offering of laddu to the Lord was made in the village named Tapeswaram in East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh. The laddu has left the village on Friday and would be reaching Khairatabad on Saturday. Tapeswaram is known for a special sweet delicacy 'Kaja'. According to Malli Babu, owner of Sri Bhakthanjeyeya Suruchi Foods, all these years he along with 15 others would take a deeksha and wear Ganesha Mala and start making the special laddu for Khairatabad Ganesha. This is the first time that he had sent such a small laddu.



## HANS NEWS SERVICE

**Hyderabad:** The major mid-night fire mishap, which was perhaps the first of its kind in the Srisailem Left Bank Hydro-electric Project, claimed nine lives. In fact, the project, being the largest one in the country, is equipped with the latest technology where even a small spark can be detected immediately.

The ghastly incident has come as a major shock to the people and is taking a turn into slugfest between the government and the Opposition. In fact, this would be rocking the Assembly which

- Out of 20 employees, 11 escape through emergency exit
- Woman official of TS Genco among dead
- CM orders CID probe, announces ex gratia
- President, PM express grief over loss of life
- Opposition targets govt, demands CBI probe

would meet from September 7.

A woman official of TS Genco and two employees of a private company were among those who died in the incident. Minister for Power G Jagadeeshwar Reddy said the fire possibly erupted due to short circuit in one of the

electric panels of the power house and spread to other parts. "Thick smoke engulfed the tunnel, making it difficult for the rescue teams to reach the place," the minister said.

He said fire extinguishers could not control the fire and ambulances could not reach the area. Teams from the Na-

tional Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and from the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) were pressed into service. Rescue teams from Singareni Collieries also joined the rescue operations, he said.

Shocked over the incident, Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao ordered a CID probe and announced Rs 50 lakh ex gratia to DE Srinivas Goud's family and Rs 25 lakh each to other families of those who died. He also announced one job each to the families of the deceased. Opposition parties, however, are demanding a CBI probe.

The Chief Minister ap-

pointed CID additional director-general Govind Singh as inquiry officer to probe the cause of the accident and submit a report to the government.

President Ram Nath Kovind and Prime Minister Narendra Modi condoled the death of the employees. Genco CMD T Prabhakar Rao and others rushed to the site. The deceased have been identified as Srinivas Goud (Deputy Engineer), Venkat Rao (Assistant Engineer), Mohan Kumar (AE), Uzma Fathima (AE), Sundar (AE), Plant attendants Rambabu and Kiran.

Continued on Page 5



Employees use a fire extinguisher as they attempt to douse fire at Srisailem Left Bank Power Station in Kurnool district on Friday

## Macron, Merkel switch to namaste

**New Delhi:** French president Emmanuel Macron leaned forward and folded his hands in the traditional Indian "namaste" as he welcomed German Chancellor Angela Merkel at his Mediterranean holiday retreat, the Fort of Bregancon, in southern France.

The German Chancellor reciprocated with what is becoming a popular form of greeting among world leaders in the time of the coronavirus pandemic. The two leaders are meeting at the French President's summer residence to discuss a long list of subjects including the pandemic, post-election unrest in Belarus and growing tensions



with Turkey. US President Donald Trump and Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu are among world leaders who have chosen a "Namaste" over the usual handshake in keeping with social dis-

tancing restrictions to avoid infection.

The Israel Prime Minister was one of the first global leaders to endorse the Indian-style greeting. "Just avoid shaking hands as I do. You can try to imple-

ment the Indian system of Namaste or say another word like shalom, but find a way, any way of not shaking hands," Mr Netanyahu had said. In March, Donald Trump was also pictured greeting visiting Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar with folded hands. "We did not shake hands today. We looked at each other and said what we are going to do. You know, sort of a weird feeling," Trump told reporters after his meeting with Mr Varadkar, who is of Indian-origin.

A video of Prince Charles, 71, greeting people with a "Namaste" in London had gone viral on social media in March.

## Pranab Mukherjee stable

**New Delhi (PTI):** There was no change in the condition of former president Pranab Mukherjee and he remains haemodynamically stable and on ventilatory support, the hospital said on Friday. Doctors attending to him said his vital parameters are being maintained.

According to the doctors, a patient is haemodynamically stable when the blood circulation parameters - blood pressure, heart and pulse rate, are stable and normal. Mukherjee was admitted to the Army's Research and Referral Hospital in Delhi Cantonment on August 10 and was operated for removal of a clot in the



brain. He had also tested positive for Covid-19. Thereafter, he developed a lung infection and is being treated for the same. His health parameters are be-

ing closely monitored by a team of specialists at the hospital. "The medical condition of Shri Pranab Mukherjee remains the same. He is being treated for lung infection and continues to be on ventilatory support. His vital parameters are being maintained and he is haemodynamically stable," the hospital said in a statement.

The family of the former president has been visiting him at the hospital. His son Abhijit Mukherjee had said that his father's condition is stable and his vital parameters are under control. Pranab Mukherjee served as the 13th President of India from 2012 to 2017.

## CBI starts investigation in Sushant death case by quizzing his cook

**Mumbai (PTI):** After the Supreme Court nod, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Friday started its probe into the Sushant Singh Rajput death case in the city as it collected relevant documents and reports from the Mumbai police, officials said.

A special investigation team of the CBI, consisting of officers, other personnel and also forensic experts, landed in Mumbai on Thursday evening to take over probe into the high-profile case which has re-



ceived much media attention. Getting down to business, CBI officials on Friday morning brought Rajput's cook for enquiry at DRDO and IAF guest house in suburban Santa Cruz, where the visiting probe team members are staying.

A vehicle, in which the cook was seen sitting next to a CBI official, was spotted entering the guest house complex. The probe team will record statements of people connected with the case, sources said. It will also scan financial transactions of the 34-year-old actor, who was found dead in his apartment in suburban Bandra on June 14, they said.

Another team of the CBI, led by a superintendent-rank officer, reached the Bandra Police Station, where an ADR (accidental

death report) was registered after the alleged suicide by the actor, an official said. The team collected case diary of the ADR and other important documents related to the investigation of the case, which included autopsy and forensic reports, he said. The CBI team also met DCP Abhishek Trimukhe, who was heading the Mumbai police probe team, the official said.

The CBI squad will also visit Rajput's flat in 'Mont Blanc' building where he was found hanging.

## ED questions Sushant's sister

**New Delhi (PTI):** The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday questioned and recorded the statement of Priyanka Singh, elder sister of Sushant Singh Rajput, in connection with a money laundering case probe linked to the actor's death, officials said. The statement of Priyanka Singh was recorded under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) in Delhi, they said. It is understood that the ED wants to obtain information related to Rajput's finances, personal and professional deals that Priyanka Singh was privy to, in order to take its investigation forward into the allegations of money laundering and alleged financial irregularities perpetrated on the actor.

## Pak nukes which won't harm Indian Muslims

**New Delhi (IANS):** In his trademark braggart style, Pakistan Federal Minister Sheikh Rashid has threatened India with nuclear war once again, saying the weapons will be such that they will save the Muslims during the attack.

In an interview with Pakistani media channel Samaa TV on Wednesday, Rashid claimed that Pakistan has very precise weapons which are "small and perfect".

The Pakistan minister, who's known for his bragging style and outlandish remarks, also said that the weapons will only target certain regions and even

Assam can now come under their range of attack.

Rashid warned that Pakistan will have no option in a conventional war and "if something will happen, it will be the end", indicating a nuclear war of mass destruction. "If Pakistan gets attacked by India, there is no scope for conventional war. This will be a bloody and nuclear war. It will be a nuclear war for sure. We have very calculated weapons which are small and perfect.

Our weapons will save Muslim lives and will only target certain regions, he said.

## BJP to block Tharoor's FB summons

**New Delhi (IANS):** With Shashi Tharoor moving a privilege motion against a BJP MP for questioning his power to unilaterally summon Facebook representatives to a Parliamentary Standing Committee, the BJP has realised the Congress' seriousness in the matter. The saffron party is also ready with two plans to block Tha-

roor's moves, with the first already set in motion.

Let's talk about Plan B. If Plan A doesn't give the desired result, BJP is likely to set the backup plan in motion on September 1, when the Standing Committee on IT reconvenes. Facebook representatives have been summoned the next day, between 4

and 4.30 p.m. "on the subject 'Safeguarding citizens' rights and prevention of misuse of social/online news media platforms'. Rules allow any member to question the move and seek voting over it.

Among the 21 Lok Sabha members in the committee, the BJP has 12 and an ally member. Among the 10 Rajya

Sabha members, one has died, leaving only nine. Out of these nine, the BJP has 3 members and hopes to get the vote of a nominated member.

Strictly, on its own, the BJP has 15 members in the 30 member panel. If it considers ally LJP and a nominated member whose views align with the BJP, the ruling party will have 17 votes.

## With Biden acceptance, prez poll gets in top gear

**New York (IANS):** Armed with the Democratic Party's nomination, former US Vice-President Joe Biden formally launched his battle against President Donald Trump in a "life-changing election", asserting that he would lead the nation out of "this season of darkness".

"Here and now, I give you my word: If you entrust me with the presidency, I will draw on the best of us, not the worst. I will be an ally of the light not of the darkness," he

**I won't have to do it alone. Because I will have a great Vice-President at my side. Senator Kamala Harris. She is a powerful voice for this nation**

said on Thursday night while accepting his party's nomination.

"United we can, and will, overcome this season of darkness in America,"



Democratic presidential candidate former Vice-President Joe Biden hugs his wife Jill Biden after his speech during the fourth day of the Democratic National Convention at the Chase Centre in Wilmington on Thursday

he said speaking to the party's virtual convention from his hometown of Wilmington, Delaware.

Like every speaker before him during the four-day convention, Biden accused Trump of plunging the nation into the darkness of divisiveness, hatred and a health and economic crisis.

He said Trump was "a President who takes no responsibility, refuses to lead, blames others, cosies up to dictators, and fans the flames of hate and division".

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# Womenia

## Fashion staple during and post pandemic

Although most of us have traded our jeans and dresses for sweatpants and slippers for the time being, the wardrobe essentials are forever

Let's face it, none of us know how long this quarantine will last, but a wardrobe with a reliable foundation of clothes will make it easier for you to maintain your new work from home routine or help you get back up with ease once the coronavirus passes. That's why the concept of a wardrobe staple is so enduring: A closet built on a streamlined selection of items makes day-to-day dressing infinitely easier.

Whether your newest home project is cleaning out your closet and starting from



scratch or you just want something other than pajamas to wear, here is a list of wardrobe essentials that you should own.

### White shirt

The great thing about a white shirt is that it is the perfect blank canvas upon which you can draw your unique style statement. A white shirt and a well-fitting trousers or a skirt make for the perfect chic professional look. You can jazz it up with a scarf or a light jacket for a playful look for informal occasions, or maybe

even a solid necklace that garners attention at a party. Don't be afraid to experiment with everything a white shirt has to offer.

### Blazer

If you need to pull together an office look then invest in a great blazer. A blazer doesn't just have to exist in the office. It can be used as a great fall outerwear substitute when it's not quite cold enough for a heavy coat. Blazer's can also transition into great date-wear by throwing them over a nice cocktail dress.

### Little black dress

The quintessential little black dress (LBD) is a classic wardrobe essential for women. The wonderful thing about little black dresses is that they are so versatile. Not everyone likes the same style; an off-shoulder won't have the same fans as an A-line dress, frills aren't everybody's cup of tea, and hem lengths change with the person's life trajectory.

### Dark coloured skinny jeans

Dark colours are preferred for a reason: they are complementary to almost every colour on the palette. Pair them with a knit sweater and boots for an evening out with the girls, a button-down shirt for a casual or formal meeting, a T-shirt and sneakers for a timeless spring look.

### Denim Jacket

Perfect for relatively casual occasions, a denim jacket is extremely utilitarian and thus essential to a woman's wardrobe. It is also an androgynous outfit piece which lends a large helping of effortless chic to any outfit. It can be worn season after season and can be thrown in with any ensemble to ramp up the trend factor. Though there is a variety of colours, styles, and details to choose from, a classic medium wash is the most versatile option out there.



### Your Signature Item

If you're a fan of glitter, a bejewelled jacket or sequined pants can be the way to go. If you're into accessories, long earrings, large finger rings or a boho necklace can be the item your friends relate with you. A large handbag or a small one to take wherever you go can also be a beautiful signature item.



## A royal twist to the humble face mask

From simple lab masks, printed florals to ninja-style, here's a glimpse of how the Royals are trending in their face masks

PUJA GUPTA

Face masks are the new normal and a necessity during the pandemic.

They have become an integral part of one's back-to-work wardrobe across the world. Royal families too have taken to the trend as they return to their duties sporting this new accessory. From simple lab masks, printed florals to high-tech ones, take a cue.



### BELGIUM'S KING PHILIPPE AND QUEEN MATHILDE

Monotones for King Philippe and Queen Mathilde who co-ordinated their face masks with their outfits as they attended a concert in prelude to the National holiday offered by the Queen Elisabeth International Musical Competition at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels.

### THE SPANISH ROYAL FAMILY

Crown Princess Leonor, King Felipe VI, Queen Letizia and Princess Sofia all arrived wearing the humble blue surgical mask for a state tribute to COVID-19 victims and people working on the front lines to fight the pandemic at Palacio Real in Madrid, Spain.



### CAMILLA, DUCHESS OF CORNWALL

Spotted in London wearing a peacock feather-patterned mask, The Duchess of Cornwall walked from Clarence House to the National Gallery. She wore the Liberty pattern mask from British brand Fiona Clare with a denim dress and brown leather handbag.



### PRINCE WILLIAM AND KATE MIDDLETON

The Duchess wore a face mask in public for the first time on August 4, 2020, choosing a \$19 floral covering by London-based brand Amaia. Kate Middleton was spotted pairing a white Suzannah dress with a floral print mask. The Duchess then wore the same mask again for another engagement, but this time coordinated it with a floral Emilia Wickstead dress, while her husband, Prince William donned a blue-hued mask which complimented his shirt and pants.



### JORDAN ROYAL FAMILY

Always setting the bar high with her innate style and fashion choices, Queen Rania Al Abdullah of Jordan chose a high-tech no nonsense mask for her recent appearance. King Abdullah II Ibn Al Hussein also sported the same showcasing their back to business moods as they attended the inauguration of Al Bashir Hospital's new emergency and oncology wards in Jordan.



## Hairstyles to go with your desi outfit this Ganesh Chaturthi

Even though we're gearing up for an intimate and toned-down festive season, the excitement and mirth surrounding the festivities still sparks joy.

First up is Ganesh Chaturthi, and while you might already have your desi ensembles lined up for a day filled with puja aartis and delicious modaks to follow, have you narrowed down on your hair and make-up look? Are you going

to settle for a hasty bun? Nah, girl! Not on our watch. The fact that it's an intimate affair is no excuse to wear the same boring hairstyle on this occasion. To help you break out of your hairstyle rut, we've compiled a list of chic hairstyles that will complement your desi ensembles for the day.

### Hybrid bun ponytail

A hybrid bun ponytail is lovely to wear with a saree. Instead of pulling together all your hair in a bun, let half the length loose. To make it chicer, do a centre parting and clean up any flyaways. A quick hack: spritz some hairspray on a toothbrush and use it to lay down the baby hair.

### ow pony with bangs and face-framing tendrils

We love this look, it's like a fusion of traditional meets glam. We love how the bangs and fame framing tendrils instantly elevate this basic low pony. Such a simple yet chic way to style your favourite ponytail for a festive occasion.

### Casual middle bun

Nothing screams off-duty than hair tied in a cool and casual bun! Prep your hair with texturising hair cream to add some texture to your tresses. Leave out some face-framing tendrils in the front and secure the rest of your hair in a high bun — gently tug on the bun to add volume. Go one step further and add a large silk

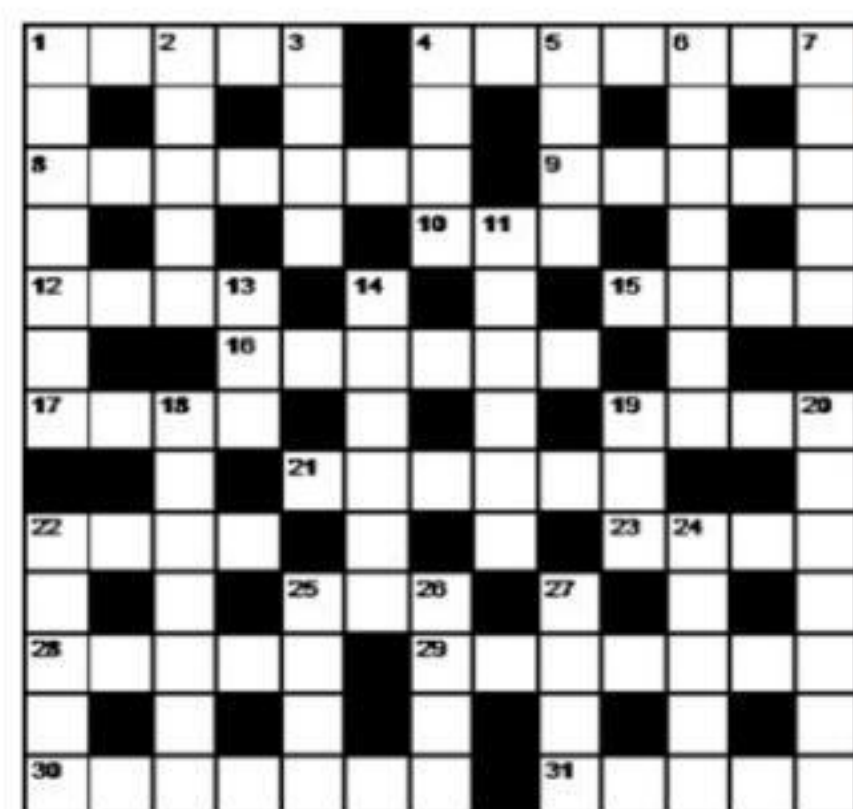
scrunchie to elevate the look further.

### Half-up with a pouffe

Throwing it back with an old school saree hairstyle — the half-up hairdo with a pouffe hairdo will make your desi mom's heart grow two sizes! Add some flicked waves from mid-lengths to tips to collect additional compliments.

### Accessorised waterfall braid

Probably the most OTT of all the styles we have on this list, this waterfall braided crown will work if you want something a bit more dramatic for the occasion. Adorned with pearly accessories, the style will cover your need to bling out during the puja!



### CROSSWORD

**Across**

- Possessor (5)
- Donating (7)
- Dignify (7)
- More unfavorable (5)
- Yang's opposite (3)
- Bridge feat (4)
- Departed (4)
- Guidance (6)
- Shoe part (4)
- Troubles (4)
- Garden dwarfs from Zurich? (6)
- Atop (4)
- Be quiet (4)
- Monetary unit of Myanmar (3)
- Prickly plants (5)
- Occurring at the beginning (7)
- Scolds, admonishes or berates (7)
- More sagacious (5)

**Down**

- Supervised (7)
- Japanese warrior (5)
- Applies friction to (4)
- Dull colour (4)
- A young deer (4)
- Middle Easterner (7)
- Belgian city (5)
- Earnings (6)
- Floor covering (3)
- Equally (6)
- It will grow into the king of the jungles ? (4,3)
- Etna residue (3)
- Academic (7)
- Sore (5)
- Modules (5)
- Pale red colour (4)
- Helps (4)
- Range of vision (4)

### SUDOKU

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		9						5
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SOLUTION TO AUGUST 21

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5	6	9	1	2	8	4	7	3

### NEWS ROUNDUP

## Saumya Tandon on quitting 'Bhabiji Ghar Par Hain!': End of a beautiful journey

Actress Saumya Tandon, who played Anita Bhabi in the popular sitcom, Bhabiji Ghar Par Hain!, has quit the show after five years. On Friday she shared vignettes of her last day on the set.

Saumya has posted several videos on Instagram, capturing the celebrations on her last day on the set. One of the videos features the entire cast and crew singing "Tum ko dekha toh ye khayal aaya" by late ghazal maestro Jagjit Singh. The crew also sings "Abhi na jao chhodkar" for her. In one clip, the actress gets emotional and then is seen praising co-actors Asif Sheikh and Rohitashv Gour. "End of a beautiful journey. The way we part shows how strong our relationship was. These are some moments to cherish all my life, my small note for every single person on the unit. My dearest @iaasifsheikhofficial. My friends @rohitashvgour @yogesh.tripathi78 @vaibhav.mahar.teeka @deepeshbhan@saleem\_zaidi @saanandvera (missed you on the last day)," Saumya wrote as caption with the videos.

'Bhabiji Ghar Par Hain!' revolves around two neighbouring couples, the Mishras and the Tiwaris, where both husbands have a crush on the other man's wife.





# 70-day bus ride from Delhi to London, ticket ₹15 lakh

**New Delhi (IANS):** A private tourist company based in Gurugram has announced a bus service from Delhi to London where the travellers will cover 18 countries and 20,000 km in 70 days.

Adventures Overland on August 15 announced the "first-ever hop-on/hop-off bus service between Delhi and London", named "Bus to London". People taking this tour will travel through Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, China, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Russia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Germany, Netherlands, Belgium and France.

A special 20-seater bus, equipped with business class seats, is being built for this trip. Apart from the 20 pas-

sengers, there will be a driver, an assistant driver, a guide and a helper. The guide will change at regular intervals during the trip.

The company will also take care of the visa arrangements of the passengers.

The trip will be divided into four categories and passengers can choose different destinations according to their liking and convenience while they will have to pay as per the particular package. However, if they avail of the whole trip from Delhi to London it will cost them Rs 15 lakh per person.

The idea materialised after two travel enthusiasts, Tushar Agarwal and Sanjay Madan, took a road trip to London in 2017, 2018 and 2019.

Adventures Overland co-founder Tushar Agarwal told IANS, "We planned this trip after a lot of people passionate about travelling expressed their wish for a road trip to London. This was announced on August 15 and we hope that the first bus to London will be flagged off in May 2021. We have not started the registrations due to the coronavirus spread. The registrations will start after taking stock of the coronavirus situation in all the countries."

"All the facilities will be provided during the 70-day trip. Arrangements for stay will be made in 4-star or 5-star hotels and passengers will also be provided Indian food in all the countries," he added.



## POLLS AMID PANDEMIC

# Voters to get gloves, booths to have thermal scanners



## Can't allow Ganpati Festival in Maha: SC

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court on Friday said it is not inclined to permit festivities during Ganpati festival in Maharashtra this year as the crowd becomes uncontrollable. Citing the pandemic, a bench headed by Chief Justice of India SA Bobde maintained that the Ganesh Chaturthi festivities, by their very nature, involve large crowds.

"We are not inclined to allow Ganapati festivals since that is completely uncontrollable," remarked the CJI.

The Supreme Court Friday allowed devotees to offer Paryushan prayers in three Jain temples in Mumbai amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

**New Delhi (PTD):** Voters will be provided with gloves to press the EVM button and COVID-19 patients in quarantine will be allowed to vote at the last hour of the polling day, according to broad guidelines issued by the EC on Friday for holding elections during the coronavirus pandemic.

The gloves will most likely be disposable. A separate set of guidelines would be issued for voters who are residing in areas notified as "containment zone", the Election Commission said.

The commission has recommended mandatory sanitisation of polling stations, preferably a day before the polls.

Thermal scanners would be placed at the entry point of every polling station. Polling or paramedical staff will conduct thermal screening of voters at the entry point of a polling station, it said. "There shall be maximum 1,000 electors instead of 1,500 electors in a polling station," the guidelines said. A group of five people, including candidates but excluding security personnel, is



allowed to take part in door-to-door campaigning.

For roadshows, the commission said, convoys of vehicles should be broken after every

five vehicles instead of 10 (excluding security vehicles).

Public gatherings and rallies can be held subject to adherence to COVID-19 guidelines.

The district election officer should identify in advance dedicated grounds for public gatherings with clearly marked entry and exit points.



## Indian health experts back blood plasma therapy

**New Delh (IANS):** After reports surfaced that the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has put on hold the emergency use authorisation of blood plasma therapy to treat severely ill Covid-19 patients, health experts in India on Friday stressed that the therapy should not be abandoned till the development of an effective vaccine against the virus.

The convalescent plasma therapy has shown encouraging results in India to date.

According to Rahul Bhargava, Director and Head, Haematology at Fortis Memorial Research Institute in Gurugram, so far, data has been equivocal with many confounding factors.

"Only a properly well-randomised controlled trial will help to know which patient at what time/duration of disease

and the extent of disease will get benefitted. In the past also, for various diseases, plasma therapy has been utilised with great success and failure," Bhargava told IANS.

What is required is to know the antibody strength of the donor to see the beneficial effect. "It should not be abandoned until we have a vaccine or any other option to treat sick patients. We should follow the policy of let's do no harm," he added. According to several studies, plasma donated by people who've survived Covid-19 has high levels of antibodies and is considered safe.

The convalescent plasma therapy has gained much traction in several countries, including in India, where several lives have been saved with the therapy.

# Covid tally crosses 29 lakh-mark

**New Delhi (IANS):** With 68,898 new Coronavirus infections in 24 hours, India tally mounted to 2,905,823 on Friday, while the death toll climbed to 54,849 with 983 more fatalities, said the Health Ministry.

Out of the total cases, recoveries have crossed the 20 lakh-mark and surged to 21,58,946 with 62,282 more people recuperating in the past 24 hours, taking the recovery rate to nearly 74.30 per cent. The actual caseload of the country is the active cases, which currently stands at 6,92,028.

India's journey to over 29 lakh cases has taken over 200 days since the emergence of the first case on January 30. On July 17,



the country logged 10 lakh cases, which then doubled to 20 lakh in 20 days on August 7 and added more than nine lakh cases in just 14 days.

Notably, the case fatality rate, which is the proportion of people who die from the disease among individuals diagnosed, has dropped to 1.89 per cent, the Ministry said.

## Insurance cover extended to pvt docs

**Mumbai:** The Maharashtra government has extended Rs 50 lakh insurance cover to private doctors who die of coronavirus infection during the pandemic, an official said on Friday. In a circular issued on Thursday, director of state Health Services Dr Sadhana Tayde said the insurance cover, which is being given to doctors in government and semi-government services, has now been extended to private medical practitioners who succumb to the infection.

Referring to a letter dated April 9 about the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package - Insurance Scheme for health workers fighting Covid-19, she said the provisions of the same be followed for private doctors as well.



## Karnataka Health Minister's mother dies

**Bengaluru:** The mother of Karnataka Health Minister B Sriramulu died in Ballari district, a day after she recovered from coronavirus, he said on Friday. "With deep sorrow I inform you all that my mother Honnuramma passed away on Thursday night due to age related issues. At the ripe age of 95, my mother had completely recovered from coronavirus and just returned home from the Bowring Hospital in Bengaluru," Sriramulu tweeted. Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa, Medical Education Minister Dr K Sudhakar and many other ministers condoled the death of Honnuramma.

## Kolkata police officer succumbs

**Kolkata (IANS):** An Assistant Commissioner of Police died of Covid-19 infection at a city hospital on Friday, sources said.

Uday Shankar Bandopadhyay, an ACP in Kolkata police's central division, was admitted to a private hospital in the city a few weeks ago with respiratory problems.

As his condition deteriorated, Bandopadhyay had to undergo a Covid test and was detected positive for the virus. He was immediately shifted to a private Covid hospital here.

"Extremely saddened to share the news of untimely demise of an outstanding officer ACP (Central-Div) Uday Shankar Bandopadhyay who was under treatment in hospital due to Covid-19," Kolkata Police commissioner Anuj Sharma tweeted.



## 27 Maha jails record 1,478 cases; 6 deaths

**Mumbai:** As many as 1,478 cases of COVID-19 and six deaths have been reported from 27 jails in Maharashtra so far, an official from the prisons department said on Friday. A total of 1,166 inmates and 312 jail staff have contracted the infection and six prisoners have died of it, the official said. As far as inmates are concerned, Nagpur Central Jail is the worst-affected in the state with 219 cases, followed by Pune's Yerwada Central Jail with 190 cases, he said.



## 14 AI passengers test positive

**Hong Kong:** Fourteen passengers who travelled from Delhi to Hong Kong on an Air India flight on August 14 have tested positive for COVID-19 till Thursday, the Hong Kong government said. Due to this incident, Air India's passenger flights have been barred from landing in Hong Kong till August-end, it added on Friday. A passenger from India can arrive in Hong Kong only if he or she has a Covid-19 negative certificate from a test done 72 hours prior to the journey, according to the rules issued by the Hong Kong government in July.

# Postpone NEET, it may lead to suicides: Swamy to PM Modi

## NOW, NSUI WRITES TO MODI TO POSTPONE NEET, JEE

**New Delhi (IANS):** BJP MP Subramanian Swamy has sought Prime Minister Narendra Modi's intervention to direct the Education Ministry to postpone the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) and the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) till Diwali, and warned of suicides by youths otherwise.

In his "urgent letter" to Modi, Swamy said: "Holding the exams, in my opinion, may lead to a large number of suicides by youths around the country."

He cited an example of Mumbai where, he claimed, "there is no public transport and people have to come from other areas, often 20 to 30 km away". This is because of the restrictions enforced at many places due to the COVID-19 pandemic, he argued.



"There is widespread desperation among the youth since this exam is a make-or-break affair for them and they have to take it when they are fully prepared," the Rajya Sabha MP wrote to the

Prime Minister.

Earlier, Swamy spoke to Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal. Pointing this out to Modi, Swamy added that Pokhriyal was "sympathetic" to

his suggestion to put it off beyond Diwali. However, it needs the Prime Minister's "concurrence", he wrote.

Swamy tweeted on the Supreme Court order on the matter, saying that the apex court had "left the date (for the exam) to the government" to decide.

On Monday, the Supreme Court had rejected a plea for the postponement of the two entrance tests due to the coronavirus outbreak. The court said that life has to go on despite the virus outbreak and that it could not put the careers of students in jeopardy by interfering in National Testing Agency's decision to hold these in September.

The NSUI on Friday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi

to demand their postponement, citing the danger to the lives of students amid the novel coronavirus pandemic.

"With about 26 lakh students registered for the entrance exams and lakhs of final-year students, the exercise will lend much greater possibility to the spread of Covid-19," National Students Union of India (NSUI) National President Neeraj Kundan wrote in the letter to the Prime Minister.

Kundan said that the exercise would not only put the candidates' lives at risk but also of people/parents accompanying them to the examination centres.

"Furthermore, the cycle will never cease and only act as a catalyst, endangering more vulnerable lives," the NSUI leader said.

## 70 trees cut for road widening

**Mumbai:** Over 70 trees have already been felled on the road leading to Sevagram in Wardha, Maharashtra -- the ashram that Gandhi made his home after the Salt Satyagraha of 1930. In a letter to the district collector, concerned citizens and residents of the area have asked that the 5-km stretch of road leading to the ashram not be widened. They have requested that any widening only occurs in the space that the trees will permit. About 170 more trees could face the axe. Local people, among them several teachers and doctors, agitated over the loss of tree cover, have formed a committee -- the Vriksh Bachao Samiti -- to protect the trees. On the eve of Independence Day this year, the committee, in a letter to the district collector, appealed against the felling of more trees. It asked that those already felled be replanted. On Independence Day, a



large group gathered and protested the felling of trees.

The road-widening is occurring in the mid-section of Wardha, very close to schools, colleges and residential areas. Widening this stretch would make for speedier traffic and increase the possibility of accidents, the committee said, appealing that the road widening plan be abandoned in public interest.



## It is time for political parties to mend their ways

Amidst the outbreak of novel coronavirus disease (Covid-19) crisis in the country, the Union government had announced various economic measures under the Atma Nirbhar Bharat Package (ANBP) in the middle of May for migrant workers across the country. Pursuant to this, the Department of Food & Public Distribution had allocated a total quantity of about 8 Lakh MT of food grains to all States/UTs which was communicated to all States/UTs under the “Atma Nirbhar Bharat Scheme” to help mitigate the food-security requirements of migrant/stranded migrants across the country. This scheme was specially provided to cover all such persons who were neither covered under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) nor under any other State PDS scheme or were not able to access PDS food grains for any reason, during the unprecedented Covid-19 situation. The number of interstate migrants was not documented anywhere but as a matter of abundant pre-

caution and taking into account the extensive media coverage, a very liberal estimate of about 8 crore migrants/stranded migrant persons across the country was made. The intention was to provide adequately for all eventualities so that the allocation did not fall short of the requirement. It needs to be emphasised that no data on the actual or estimated number of such persons across the country was available with either the Central government or the State governments. Food Department allocated about 4 LMT food-grain per month and a total of 8 LMT for a period of two months i.e. May and June of this year. About 6.38 LMT food grains were lifted by States/UTs based on their own estimates. The lifted quantity of 6.38 LMT of food grains could not be completely utilised/distributed due to reverse migration, it is learnt now. As per reports available up to August 17, out of total 6.38 LMT lifted food grains, a total of about 2.49 LMT (39%) food grains have

been distributed by the States/UTs under the scheme. What is puzzling in the exercise is how come no State government or the Centre estimated the figures of the migrant population right. By all means, even the figures reflected in these estimates could be wrong. There is little to prove that these many crores really benefited going by the food grains lifted. Was there a deliberate attempt to puff up the figures which could have led to wastage of food grains or misuse of the same? If our claims of technological leap in governance is not true and we keep relying upon guessimates, will it benefit the country in the long run. It is time all governments wake up to the reality and map the population properly. The country needs to do it not just in case of migrant populations. It needs to keep a record for all practical purposes. Unfortunately, the National Population Register and census have run into controversy politically due to the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) all political parties need to be blamed. This pandemic crisis is an opportunity for the political class to correct its flaws. Let their attitudes rest a while so that the national interest takes precedence.

# Watchdog stops barking, wags its tail instead!



V RAMU SARMA

Media is supposed to play an important role in society not only as an instrument to provide source of information, but also as a “watchdog” or scrutiniser. It is supposed to be free to select the stories they consider important or interesting. As watchdog, it is their role and responsibility to bring to light the omissions and commissions of the government.

There are any number of examples where the media played exemplary roles. If you look at the international scenario, the Watergate scandal came to light on June 17, 1972 which changed American politics where people started questioning their leaders. Several burglars were arrested in the office of the Democratic National Committee, located in the Watergate complex of buildings in Washington, D.C. They were connected to the then President Richard Nixon's re-election campaign. Washington Post reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein revealed his role in the conspiracy. Nixon resigned on August 9, 1974.

In India, former Chief Minister of Maharashtra, A R Antulay was forced to quit from his post by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi after Parliament was paralysed for days over the ‘cements scandal’ in the State. It was the classic journalistic coup, swift, bold and utterly bloodless and the Indian Express came out not just with breaking news but series of stories which exposed how political parties and Chief Ministers resort to arm-twisting and fund collection.

In undivided Andhra Pradesh, the then Chief Minister N Janardhana Reddy had to call it quits after the State High Court indicted him for nepotism and favouritism in the college capitation fee controversy. He initially declared that there was no need for him to resign but the series of exposures by media and the Supreme Court verdict forced him to quit despite having mobilised the support of 123 MLAs.

In 1991, another scandal in re-

gard to emergency reconstruction programme in Andhra Pradesh also came to light. I myself had gone around the State and had come up with series of stories which rocked the State Assembly then.

Then we have the famous Bofors scandal. It was one of the major weapons contract political scandal that came to light. The Rs 1,437-crore deal between India and the Swedish arms manufacturer AB Bofors for the supply of 400, 155mm Howitzer guns for the Indian Army was entered on March 24, 1986. On April 16, 1987, The Swedish Radio claimed that the company had paid bribes to top Indian politicians and defence personnel. On April 20, 1987 Rajiv Gandhi told the Lok Sabha that no kickbacks were paid and no middlemen were involved. The allegation was that Rs 64 crore was paid as bribe by India. A Joint Parliamentary Committee was formed to probe and the Congress got defeated in 1989 elections. The scandal came to light due to excellent work in investigative journalism carried out by the Reuters news based on the revelation of Swedish radio's breaking news, and then by the Hindu newspaper journalist Chitra Subramaniam.

Another scandal which came to be known as adventure capitalism was related to setting up a Rs 5,800 crore Volkswagen car unit in Andhra Pradesh. The TDP government had initiated the moves and while the process was on, it went out of power and the successor Congress government under the leadership of Y S Rajasekhara Reddy in its hurry to get the deal through, close to the port city of Visakhapatnam, used different means to outwit its neighbouring States like Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. The media exposure brought to light that it was a sex and bribery scandal involving number of senior executives in Europe and Volkswagen's former Indian representative Helmuth Schuster who reportedly connived with top political leaders in Andhra Pradesh government and took it for a ride. Schuster asked for and got Euros 2 million (Rs 11 crore) of the proposed Euros 5 million from the State government. This was an instalment of its share of equity in a specially floated joint venture, VashistaWahan, which is apparently intended to set up the car factory.

But the situation has now changed and over the years, the



**The media has fallen prey to the nuanced efforts made by successive governments to throttle their independence. Common methods include government-backed ownership changes, regulatory and financial pressure, and public denunciations of honest journalists. The governments have also offered proactive support to friendly outlets through measures such as lucrative contracts, advertisements, paid news and preferential access to State information. The goal is to make the press serve those in power rather than the public. Days when media used to disseminate objective truth is over and lot of malice has taken its place. The only accountability is to serve the regime**

press has been under attack. Its freedom has been eroded in a systematic manner. Attempts to silence critical media voices and strengthen the outlets that serve up favourable coverage have become a near global phenomenon, and it is more clearly visible in two Telugu States. Of course, the situation at the level of national media is no better.

Large segments of the population are no longer receiving unbiased news and information. The media has fallen prey to the nuanced efforts made by successive governments to throttle their independence. Common methods include government-backed ownership changes, regulatory and financial pressure, and public denunciations of honest journalists.

The governments have also offered proactive support to friendly outlets through meas-

ures such as lucrative contracts, advertisements, paid news and preferential access to State information. The goal is to make the press serve those in power rather than the public. Days when media used to disseminate objective truth is over and lot of malice has taken its place. The only accountability is to serve the regime.

News has lost its worthiness and the priorities are shifted from people to serve the regime that controls and sets the agenda, all in the name of freedom of the press. Indian media seems to be writing a new history which has killed critical journalism. What the people heading the regime fail to realise is that this nakedness of representing regimes voice only is killing democracy in India.

News anchors whether it is electronic or print media have

become judges and pass their judgment shamelessly without any ethical consideration. They have lost the initiative to question the authorities and the government and are confining themselves to press notes.

Some media houses have sold their critical power to separate its truth from their errors and this has resulted in fake news and hatred against opponents becoming the latest trend. Media houses and journalists are being consistently pushed to behave in a certain manner or else face the wrath of the government. They do not even hesitate to indulge in arm twisting methods.

Genuine critics of the regime's policy are categorised as anti-government if not anti-national. There is a constant exercise of silencing the unpleasant voice. If one agrees for uncritical admiration of the government of the day, you are favoured with many things and tailor-made information is supplied in tons. If one tries to be even little critical, then he is considered to be enemy. The concept of quid pro quo is being witnessed in the world of media too. Another threat to democracy is from social media which is also being used more to spread hatred.

Media which should represent people is fast forgetting its responsibility and does not feel that it has any accountability to tell people the truth. All this has turned media into a game of circus to divert the people. If the key pillar of democracy does not realise this and if it still fails to make efforts to come out of these machinations by the rulers, it would be writing a wrong history. It's high time media started questioning their leaders.

## PART - II



## YSR: A legendary leader and gem of a person

DR K NARAYANA

NTR had put his stamp of approval for the project and a GO was issued. With this background, YSR had agreed to name the Veligonda project after Comrade Pula Subbaiah and laid the foundation stone. All over the country, many Communists have devoted their lives in the fight for achieving irrigation projects. But YSR's sincerity in naming two of them after Communist leaders is to be appreciated. From my experience, I can say that he had a positive approach to his political opponents. Once I had gone to meet the CM, YSR. He had received me warmly. Dr KVP, who was present there, asked me abusively, “You want to end up losing your pants or what? Why are you criticising the CM?” With a smiling face, YSR interjected and said, “Our Narayana is a CPI leader and I am the CM. It is natural that as an Opposition leader, he will be criticising me.” Dr KVP said resignedly, both of you are Rayalaseema fellows. You settle it yourself.

The Padayatra from Chevella stands out as an important milestone in YSR's political life. It was a daring move and his ‘do-or-die’ attitude had imparted life into the Congress Party. When I went to Rajahmundry to address our party meet, I came to know that YSR, during the Padayatra had a sunstroke. I went to meet him, but no visitors were allowed as he was advised complete rest. But YSR received me warmly, while lying down in the bed. Vijayamma was attending on him. When he tried to sit up, I told him to take rest and not bother about etiquette. “I told him to follow the doctor's and Vijayamma's advice.” I told her to take good care of my friend. With light hearts, we both spent those few moments.

Defying bad weather, he set out to sort out some difference among Congress leaders in Chittoor district. Bhumana Karunakar Reddy was given the responsibility to arrange the meet. Weather was bad, but the advice of senior officials of the CM's office was ignored. That shows rot in the administration. The concerned senior officials and specialists would have to put their foot down and refused to allow YSR to travel in such a bad weather. The officials may at the most face a transfer for defying. Their position is safe. But had they acted

**Vijayamma told that she had asked YSR, “What made you choose me?” YSR embraced her and said, “I like your innocence.” Yes, I think it is true. YSR is in fact better looking than Vijayamma. When I mentioned this to Sajjala Diwakar Reddy, he said that Vijayamma was his batch-mate and she was such a nice person. This shows that YSR was looking at her inner beauty. Vijayamma once told me about YSR's refusal to his daughter Sharmila's choice. Every father thinks differently when it comes to his daughter's life choice. And YSR is no exception. But still he consented to her divorce and remarriage with a boy of her choice. I suppose that Vijayamma's revelation regarding Sharmila would clear any misconceptions**

the anti-hoarding campaign in Tirupati and was shocked to learn that YSR's helicopter crashed in Nallamala Forest and that he was no more.

YSR had so much interest in water projects. One Minister once commented that if you take a proposal for a hydro-project to him, he will sign on it immediately. Once there was a comment that former CM, J Vengala Rao would be ever ready to approve any project for Khammam district. YSR's helicopter pilot once told me that whenever a water body comes in to view during the flight, he would ask the pilot to go closer to it, so that he can get a better view.

On the issue of Krishna-Godavari water, the CPI had extended support to the proposals, as we felt it is in the people's interest. But when it came to light that the Handri-Neeva project work in Kurnool district was mired in corruption, our party demanded that the water project in progress cannot be stopped, but we should fight and expose the corruption. But one newspaper commented that CPI's Narayana is supporting corruption.

YSR presided over an all-party meet on the Polavaram Project. I and Chada Venkata Reddy attended. Controversies and arguments were running high during the meeting. To reduce the tension, I said, “You should kiss when you are in the mood. Our YSR is in the mood to implement the project. Let him go ahead.” That day happens to be Valentine's Day and Vatti Vasantha Kumar jocularly commented that Valentine's Day effect is there on Narayana. But my interjection had brought a more amenable atmosphere in the meeting that day.

Vijayamma told that she had asked YSR, “What made you choose me?” YSR embraced her and said, “I like your innocence.” Yes, I think it is true. YSR is in fact better looking than Vijayamma. When I mentioned this to Sajjala Diwakar Reddy, he said that Vijayamma was his batch-mate and she was such a nice person. This shows that YSR was looking at her inner beauty. Vijayamma once told me about YSR's refusal to his daughter Sharmila's choice. Every father thinks differently when it comes to his daughter's life choice. And YSR is no exception. But still he consented to her divorce and remarriage with a boy of her choice. I suppose that Vijayamma's revelation regarding Sharmila would clear any misconceptions.

I am making a bold statement by calling YSR, “a gem of a personality.” Once the APCC president, MSR said that “it is Dr KVP who had planned every inch of YSR's padayatra. Dr KVP is like the soul of YSR” Dr KVP and YSR were close friends since their student days and their friendship stood the test of time. Finally, I thank Vijayamma for giving me the opportunity to share my memories about YSR. We all feel the loss of YSR. The readers may or may not agree with what I had said. Some may even reject them. But opinions will not change easily. But I had gone beyond politics to remember my friend.

(Concluded)

— The author is national secretary, the Communist Party of India

## Corporate hospitals don't value human lives

Any institution or person committing a crime is a criminal, nothing less or nothing more. While dealing with a crime, community angle should not come in the way of inquiry. It is ridiculous that certain people are playing the cast card to dilute or divert the severity of crimes. In the Vijayawada fire accident issue, all misappropriations made by the hotel and hospital authorities came to limelight. Instead of giving moral support and strength to the Covid-19 patients, corporate hospitals are encashing their weakness and fleeing them by offering treatment at exorbitant rates. Only it is a tip of the iceberg, if the present enquiry team digs deep into the details, we can come to know the real depth of the crime. How long this type of activities have been continuing in the same hospital, whether the government is conducting regular checks to control this type of anomalies in all other corporate hospitals in our country are some of the questions that need answers.

B Venkatareddy, Vijayawada, AP

## Create job opportunities

The proposal of setting one National Recruitment Agency for conducting a common test for various Central posts is welcome. It sets free the jobseekers from many avoidable hurdles and inconveniences like multitude of tests, interviews and related expenses. Though it is not related to the central posts, the Centre

## LETTERS

should address the problem of raising nativity issues in employment by some State governments. The unemployment levels have been already high in India, pegging at forty years high even before pandemic set in. The ongoing pandemic has worsened the unemployment menace further. Besides making the recruitment process easier, the government should raise the opportunities. Apart from filling the backlog posts, it should create many more to help the helpless youth at this juncture.

Dr D V G Sankararao, MIMS, Nellimarla, Vizianagaram, AP

## Social equality must for economic progress

This is with reference to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speech on the eve of 73rd Independence Day where he said several global firms were looking at India as a major investment destination, which reflected in the robust inflow of FDI's last financial year. He further asserted that the Covid-19 pandemic had halted country's march towards self-reliance and presented a broad outline for spurring India's growth in diverse sectors. But, even after passing of seven decades of Independence, several questions remain unanswered and social, economic justice as enshrined in Constitution of India is still a distant dream for millions of citizens in the

country. Major challenges remain on the economic front and in providing adequate and quality healthcare, education for all, food, sanitation and drinking water. The UNDP estimates the total financial requirement for India to reach Sustainable Development Goals-4 by 2030 is 2258 billion dollars, which for the years 2017-30 averages 173 billion dollars per year, for exceeding the current Budget of 76.4 billion dollars a year for education. The government has to pool up all of its resources to reach the desired goals in the wake of heralding a new chapter by introducing New Education Policy-2020 with a focus on universalising access from early childhood to higher education, integrating over 2 crore schoolchildren. The incidence of absolute poverty, which has been falling since 1972, has increased to 30%. To promote new India at the global level as outlined by the Prime Minister on the historic occasion, it is very much expedient to remove the inequalities and to improve the capabilities of the masses as well as their well-being by expanding productive employment opportunities. Further, expanding the quality of basic health and education for all is very much imperative. Evolution of true democracy is not possible if we are not prepared to hear the other side. Therefore, to create new India as asserted by the Prime Minister and to hold the head high, the government should wipe out every tear from every eye with Atmanirbhar Bharat in the days to come.

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# Covid hospitals to go up in AP

- Total number of Covid hospitals will reach 287 from the current 138
- CM orders that doctors and specialists should be appointed soon
- He also asks officials to increase the pay of temporary sanitation staff

HANS NEWS SERVICE

**Amaravati:** The state government has increased the number of Covid hospitals to 287 from 138 and would soon appoint doctors and specialists and has increased the pay of sanitary workers.

Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy, who held a review meeting on the prevailing Covid situation in the state on Friday at his camp office, told the officials that the strength of Covid hospitals should be increased to 287 with an addition of 149 more hospitals and doctors and specialists should be made available as soon as possible.

The pay of temporary staff recruited for sanitary work should be increased and the hospitals should have the basic infrastructure and rating should be given as per the performance of the hospitals.

In the 287 hospitals, all facilities should be available and medical staff should be present in the required number and the standards in the hospitals



Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy reviewing Covid-19 situation with officials at Tadepalli on Friday

should be regularly monitored.

The Chief Minister said that Covid call centres and help desks in hospitals should function efficiently.

Hygiene should be maintained in the hospitals and nutritious food should be provided to the patients. Care should be taken for those who

are in home quarantine and those coming under Aarogyasri should be taken care of well.

He said that referral protocol should be followed and implemented from village and ward clinic level. A call centre to register complaints on Aarogyasri services should be started and the toll-free number should be

displayed prominently at all hospitals.

Jagan directed the officials to consider the possibility of handing over the cash incentive for women while discharging them after delivery.

Officials of the departments concerned participated in the meeting.

## AP reports 9,544 fresh cases

Tally reaches 3.34 lakh while death toll climbs to 3,092 with 91 more deaths

**Amaravati:** The rapid spread of coronavirus contagion is showing no signs of abating as 9,544 more cases have been added, pushing state's overall tally to 3.34 lakh on Friday. The state also added 91 fresh Covid-19 casualties in the last 24 hours, taking the aggregate toll to 3,092.

The mortality rate has been kept steady at 0.92 per cent, about one per cent less than the national average.

The health officials claimed that

the recovery rate in the state now crossed 72 per cent, though less than the national average of over 73 per cent.

The latest bulletin, meanwhile, said 8,827 patients got cured and discharged from hospitals in the last 24 hours, taking the overall total to 2.44 lakh so far.

The number of active Covid-19 cases increased to 87,803.

East Godavari continued its top streak adding 1,312 fresh cases while its neighbour West Godavari

too grossed 1,131 in the last 24 hours, followed by Chittoor 1,103.

Kurnool added 919, Prakasam 797, SPS Nellore 761, Visakhapatnam 738 and Anantapuramu 704 new cases.

Chittoor reported 16 coronavirus fatalities for the second consecutive day, followed by West Godavari 13, SPS Nellore 12 and East Godavari 11.

According to government data, 71.66 per cent of the deceased were male and the rest female.

### CASH SEIZURE CASE

## Minister issues notice to Lokesh, Bonda Uma, media

Says despite his denial and expression of readiness to face any probe, some individuals and channels repeated their false charges to the effect that the cash seized in TN belongs to him

**Ongole:** Minister for energy, forests, environment, science, and technology Balineni Srinivasa Reddy announced in a statement on Friday that he issued notices to Nara Lokesh, Bonda Umamaheswara Rao, managements of two TV channels and journalists regarding news reports of cash seizure in Tamil Nadu recently.

Srinivas Reddy said that the Tamil Nadu police conducted checks at Elavur check post on July 14 and seized Rs 5,22,50,000 from a car and handed it over to the Income Tax department. He said that after learning that few Tamil and Telugu media outlets thought that the MLA sticker on the car and the money belongs to him, he issued a statement rejecting

the reports, to all media houses and announced his readiness for a full inquiry in that matter. But, he alleged that Lokesh tweeted false information about him and a Telugu channel telecast the tweets repeatedly to defame him while Bonda Umamaheswara Rao made allegations against him participating in a debate.

The minister announced that he issued legal notices to Lokesh, Bonda Umamaheswara Rao, Bollineni Rajagopal Naidu, Bollineni Ravindranath, E Sambasiva Rao, Komareddy Pattabhiram, Kata Subbarao, and an English channel. He said that the respondents do not tender their apology, he will pursue the legal action against them.

- Authorities are discharging 19 lakh cusecs of water from Sir Arthur Cotton Barrage
- With reprieve for flood, 144 Section imposed in Devipatnam mandal to curb movement of people

HANS NEWS SERVICE

**Rajamahendravaram/Kakinada:** After a brief lull, the floodwater level in River Godavari is increasing in owing to incessant rains in its catchment areas and rising flows from its tributaries Sabari and Indravathi.

Third warning will be issued at Sir Arthur Cotton barrage on Friday night as the water



Villagers are moving on boats in the flood-hit Devipatnam mandal in East Godavari

level at Bhadrachalam reached 57 feet prompting authorities to issue third warning.

As many as 19 lakh cusecs of water is being released from

Sir Arthur Cotton Barrage into the sea and the present water level at the barrage is 17.05 feet. As many as 175 villages in 26 mandals were sur-

rounded by floodwater and 86 lanka villages have been fully marooned in the district. The people in island villages are in the grip of fear with water re-

source department predicting that flood situation may continue for some more days.

Meanwhile, in Devipatnam mandal, all the tribal habitations are still under floodwater and Polavaram Project evacuees are expressing concern over the increasing flood.

Rampachodavaram sub-collector and ITDA project officer C V Praveen Aditya announced prohibitory orders under Section 144 (I) in Devipatnam mandal in view of the deteriorating flood situation to prevent danger to human life. Aditya said that in view of the incessant rains for the last four days, flooding was continuing with streams as well Godavari were overflowing. He said NDRF teams have been deployed to carry out rescue and relief operations in the affected villages.

# YSRCP's 3 capitals game risky, warns Naidu

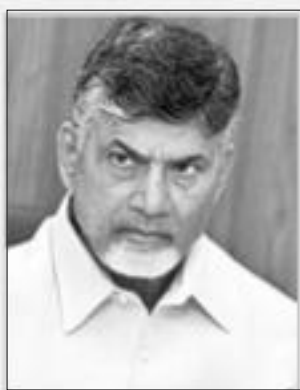
HANS NEWS SERVICE

**Amaravati:** TDP national president and former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Friday accused the Jagan Mohan Reddy government of playing a risky, 3-cards poker gamble with the people of Andhra Pradesh by trying to split the state capital into three pieces.

Naidu termed it as gross betrayal on the part of the Chief Minister to destroy Amaravati for which he had announced his categorical support on the floor of the Assembly prior to 2019 elections.

In a statement here, the TDP chief asserted his party's solidarity to the protests called for by the Amaravati JAC in the

- Says all 13 districts should support Amaravati agitation
- TDP expresses solidarity to Amaravati JAC as agitation will complete 250 days on tomorrow
- Reminds that Jagan expressed his categorical support to Amaravati on the floor of Assembly as the Leader of Opposition



larger interests of the state. The JAC protests will reach 250th day on Sunday. All the people in 13 districts should come forward and make the anti-Capital shifting protests a success.

He said that the unwillingness on the part of YSRCP to seek fresh mandate on 3 capitals plan was enough proof of

how the people of all districts were against the capital shifting. It was clear that Jagan's multiple capitals plan in the name of decentralisation has no approval of people. The time has come for all sections of people to rise above political affiliations and join the agitation. All political parties, people's organisations and all walks of

life should express their solidarity and take an active part.

Naidu recalled how all due procedures were followed and people's approval was taken before selecting Amaravati as the only capital of the state. Holy waters and sacred soil was fetched from over 13,000 villages and 3,000 wards from all over for the foundation of Amaravati. He advised the present day rulers to follow the best practices in governance like continuing the landmark projects started by the previous regime. Nobody has any right to destroy development. The 3-capitals move was nothing but a vicious plan to cripple the state and destroy the future of people, he said.

## Narrow escape for Pushpasreevani, Mopidevi

The vehicle they are travelling in hits another car in their convoy resulting in damage to their car

HANS NEWS SERVICE

**Visakhapatnam:** It was a close shave for Deputy Chief Minister P Pushpasreevani and YSRCP Rajya Sabha member Mopidevi Venkataramana Rao as they escaped a major accident when they were on their way to Visakhapatnam on Friday.

The vehicle in which they were travelling collided with another four-wheeler in the front which was a part of the convoy. Since the driver in the front car had applied a sudden brake, a portion of the car in which Venkata Ramana Rao was



travelling got damaged.

The incident took place at Tallepalem in Kasimkota mandal in the district. It is learnt that a private vehicle tried to come in the middle of the convoy forcing the

driver to apply a sudden brake. Luckily, no injury was reported at the spot. Both Venkata Ramana Rao and Pushpasreevani boarded another vehicle to reach Visakhapatnam.

## 9 killed in fire at Srisailem power plant

Continued from P1

Two employees of a private battery company Vinesh and Mahesh Kumar also died as smoke engulfed the entire fourth unit of the Hydel project.

According to TS Genco authorities, the power plant is located inside the tunnel at about 1.2 km from the entrance and the only way to reach the plant was through the tunnel. The engineers were doing maintenance job of electric panels when the mishap took place. Officials said there were 20 employees on the ground floor of the powerhouse when the fire broke out. Initially, the employees tried to contain the blaze with extinguishers, but the situation went out of control. While 11 employees ran out to safety through an emergency exit, nine were trapped inside as thick smoke engulfed the area.

Official statement said the rescue teams reached the plant site, "But because of flames and heavy smoke, it was not possible to enter the tunnel. They could enter the power house only by Friday afternoon. But by that time, all the

nine employees were unfortunately found dead. Out of the eight persons, who managed to escape in the initial hours, three persons were seriously injured and they are being treated. There were 17 employees inside the tunnel when the accident took place, the statement said.

The rescued employees include deputy executive engineer Pawan Kumar, plant junior assistant Ramakrishna, junior engineers Mathru, Krishna Reddy and Venkataiah and driver Palankaiah. They were shifted to Hyderabad and are undergoing treatment in Hyderabad and they are stable. All expenses for the treatment of the injured will be borne by the government, the Genco CMD said.

Several questions are now being raised over the incident. It is said that the plant had an escape route but still the employees could not escape as the batteries which provide lighting under such circumstances were disconnected by the team which had come to take up the maintenance work. The Opposition even alleged that the annual maintenance of the power plant was not done.

# AP Minister lashes out at YSRCP MP Raghurama

HANS NEWS SERVICE

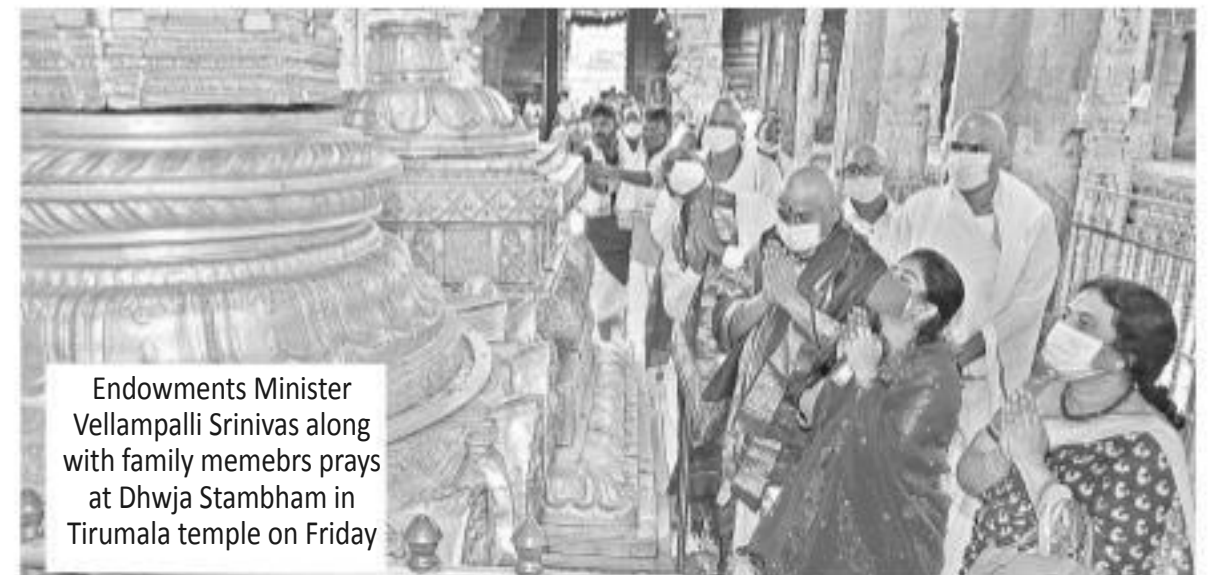
**Tirupati:** Endowments minister Vellampalli Srinivas slammed rebel YSRCP MP K Raghurama Krishnam Raju for his critical remarks against the state government for not permitting public celebration of Vinayaka Chaviti in the state. Describing Raju as "a useless leader", he said he was acting on the direction of TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu. Srinivas, speaking to the media after darshan of Lord Venkateswara in Tirumala on Friday, accused Raju of tagging Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy and the government to one religion to tarnish its image.

It is not proper for Raju to try to rake up such sensitive issue of religious celebration, he said affirming that the government has the responsibility of ensuring safety of its people and also to look after their welfare. He maintained that the government consulted political parties and also swamis before deciding against public celebration of Vinayaka Chaviti and resolved to limit the festival

- Alleges that the rebel MP is acting on the directions of TDP chief
- Rejecting criticism over ban on public celebration of Vinayaka Chaviti, he stresses safety of people is important
- Minister's political criticism goes against the long time practice of leaders refraining from making political comments at the temple

to homes this time due to the severity of the pandemic in the state.

Naidu sitting in Hyderabad and Raju staying in Delhi were attacking the government for each and every decision and now they are showing step-motherly love towards Hinduism, the minister said during the rebel MP to visit his constituency for celebration of festival if he has really any faith in Hinduism. Interestingly, the



Endowments Minister Vellampalli Srinivas along with family members prays at Dhruja Stambham in Tirumala temple on Friday

minister in an urge to attack his party rival conveniently forgotten the practice of leaders refraining from making any political comments on the holy hills, Tirumala and went full steam to blast Raju who proved a thorn in the flesh of ruling YSRCP.

The minister along with his family participated in the predawn hour-long weekly Abhishekam of Lord after which he took part in Sundarakanda Parayana

at Nada Neerajana. He lauded TTD organising a slew of programmes for boosting spiritualism and values. Both Sundarakanda Parayanam and Virataparva Parayanam being conducted daily in Nadaneerajanam proved a hit with a large number of devotees viewing the live telecast of the events on SVBC, he said. Later, Srinivas also offered prayers to Goddess Padmavathi in Tiruchanur and also in Srinivasa Mangapuram temple.



## TODAY'S QUOTE

### Need to cut road construction cost by 25%

“There is a need to reduce road construction cost by 25 per cent and new technologies should be used to attain this target. Specific areas like hilly areas, border areas and coastal areas need different approach and technologies

- Union Minister **Nitin Gadkari**



## COVID BLUES

### Consumer confidence subdues in Aug

India's consumer sentiment has dipped in August 2020 by 1.6 percentage points, according to Refinitiv-Ipsos Primary Consumer Sentiment Index (PCSI). The monthly PCSI, which is driven by the aggregation of the four weighted sub-indices, has shown a drop for at least 3 of the 4 indices in August

FOREX (buy rates in ₹)			
US Dollar	79.33	South	
Euro	92.83	African Rand	4.98
UAE Dirham	22.41	Hong Kong Dollar	11.1
Thai Baht	2.73	Japanese Yen	0.82
British Pound	102.64	New Zealand Dollar	51.38
Australian Dollar	56.45	Saudi Riyal	21.95
Canadian Dollar	59.53	Swedish Krona	9.82
Swiss Franc	85.46	Singapore Dollar	57.41

DELHI SATURDAY 22 AUGUST 2020

## BIZ BRIEFS

### E-registration for jewellers

**New Delhi:** The central government on Friday launched an online facility for the registration of jewellers as well as assaying and hall-marking centres and their renewals thereafter. The facility can be accessed through the Bureau of Indian Standards portal [www.manakonline.in](http://www.manakonline.in). Launching the online facility, Union Minister for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Ram Vilas Paswan said that it was difficult to manually handle a large number of requests for registrations. He said that the online system will ensure ease-of-doing business for both jewellers and entrepreneurs who have set up assaying and hallmarking centres or wish to do so. Hallmarking of precious metals will be mandatory from June 1, 2021. Speaking to reporters through videoconference, Paswan said that there will be no human interface in processing the applications. "Now, jewellers can apply online and submit the necessary documents and fees for obtaining licences through this online portal," he said.

### Steel demand to contract

**Mumbai:** India's steel demand is expected to contract in FY21, Fitch Ratings said on Friday. However, the ratings agency said that volumes should continue to improve over the next few quarters, led by rural consumption and government spending on infrastructure, and lead to better margins due to operating leverage. "Higher prices supported by the price rebound in China should also drive margins in 2QFY21 and beyond. Hot-rolled steel sheet prices in China have improved by around \$100/metric tonne (mt) since April 2020, and Indian prices have started to tick up since late-July, with a lag," said a statement by Fitch Ratings. As per the statement, the EBITDA of Indian steel-makers JSW Steel and Tata Steel should improve from 20FY21 driven by higher volumes and wide margins.

# Centre should step in to revive economy

SBI economists say RBI may not go for rate cut as inflation unlikely to decline

**Mumbai:** The Reserve Bank is at the end of its rate cut cycle as inflation is unlikely to decline materially from the current level, and the onus of economic recovery has now shifted to the government, economists at SBI said on Friday. The comments come a day after the release of the minutes of the latest meeting of RBI's Monetary Policy Committee, where high inflation was cited as the prime reason for the unanimous decision to hold rates. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had cut rates by 1.15 per cent in two moves since the onset of the pandemic in March this year in order to push economic growth, but surprised many by holding on to rates at the August review as inflation overshoot its target. "Fiscal policy should play a decisive role, if we have to nurture any hopes of a fast-paced recovery," economists at SBI said.

"We now believe that we are at the end of the rate cut cycle and expectations of large rate cuts must be anchored as inflation is unlikely to decline materially from current level," the SBI economists said, hinting that at best there can be a 0.25 per cent more of rate cuts in offing.

If RBI continues with unconventional policy measures it would help the financial markets because



Fiscal policy should play a decisive role, if we have to nurture any hopes of a fast-paced recovery

- SBI economists

it has been significantly able to reduce the long and variable lags of monetary policy through successes like fastest rate transmission and restoring financial stability, it said. With no rate cuts on the table, the other monetary policy alternative could be to reduce the width of the asymmetric policy corridor or increase in reverse repo rate when the pandemic subsides, they opined. The SBI economists said they feel inflation which came at 6.9 per cent for July - could be sticky because their estimates show that the large procurement by the government may have resulted in 0.35-0.40 per cent upward impact. The supply chain disruptions

are showing no signs of abating and have played a spoilsport across several states, they added.

The economists also endorsed the Monetary Policy Committee's call for a change in computing inflation to a practice adopted by developed markets. "We plead with the National Statistical Office (NSO) to fix the broken CPI methodology that is playing havoc with policy decisions."

"The minutes of the MPC meeting make a forceful case for shifting to a chain-based price index for measuring price level, as is the practice in most developed countries given the change in consumer preferences," they said.



### Union Bank of India posts ₹340 cr net

HANS BUSINESS

**Hyderabad:** State-owned Union Bank of India on Friday reported a consolidated net profit of Rs 340.95 crore for the first quarter ended June 2020. The bank had logged a net profit of Rs 230.12 crore during the same period of the preceding fiscal year. Union Bank said the figures related to June 2019 are of pre-amalgamated period, hence not comparable with post-amalgamation financials for the quarter ended June 2020.

Amalgamation of Andhra Bank and Corporation Bank into Union Bank came into effect from April 1, 2020.

Its total income (consolidated) stood at Rs 20,487.01 crore during the April-June quarter of 2020-21 as against Rs 10,053.68 crore in the same period a year ago, the bank said in a statement. On asset front, the gross non-performing assets of the bank as on June 30, 2020 fell a tad to 14.95 per cent of the gross advances as against 15.18 per cent by end of June 2019. Net NPAs were down substantially at 4.97 per cent from 7.23 per cent.

### Techno Paints eyes ₹120 cr turnover

HANS BUSINESS

**Hyderabad:** Techno Paints, a part of city-based Fortune Group, which operates in paints segment, is targeting a turnover of Rs 120 crore during the current financial year. It achieved Rs 90 crore turnover in 2019-20.

"We are confident of achieving the targeted growth this financial year as our brand is evoking good response. We offer products and services of highest quality. Besides, we have our

own network. These will help us in achieving the turnover target," Akuri Srinivas Reddy, Founder, Fortune Group which offers painting services under Techno Paint brand. The company enables customers to choose various colour combinations through its 'Colour Spectra' offering. Speaking to the media on the occasion of 18th anniversary of the company which falls on August 25, he said that his company had operations across eight States.

### Value buying, global cues lift equity mkts

**Mumbai:** The Indian equity market made healthy gains during Friday's trading session on the back of positive global cues and value buying opportunities. After a gap-up opening, the indices held on to their initial gains despite volatility. The NSE Nifty50 closed at 11,371.60, up by 59.40 points, or 0.53 per cent, from its previous close. The Sensex closed at 38,434.72, higher by 214.33 points, or 0.56 per cent, from the previous close of 38,220.39. Sector-wise, the



top gainers were the BSE Power, Utilities, Realty and Bankex indices, whereas top losers were the BSE Telecom, Metal, Oil and Gas and IT indices. Globally, major Asian markets closed on a positive note.

# MEIL bags ₹4,509-cr Zojilla tunnel project

Project to be executed in most challenging weather conditions in Jammu & Kashmir-Ladakh region



HANS BUSINESS

**Hyderabad:** City-based infrastructure major Megha Engineering & Infrastructure Limited (MEIL) on Friday said it emerged as top bidder for Zojilla tunnel project to be taken up with Rs 4,509.50 crore in Jammu & Kashmir-Ladakh region. "MEIL has become an L-1 in the most prestigious Zojilla pass tunnel in Jammu Kashmir-Ladakh in Himalayan region. National Highways and Industrial Development Corporation (NHIDCL) has opened the bids on Friday, and MEIL topped the list by quoting less than other companies," MEIL said in a statement on Friday.

The project, which will be another jewel in MEIL's crown, has been designed to be constructed in two sections of about 33 kilometres. The first section involves the construction of 18.50 kilometres road. In the second section, the Zojilla tunnel will be built in a horseshoe shape of 14.15 km as a two-road lane of 9.5 metres wide and 7.57 metres high. The project facilitates road connectivity between Srinagar and Leh, the capital of Ladakh, around the year.

This project will have to carry out innovatively in the most challenging weather conditions. The central government called for tenders to complete this long-pending road tunnel. MEIL has quoted Rs 4509.50 crore,

whereas the other companies quoted at a higher amount. On July 30, three companies submitted the bids to NHIDCL, and the finance bids were opened on August 21.

Ch Subbaiah, Director, MEIL, said: "A two-lane road with bi-directional traffic would have to be constructed on the Zojilla route, which is called a single tube tunnel. The road consists mainly of shafts as well as portal structures and excavated areas. This complex project would have to complete in just 72 months". The road from Srinagar to Leh in Ladakh is not suitable for vehicular traffic throughout the year. The Srinagar-Ladakh highway is completely closed for six months, especially during the winter season. Under these circumstances, the road tunnel was proposed between Sonamarg to Leh and Ladakh via Kargil long back. Finally, the project has now been initiated. It will be constructed from Z-Morh tunnel to Zojilla tunnel between Sonamarg-Kargil on the National Highway-1 in the Zojilla pass area.

"This EPC project is the most complex one. The construction of this tunnel is going to face unprecedented difficulties. The tunnel has to be built at 700 metres below the surface on average. It is also in the most complex hill terrain known for frequent snowstorms," the company said.

# Covid-19 to hit housing credit growth, take big toll on HFCs

The Covid-19-induced slowdown is likely to pull down the growth of housing credit, thereby impacting housing finance companies (HFC). As per an ICRA report, the pandemic effect is expected to lower the housing credit growth to 5-8 per cent in FY2021. "The growth is expected to be slower in H1 FY2021 as disbursements were significantly low in Q1 FY2021 and started picking up from July 2020," the report said.

"The overall recovery in H2 FY2021 depends on the economic turnaround as some borrowers may defer their home purchases till they are able to achieve stability in their income levels or in the resumption of business activities." According to the report, HFCs are

likely to be differentiated on their ability to control fresh slippages amid slowdown in growth and steady easing of funding challenges. "ICRA notes that the overall on-book housing loan portfolio



growth of HFCs and non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) reduced significantly to three per cent Y-o-Y in FY2020 due to fund-

ing constraints for a major part of the fiscal," the report said.

Supported by portfolio buyouts, banks grew their housing portfolio at 11 per cent in FY2020. The ratings agency estimates the total housing credit at Rs 21.2 lakh crore as on March 31, 2020.

Accordingly, the overall gross non-performing assets increased to 2.4 per cent as on March 31, 2020 with a sharp deterioration across the wholesale loan construction finance segment, given the tight liquidity situation faced by some developers with delayed projects and the reduced fund availability for the developers, the report said.

### PropTiger organises property expo

**E**lara Technologies-owned PropTiger.com organised two-day online property expo, 'Right to Home' from August 20. The expo enabled buyers to attend online presentations made by leading property experts and to hold one-on-one digital interactive sessions with property advisors from developers and PropTiger.com.

During the two-day virtual event that concluded on August 21, as many as 30 leading developers participated to showcase more than 80 projects located across India's top nine cities including Hyderabad.

# Hyd leads India's office supply with 30% share

A JLL report says Hyd realty returning to normalcy faster than other cities

P MADHUSUDHAN REDDY

Painting a rosy picture about the real estate sector in Hyderabad, real estate consultancy JLL, in a report, said that the performance of the realty sector in the City of Pearls was far better than other cities in the first six months of 2020 despite the ongoing Covid-19 crisis. The report has further maintained that the sector is returning to normalcy in the city faster than other cities. According to the report, the city also led India's office space supply with a 30 per cent share during January-June 2020 (H1 2020), significantly driving the country's office absorption with an 18 per cent share during the same period.

JLL in association with industry body CII brought out the research report titled 'Hyderabad Real Estate - A Road map amid the Covid-19 crisis'. The JLL-CII report was released during the virtual conference on 'Telangana's Real Estate & Infra Prospects in the Covid world' held on Friday.

"Hyderabad's positive reaction to the crisis has reflected in the city's real estate performance. The focus of the government on business-friendly policies has helped Hyderabad emerge as one of the leaders despite the global pandemic," said Sandip Patnaik, Man-



Low unsold inventory in the city coupled with good sales allowed top developers to hold base prices of the residential units intact despite Covid crisis

aging Director- Hyderabad, JLL.

Impressive investment in the infrastructure sector and the State's fast track execution has contributed to the city's real estate growth. An active real estate market and strong economic growth along with a thriving startup culture have helped the city to gain one of the leading positions globally, he added.

Demand dynamics in office space real estate remained strong as a few key office leases with large area were closed after the lockdown was relaxed in May 2020. "As the city opened in early May 2020, construction activity resumed in a few projects and a few office projects started operations by June 2020. A total supply of 3.7 million sq. ft was added in H1 2020. The city reported an absorption of 2.1 million sq ft in H1 2020 which dropped the city's vacancy rate to

9.2 per cent," the report said.

On the residential real estate front, Hyderabad witnessed significant traction in new launches even during the lockdown period. Most of these launches were in the northern and eastern submarkets. Despite the healthy volume of launches, good sales kept the city's unsold inventory at the lowest in the country. Construction resumed in many projects in the city, albeit at a slow pace due to reverse migration of construction labourers during the lockdown, it added.

Although Hyderabad is battling with a growing number of Covid-19 cases and the threat of virus spreading looms large, home buyers have started physical site visits. Further, low unsold inventory in the city coupled with good sales allowed top developers to hold base prices of the residential units intact despite Covid crisis. Many devel-

opers are also exploring new technology options to ease out the home buying process, the report said. "Hyderabad's resilience comes from the confidence of doing business in the city. Owing to its robust infrastructure along with ease of living, Hyderabad is a major destination for India's young workforce today," said Ramesh Nair, CEO & Country Head, India, JLL. The JLL report however underlined the need for encouraging manufacturing and other sectors in the city. "Hyderabad's economy is largely dependent on the technology sector, which contributes 65 per cent of the State's economy. This IT-sector driven, unidimensional economic growth is not sustainable in the long run. Alternative economic sectors have to be explored. Projects such as Pharma City should be marketed well to attract new investments in other sectors. The manufacturing sector also needs to be promoted in the city with the help of enabling policy initiatives," it said.

New sectors such as automobiles, semiconductors, and data centre companies should also be encouraged to invest in upcoming locations to create new economic hubs around the city with all essential infrastructure, the research report added.



# TS Covid tally nearing 1L mark

- ▶ 1,967 people test positive and 8 succumb to the deadly virus during the past 24 hours
- ▶ More private hospitals seek permission to offer Covid treatment despite receiving flak from people

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad: Telangana is on the verge of reporting one lakh Covid-19 cases. As per the daily bulletin of the Health department until Thursday evening, the overall Covid count stood at 99,391 even as the total tests are nearing 8.5 lakh. Also, the tests done (26,767) on Thursday were an all-time high this season, but well short of the set target of 40,000 tests per day as announced by the government couple of weeks ago.

Of the fresh cases (1,967), GHMC reported 473 cases, Ranga Reddy 202, Medchal Malkajgiri 170, and Warangal Urban 101 cases.

Eight people have died taking the toll to 737 so far. The case fatality rate is 0.74 percent, which is better than the all India rate which is 1.9 percent.

As many as 1,781 people have been cured of virus infection in a 24-hours period taking the total cured count to 76,967. The re-



A health worker wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) arranges swab samples collected at a free coronavirus testing centre in Secunderabad on Friday  
Photo: Ch Prabhu Das

covery rate of Telangana (77.43 per cent) is also better than the national average (73.91 per cent). While the active cases are at 21,687, the number of patients undergoing treatment in hospitals is over 6300.

Even though private hospitals are facing flak from the public for reportedly overcharging pa-

tients coming for Covid treatment, the hospital management seems to be not worried and discouraged. While the private hospitals offering treatment was around 120 for a long time, freshly 167 hospitals have obtained permission from the Health department to treat virus-infected patients. As a re-

sult, the number of beds in private hospitals has increased to over 9000 out of which nearly 4000 are occupied. The number of hospitals in GHMC limits is 77 while 90 of them are in districts. Meanwhile, of the 7952 beds in government hospitals, 2385 beds are occupied while 5567 are vacant.

Give ₹ 1 crore ex-gratia to health workers die of Covid: docs' assns

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad: Medical Associations from Telangana have demanded the government to give Rs 1 crore ex-gratia besides government job to a family member of the health-care worker died of Covid.

Representatives of various medical associations including TGGDA, T JUDA, HRDA, TPHDA, NIMS RDA etc. met at Osmania Medical College on Friday to discuss the delay by government to help the family of deceased Dr Naresh Kumar, Dy DMHO of Bhadrachalam who died of corona recently.

Doctors, part of different wings of the Health department expressed their views and felt that the Naresh's family should be extended immediate help.

They also wanted the government to release a GO immediately for free treatment for Covid-infected health workers and also to their family members in hospitals of their choice including corporate hospitals.

The meeting decided to wait for a couple of days and hold a press meet with the members of all the associations on August 24.

## Congress urges Guv to prod CM to act on her suggestions



HANS NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad: In the backdrop of the recent remark of Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan that the Chief Minister failed to respond to her suggestions in handling the coronavirus pandemic in the State, the Congress on Friday held that rather complaining she should have summoned the CM and ordered him to act on her suggestions.

In a media statement, the TPCC treasurer Gudur Narayana Reddy pointed out that as the Governor of the State, Dr Soundararajan enjoys enormous powers which she never exercised. "Instead of complaining about the inefficiency of the State government, the Governor should have played a proactive role by getting her suggestions implemented through top officials. At least now she could use her discretionary powers and

▶ Guv should have told CM to act on her suggestions: Congress

▶ Instead of complaining about the inefficiency of the State government, the Governor should have played a proactive role by getting her suggestions implemented through the top officials, says TPCC treasurer Gudur Narayana Reddy

submit a report to President of India Ramnath Kovind on the mishandling of Covid-19 situation by TRS government, he said.

Congress leader urged the Governor to make public the letters she wrote to the State government giving suggestions on Covid-19 situation. He said people have a right to know what was suggested by the Governor and why the State government did not act on those suggestions.

Narayana also condemned the statements made by few TRS leaders targeting the Governor for her serious remarks. He also condemned both TRS and BJP leaders for trying to turn the Governor's remarks into a TRS-BJP tussle.

## NDRF directed to assist in relief ops at Srisaillam

Union Home Minister Amit Shah ask Central agency to assist TS govt: Kishan Reddy

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad: Union Home Minister Amit Shah has directed the Central agencies to extend necessary help to the Telangana State government in the relief operations in the fire accident that took place at Srisaillam power plant on late Thursday night.

Union Minister of State for Home, G Kishan Reddy Friday said that he was shocked with the news of the fire accident and still nine of the employee of the of power plant were trapped inside, where the fire accident had taken place.

The incident was briefed to the Home Minister Amit Shah, who is undergoing post-Covid treatment at a hospital in New Delhi. Shah directed the Central agencies concerned to extend all necessary help to the State government, he added.

Following these developments, the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) has been



asked to assist the Telangana State government in the relief operations, Kishan Reddy said.

The Secunderabad MP expressed the hope that all the nine members of the staff working at the hydel power generation unit of Srisaillam Left Bank reportedly trapped inside the incident spot would come out safely. And, those undergoing treatment would recover at earliest.

Kishan Reddy also asked the State government to look into the incident in all seriousness and ensure to take necessary steps to prevent recurrence of similar incidents in future.

Guv, CM greet people on Vinayaka Chaturthi

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad: Telangana Governor Dr. Tamilisai Soundararajan and Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao on Friday greeted people on the occasion of Vinayaka Chaturthi.

In a message, the Governor said, "I pray and wish that Lord Ganesha, the remover of obstacles, will clear all the hurdles in our path to unity, peace, progress and prosperity of our State and our nation."

She appealed to the people to adhere to the Covid-19 preventive measures, celebrate the festivities in a safe and healthy manner. She prayed for the blessings of Lord Ganesha in overcoming the Covid-19 pandemic situation very soon.

The Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao also wished people prosperity, good health and a happy life on the occasion of the Vinayaka Chaturthi. He prayed to Lord Ganesha that very soon coronavirus pandemic would end and normal life would be restored for each and everyone in the country in general and State in particular.

## SRISAILLAM POWER UNIT FIRE MISHAP

### Bandi fires neglect salvo at State govt

The Chief Minister and Power Minister should take the moral responsibility for the incident, says the TS BJP president

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad: Expressed shock over the fire accident in the power generation unit at the Srisaillam Left Bank, Telangana BJP president Bandi Sanjay Kumar said the negligence on the part of the State government for failing to take safety measures caused the fire accident.

In a statement here on Friday, he said it is shocking to know that the staff of the unit trapped in the power generation unit are not traced even after 12 hours of the incident took place. He demanded the State government to step up the rescue operations to save the trapped staff.

The Karimnagar MP alleged that lack of proper functioning and safety precautions led to the incident. "The Chief Minister and



Power Minister should take the moral responsibility for the incident and for the loss of power generation for the State during the current season."

The incident is giving rise to several apprehensions and the State government should clarify the same. Besides, he demanded a CBI inquiry into the incident.

The BJP State chief demanded that CM KCR should from now at least give up his farmhouse politics. He extended condolences to the staff who lost their lives in the fire accident and wished for the early recovery of those undergoing treatment.



Telangana Finance Minister T Harish Rao's wife T Srinita launching new dairy products under the brand of Milchy Milk in Hyderabad on Friday

## Harish Rao's wife launches new dairy products in Hyd

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad: Telangana Finance Minister T Harish Rao's wife T Srinita launched new dairy products with a brand name of Milchy Milk here on Friday.

She stressed on the need to consume more milk and other dairy products which helps to improve the immunity system

in the current corona pandemic.

Srinita said that the procurement, processing, packing and the supply of all the dairy products are being done in highly hygienic conditions at the milk processing units. Home delivery facility is also being arranged to make the quality products reach every doorstep, she added.



## Uttam expresses grief over power plant mishap

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad: TPCC chief N Uttam Kumar Reddy expressed grief over the tragic accident at Srisaillam power plant in Nalgarkurnool district where nine employees were found dead following a fire mishap.

In a media statement, while expressing shock over the accident he termed this as one of the worst tragedies of the nation in the recent times and sought thorough probe into the events which led to the accident in which engineers and other staff lost their lives. "Scores who had bright future

lost their lives in the tragic incident. Since it happened due to government's negligence each of the deceased should be provided an exgratia of Rs 1 crore and ensure that this kind of accidents do not take place in future. My heartfelt condolences the families of the deceased," Uttam said.

## DEMOLITION OF MOSQUES, TEMPLE IN SECRETARIAT

### Congress demands criminal cases be registered against CM, CS

"This criminal act is against the law and Constitution. Bringing down the structures in the dark of the night is nothing less than a conspiracy. Cases like this invite applying of a sedition charge," says AICC spokesperson Dr Sravan Dosaju

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad: As part of intensifying the agitation against razing of religious structures within the Secretariat complex, the Congress on Friday submitted representation to District Collectors across the State and sought registering of criminal cases against CM and Chief Secretary citing violation of Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991.

In Hyderabad, a Congress delegation led by HCC president Anjan Kumar Yadav along with AICC spokesperson Dr Sravan Dosaju,



TPCC Minorities Department chairman Shaik Abdullah Sohail, Nampally incharge Feroz Khan submitted a representation to Hyderabad Collector, Swetha Mo-

hanty and requested her to initiate action under the constitutional provisions.

Later speaking to media persons, Sravan said that the Congress has intensified the agitation as the religious structures including two mosques and one temple were demolished in the dark of the night by authorities. And when Congress leaders approached police stations, the officials were not ready to book even an FIR, even though it is a clear case of violation of Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991. Hence, the Chief Minister and Chief Secretary are directly re-

sponsible for the 'criminal act' of hurting religious sentiments of both Hindus and Muslims. "This criminal act is against the law and Constitution. Bringing down the structures in the dark of the night is nothing less than a conspiracy. Cases like this invite applying of a sedition charge," he said.

We demand that without further excuses the government construct the Nallapochamma temple, whose association with Telangana movement is unforgettable and mosques at the same place to restore the confidence of Telangans," the Congress leaders said.

## In a first, TS govt to appoint Ward Officers in civic bodies

- ▶ This will help in the efficient implementation of the new Municipal Act and expediting development in all municipalities, says MAUD Minister KT Rama Rao
- ▶ The department has also decided to take up the rationalisation of available staff and posts before filling up the 2298 vacancies

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad: In a major step to strengthen the administration in all Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), the Telangana government has decided to recruit new Ward Officers for each ward in the municipalities and take the government services to the citizens in an effective manner.

The decision was taken at a meeting chaired by MA&UD Minister KT Rama Rao at Pragathi Bhavan here on Friday. The department also de-



cided to take up the rationalisation of available staff and posts before filling up the 2,298 vacancies in the department.

KTR stated that this will help in the efficient implementation of the new Municipal Act and expediting development in all the municipalities.

The Minister said that this is the first time in the country, ward officers are being recruited for each ward in municipalities. These officers will play a crucial role in delivering services in a quicker and better way with a citizen-

centric approach. The appointment of ward officers will act as a bridge between the citizens and the Municipal department, he added.

The government also decided to appoint two chief engineers to avoid any delay in engineering works in the municipalities. KTR gave green signal to the appointment of two to three AEs under the chief engineers to assist them. The Minister instructed the officials to fill up the vacant posts at the earliest and in a transparent manner.



## IPL 13

## Delhi Capitals announce JSW Group as principal sponsor

**New Delhi (IANS):** Delhi Capitals on Friday announced JSW Group as the team's principal sponsor for the upcoming season of the Indian Premier League to be held in UAE between September 19 to November 10. JSW Group comes in place of Daikin Air-Conditioning who had been the Delhi franchises principal sponsors since 2015.

Commenting on the new principal sponsor, Parth Jindal, Chairman and Co-Owner of Delhi Capitals said, "We at the JSW Group see this as a tremendous opportunity to step in as principal sponsor for the Delhi Capitals."

"The fact that JSW is rapidly increasing its consumer facing businesses across steel, cement and paints also calls for the JSW brand to be more visible and there are few properties that garner the viewership of the IPL."

"At JSW, we strive to be 'better everyday', and over the past two years we have been witness to the DC team adopting this very same philosophy and constantly striving to reach new heights. We, at JSW have no doubt that this DC team has all the ingredients to bring the trophy to the capital city and to get the opportunity to be associated with a team filled with so much talent, youth and experience is something that is very exciting for every single JSWite," he added.

Jindal is the Director of JSW Steel USA, Founder of JSW Sports and Managing Director for JSW Group's Cement and Paints businesses.

Speaking about his expectations on the team's performance during the new season, Jindal said, "The upcoming edition of the IPL will be different for more reasons than one. I have full faith in our team's players and coaching staff to better the results of the previous year. I wish them all the very best as they prepare to depart for UAE."



## Malinga likely to miss initial games

**Colombo (IANS):** Mumbai Indians seamer Lasith Malinga will not be available for the initial stages of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2020 due to personal reasons.



According to a report in ESPN-cricinfo, the Sri Lankan bowler will not be travelling to the UAE with the Mumbai Indians squad as his father is ill.

The lucrative T20 league, scheduled to be played across three venues in Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah, will be held from September 19 till November 10. "It is understood Malinga's father has been ill and may require surgery in the coming weeks. The fast bowler wants to be by his side and will be training in Colombo," the report said.

Last year, Malinga was in the middle of things as he helped the franchise get to their fourth IPL title with a scintillating last-over finish. He has played 122 games in the IPL, picking 170 wickets at an average of 19.80.

The 36-year-old last featured for Sri Lanka in a T20I during the home series against West Indies in March this year. Malinga has so far played 30 Tests, 226 ODIs and 84 T20Is in which he has scalped 101, 338 and 83 wickets respectively.

## CSK share pictures of Dhoni, Raina ready for UAE sojourn

**Chennai (IANS):** Former India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni and veteran all-rounder Suresh Raina, both of whom announced their retirements from international cricket recently, were among those Chennai Super Kings (CSK) members travelling to the UAE on Friday for the upcoming edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL). The official Twitter handle of CSK posted the pictures of Dhoni, Raina, bowling consultant L Balaji and Ravindra Jadeja. "#Yellove on the move! #Whistle-Podu," the franchise captioned the images. CSK had the six-day long conditioning camp between August 15 and 20 in Chennai. Senior off-spinner Harbhajan Singh did not depart for Dubai with the rest of the squad due to personal reasons.



## KKR hopeful of Eng, Aus players' availability from start

**Kolkata (IANS):** Two-time champions Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) are hopeful that England and Australian players will not have to skip their initial matches in the upcoming Indian Premier League (IPL) as something is being worked out to see the interests of all.

Both England and Australia will be involved in a limited-overs series from September 2 to 16 in the UK with the IPL starting from September 19 in the UAE. As many as 29 England and Australian players are spread across the eight IPL squads, with KKR having five of them (Eoin Morgan, Pat Cummins, Tom Banton, Chris Green and Harry Gurney).

Aussie star pacer Cummins, bought by KKR for Rs 15.5 crore, became the most expensive foreign buy ever at last year's IPL players' auction.

When quizzed about their participation from the start of the season despite the bilateral series, KKR CEO Venky Mysore told IANS: "We are very hopeful".

IPL had recently indicated to franchises that relaxation of the mandatory seven-day quar-

tine period that players had to undergo after arriving in the UAE was unlikely. That period also includes team members clearing three COVID-19 tests before they can begin training. "They are working on a plan. Let's see what happens," Mysore said when asked about the same.



On Thursday, Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) chairman Sanjeev Churiwala also expressed hope that English and Aussie players won't have to sit out for the initial games.

Churiwala explained that as per the final set of the tournament's Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), the players travelling from the England-Australia series will need to follow strict protocols to ensure they seamlessly pass from one bio-secure bubble (in England) to the other (in the UAE).

## Pay-cuts or layoffs possible in future, says BCCI official

**New Delhi (IANS):** The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has managed not to lay-off any staff or impose any pay cuts for players during this period of economic melt-down enforced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, there's a chance that the BCCI top brass may meet soon to discuss the possibility of a pay cut after taking into account all the aspects, revealed a senior BCCI official.

"We are yet to discuss the issue of salary cuts. But we will deliberate on the issue in a meeting and discuss how much will be the impact of all these things, and after keeping all that in mind we will take a call," the official told IANS. "Yes, there are chances of pay-cuts or layoffs as well."

Earlier, BCCI Treasurer Arun Dhumal had hinted that a lot will depend on the 13th edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL), which is set to begin in UAE from September 19, taking place with the huge money on stake.

The richest cricket board in the world has managed to stay afloat without any lay off but did cost cutting measures on the travel and hospitality front. "We will discuss it since the IPL is happening now. A lot will depend on the success of IPL as well. Title sponsorship deal (of Rs 222 crore) is not that huge compared to previous one (Vivo's Rs 440 crore). So let's see what can be done with minimum damage," the official added.

## ENG V PAK 3RD TEST, DAY 1

## Crawley cracks fifty as England reach 91/2

**Southampton (IANS):** Zak Crawley scored a second consecutive half century as England reached 91/2 at lunch on Day 1 of the third and final Test here on Friday. Top-order batsman Crawley, 22, was batting on 53 from 80 balls with skipper Joe Root for company on 10.

Electing to bat, the hosts lost opener Rory Burns (6) early as the southpaw nicked a Shaheen Shah Afridi delivery to Shan Ma-

sood at third slip.

Dom Sibley (22) and Crawley looked good for their 61-run first wicket partnership before leg-spinner Yasir Shah trapped the former in front.

Root and Crawley then looked steady as Pakistan bowlers tried to make further inroads.

**Brief Scores:** England 91/2 (Zak Crawley 53 batting; Shaheen Shah Afridi 1/24) vs Pakistan



## ISL: Jamshedpur FC rope in Lithuanian forward Valskis

**Jamshedpur (IANS):** Jamshedpur FC has announced its second acquisition within a span of one week as hitman Nerijus Valskis put pen to paper confirming his arrival at the club for two seasons. Valskis is the current Indian Super League 2019-20 Golden Boot winner.

He led his former club Chennaiyin FC to the ISL final, scoring fifteen goals and six assists, and all of his goals came through open play. "I am thrilled to be playing for a football-crazy city like Jamshedpur. The city has a huge legacy in football, and I want to help add silverware by winning the coveted ISL trophy for the fans. It is unfinished business for me, and I hope to work hard towards contributing and making Jamshedpur FC Champion of India! This club has huge ambition, and I can't wait to kick-start an exciting future," said the Lithuanian forward.

Valskis has plied his trade at clubs in Lithuania, Israel, Be-



larus, Latvia, Romania, and Poland. He enjoyed his best season personally at FK Suduva in the 2013 A Lyga campaign in the Lithuanian topflight.

Last season's heroics by the sniper was not the first time that he had taken a league by storm.

He topped the scoring charts with 27 goals in 30 league appearances in the 2013 season with FK Suduva and was crowned A Lyga Player of the

## Final list out; Rohit, Vinesh among 5 athletes to receive Khel Ratna

**New Delhi (IANS):** Star India batsman Rohit Sharma is among the five athletes who will receive the country's highest sporting honour, the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award, for 2020.

This will be the first time in the history of National Sports Day awards that five sportspersons will be conferred with the Khel Ratna. The Selection Committee for National Sports Awards 2020 on Friday confirmed that cricketer Rohit, wrestler Vinesh Phogat, women's hockey captain Rani Rampal, table tennis star Manika Batra and para athlete Mariyappan Thangavelu will be

conferred with the prestigious award on August 29 on the occasion of National Sports Day.

Rohit will be the fourth cricketer after Sachin Tendulkar, M.S. Dhoni and Virat Kohli to be conferred with the award. Tendulkar was awarded the Khel Ratna in 1998, Dhoni got it in 2007 while Kohli received it in 2018.

Also, 27 athletes, including cricketer Ishant Sharma, will get the Arjuna Award on August 29.

Interestingly, Sakshi Malik and Mirabai Chhanu's names were removed from the final list. Their names were earlier recommended for Arjuna Award.



## CPL 2020: St Lucia Zouks, Trinbago Knight Riders register thumping wins

**Tarouba (Trinidad) (IANS):** St Lucia Zouks opened their account in the ongoing Caribbean Premier League (CPL) after a thumping win over champions Barbados Tridents in a rain-curtailed match.

On Thursday, Zouks defeated Barbados Tridents by seven wickets by (D/L) method at the Brian Lara Stadium.

Electing to bat, Tridents were at 131/7 in 18.1 overs when rain interrupted play and the umpires were forced to call it the end of the innings. Johnson Charles and skipper Jason Holder contributed with 35 and 27 runs respectively.

Zouks were then given a revised target of 47 runs in five overs which they chased down

comfortably in 4.1 overs, thanks to Andre Fletcher's unbeaten 16 off seven balls and Mohammad Nabi's 15 runs in six balls. Rahkeem Cornwall also scored 14 off eight balls.

Nabi was adjudged the Player of the Match for his all-round performance (15 runs, 1/19 in 4 overs).

In the second game of the day, Trinbago Knight Riders defeated Jamaica Tallawahs by seven wickets.

Batting first, Tallawahs posted a below-par total of 135/8 in their allotted 20 overs, riding on a 58-run knock from Glenn Phillips. Asif Ali (22) and Andre Russell (25) also made useful contributions in the middle-order.

Sunil Narine's quickfire 53

runs off just 38 deliveries, and an unbeaten 49 from Colin Munro then helped Knight Riders chased down the total with utmost ease with 11 balls to spare. Narine was named the Player of the Match.

**Brief Scores:** Barbados Tridents 131/7 (Johnson Charles 35; Roston Chase 2/8) lost to St Lucia Zouks 50/3 (Andre Fletcher 16\*; Rashid Khan 2/24) by seven wickets (D/L) method.

**Brief Scores:** Jamaica Tallawahs 135/8 (Glenn Phillips 58; Jayden Seales 2/21) lost to Trinbago Knight Riders 136/3 (Sunil Narine 53; Mujeeb Ur Rahman 1/13) by seven wickets.

## Clean slate: Styria to stoke the MotoGP competition flame

**Spielberg (Austria):** The BMW M Grand Prix of Styria is going to see every rider find improvements, meaning we're set for another unpredictable weekend of MotoGP™. That's the opinion of the riders who faced the media in the pre-event Press Conference, with Austrian GP race winner Andrea Dovizioso (Ducati Team) being joined by World Championship leader Fabio Quartararo (Petronas Yamaha SRT), 2020 Red Bull Ring podium finishes Joan Mir (Team Suzuki Ecstar) and Jack Miller (Pramac Racing), Brad Binder (Red Bull KTM Factory Racing) and Valentino Rossi (Monster Energy Yamaha MotoGP).

The riders may be attacking the same piece of asphalt this weekend, but that doesn't mean we're going to see the same result. Dovizioso beat Mir by 1.3 seconds on Sunday but the Italian isn't taking it for granted that he's going to have the upper hand again at the Styrian GP. Dovizioso has a wise head on his shoulders and knows that other riders and



teams are going to be making strides forward, with the data gathered from the Austrian GP – including him and Ducati.

"We try something new every time we do a race. You can understand a lot of things, more so than the practice sessions, so it's normal

for everyone. I think that we showed really good speed in the race, but I still don't feel good mid-corner and on exit," said Dovizioso, when asked whether or not he'll be trying some different settings in order to try and gain more speed around the Red Bull Ring.

"We have to be better, and especially because we can bring that to upcoming tracks. Some competitors will be stronger this week because they couldn't get the result last time and so they will be hungry and like everyone, they will have seen things in the race. For sure, the weather will decide things. I think it will be hot tomorrow and maybe Sunday not so much, but I think it will be a different weekend."

One of those looking to be stronger is Quartararo. An eighth-place finish less than a week ago saw Dovizioso cut the gap to 11 points between the leading duo in the title fight, with the 21-year-old explaining how he thinks the title race is wide open.