

ANALYSIS 7
HOW TO HARNESS
NARI SHAKTI

MONEY 8
CORONAVIRUS DOES NOT SPREAD
THROUGH CHICKEN: FSSAI CHIEF

SPORTS 12
RAIN TAKES INDIA
TO FINAL

HYDERABAD, FRIDAY MARCH 6, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3

the pioneer

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ANUPAMA TO
REPRISE ANNA
BEN IN HELEN
TELUGU REMAKE

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NOVEL CONTACT LENSES TO HELP CORRECT COLOUR BLINDNESS

Researchers have developed novel contact lenses to help correct various forms of colour blindness, an advance that may lead to new clinical recommendations for the condition in which people have reduced ability to distinguish between certain colours. According to the journal Optics Letters, scientists incorporated ultra-thin optical devices known as metasurfaces into off-the-shelf contact lenses to correct deuteranomaly -- a form of red-green colour blindness. "Problems with distinguishing red from green interrupt simple daily routines," said Sharon Karepov, a co-author of the study.



LOW CARB DIET MAY REVERSE AGE-RELATED EFFECTS IN BRAIN

Minimising the consumption of carbohydrates may prevent and reverse age-related effects within the brain, according to a study. The research, published in the journal PNAS, reveals that neurobiological changes associated with ageing can be seen at a much younger age than would be expected, in the late 40s. To better understand how diet influences brain ageing, researchers from Stony Brook University in the US focused on the presymptomatic period during which prevention may be most effective.



IIT-M DEVELOPS AI-POWERED DRONES TO COUNTER 'ROGUE' ONES

Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, on Thursday claimed to have developed an AI-powered drone to counter 'rogue drones' (unregulated UAVs) ensuring safety at vital locations. The AI-powered system would be an assistance to law enforcement agencies, security services, armed forces in order to secure air space over critical civilian and military installations by 'rogue' drones. The drones can hack into the GPS navigation system of the 'rogue drones' forcing it to change its flight path or make a safe landing, a press release said.



INDIAN JOURNALISM STUDENTS WIN INAUGURAL IJA AWARD

Two Indian girls studying in a British university have jointly won the inaugural award instituted by the Indian Journalists Association (IJA) for Indian students producing the best content on a postgraduate journalism course in the UK. IJA is a 73-year-old organisation representing UK-based journalists covering Indian affairs. Janani Suri and Malika Malhotra, students of International Journalism in the Cardiff University, were declared joint winners of the IJA award for 2018-19.



State agrees in principle to supply drinking water to TN

4



Digvijaya blames five BJP leaders for 'horse-trading'

5



HC dismisses Kochhar's plea against termination

8

TODAY
ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Magha & Shukla Paksha Panchangam
Tithi: Ekadashi: 11:46 am
Nakshatram: Puranvasi: 10:38 am
Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)
Rahukalam: 10:59 am - 12:27 pm
Yamagandam: 03:23 pm - 04:52 pm
Varjyam: 06:07 pm - 07:37 pm
Gulika: 08:02 am - 09:30 am
Good Time: (to start any important work)
Amritkalam: 08:19 am - 09:52 am
Abhijit Muhurtham: 12:03 pm - 12:50 pm

HYDERABAD WEATHER
Forecast: Partly Cloudy
Temp: 34/21
Humidity: 45%
Sunrise: 06:30
Sunset: 06:23
Current Weather Conditions Updated March 05, 2020 5:00 PM

DON'T OVERREACT, SAYS ETELA

Two corona samples test negative, Telangana heaves a sigh of relief

People working in IT need to be well-informed and behave responsibly

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana on Thursday heaved a sigh of relief as samples of the two suspected cases of coronavirus -- a techie and a sanitation worker in Apollo -- sent to the National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune on Wednesday tested negative for COVID-19.

Health Minister Etela Rajender said, "Telangana people are fortunate. Both the suspects from Telangana tested negative. The Health Department has been working relentlessly for the past four days. I would request all people to continue the support that they have been giving us and helping people educate and give them courage."

Etela asked: "Are we in 21st century or primitive age? How can people fight over the issue



TS Health Minister Etela Rajender showing reports pertaining to the two samples from the state that tested negative for coronavirus

“Are we in 21st century or primitive age? How can people fight over the issue that the virus would spread if the windows of the patient's house are open Building was evacuated over a lady employee in Mindspace being infected with corona.”

—ETELA RAJENDER HEALTH MINISTER

evacuated over a lady employee in Mindspace being infected with corona. Our entire police and IT department tried to calm down the situation there. Her reports are negative; don't overreact as it will lead to bad consequences. We are taking measures".

If any COVID-19 positive patient is admitted to a private hospital, the Health Department will direct them

that the virus would spread if the windows of the patient's house are open? Building was

how to provide treatment, prices that can be charged. Furthermore, 'contacts' of COVID-19 positive cases who are advised home isolation by Health Department should be confined only to one room in their homes for a period of 28 days. They should NOT mingle freely even with their family members also.

Only one person admitted in Gandhi hospital is being treated and he would recover in a day or two. He said, "People working in IT need to be well-informed and behave responsibly".

The Minister said that it was the responsibility of the paramedical staff to educate people about rumors and false propaganda. He thanked all the medical staff from various districts of the state.

2

OPERATING DRONE CAMERA OVER KTR'S FARMHOUSE

Revanth Reddy arrested, sent to Cherlapally jail

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Narsingi police arrested TPCC working president and Malkajgiri MP Revanth Reddy on Thursday for allegedly operating a spy drone to record details of Telangana Rashtira Samithi working president and minister K Taraka Ramarao's farmhouse at Janwada.

Six persons, identified as Poreddy Praveen Paul Reddy, Mangi Jaipal Reddy, Mandada Vijay Simha Reddy, Darga Rajesh, Elubandi Shiva and Veeresh, were arrested in this connection on Wednesday and remanded to custody. They were arrested for using drones without permission, while Revanth and his brother Krishna Reddy were named as the accused.

The police have registered cases under sections 188



TPCC working president and Malkajgiri MP Revanth Reddy being taken into custody on Thursday

(Disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) and 287(negligent con-

duct with respect to machinery), 120b (whoever is a party to a criminal conspiracy other than a criminal conspiracy to commit an offence), 109(whoever abets any offence shall, if the act abetted is committed in consequence of the abetment, and no express provision is made by this Code for the punishment of such abetment, be punished with the punishment provided for the offence) of the IPC and 11a (whoever willfully flies any aircraft in such a manner as to cause danger to any person or to any property on land or water or in the air shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to six months, or with fine which may extend to one thousand rupees or with both) of the Indian Aircraft Act.

2

HC TO TS GOVT

Devise strategy to check corona

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A division bench of the Telangana High Court on Thursday bombarded the state government with a volley of questions on preventive steps taken to curb the spread of deadly coronavirus that has already entered the state. The bench directed the state government to put in place a strategy for screening people and to consider setting up screening medical teams in major bus and railway stations in the state.

The bench passed these orders while dealing with a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) plea filed by a resident of Manikonda G. Sidda Laxmi urging the HC to prohibit the upcoming Holi celebrations scheduled to be held on March 9 and March 10, 2020. In her petition, she urged the HC to



issue directions to the state government to give wide publicity to aspects like personal hygiene to keep the virus at bay.

The bench, comprising the Chief Justice of the state Justice RS Chauhan and Justice A. Abhishek Reddy, also took note of the precautionary measures taken up by the government so far. The HC has also appointed senior advocate S. Niranjan Reddy as an amicus curie in the issue.

2

Five killed in road accidents

PNS ■ NIZAMABAD

Five persons were killed in two separate road accidents here on Thursday. In the first incident, two persons were killed near Medipalli on the Nizamabad-Karimnagar main road when a TSRTC bus hit a two-wheeler. Naveen of Prakasam district, Andhra Pradesh and another person died on the spot. The bus from Bodhan depot was proceeding towards Warangal from Nizamabad and the bike was coming from the opposite direction. In the second incident, three persons were killed when the driver of a speeding car lost control over the vehicle and hit a tree at Indalvai in Nizamabad district. The victims were going from Hyderabad to Nizamabad. Three others travelling in the car sustained severe injuries. The deceased were identified as Gautam, Nikhil and Balakrishna.

Coronavirus effect: Metro ridership tanks by 15,000

To avoid overcrowding, trains to/from HI-TEC City will be run at 2.5-minute frequency

NAVEENA GHANATE ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabadis have taken the threat of infection by coronavirus seriously and are studiously avoiding crowded places, including Metro trains. Evidently, on Thursday the ridership in Hyderabad Metro trains plunged with people largely avoiding the public transport.

HMRL MD N V S Reddy said that the ridership drop was approximately between 15,000 and 20,000 pax. Although measures have been taken to clean up Metro trains



and bus services, there is evident scare among people over using Metro.

Anil Kumar Saini, L&T HMRL COO, said, "Based on the morning commuting usage, we are expecting a maximum drop of 15,000 commuters. Moreover, a lot of people have opted for work

from home amid the corona scare, this is possibly another reason."

To ensure that trains are not overcrowded and people feel safe during peak hours, HMRL will be adding additional trains on the Ameerpet to Raidurg route. The move comes against the backdrop of panic in IT corridor over a techie being tested positive even though the person later tested negative. NVS Reddy said that the trains would run at a frequency of 2.5 minutes on the route to address the peak hour traffic.

2

New twist to drowning incident

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR

Suicide pact by TRS MLA's kin?

It appears that the deaths of three members of a family, attributed initially to 'accidental' drowning of their car in the Kakatiya canal in Karimnagar on February 17th, could have been the result of a suicide pact.

In a diary recovered from a fertilizer shop owned by the deceased Satyanarayan Reddy, police found entries to the effect that he wanted his entire property to be bequeathed

to TTD. The police are now inclined to believe that the entire family might have committed suicide by riding the car into the canal.

2



TS BUDGET SESSION FROM TODAY, BUDGET ON MARCH 8

Assembly, Council to pass anti-CAA resolution

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Legislative Assembly is expected to pass a resolution against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) during the Budget session beginning on Friday.

The Budget session would start with the customary address of the Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan to the joint sitting of the legislature on Friday.

This address would be Tamilisai's first one after she



assumed office in September last. Debate on governor speech will be held on March

7. The Finance Minister T Harish Rao would introduce the budget for the first time in

Legislative Assembly on March 8 and Legislative Affairs minister Vemula Prashanth Reddy in the Legislative Council on the same day.

Voicing opposition to the amended citizenship law, the state cabinet had on February 16 urged the Union government to abrogate the CAA.

The February 16 Cabinet meeting, chaired by Chief Minister K Chandrababu Naidu, had said it felt the CAA would lead to discrimination on the basis of religion while

granting citizenship, thus jeopardising secularism as envisaged in the Constitution.

The Cabinet has decided to pass a resolution against the CAA in the Assembly, the way Kerala, Punjab, Rajasthan and West Bengal have done, according to an official release on February 16.

Coming out strongly against the CAA, Rao had earlier said he may convene a meeting of regional parties and Chief Ministers to oppose it.

2

Bigg Boss 3 winner 'attacked' at pub

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Tollywood singer and recent Bigg Boss 3 winner Rahul Sipligunj was involved in a drunken brawl at a pub in Gachibowli on Wednesday night. A group of persons linked to a politician allegedly attacked him, after an altercation.

Rahul was at the pub with his friends when the attack took place. The attackers, believed to be close relatives of Tandur MLA from Vikarabad district, Pilot Rohit Reddy, attacked Rahul with beer bottles and injured him, when he questioned them for allegedly passing comments at his female friend.

"They were returning from the washroom and dashed me. When I questioned them, they got angry and start-

The attackers, believed to be close relatives of Tandur MLA Pilot Rohit Reddy, attacked Rahul with beer bottles and injured him

ed abusing me, following which an altercation started and soon they started hurling beer bottles at me. I heard that they do this often because of their political background," said the singer.

Though he did not lodge a complaint with police on the incident, the Gachibowli police registered a case on a complaint of the night patrolling teams. The teams had rushed to the spot and controlled the situation.

2



Welfare is always a priority in Telangana Budgets

Telangana State, that came into existence on June 2, 2014, has achieved miraculous progress in a short span of five years and nine months. Soon after K Chandrasekhar Rao became the Chief Minister, he contemplated drafting a comprehensive policy for the overall development of the state. The policy as envisaged by him, among others, included aspects like the state's economy vis-à-vis the country's economy, its goals, aims and objectives etc. He was very clear that the policy so formulated should be aimed at generating wealth from sources till then untapped and unidentified. The first Budget of Telangana which was in continuation of the Vote-on-Account sought by the then Government of the undivided State, was presented during the financial year 2014-15. Prior to the preparation, government

constituted 14 task forces in the areas of welfare, drinking water supply-sanitation, agriculture-dairy industry, industry-basic infrastructure development, human resources development, irrigation-water resources, energy, environment, law-administrative reforms, vigilance, resource mobilisation, law and order, urban development and rural development before finalising the Budget proposals. Based on the reports of the task forces, the first Budget of the Telangana State was presented on November 5, 2015. Thus, the first Telangana Budget was a major departure from the past both in its approach and content, despite not having full comprehension about the financial position of the State. The first full-year Budget for 2015-16 was prepared without the benefit of having estimates for the full 12 months of the previous year as the State was formed in June, 2014.

The first Budget of Telangana, which was in continuation of the Vote-on-Account sought by the then Government of the undivided State, was presented during the financial year 2014-15

By the time preparation of the State budget for 2016-17 was underway, the government was able to get a comprehensive idea about the trends in the State finances. It was only after the income and expenditure under Plan and Non-Plan schemes from March 31, 2015 to March 31, 2016 was clearly calculated, the real basis for Telangana State Budget calculation was arrived at. The first-year Budget after formation of Telangana was on ad-hoc calculation based on earlier Budgets and the second-year full-fledged Budget was based on some exercise. Though the Budget for 2016-17 was the third Budget

of the State, it was in a way, the first one to be prepared after a comprehensive review of all items of expenditure and a realistic assessment of resources based on the facts and figures available. In the process, the fourth consecutive Budget, for the year 2017-2018, was both inspirational and message oriented. The Budget reflected the Government's objective of reaching out to all sections, all those in the hereditary professions, all religions, people working in various fields, all government departments that are entrusted with the implementation of development and welfare schemes, lower income



VANAM JWALA NARASIMHA RAO
CPRO to Chief Minister

The financial stability and progress despite GST and demonetisation were also highlighted. In addition, there was a mention about the schemes that were conceived during 2017-2018 and the way they would be implemented in future. Telangana State was ranked No. 1 which is an indication about the buoyant economy of the state. There was a distinct upward shift in the growth path of the economy of Telangana since its formation in June 2014. The average annual growth of State Domestic Product increased from 4.2% in the two years preceding the formation of the state (2012-14) to an impressive growth of 9.5% during the three years following the formation of the State (2014-17). This apart, Telangana State stood first among all the States by clocking a growth of 21.10% in its own tax revenue in 2016-17 over 2015-16.

KCR presented the Vote-on-Account Budget for the year 2019-20. This was the sixth Budget of the new State and first in the second term. His hour-long Budget speech touched every aspect of Telangana people and to put it in simple words, it was for the welfare of people. There were special reasons for Vote-on-Account Budget as detailed by CM in his speech. He said that once the Union Government introduced the full-fledged Budget after elections, the quantum of allocation to each state, including Telangana, would be known and hence there would be some clarity. Presenting the Budget, the CM said that Telangana has achieved miraculous progress in a short span of five years and by making rapid strides in all the spheres through balanced development, became one of the fastest growing States in the country.

Detailing about five years of economic development KCR said that in the first year of formation of the State, it could spend just Rs 6,247 crore per month, whereas after five years, it reached a stage to spend Rs 11,305 crore per month. There was significant increase in the capital expenditure too. During the last ten years under the undivided State, total capital expenditure incurred in Telangana was Rs 54,052 crore. After formation of Telangana, it was at Rs 1,03,551 crore within five years. KCR said that though there was fall in revenues due to economic slowdown, he expressed hope and optimism that situation will change for the better. Against this genesis and evolution of the state's budgets, this year's Budget is being presented to the state Assembly by the Finance Minister.

GWMC ELECTIONS

MLAs MAKE FULL USE OF PATTANA PRAGATHI

PV KONDAL RAO
WARANGAL

Elections for Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation are scheduled to be held in 2021. However, the ruling TRS MLAs are leaving no stone unturned are grabbing opportunities with both hands. The state government's Pallo and Pattana Pragathi Programmes came in handy for the ruling party MLAs and Corporators. They are actively taking part in the programmes taken up under Pattana Pragathi and in a way are making pre-election exercise in Warangal, Hanamkonda and Kazipet city limits. The surrounding villages are also being covered with legislators of Wardhannapet, Station Ghanpur and Parakal leading from the front. Minister for Women and



Tribal Welfare Minister Satyavathi Rathod interacting with the locals during Pattana Pragathi programme in Warangal

Child Welfare Satyavathi Rathod was entrusted with the responsibility of carrying the baton of programmes and her constant inspections in urban areas are yielding positive results. During the past ten days, the Minister has been touring Warangal almost every day

with legislators - Dasyam Vinayabhasakar, Nannapuni Narendar and Aroori Ramesh, Dharma Reddy and Dr T Rajaiah accompanying her. The welfare programme concepts initiated by the government under the Pattana Pragathi have been successfully implemented with the participation of the legislators.

Though Greater Warangal Corporation is scheduled to go for polls in 2021, the MLAs and corporators are taking no chances

Though the existing corporators are actively taking part in the programmes, MLAs participation this time is dominating the scene in Warangal Municipal Corporation limits. MLAs active participation is seen as a planned strategy of the ruling party and the TRS is considering it as an image building method in Warangal. The Warangal Municipal Corporation will go for polls in 2021 and since the elections are due in another fifteen months, the legislators of urban constituencies are actively participating in the programmes.

Follow due process: HC tells govt

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana High Court on Thursday directed the state government to follow due process of law while taking any steps in the issue of the lands belonging to Congress Party MP A Revanth Reddy and his brother Kondal Reddy. A single judge bench comprising Justice A Rajasekhara Reddy passed the order while dealing with a writ petition filed by the MP and his brother Kondal Reddy. Arguing the case before the High Court, the counsel for the petitioners T Rajanikanth Reddy urged the HC to issue directions to the state government to not interfere with the peaceful possession and enjoyment of land owned by the petitioners in Gopannapally village. He said that the RDO and Tehsildar of the area came to the land of the petitioner and asked them to hand over the possession of the same without following any due process of law. The court later adjourned the matter for further hearing till Friday.

Renowned journalist Potturi passes away

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Potturi Venkateswara Rao, a doyen of Telugu journalism passed away here on Thursday. He was 86. A tall figure in journalism, Potturi as he is called affectionately by journalistic fraternity, breathed his last in a hospital. He was suffering from cancer of late. Potturi served in the field of journalism for over five decades. He was the Press Academy Chairman in undivided Andhra Pradesh. He was born on February 8, 1934 in Potturu village of Guntur district. He commenced his career in 1957 with Andhra Janata and went on to serve eminent dailies like Andhra Bhumi, Eenadu and Andhra Prabha. Potturi authored several books. His works like Paltrikala Meti Viluvalu, Chintana and Chirasmaraneyulu brought him recognition. Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao has expressed his deep condolences over the demise of senior journalist Potturi Venkateswara Rao. The Chief Minister commended the services rendered by



KCR recalled the moral support extended by Potturi Venkateswara Rao during the Telangana statehood movement

Venkateswara Rao in the field of media and social service. The CM recalled the moral support extended by Potturi Venkateswara Rao during the Telangana statehood movement. The CM prayed to the almighty to rest the departed soul in peace. KCR has conveyed his heartfelt condolences to members of the bereaved family. Former Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh N Chandrababu Naidu also conveyed the death and conveyed his profound sympathies to bereaved family

members. Former Minister Lokesh and YSRCP MP Vijaya Sai Reddy conveyed their condolence messages through twitter. Himachal Pradesh Governor Bandaru Dattatreya described Potturi Venkateswara Rao as one of the first generation journalists. In a message, he conveyed his profound grief to the bereaved family members. Jana Sena president Pawan Kalyan, who called Potturi as a towering journalist, said that the death of Potturi caused an irreparable loss to the field of journalism.

Assembly, Council to ...

Continued from Page 1

The Asaduddin Owaisi-led AIMIM, a friendly party of the ruling TRS, has also sought to "put on stay" the National Population Register (NPR) in the state. Owaisi had said they would request the Chief Minister to put on hold NPR in the state. The Chief Minister on Wednesday called on Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan and handed over the copy of the Governor's address as approved by the state cabinet. The opposition Congress, which held a meeting of its leaders here recently, said it would raise farmers issues, among others, during the Assembly session.

New twist to drowning incident

Continued from Page 1

The Karimnagar Commissioner of Police Kamal Hasan Reddy, while saying that a probe was on into the suspicious circumstances leading to the Reddy's family, mentioned that the police recovered "some important information in connection with the case". The Commissioner of Police said that the police were examining the entries in the diary by involving handwriting and forensic experts. The fresh investigation was at an advanced stage, he said, while declining to reveal details at this stage. It may be recalled that the bodies of Nareddy Satyanarayana Reddy, his wife Radha -- who is a cousin of TRS Peddapalli MLA Manohar Reddy -- and their daughter Vinayasri were

recovered from the canal on February 17. Satyanarayana owned a fertiliser shop in Karimnagar, while Radha was school-teacher and Vinayasri was a final year dental student. The trio left their residence at Bank Colony in Karimnagar in their car on January 27th and were reported missing thereafter. Their bodies were accidentally found by the police in the canal after 20 days.

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Bigg Boss 3 winner...

Continued from Page 1

Rahul was taken to a nearby private hospital, where he was given first-aid. "Rahul was along with his four friends -- Raj, Sudhaker, Usha and Pinky at Prism pub. They entered about 8.30 pm on Wednesday where one Ritesh Reddy and 5 to 6 of his friends were also present. At about 11 pm, one of Reddy's friends dashed Rahul while returning from the washroom while he was dancing with the female friends. During the altercation, they beat him up with hands and legs and also hit him with beer bottles on the face and head. The gang had also misbehaved with the female friends. Based on a complaint, a case was booked," said Police Inspector of Gachibowli, R. Srinivas, adding that they were examining CCTV footage from the pub.

Revanth Reddy arrested, sent to Cherlapally jail

Continued from Page 1

Police refuted the claim of the MP that he was arrested at the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport in Shamshabad amidst a ruckus and said that Reddy himself surrendered at Narsingi PS. The Congress MP from Malkajgiri, Revanth Reddy argued with the police how his name could be included in the case. Officials then explained his involvement and the evidence available incriminating him, adding that the MP refused to cooperate with the police. Following his arrest, the Malkajgiri MP was produced before the court, after which where he was remanded to judicial custody for a period of 14 days.



Corona effect: Metro ridership tanks by 15,000...

Continued from Page 1

To ensure that the trains are not crowded, two more additional trains are being prepared. The additional trains will be put to use in about 10 days. The frequency of 2.5 minutes will be maintained for 4 hours in the morning and 4 hours in the evening, termed as 'peak hours'. L&T Hyderabad Metro Rail Limited has initiated measures to prevent the spread of the virus. Hyderabad Metro Rail Limited Managing Director said, "All the Metro trains are being cleaned - everything, including metal railing, hand grab, whatever part touched by people are being sanitized by r2 chemicals."

HYDERABAD BULLION RATES

GOLD	₹ 42,230 (10 gm)
SILVER	₹ 45,800 (1kg)
	₹ 900

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG

Dressed/With Skin	₹100
Without Skin	₹114
Broiler at Farm	₹69

EGG RATES ₹/100

HYDERABAD	275
VIJAYAWADA	310
VISAKHAPATNAM	350
RETAIL PRICE	₹2.75

Devise...

Continued from Page 1

The amicus curie S. Niranjan Reddy made several suggestions during the course of the hearing of the case. He said that isolation wards should be set up in all the government hospitals of the state to extend treatment to those suspected to be carrying coronavirus. He said that the state government should follow the guidelines issued by the United Kingdom government to tackle the virus.

CCSCL inks pact with TS Police

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Centre for Cyber Security and Cyber Law (CCSCL), Osmania University, Hyderabad and the Telangana State Police, Home Department of Government of Telangana signed a MoU on Thursday. The MoU is useful in capacity building in both the parties, detection of Cyber Crimes, updating the Knowledge of Cyber Laws and Cyber Security measures" said

the DGP of TS police, Mahender Reddy. He also advised the Osmania University to offer certain custom made courses meant for police personnel and issue certificates. The Osmania University officials explained the recent initiatives taken in the University, to offer technology based programmes and also research. The MoU was signed by the DGP and Prof. Gopal Reddy, the Registrar, Osmania University. Prof. S. Ramachandram,

Two corona...

Continued from Page 1

Rajender said that this is not a test that is done if you have money, need, or doubt but only when there are symptoms. He said, "People with cough and cold are reaching out to us. Someone from Argentina wanted us to do a test. Without infection, how will we test? How can we remove from their nose or throat? Only if symptoms are there, there is enough quantity, only then we will test for corona."

GHMC GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
Superintending Engineer (Projects), South Zone

Procurement Tender Notice
Dt: 05.03.2020

NT No.: 21/SE(P)/SZ/GHMC/2019-20
Name of Work: Development works in South Zone, GHMC at Item No. 1 to 3 respectively, Down Load Start date/Last date & time for receipts of Bids : 07.03.2020 from 04:30PM, 23.03.2020 upto 11:00AM, 23.03.2020 upto 11:00AM. Office Name, Address and Cell No. O/o Superintending Engineer (Projects), South Zone, GHMC Ph No. 9701362693, 7337557255. Further details can be seen at e-procurement@http://tender.telangana.gov.in Sd/- Superintending Engineer (Projects), South Zone, GHMC R.O. No.: 419-PP/CL-AGENCY/ADVT/1/2019-20 Dt: 05-03-2020

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
IRRIGATION CIRCLE NIZAMABAD

TENDER NOTICE
Tenders were floated vide Tender Notice No's 14/2019-20 Dt. 04-03-2020, 15/2019-20, Dt. 04-03-2020 & 16/2019-20, Dt. 04-03-2020, for an Amount of Rs. 223.48 Lakhs available from 04-03-2020 to 11-03-2020. Further details can be seen @ https://tender.telangana.gov.in. Sd/- Superintending Engineer, I&CADD, Irrigation Circle, Nizamabad R.O. No. 810-PP/CL/ADVT/1/2019-20

Government of Telangana Revenue (LA) Department Office of the District Collector, Siddipet.												
Form - VII (Preliminary Declaration)												
The Right to fair compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013, Under Section - 19(1) of Central Act 30/2013 and Subrule(1) of Rule 25)												
Collector File No. G1/1557/2019 Dt: 02.03.2020 Special Deputy Collector & Revenue Divisional												
Officer, Siddipet File No. B/110/2019 Dt: 04.02.2020 Gazette No. 67/2020 Dt: 12.02.2020 Government of Telangana/ District Collector, Siddipet issued the following declaration to Acquire Ac. 20.22 gts in Akkenapally Village, Nangunoor Mandal, Siddipet District is required for Public Purpose to execute distributory of right main canal of Ranganayaka Sagar reservoir of Kaleshwaram Project												
Responding to a requisition from farmers of Akkenapalli a declaration to acquire Ac 20.22 guntas in Akkenapalli village, Nangunoor(M), Siddipet Dist. as per the Act 30/2013 has been issued												
Schedule												
Village	Akkenapally	Mandal	Nangunoor	District	Siddipet							
Sl. No.	Survey No.	Type of Land	Area in Hectares	Area in Guntas	Area in Annas	Name of Owner/ Possessor, Name of Father/ Husband	Name of Engager	Boundaries East	Boundaries West	Boundaries North	Boundaries South	Remarks, Trees, Structures etc.
1	227	Metta	0.25	0.25	0.25	Lakkidi Ajay Kumar S/o Kishan Rao	Lakkidi Ajay Kumar S/o Kishan Rao	226	226	226	227	
2	227	Metta	0.25	0.25	0.25	Lakkidi Kishan S/o Buchaiah	Lakkidi Kishan S/o Buchaiah	224	224	224	227	
3	227	Metta	0.15	0.15	0.15	Appisa Rajaww W/o Poshaiiah	Appisa Rajaww W/o Poshaiiah	224	224	224	227	
4	227	Metta	0.15	0.15	0.15	Basava Yadagiri S/o Poshaiiah	Basava Yadagiri S/o Poshaiiah	224	224	224	227	
5	228	Metta	0.35	0.35	0.35	Road	Road	226	226	226	227	
6	228	Metta	0.35	0.35	0.35	Baswa Lalitha W/o Srinu	Baswa Lalitha W/o Srinu	226	226	226	227	
7	228	Metta	0.35	0.35	0.35	Baswa Narsingarao S/o Poshaiiah	Baswa Narsingarao S/o Poshaiiah	226	226	226	227	
8	228	Metta	0.09	0.09	0.09	Damanthula Sampath S/o	Damanthula Sampath S/o	226	226	226	227	
9	228	Metta	0.14	0.14	0.14	Damanthula Kanakavva W/o Sampath	Damanthula Kanakavva W/o Sampath	216	216	216	218	
10	228	Metta	0.24	0.24	0.24	Mangalarapu Rama W/o Sampath	Mangalarapu Rama W/o Sampath	219	219	219	218	
11	228	Metta	0.09	0.09	0.09	Baswa Yadagiri S/o Venkaiah	Baswa Yadagiri S/o Venkaiah	214	214	214	217	
12	228	Metta	0.24	0.24	0.24	Beswa Gopal S/o Venkaiah	Beswa Yelliseti S/o Venkaiah	214	214	214	217	
13	228	Metta	0.11	0.11	0.11	Gone Yadagiri S/o Narsaiiah	Gone Yadagiri S/o Narsaiiah	214	214	214	217	
14	228	Metta	0.30	0.30	0.30	Dopati Lakshmi W/o Rajashekar	Dopati Lakshmi W/o Rajashekar	215	215	215	217	Well-1
15	228	Metta	0.02	0.02	0.02	Dopati Malliah S/o	Dopati Malliah S/o	214	214	214	214	Mango Tree-1
16	228	Metta	0.02	0.02	0.02	Others	Others	217	217	217	214	
17	228	Metta	0.16	0.16	0.16	Potharaju Malleshram S/o Rajamallu	Potharaju Malleshram S/o Rajamallu	215	215	215	214	
18	228	Metta	0.09	0.09	0.09	Appisu Ramavva W/o Janardhan	Appisu Ramavva W/o Janardhan	215	215	215	217	
19	228	Metta	0.25	0.25	0.25	Appisa Balamani W/o Komuriah	Appisa Balamani W/o Komuriah	216	216	216	214	
20	228	Metta	0.27	0.27	0.27	Ette Kanukiah S/o Yellaiiah	Ette Kanukiah S/o Yellaiiah	214	214	214	214	1-Well Mango Tree-9
21	228	Metta	0.21	0.21	0.21	Mucharla Sathaiiah S/o Rajalah	Mucharla Sathaiiah S/o Rajalah	214	214	214	214	
22	228	Metta	0.04	0.04	0.04	Mucharla Lachavva W/o Allaiiah	Mucharla Lachavva W/o Allaiiah	214	214	214	214	
23	228	Metta	0.20	0.20	0.20	Mucharla Lachavva W/o Allaiiah	Mucharla Lachavva W/o Allaiiah	215	215	215	211	
24	228	Metta	0.30	0.30	0.30	Meesam Balavva W/o Muthaiiah	Meesam Balavva W/o Muthaiiah	208	208	208	211	
25	228	Metta	0.18	0.18	0.18	Jakkula beeraiiah S/o Komuriah	Jakkula beeraiiah S/o Komuriah	208	208	208	208	
26	228	Metta	0.18	0.18	0.18	Jakkula beeraiiah S/o Komuriah	Jakkula beeraiiah S/o Komuriah	208	208	208	208	
27	228	Metta	0.30	0.30	0.30	Vadde Lingaiiah S/o Venkataiah	Vadde Lingaiiah S/o Venkataiah	208	208	208	208	1-Bore
28	228	Metta	0.25	0.25	0.25	Vadde Rajaiah S/o Venkataiah	Vadde Rajaiah S/o Venkataiah	205	205	205	208	1-Well 1-Bore
29	228	Metta	0.25	0.25	0.25	Vadde Swamy S/o Venkataiah	Vadde Swamy S/o Venkataiah	205	205	205	208	
30	228	Metta	0.18	0.18	0.18	Vadde Rajaiah S/o Venkataiah	Vadde Rajaiah S/o Venkataiah	189	189	189	189	
31	228	Metta	0.10	0.10	0.10	Bathula Malaiiah S/o Malaiiah	Bathula Malaiiah S/o Malaiiah	189	189	189	189	
32	228	Metta	0.07	0.07	0.07	Mangalarapu Narsimlu S/o Ramaiah	Mangalarapu Narsimlu S/o Ramaiah	187	187	187	189	
33	228	Metta	0.07	0.07	0.07	Bathula Raju S/o Komuriah	Bathula Raju S/o Komuriah	197	197	197	189	
34	228	Metta	0.14	0.14	0.14	Bathula Raju S/o Komuriah	Bathula Raju S/o Komuriah	199	199	199	189	
35	228	Metta	0.10	0.10	0.10	Bathula Raju S/o Komuriah	Bathula Raju S/o Komuriah	199	199	199	189	
36	228	Metta	0.06	0.06	0.06	Govt.Land	Govt.Land	189	189	189	189	
37	228	Metta	0.06	0.06	0.06	Donthi Poshaiiah S/o Sallu	Donthi Poshaiiah S/o Sallu	189	189	189	189	
38	228	Metta	0.14	0.14	0.14	Vanaparthi Siddiramulu S/o Sidaiah	Vanaparthi Siddiramulu S/o Sidaiah	193	193	193	183	
39	228	Metta	1.00	1.00	1.00	Donthi Poshaiiah S/o Sallu	Donthi Poshaiiah S/o Sallu	192	192	192	191	
40	228	Metta	0.35	0.35	0.35	Kodari Maheshwari W/o Raju	Kodari Maheshwari W/o Raju	190	190	190	191	
41	228	Metta	0.12	0.12	0.12	Jakkula Kanakiah S/o Chandram	Jakkula Kanakiah S/o Chandram	192	192	192	191	
42	228	Metta	0.03	0.03	0.03	Road	Road	192	192	192	191	
43	228	Metta	0.16	0.16	0.16	Kodari Vijaya W/o Yadagiri	Kodari Vijaya W/o Yadagiri	124	124	124	125	
44	228	Metta	0.02	0.02	0.02	Kodari Sathaiiah S/o Allaiiah	Kodari Sathaiiah S/o Allaiiah	124	124	124	125	
45	228	Metta	0.08	0.08	0.08	Kodari Kamala W/o Siddaiiah	Kodari Kamala W/o Siddaiiah	124	124	124	125	
46	228	Metta	0.08	0.08	0.08	Kodari Kanakiah S/o Venkaiah	Kodari Kanakiah S/o Venkaiah	124	124	124	125	
47	228	Metta	0.08	0.08	0.08	Kodari Swaroopa W/o Venkataraju	Kodari Swaroopa W/o Venkataraju	124	124	124	125	
48	228	Metta	0.06	0.06	0.06	Kodari Sathaiiah S/o Allaiiah	Kodari Sathaiiah S/o Allaiiah	124	124	124	125	
49	228	Metta	0.36	0.36	0.36	1.Kondari Yadaiah S/o Komuriah 2.Kondari Lakshmi W/o Kishtaiiah (Late)	1.Kondari Yadaiah S/o Komuriah 2.Kondari Lakshmi W/o Kishtaiiah (Late)	124	124	124	125	
Total											20.22	

TECHIES MEETUP

COVID-19: ITS BUSINESS AS USUAL FOR IT FROM TODAY

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Cyberabad Police Commissioner VC Sajjanar along with Society for Cyberabad Security Council (SCSC), Hysea and Nasscom organised an interactive meeting on Thursday with more than 250 executives including the facility heads, HR representatives of IT industry to monitor the COVID-19 in Cyberabad.



The meeting was organised to review and discuss the concerns, updates and the preventive measures to be taken to contain the panic situation that was created due to one 'unconfirmed' coronavirus case at Raheja MindSpace. Based on request from members, a standard operating protocol will be published soon.

Sajjanar said that the suspected sample of the techie sent to National Institute of Virology (NIV) in Pune was found to be negative for COVID-19.

Answering the queries of the attendees, Sajjanar advised public not to believe in rumours, unless they are verified and duly validated by authorities. He assured that the current situation is Business As Usual (BAU) and in any manner does not warrant shutting down the operations or direct employees to work from home.

"Companies should report to the Cyberabad Police about the false messages and the police will take action against such individuals. As per Health Department, healthy and unaffected persons do not need to wear masks. It is advised for those who are ill with symptoms. Dial '104' in case of any suspect identified with COVID-19 symptoms. Employees are advised not to share any rumours unless they are vetted by themselves or the heads of the companies. All the companies are advised to cascade

UNCERTAINTY OVER HEALTH INSURANCE

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With private hospitals in state coming forward to treat the suspects of coronavirus, there is uncertainty over health insurance. If any COVID-19 positive patient is admitted at a private hospital in TS, the Health Department will direct the hospital on prices that can be charged. Insurers are going by the rule that the claims due to coronavirus are payable provided the concerned person is hospitalised for at least 24 hours.

According to Pankaj Verma, head of market underwriting operation of SBI Insurance, "Our standard health policy is capable to provide insurance to coronavirus patients. As of now we are evaluating if there is any requirement for a specific cover.

If the need arises, we will plan to introduce a specific product to address such viruses. On the claims front, we comprehend that COVID -19 is a disease of epidemic proportions, we are trying to provide all the help. SBI is not rejecting any claim without minimum compliance of requirements as prescribed".

However life insurance policies will continue to thrive. IRDAI issued guidelines to health insurers handling coronavirus claims and directed the companies to design products covering the cost of treatment. Most of the health insurance policies do not cover outpatient treatment. However, if coronavirus is declared as a pandemic by WHO or Central government, then claims might not be payable as such claims.

the advisory mails and circulars to its employees. To prevent the spread of the virus it is advised to clean the premises frequently and also use sanitisers and wash the hands regularly," said the

Commissioner of Police. This meeting was organised held under the chairmanship of the Cyberabad Commissioner of Police attended by the SCSC general secretary Krishna Yedula,

Coronavirus threat prompts city to cancel many events

HYDERABAD: Amid coronavirus scare in Hyderabad, several events slated to be organised in the city have been cancelled.

IIIT Hyderabad postponed its R&D Showcase 2020 on March 7 and 8 citing, "Due to global emergency after careful consideration and guidance, the institute has decided to postpone the R&D showcase". The new dates are yet to be announced. Likewise, TIE Hyderabad's TIE-Woman launch to be held on Friday was cancelled stating that, "We have cancelled the event due to concerns around the coronavirus and in accordance with health guidance". This has been the state of affairs across the world. Even the Olympics could be postponed. Japan's Olympic Minister has said that the Tokyo 2020 Games could be moved from the summer until later in the year due to the coronavirus. The Olympics are taking place from July 24 to August 6 of this year. While IOC remained firm that Olympics will be held in summer, IOC however will continue to follow the advice of WHO, as the leading United Nations agency on this topic.

SCSC vice chairman Bharani Kumar Arol, Hyderabad Software Enterprises Association (HYSEA) president Murali Bollu, HYSEA COO Srinivas, NASSCOM director Srikanth Srinivasan, STPI director Ram Prasad and others.



Hyderabad Metro Rail Limited MD NVS Reddy launches Paytm QR code based Metro-ticketing system at Metro Rail Bhavan in Rasoolpura on Thursday

QR-based e-tickets a hit among Metro commuters

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Three months into launching of QR code based e-ticketing to book Metro train tickets in Hyderabad, the service seems to be a big hit.

Around 60,000 among 4 lakh Metro commuters are using QR code based tickets everyday to travel in metro and is further increasing.

To further boost the services, managing director of Hyderabad Metro Rail Limited (HMRL) NVS Reddy on Thursday launched a Paytm QR code based metro-ticketing system at Metro Rail Bhavan at Rasoolpura in the presence of managing director of L&TMRHL KVB Reddy, senior vice-president of Paytm Abhay Sharma, COO of L&TMRHL Anil Saini.

NVS Reddy said, "Telangana state is pioneer in digital transactions and Hyderabad Metro wants to be at fore front of these activities. The main advantage of this ticketing is avoiding queues and thus reducing travel time. With Paytm standing parallel to banking industry, many more people will join the QR code ticketing. Further, HMRL would be adding multiple

route passes using QR code e-ticket, as currently QR code tickets are used only for single or return journey.

NVS Reddy said, "We will introduce passes on QR codes immediately after coronavirus issue subsides. Using QR ticketing, commuters will get passes and discounts will be offered."

According to officials, if commuters purchase tickets in bulk, they would get complementary tickets.

Explaining about the idea bulk tickets, Anil Kumar Saini said, "If a commuter buys 45 tickets in bulk, with each ticket worth Rs 60, then they would be given additional 5 tickets as complementary. Officials are working to decide the packages."

Meanwhile, the HMRL officials said that the QR code scanning is being extended to shuttle services. Using same QR code, a person can book a ticket for shuttle service provided by Metro and complete the journey using another shuttle service. The machines are being set up in the shuttles provided by Metro and are likely to be extended to Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC).

SSC hall tickets to go online in advance to avoid problems

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Directorate of Government Examinations, Telangana has decided to post the hall tickets of Secondary School Certificate (SSC) public examination in the website much early to ensure enough time to resolve the problems of students.

The decision was taken by the DGE after witnessing the bitter experience faced by the officials of Board of Intermediate Education (BIE).

Last year, SSC hall tickets were sent to respective schools and were posted in the relevant website just five days before the commencement of exams.

It may be recalled here that the BIE received many complaints from students that they had not received hall-tickets as the colleges did not pay the fee collected from students to the board. The officials did not have enough time to sort out these problems.

Going by the experience of BIE, the SSC Board has decided to keep the hall tickets in the website to resolve any last minute problems.

Internal assessment marks of SSC would also be uploaded into the website much early. It drops enough hints about problems that may arise later on.

While the BIE allows students to write the exam even though the student hall ticket did not feature principal's signature, this is not going to be the case with the SSC Board. If the SSC students have fee dues, the principals of schools are not signing the hall tickets.

However, parents are urging the SSC to adopt the same method adopted by the BIE. At the time of issue of TC or other certificates, the dues can be collected then, the parents advised. Several teachers second the opinion. They said that the students would go into depression if schools insist them on clearing dues.

Auto driver gets 10-yr jail for sexual assault

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

An auto rickshaw driver was sentenced to undergo 10 years of rigorous imprisonment for sexually assaulting a minor girl by the special court for Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act on Thursday.

The court also slapped a fine of Rs 5,000 on the auto driver, said public prosecutor K Pratap Reddy, adding that the girl had lodged a complaint on July 19, 2016 stating she used to work as maid at a house and travel in auto to reach her employer's house.

No corruption in Metro: Centre

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Civil Aviation Hardeep Singh Puri in Lok Sabha said that there was no corruption in Hyderabad Metro Rail project.

Responding to questions raised by Revanth Reddy, the Minister said, "State government of Telangana has informed that they have not received any complaints regarding any ongoing scam or corruption or misappropriation in Hyderabad Metro Rail Project. It also said that the fares have been fixed by Metro Rail Administration of

2 held for stealing Rs 32 L cash

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Crime team of Abid Road Police Station apprehended two persons on Thursday in connection with a theft case reported at the GPO four days ago.

The police officials seized mobile phones and recovered Rs 31.10 lakh cash from their possession on Thursday.

The accused identified as Abdul Majeed, 31, and Shaheen Begum, 30 were friends and allegedly planned to steal cash from the scooter of a businessman.

Majeed, a resident of Secunderabad, is an employee of AM Corporation at Ranigunj. Begum, a resident of Uppal, works at Dandy Ice Cream parlour.

Majeed, who works at the company of the complainant, prepared a duplicate key of the lock of the scooter and handed it over to Shaheen Begum. "On March 2, Majeed along with his employer came to Troop Bazaar and collected cash from traders and kept it

Cricket betting racket busted, two arrested

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The North Zone Team of the Commissioner's Task Force busted a cricket betting racket after conducting a raid at a gaming house at Gowliguda and apprehended two organisers on Thursday.

The accused have been identified as Praveen Agarwal, 30, a resident of Bahadurpura and Lakhan Sarda, 29, a resident of Gowliguda.

Earlier, the duo were habituated to cricket bettings. Few months ago, they met the main organiser Sanketh, a native of Rajasthan. They hatched a plan to organise cricket betting and share the profits. Few months back the main organiser Sanketh provided betting app, its login ID and password to the duo, which provides online score as well as betting ratios.

Agarwal and Sarda used to organise cricket bettings from the residence of Lakhan Sarda at Gowliguda with 20 punters directly and over calls for test matches and T20 series. Based on a tip off, the officials raided the gaming house and apprehended the duo while they were betting on the Australia Vs South Africa ODI Cricket match. Officials seized Rs 40,000 cash and two phones from their possession.

STATE AGREES IN PRINCIPLE TO SUPPLY DRINKING WATER TO TN

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao has in principle agreed to supply drinking water for Tamil Nadu in consultation with the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy from a perennial and assured source. This assurance came in response to a request from a delegation of Ministers and officers of Tamil Nadu Government which called on Chandrashekar Rao at Pragathi Bhavan on Thursday.

The Chief Minister suggested to the delegation to send a formal proposal from Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu requesting him and also AP Chief Minister in that regard. He further suggested that soon after receiving the proposal there should be a meeting among the three states at officers' and experts' level to prepare a report based on the discussions to proceed further. "Let the officers come to a consensus for taking a final decision. As and when this materializes, let India learn through this as to how states can cooperate with each other," K Chandrashekar Rao said.



Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao with the ministerial delegation from Tamil Nadu at Pragathi Bhavan on Thursday

The delegation from Tamil Nadu consisted of Ministers SP Velumani and D Jayakumar and Secretary PWD Dr K Manivasan and Advisor Dr M Sheelapriya.

In the meeting that held with the delegation Ministers KT Rama Rao, Vemula Prashanth Reddy, Errabelli Dayakar Rao, Chief Advisor Rajiv Sharma, Chief Secretary Somesh

Kumar, Principal Secretary Irrigation Rajat Kumar, CMO officers S Narsing Rao, Smitha Sabharwal, OSD to CM Sridhar Rao Deshpande, Engineer in Chief Muralidhar Rao and CE Interstate water Narasimha Rao were present.

The Chief Minister, while interacting with the delegation said that for the drinking water needs of any state, the neigh-

bouring states should be benevolent. He said that he raised the issue of drinking water problem of Tamil Nadu and also other issues of whole country in NITI Aayog meetings several times. TRS MPS raised the issue of Tamil Nadu drinking water couple of times in Lok Sabha, the CM said.

He said that in fact the whole country should feel ashamed

The CM suggested to the members of delegation to send a formal request proposal from the CM of Tamil Nadu to him and also to the CM of Andhra Pradesh

for the suffering of Tamil Nadu in drinking water front. The Chief Minister further said out of the 70,000 TMC of water available in India, after meeting the irrigation needs of the entire country, still there would be a surplus of 30,000 TMC of water. Out of this just 10,000 TMC of water is enough to properly put to use for drinking water purposes in the country. The Chief Minister suggested the delegation that they should have a special strategy to fight for their drinking water which shall take priority over everything else.

Later, the Chief Minister made a phone call to his AP counterpart and discussed about the Tamil Nadu delegation request.

Soon Telangana to have 10 new Bharosa Centres

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Director-General of Police Mahender Reddy has hinted at establishing Bharosa Centres in 10 more districts across Telangana. The centre has been set up to help women in distress along with dealing with cases under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. It is a one-stop centre to resolve problems faced by women and children.

The centre also provides psychological services with the help of a Clinical Psychologist, social counselors and legal counselors.

Speaking as the chief guest in the 20th anniversary celebrations of civil society organisation 'Taruni', whose domain is woman and child welfare, the Bharosa Centre has been set up to rule out the need for women and children, being subjected to work place, physical and sexual harassment, mental agony and financial troubles, visiting the police stations and to get relief to them under one roof.

On the occasion, the DGP lauded the achievements of 'Taruni'. The organisation has the record of rescuing over 17,000 women and children directly and indirectly across the state. The DGP recalled the contribution of various civil society organisations to protect women and children. He noted that Taruni is associated with the police since 2016.

Swati Lakra, IGP Women Safety said that Bharosa Centres, SHE teams, NRI cells and Taruni have been playing important roles to provide



DGP felicitates Samata case investigators

HYDERABAD: Director-General of Police Mahender Reddy on Thursday felicitated OSD Malla Reddy (the then SP), DSP Satyanarayana Reddy, CI Rana Pratap, SI N Venkatesh and other officials who investigated Samata case and ensured that the guilty were awarded capital punishment in record time. He presented them with shawls and flower bouquets. The

felicitated includes head constables and constables involved in the investigation and public prosecutor. The investigators explained the DGP and Additional director-general North Zone Nagi Reddy how scientific evidence was collected in the case and how information has been gathered from locals. The investigators were also given cash incentives too.

security to women. In the three years of its operation, Bharosa centres have witnessed a total of 6,437 cases, with a total of 898 POCSO cases, and got convictions in 37 cases.

There were a reported 4,490 domestic violence cases and the two centres have managed to close 3,627 cases. The centre in the three years also received 240 rape cases and

809 other cases. A total of 447 chargesheets have also been filed through the Bharosa centres by the police.

Principal Secretary Parthasarathi, agriculture secretary Dr Janardhan Reddy, British Deputy High Commissioner Fleming, Forest Department CCF Raghuvir, former civil servant Prabhakar Reddy and others took part in the programme.

BUDGET SESSION

Congress gears up to corner TRS in Assembly

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With Telangana Assembly Budget session all set to commence from February 6, the opposition parties have geared up to corner the state government for failing to implement crop loan waiver and supply urea to them in time and plunging the state into 'debt trap'.

Apart from this, the opposition has also decided to raise a host of issues including unemployment allowance, Rythu Bandhu, double bed room houses, filling up of vacant jobs and alleged corruption in irrigation projects. Congress Legislature Party (CLP) has decided to demand the state government to run the Budget session for 30 days and would mount pressure on government in BAC meeting to be held after Governor's address. The Congress, which alleged that the government has failed



It is unfortunate that the state has a Chief Minister who behaves like dictator. Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao looted one lakh crore and pushed the state into debt trap. Mid-Manair, Sripada Yellampally were constructed during Congress regime

—MALLU BHATTI VIKRAMARKA
Congress Leader

to provide water to even a single acre, though it spent one lakh crore on Kaleswaram Project, is likely to demand the government for a debate on corruption in the irrigation projects. Also, the Congress is likely to bring up coronavirus issue in the Assembly.

Reacting on the proposal of government to pass a resolution against Central government's CAA and NPR, CLP leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka found fault with the government stating that there is no use with the resolutions. Addressing the media

on Thursday, Bhatti said, "It is unfortunate that the state has a Chief Minister who behaves like dictator. Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao looted one lakh crore and pushed the state into debt trap. Mid-Manair, Sripada Yellampally were constructed during Congress regime. KCR had forgotten the assurances given during elections," he alleged.

On the other hand, the ruling TRS government has also geared up to counter the opposition in Assembly. The government is also likely to introduce new Revenue Act, new GHMC and others besides passing resolution against CAA.

'AP fishermen using banned nets in TS waters'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Animal Husbandry Minister Talasani Srinivas Yadav on Thursday directed Commissioner of Fisheries Dr C Suvarna to act against fishermen from Andhra Pradesh for allegedly using banned and unscientific fishing nets in Telangana river waters.

The Minister wanted stern action to be taken against those who were hindering the efforts of the Telangana government for the welfare of the fishermen in the State.

He said the government released fishlings worth crores of rupees into the Srisaillam backwaters (Krishna River) for the benefit of Telangana fishermen, but certain unscrupu-

lous fishermen from AP were using banned nets and fishing in the waters. He asked them not to hesitate and initiate action on such fishermen illegally entering into the State waters.

In written orders to the district Police and Fishery Department, Talasani wanted teams to be constituted under Mahipal, a Fishery Department officer, to restrict the movement of the illegal fishermen who were catching fishlings released into the backwaters. He also wanted the department to take the issue to the notice of their counterparts in Andhra Pradesh as a majority of illegal fishermen fishing in Telangana waters are from AP.

By-election for Nizamabad seat on April 7

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Election Commission of India has released election schedule for by-election of MLC seat from Nizamabad under the Local Authorities Constituency to fill in the vacancy. The vacancy arose because of disqualification of R Bhoopathi Reddy on 16 January 2019. Accordingly, notification would be released on March 12, 2020. Last date of filing nominations is March 19, scrutiny of nominations is March 20, last date for withdrawal of candidatures is March 23, date of polling is on April 7 and counting will be held on April 9.



Newly-elected chairman of Telangana State Cooperative Apex Bank Limited Konduri Ravinder Rao with Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao on Thursday

TSCAB chief elected unanimously

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Konduri Ravinder Rao was elected chairman of the Telangana State Cooperative Apex Bank Limited, while Gongidi Mahender Reddy was elected vice-chairman unanimously in the elections held at TSCAB office here.

Minister for Agriculture S Niranjan Reddy thanked farmers for giving their full support to the TRS-supported candidates. He thanked the directors of cooperative central banks for their support to Konduri Ravinder Rao and Gongidi Mahender Reddy.

He greeted the newly-elected chairman and vice-chairman. Listing out the reforms

Minister Singireddy said the State was spending Rs 60,000 crore on projects and electricity like no other State

introduced by the government, the Minister said that the farmers' coordination committees would be changed as Rythu Bandhu Samitis. He said the State was spending Rs 60,000 crore on projects and electricity like no other State in the country.

Regulate prices of surgical masks: Cong

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Former Minister Mohammed Ali Shabbir on Thursday demanded that the State Government take immediate measures to regulate the supply of surgical masks and hand sanitizers and control their prices.

Shabbir Ali, in a statement, said that the prices of surgical face masks and hand sanitizers have increased by more than 10 times ever since the first case of coronavirus was confirmed in Hyderabad last week.

The surgical mask, which was sold for Rs 3-5 per piece is now being sold for Rs 25-30 per mask. Similarly, the hand sanitizers are not being sold at MRP.

"The increase in number of coronavirus cases/suspect has created a sense of panic among the common people. As advised by the authorities, people want to take all precautions like wearing a mask and cleaning their hands with sanitizers. However, the precaution is turning out to be a burden on the common man due to sudden increase in prices," he said.

CC roads in villages by March-end

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The state government has made arrangements to spend at least Rs 600 crore by this month end to lay CC roads in villages as part of MGNREGS. Of the funds, at least 60 per cent of the funds would go towards wages to workers.

The government wanted to give priority to those villages

in allotting CC roads based on the progress the villages achieved in implementing Palle Pragathi.

Besides NREGS, CC roads would be laid in villages under Prime Minister Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY). According to officials, the Centre has agreed to give funds to lay roads up to 800 km under PMGSY phase-III.

HANDS ON



As part of Pattana Pragathi programme, Excise Minister Srinivas Goud drives a tractor after handing over the vehicles to the gram panchayats of Hanwada and Mahbubnagar on Thursday

FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND

Mahbubnagar adopts AI-based tech to combat anaemia

Over 65,000 school students screened through Health Cube, a smart diagnostics solution

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In its endeavor to provide people easy access to timely diagnostics, the district authorities of Mahbubnagar have adopted an innovative AI-based technology solution to conduct anaemia screening for school-children under the 'Anaemia Mukh Bharat' initiative.

Mahbubnagar is the first district in Telangana, where artificial intelligence technology has been used in anaemia screening interventions. This has been enabled by HealthCube, a portable device, similar to the size of a set-top box, which has been used to conduct screening in over 250



schools in the district. At the end of the project, over 65,000 students were screened.

HealthCube not only enables timely and quick diagnostics, but also ensures accuracy and

The device can be used in even the absence of electricity or internet, so it is ideally suited to remote, far-flung locations which lack access to doctors, diagnostic labs and internet connectivity

cost-efficiency. It does not require a doctor to operate it and with proper training, anyone with education qualification equivalent to 8th standard can successfully use the device to conduct the tests with 99 per cent accuracy.

Through the smart diagnostic system installed in HealthCube, 33 tests can be conducted in 3 to 30 minutes. Results for these can be obtained

across various parameters like vitals, biochemistry, infectious diseases, and cardiac markers, etc. The results are saved electronically on cloud with the help of an Android-based application and accessed easily on mobile phones and laptops.

The device can be used in the absence of electricity or internet, so it is ideally suited to remote, far-flung locations which lack access to doctors,

diagnostic labs and internet connectivity.

Anaemia is a major health concern for India and as per the data from 4th National Family Health Survey (NFHS), 54 per cent adolescent girls in the age group 15-19 years are anaemic, while the figure for adolescent boys stands at 29 per cent in the same age group across India.

In Telangana, 56.6 per cent of all women and 48.2 per cent pregnant women in the age group of 15-49 were found to be anaemic. In Mahbubnagar district, over 50 per cent of women in the same age group were also found to be anaemic as per the NFHS-4.

Cong condemns Revanth's arrest

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Congress leaders N Uttam Kumar Reddy, Mohammed Shabbir Ali, AICC secretary SA Sampath Kumar, Mallu Ravi on Thursday condemned the arrest of TPCC working president and Malkajgiri MP A Revanth Reddy.

"How can the police arrest an MP in this manner? Will the government also arrest people if they question the government? Democrats, intellectuals and educationists have to think on it. There is no Constitution and law in the state. Only Kalvakuntla constitution is being implemented," they said in a statement. They called upon the democrats, intellectuals and educationists to launch movement against TRS.

SHORT READS



Tension in Coimbatore after attack on mosques

COIMBATORE: Tension prevailed in parts of the city early on Thursday after two mosques came under attack here, following which security was beefed up, police said. While a bottle filled with petrol was hurled at a mosque in Ganapati locality, there were reports of stones being thrown at another place of worship in Kovalpur. The incidents came in retaliation to an attack on a Hindu Munnani worker late on Wednesday night, they said. Madukkarai Anand was attacked by some unidentified people, who came on bikes, when he was returning from a pro-CAA rally at around 10 p.m.

PM Modi hails women's contributions in different fields

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday hailed women's contribution in different fields, saying woman power is securing the country and that he has been getting many motivating stories on exceptional women achievers. "Inspiring women entrepreneurs. Nari Shakti securing India. Women excelling in sports and leadership. Women farmers showing the way. Been getting many motivating stories on exceptional women achievers. Do keep sharing more such life journeys! #ShelnspiresUs," Modi tweeted. Modi had on Tuesday said that he will be handing over his social media accounts to 'women who inspire', to mark Women's Day on March 8.

Nirbhaya: SC to hear on Mar 23 Centre's plea against HC

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court Thursday said it would hear on March 23 the appeal filed by the Centre challenging the Delhi High Court order that the four death row convicts in the Nirbhaya gang rape and murder case have to be executed simultaneously. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told the bench, headed by Justice R Banumathi, that the trial court has fixed March 20 as date of execution of the four convicts who have exhausted all their legal remedies. Mehta told the bench, also comprising Justices Ashok Bhushan and a S Bopanna, that these convicts have made a mockery of the system by their delaying tactics and taken it for a ride. The bench said that it would hear the matter on merits on March 23 and made it clear that no adjournments will be granted.

Court dismisses Tahir's plea to surrender; arrested

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Abducting AAP councillor Tahir Hussain was arrested by Delhi Police on Thursday after a court here dismissed his plea seeking to surrender before it in connection with alleged killing of Intelligence Bureau (IB) official Ankit Sharma during the recent violence in northeast Delhi.



The reason given in the application for moving this application does not justify the conduct of the applicant to choose this forum for seeking the reliefs," the judge said

Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Vishal Pahuja refused to entertain Hussain's plea saying that the relief sought by him was outside the court's jurisdiction. The court said that as per the provisions of 177 Criminal Procedure Code (Ordinary place of inquiry and trial), the offence shall ordinarily be inquired into and tried by court within whose local jurisdiction it is committed. "In the instant case, the offence has been committed within the jurisdiction of PS Dayalpur which falls within the jurisdiction of Karkardooma Court. The reason given in the application does not justify the conduct of the applicant to choose this forum for seeking the reliefs," the judge said. Advocate Mukesh Kalia,

appearing for Hussain, submitted that there is a grave apprehension of threat to his life and therefore he has not surrendered before competent court as there is "charged environment" in Karkardooma District court. He said Hussain has no connection or involvement in the FIR registered by the police and he is being falsely implicated. Considering the gravity of the situation, Hussain wishes to surrender before the court, he said. The court said the Delhi High Court has specifically made a division of the jurisdictions, be that of the police stations or the courts district-wise and work has been allocated accordingly. It said: "This court is a special designated court dealing with the matters of MPs/MLAs. The high court has designated this court as special court to deal with cases on fast track with endeavour to dispose of the same within one year as its objective. "The applicant does not fall in the aforesaid category, hence this application cannot be entertained by this court." The court further said that the relief sought by Hussain does not fall within the domain or jurisdiction of this court, "hence, no such relief can be granted. In view of the observations, the application deserves to be dismissed".

Cong slams suspension of its 7 MPs as 'dictatorial'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday alleged that the suspension of its seven members from Lok Sabha for the entire session was a "dictatorial decision" by the government aimed at weakening the Opposition's voice ahead of a debate over Delhi riots.



Lok Sabha passed a motion suspending seven Congress members for the remaining period of the Budget session for their "gross misconduct" after they snatched papers from the Speaker's table and "utter disregard" for House rules. As soon as the House met at 3 pm following an adjournment, Meenakshi Lekhi, who was presiding the House, named Gaurav Gogoi, T N Prathapan, Dean Kuriakose, Manicka Tagore, Rajmohan Unnithan, Benny Behanan and Gurjeet Singh Aujla. Reacting to the development, Congress's leader in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said it was a "government decision" and not

one taken by the Speaker. Asserting that the Congress members had done nothing wrong, Chowdhury said it was a "dictatorial decision" and one that was motivated by "revenge politics". "We saw revenge politics in House, orders were given by the chairperson to suspend seven Cong MPs for this session," he said. Chowdhury alleged that the suspension was an attempt to weaken the party in the House as the government fears a dis-

BJP welcomes Cong MPs' suspension

NEW DELHI:

Calling the conduct of some Congress members in Lok Sabha as "unprecedented", the BJP on Thursday welcomed the decision to suspend seven "unruly" members of the opposition party from the House for the remainder of the session. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi said his party has requested Speaker Om Birla to set up a panel to look into the continuous "indiscipline" by Congress members. "Snatching papers from the Speaker's table is utmost disrespect to the Chair. We condemn this," he told reporters. Union minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat said the "unruly" behaviour of the Congress MPs was "unprecedented", and it would have shocked the country's founding fathers.

Digvijaya blames five BJP leaders for 'horse-trading'

PNS ■ BHOPAL



Congress veteran Digvijaya Singh on Thursday accused five BJP leaders, including former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, of being involved in the alleged attempt to poach MLAs to pull down the Kamal Nath-led government in the state.

The BJP, however, hit back at Singh saying that he was lying, and maintained that the party had nothing to do with the developments. In a late-night political drama in Madhya Pradesh on Tuesday, the Congress claimed that the opposition BJP took eight MLAs to a hotel in Haryana as part of a conspiracy to topple the Congress government. On Thursday morning, the Congress held a press conference in New Delhi, in which it claimed that the BJP "abducted 14 MLAs" to bring down its government in Madhya Pradesh. Taking it to Twitter on Thursday, Digvijaya held five BJP leaders including Chouhan, responsible for the recent "horse-trading"

"Modi-Shah ji, why are you looking for (black) money in other countries, it's in your party!" he added on the micro-blogging site.

— Digvijaya Singh, Congress veteran

Bhupendra Singh were ministers in the previous BJP government in Madhya Pradesh. On Monday, Digvijaya Singh had alleged his party MLAs were being offered a "huge amount of money" by BJP leaders as part of their attempt to destabilise the Kamal Nath government. The state BJP, however, termed this entire episode as the internal tussle of the ruling Congress. Talking to PTI, BJP spokesman Rajnish Agrawal alleged, "Digvijaya Singh is speaking lies. The entire episode has exposed the internal tussle of Congress. None of the MLAs, allegedly involved in entire episode, have made allegations against the BJP."

30 honey-trapping cases booked in Raj

PNS ■ JAIPUR

Thirty cases of honeytrapping were registered in Rajasthan from December 2018 to January this year, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Shanti Dhariwal informed the state assembly on Thursday. He was replying to a question raised by BJP legislator Kalicharan Saraf.



Thirty cases of honeytrapping were registered in the state from December 2018 to January this year, Dhariwal said. A total of 17 cases were registered in Jaipur, Jodhpur and Ajmer divisions from January 1, 2019 to January 31, 2020, he said. Charge sheets have been filed in nine cases, investigation is pending in seven and the final report (FR) has been filed in one

case, he added. In Jaipur Commissionerate, nine cases of honey trapping were registered in the last two years. Nineteen people were arrested in six cases and charge sheets filed, Dhariwal told the House. Investigation in two cases is pending and the FR has been filed in one case, he said.

Intelligent machines challenge to job creation

PNS ■ KOLKATA

With India having a vast pool of young population, the rise in use of intelligent machines poses a challenge to job creation in the country, secretary to the Union ministry of science and technology, Ashutosh Sharma, said on Thursday.



Another challenge faced by technology is ensuring sustainable development, he said. Sharma said intelligent machines are emanating from nations with a greying population such as Japan and Germany. "These countries cannot grow economically without intelligent machines. The situation is just the opposite in India which has a vast young population. Since we cannot stop the march of technology, planners in India must figure out how to create jobs in a

changing environment," Sharma said at an event of the Merchants' Chambers of Commerce & Industry here. Diffusion of technology is not as rapid in MSMEs as it is in large companies, he said. Sharma said the department has introduced a new policy - Scientific Social Responsibility (SSR).

"Connecting with MSMEs is part of SSR policy. SSR has the potential to fundamentally transform society by improving lives of our citizens while helping the nation achieve its goals for sustainable development," Sharma added. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds

earmarked by companies can be used for R&D purpose now, he said adding that a corporate can now finance an R&D project from its CSR fund, with matching contribution by the government. He said India is ranked third in the number of start-ups. The country has 28,000 start-ups of which 15,000 are based on technology. The department is supporting 3,000 start-ups through 120 incubators, he said.

Passenger held with 5 bullets at Delhi airport

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

An Allahabad-bound passenger was apprehended at Delhi airport for allegedly carrying five live bullets in his bag, a senior official said on Thursday.

A Central Industrial Security Force official deputed at the Indira Gandhi International Airport detected bullet-like objects while checking the luggage of the Indian national, Chander Mohan Bali, around 1 pm on Wednesday, he said. "Five live bullet rounds of 7.65 mm calibre were recovered from the passenger who was supposed to take an Air India flight to Allahabad," the official said.

Gang of 4 battery thieves arrested

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A gang allegedly involved in battery theft in south Delhi has been busted with the arrest of four persons, police said on Thursday. According to the police, a total of 128 stolen batteries, most of which are used in set top boxes to provide Internet service, have been seized from them. The matter came to light

after an Internet service provider firm filed a complaint with the police that some batteries installed at their office in Safdarjung Enclave have been stolen. Following this, an investigation was initiated and Guddu Gautam, Lal Bacchan, Arun Kumar and Akram were arrested. With this, seven cases of battery theft have been solved, police said.

'14 to 15 MLAs in touch with Aghadi'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra minister Jayant Patil has claimed that 14 to 15 BJP MLAs from the state are in touch with the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi, but the ruling alliance is not willing to commit the mistake of "poaching" opposition leaders.



Patil's comment came in the wake of the Congress' allegation that the BJP was carrying out an "Operation Lotus" in Madhya Pradesh to bring down the Kamal Nath government in that state. Patil, who is the Maharashtra NCP chief, also accused the BJP of being desperate for power. "Fourteen to fifteen MLAs of the opposition party are in touch with us even today. We have to do their works as we share good relations with them (the MLAs concerned). We understand their mindset," Patil told reporters on Wednesday outside the state Legislature complex here. "Yet, it is not right to poach

legislators...We don't intend to make that mistake. Our focus is on ensuring our government sustains," he added. The BJP emerged as the single largest party in Maharashtra after the Assembly polls in October last year. But, it failed to form government after the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena snapped ties with it over the issue of sharing the chief ministerial post. The Congress on Wednesday alleged "poaching" bid on its MLAs and allies by the opposition BJP in Madhya Pradesh.

Uproar in LS over remark by MP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha on Thursday witnessed uproar over a controversial remark by an RLP MP, who is a BJP ally, against the Gandhi family during a discussion on coronavirus, leading to adjournment of proceedings for over an hour.

Congress members stormed the Well of the House as soon as Hanuman Beniwal said there should be a probe on whether coronavirus is being spread from the "home" of Congress President Sonia Gandhi as a large number of people who were found to be affected by the virus are from Italy. Fourteen Italians have tested positive for coronavirus in India. "Earlier, Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said that party leader Rahul Gandhi had forewarned the government on the impending threat from coronavirus.

Haryana ex-minister, daughter launch front

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH



Former Haryana minister Nirmal Singh and his daughter Chitra Sarwara on Wednesday floated a political front, vowing to protect interests of the northern part of the state.

Nirmal Singh, who had served as a minister in the Bharaj Lal-led Congress government in the state, had quit the party after his daughter Chitra, who earlier held the post of the All-India Mahila Congress general secretary, was denied ticket from Ambala Cantonment in the assembly elections held last year. The former minister and his daughter then contested as independent candidates from Ambala City and Ambala Cantt, respectively, but both lost the elections despite getting a sizeable number of votes. The Haryana Democratic Front, which will be headed by Singh, who has influence in the state's northern region, has appealed to all 'like-minded'

forces to come together to strengthen the new outfit. "The front will protect the interests of north Haryana. We will be holding a big conference of our workers on March 15 at Ambala," said Singh, who has been a four-time MLA. "The way people supported us in the October 2019 assembly polls, it shows that they want us to be actively involved in politics to serve their cause and raise their voice," said Sarwara. She said the front believes in "clean politics" and will encourage people with clean image to join them.

'16,076 crew, passengers onboard ships from China not allowed to disembark on Indian ports'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 16,076 crew and passengers onboard ships from China or having travel history to affected countries have not been allowed to disembark at Indian ports, a shipping ministry official said on Thursday.



However, all possible assistance and help are being provided to these passengers and crew -- onboard 452 ships anchored at designated places -- as per WHO guidelines in case of any fever or symptoms. "As many as 452 ships with EXIM cargo and 16,076 crew and passengers have arrived at Indian ports so far from China or a travel history to countries

affected from coronavirus. As a precautionary measure to prevent any outbreak, we have not allowed the passengers and crew to disembark but ships were allowed to anchor at designated places. The cargo was brought with all precautions.

"No shore pass is being issued to the crew/seafarers having travel history from the infected countries," the official told PTI. The official said that as per WHO guidelines, scanning of all aboard on the vessels are being done and all

necessary facilities were being extended to them. The protocol is being maintained with all help in case of fever or sickness to those on board.

The official added that at Paradip port a crew member onboard Chemstar Stellar developed fever, and he along with his wife were evacuated and transferred to SCB Medical College, Cuttack for further testing. The vessel had departed from Zapu, China on February 10 and had reached Paradip Port on March 1. All required protocols are being followed. India has 12 major ports - Deendayal (erstwhile Kandla), Mumbai, JNPT, Marmugao, New Mangalore, Cochin, Chennai, Kamarajar (earlier Ennore), V O Chidambaram, Visakhapatnam, Paradip and Kolkata (including Haldia) - that handled 699.04 MT of cargo during 2018-19. There are about 200 non-major ports under the control of states.

The super club

IITs, IIMs & DU have made it to the world top 100 rankings in subjects but we should crack the institutional charts too



In a general global atmosphere of gloom and doom, here's a bit of good news for India. As many as 26 departments of higher educational institutions in the country feature among the top 100 in the world in their respective categories. According to the latest edition of the World University Rankings by Subject, 26 have made it to the top 100 and two of them even figured in the global top 50. Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) calculates performance of institutions of higher education based on four parameters — research impact, productivity of the research faculty, academic reputation and employer reputation. Significantly, all the departments to figure in the list are in Central Government-run institutions, the usual top performers — IITs, IIMs, IISc and the Delhi University. IIT Bombay has nine programmes, IIT Delhi has five among the top 100, while IIT Kharagpur, IIT Madras and IISc Bangalore have recorded three programmes each. The subjects featuring the highest levels of Indian representation are chemistry (20 universities); computer science and information systems (20); physics and astronomy (18); biological sciences (16); electrical engineering (15) and chemical engineering (14). But before we start celebrating, consider this: We have a whopping 993 universities, 51,649 higher educational institutions and 14.16 lakh teaching staff at the last count in September 2019. Given these mind-boggling numbers, we should have had more than 26 departments in the QS rankings. This suggests that there is something intrinsically wrong with our higher education system. What else can explain the fact that 80 per cent of our 2.9 million science and engineering graduates are unemployable? It's a sad reflection on our pedagogy skills if less than one per cent of the 1.5 million engineers, who enter the job market every year, are hired by the top 100 companies. There are constant complaints from industries that there is a major gap in what is being taught at our professional institutions and the skills required in the real world. And this is not just restricted to technical education.

So how do we change this dismal scenario? For starters, we need to invest more in research. When was the last time that innovations or path-breaking solutions emerged from Indian academic research? An increased focus on globalisation of curriculum and methods of instruction is needed so that our students become participants in the global economy. We also need to increase Government spending in higher education so that we can build better infrastructure, improve methods of research and hire world-class faculty that encourages a higher order of thinking, innovation, problem-solving, critical thinking and client handling. Though this year's Budget saw a five per cent increase in allocation for education, up from ₹94,800 crore last year to ₹99,300 crore, the fact remains that our spending is lower than world standards. In fact, it has remained almost stagnant over the last eight years. Besides, among public universities, around 97 per cent of our students go to those at the State level while the remaining three per cent make it to Central universities. Yet 57.5 per cent of the Government's higher education Budget goes to Central universities, IITs and IIMs. State universities also need funds and resources. Given this scenario, it is sad that Indian firms donate heavily to foreign universities as they feel they will get better returns by investing there. It is vital to develop a synergy between the Government, the industry and universities as big business houses are much more likely to invest in higher education if they derive value in terms of an excellent workforce and a knowledge pool. A separate research assessment body must be set up to regulate recruitment and appraisal standards. Also, stronger intellectual property protection must be enforced to encourage innovation and partnerships with the industry. Only then can we ensure that more of our universities improve their global ranking and often appear in the top 200 list.

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Transparent tenders

NITI Aayog plans to review norms, particularly in the L1 category, to ensure quality and equal opportunity for players



Faster, better or cheaper, pick any two" is the mantra followed by most businesses in assessing the most viable deals. But most Government departments in India have for decades prioritised the "cheaper" over the "better" while giving out contracts, an approach which has impacted the quality of the task executed. In the end, most departments have ended up looking penny wise but pound foolish. Our tender process is askew with a notice appearing in leading newspapers inviting offers with technical and commercial specifications. The vetting committees screen them, shortlist vendors and then evaluate them on the basis of their commercial bids. The lowest of the commercial offers (L1) is selected and awarded the tender. In other words, you compromise quality on the service rendered, the equipment and talent used in doing so and the completed product. Quality comes at a price, simply because it's calculated on the basis of established industry parameters and is not open to subjective assessment or manipulated mindsets. The L1 system has, therefore, always raised questions about the credibility of our selection processes and resulted in criticism and questioning by other bidders. Sometimes, these have led to legal proceedings and stalling of the tender itself. This is why the NITI Aayog is mulling a plan to review tendering norms, particularly in the L1 category, to ensure transparency and equal opportunity for all players. Often transnational companies argue that it is difficult to cut costs for their equipment that are not manufactured in India and, therefore, lose out on many of our projects that could have done better with their expertise. Most global tenders, therefore, follow a quality-based selection process (QBS) where the emphasis is on securing the most competent candidate and where higher weightage is given to the technical proposals. There is the more practical quality cost-based selection process (QCBS), where both the technical and financial proposals are used to determine the winning submission. The idea is to identify the strongest technical proposal at the best price. Telecom technology procurement on the lowest-bid method has cost us as PSUs don't get time-tested products from market leaders in the segment.

The norms need to be reviewed simply because far too many players come up courtesy online bidding processes. With many parties to choose from, the organisation concerned, through the L1 benchmark, tries to take the competitive cost advantage and dilutes all other deciding factors. Often, a supplier makes an aggressive bid, quoting an unimaginable price that does not even cover the cost of production or promises a very slim profit margin. This is done to ensure good testimonials in the market. Once the deal is sealed, all methods of cost-cutting are applied to increase profit margins. In the process, it is not just the customer, who ends up with inferior, quality goods or services but also genuine bidders, who eventually lose the race. The NITI Aayog must give higher weightage to quality, safety, implementation schedules and technical requirements. Quality checks and technical trials must be ensured at the initial stage itself. The price bids of top rankers could be opened and the one offering the lowest price could then be signed on.

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Win over thy neighbour

Given the freeze in the relations between India and Nepal, it is time for New Delhi to engage with Naya Nepal in a way that it is assured of the sincerity of its words



RISHI GUPTA

Soon after the peaceful conclusion of the civil war in Nepal in 2006, several political observers were of the view that it be referred to as "Naya Nepal." Naya, a Hindi-Nepali term, refers to a "new" nation that emerged at the cost of 17,000 lives after a decade-long civil war. Changes primarily included the ouster of the centuries-old monarchy and Nepal's transition into a democratic State, where the king was no more considered to be the sole administrator/protector, the restructuring of the country from a Hindu State to a secular one, the inclusion of the Maoist guerrilla fighters into the mainstream political process, reinstating of the multi-party political system and providing political freedom and adult franchise to the people.

Naya Nepal also faced the challenge of writing a democratic Constitution, giving justice to families who had lost their loved ones during the civil war, maintaining political stability, narrowing the thaw between the Pahadi and Madhesi groups and improving the state of the economy, which was in a shambles due to the war. While the civil war affected the internal structure of the country, it had an enormous impact on its foreign policy, especially towards India. It is often believed that Nepal, a country that falls between the two Asian giants, India and China, has been a ground for competition between them to strengthen their influence, precisely due to its strategic location. While China aims to focus on protecting its interests in Tibet, India wants a stable neighbour. Traditionally, India has been a friend of Nepal. The India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship, signed in 1950, recognises the "special relationship" shared between them. The uniqueness of this pact is characterised by open borders, free movement of people, deeply rooted socio-cultural ties and people-to-people relations.

However, with a change in its internal structure, there has been a change in the thought process of the new regime. Today, Nepal's narrative is so-called nationalistic, extreme and abhors pro-India sentiments. The anti-India tirade among the Nepalese population is not new. Despite all efforts to improve bilateral relations, distances have only grown. It is here that sincere engagement is essential to reduce differences.

Need for a template: The anti-India sentiment is acutely "political" and has become a part of everyday life, where a daily dose of dislike is being given to the Nepalese population, based on selective information. While in the past, several attempts were made to isolate Nepal from India, in the last five years, differences have become grave.

During several democratic move-



ments in Nepal, in 1960, 1990 and 2006, India played the role of a well-wisher to bridge the gap between the erstwhile monarchy and the democratic forces. Amid these natural ties a fallout in the relations is not unnatural, considering the nature of interaction between the two countries in the last five years.

The beginning: The year 2014 was promising for India-Nepal relations for two reasons. One, Nepal was the second neighbouring country Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited after taking charge in August 2014. This was also the first bilateral trip by an Indian Prime Minister to the Himalayan nation in 17 years. This signalled the priority the new Government accorded to better the strained relationship with Nepal. Then again, the Prime Minister returned to Kathmandu in November 2014, to attend the 18th Annual Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). This summit was another opportunity for India to minimise the existing trust deficit with Nepal and other regional neighbours.

Second, the two countries revised their diplomatic channels of communication. This was indeed a strong message for other competitive powers that India would continue to maintain its goodwill and developmental works in Nepal. India's swift despatch of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) teams to Nepal

during the 2015 earthquake to carry out rescue operations in affected areas was a major friendly operation. Later, India's financial assistance to Nepal for relief and reconstruction of the damaged property showcased the "naturalness" of its relation with Nepal.

Blockade: In September 2015, the Constituent Assembly of Nepal promulgated a new democratic republican Constitution. This happened seven years after Nepal's transformation into a democracy. While Kathmandu rejoiced the hasty completion of a new Constitution, issues like the rights of women, demarcation of the federal boundaries and marginalisation of the Madhesi took a violent turn. As a result, movement of goods and people were obstructed due to violence and arson at the India-Nepal border.

Nepal was quick to call it an India-imposed blockade, which was outrightly rejected by the latter. This saw a heated discussion in the Upper House of the Indian Parliament and was categorised as the biggest national emergency in Nepal. The alleged blockade was used as a tool to influence masses in Nepal during the 2017 local and 2018 national elections, too. Since then, the blockade has become an issue of national emergency in the neighbouring country.

Threat perception: In 2016, Nepal implemented its first National Security Policy (NSP). While the then Nepali

Congress-led Government hesitated to use blockade as a national security threat, the present KP Oli-led Government has amended the NSP and categorised "blockade" as a national security threat. It needs to be mentioned here that through the 1950 Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship, New Delhi had assured Kathmandu that it would not face any external aggression on its part. In the past 65 years of diplomatic interactions, Nepal has felt secure. Therefore, Kathmandu's sudden change on matters of mutual security is worrying because it has more political connotations rather than a will to resolve issues.

Cutting people-to-people ties: The updated National Security Policy 2019 under the Communist regime in Nepal has not yet been made public and it is believed that it is the use of the term "blockade" that has ruffled feathers in New Delhi. Meanwhile, during an interaction, an advisor to the Nepalese Prime Minister indicated that Nepal intends to regulate its borders. The word "regulate" incorporates limiting the transit points at what has been a largely open border, establishing a dedicated Border Security Force and treating travelling through land routes at par with air routes in terms of document requirements for citizens of the two countries.

Nepal may well cite security reasons for these upcoming upgradations but this will

impact the movement of people from the bordering regions. Notably, people-to-people contact cannot be established between the two countries, a move that seems to be acceding to China's request. While India and Nepal enjoy natural people-to-people relations, restrictions on the free movement will come at a cost to India.

Border disputes: Last November, Nepal objected to the release of a new map of India. It said that the boundaries in the Kalapani region were shown wrongly and sent diplomatic notes to New Delhi. India clarified that in no way does "the new map revisit boundaries with Nepal." It still maintains this position on the issue. The two countries have resolved 98 per cent of border disputes. The Indian side believes that an objection on Kalapani, too, can be resolved diplomatically. However, this does not seem to be the case in Nepal.

Eminent persons group: In 2016, the two countries appointed an Eminent Persons Group (EPG), consisting of relevant experts from India and Nepal, to review bilateral treaties and agreements between the two countries, including the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship. While the group has submitted its report with recommendations to both Governments, it remains under wraps. Reasons are unknown but it stands as a ticking bomb for India. The EPG report may not be a critical issue for us but it is a matter of national prestige for Nepal. Not making it public will put all the blame on India.

In international relations, diplomacy is considered to be the first and the last best resort to resolve bilateral or multilateral issues. India may have assured full diplomatic support to Nepal. However, until these issues are part of the political mandate, the present challenges cannot be resolved. From a foreign policy perspective, Naya Nepal is more challenging and complex for India. The alleged border blockade, the Madhesi movement and now the Kalapani dispute have all become part of our neighbour's national narrative which is undoubtedly hateful and extreme. While all is not lost for the two countries, the increasing presence of China in Nepal and pending bilateral issues between New Delhi and Kathmandu require the best efforts from India's side.

(The writer is doctoral candidate, Centre for South Asian Studies, JNU)

SOUNDBITE

The Health Minister saying that the Government has the coronavirus crisis under control is like the captain of the *Titanic* telling passengers not to panic as his ship was unsinkable.



Congress leader —Rahul Gandhi

This is the digital age but yes, I am a bit particular about what I post and what I don't. I like certain things to be private and people respect that about me.



Actor —Karisma Kapoor

The Indian Government must confront extremist Hindus and their parties. It must stop the massacre of Muslims in order to prevent India's isolation from the world of Islam.



Iran's Supreme Leader —Ayatollah Khamenei

Law-making is not done by an imperial ruler or from the pulpit of a religious leader but by the representatives of the people and you are the enforcers of that law.



National Security Advisor —Ajit Doval

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Bulk up infrastructure

Sir — Shortage of doctors and trained staff is a serious issue India has to deal with as we face the Coronavirus threat. Tackling the widespread impact of the virus may not be a challenge in metropolitan cities. But just in case it reaches smaller cities or villages, the situation will be difficult to handle. It is in such times that the reality of our poor medical infrastructure comes to haunt us. India's doctor-population ratio currently stands at 1:1,457, which is lower than the World Health Organisation's recommended ratio of 1:1,000.

A better healthcare infrastructure is a prerequisite for disaster management. The present crisis may not be as threatening as it is in Wuhan, which has literally been cut off from other Chinese cities but we need to be prepared for any eventuality. Last but not the least, clear and transparent communication between the authorities and the public will go a long way in ensuring that no unnecessary panic is created within the society.

Bal Govind Noida

Safeguard Constitutional morality

This refers to the editorial, "The Bengal gamble" (March 3). To put it in journalistic parlance, Union Home Minister Amit Shah sounded the poll bugle in West Bengal. It was clear from his speech that the BJP would use the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) for whatever it is worth to try and wrest power from the Trinamool Congress (TMC). It is no surprise as for the BJP, playing the religious card to polarise voters is the name of the game. It was ominous that the incendiary "Desh ke gaddaron ko, goli maaron saalon ko" (shoot the traitors) slogan was raised by frenzied BJP supporters in a mammoth march in Kolkata. The loss of life in Delhi has not stopped them from chanting the slogan. It was jarring to hear "goli maaro" and "Bharat mata ki jai" in the same breath. It is frightening to think how many cities and regions will be converted into theatres of communal violence.

It was, however, a climbdown by Shah that he did not link CAA to the National Register of Citizens (NRC) or repeat his favourite terminology "termites." In a rally in Kolkata, he assured that "no minority will have to leave" the country owing to the CAA. While we must be beholden to him for his "generosity", things are not as easy or simple as made out to be by him. The true import of the CAA blows away the argument that it does not affect

End stalemate

Sir — The communal politics of the present regime has turned Delhi into a battleground where Muslims are being assaulted,

killed and their properties are being looted, ransacked and burnt. Inaction on the part of the Modi Government has only made matters worse. Even now, it is not willing to discuss the

issue in Parliament. With at least 48 people killed and more than 200 injured, it is for the Government to restore faith by ordering a thorough investigation into the violence and make sure



Indian Muslims. The sole question is: Why should "non-Muslim identity" be made a criterion for acquisition of citizenship? The CAA determines who refugees are and who illegal immigrants are on the basis of religion, a fact that makes it discriminatory and unconstitutional. If you are of the "right religions", you are granted citizenship, and if you are of the "wrong religion" you are denied citizenship. If this is not religious discrimination, what is it? Shah should read the Constitution to see if anywhere it prescribes religion as a criterion for citizenship before trying to justify CAA. Let us not do anything that depletes India's moral strength and compassion.

G David Milton Maruthancode

that the perpetrators are brought to book. Parliament is the ideal forum to discuss these issues.

Jubel D'Cruz Mumbai

Questions remain

Sir — One fails to understand why the Government still does not want an immediate discussion on the issue of violence in Delhi. If it is wanting to discuss about it after Holi, why not now? Why waste the Parliament's precious time? Why isn't it taking action against those involved in the violence? Has action even been taken against those police personnel, whose videos went viral, where they were seen damaging windpanes of parked vehicles and CCTV cameras? Given the importance of the issue, the Government should have allowed a discussion forthwith. In a democracy like ours, people have every right to know all about the riots and the reasons for not taking action against the leaders concerned.

Srinivas Via email

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Collateral damage

Consumers will be left with high tariffs and a poorer and older technology telecom network if Vodafone Idea fails to make it through



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

The country may take a multi-billion dollar hit besides a deep dent on its reputation as a safe place to invest in the eventuality of Vodafone Idea exiting the market. Vodafone Idea, which once was referred to as the most prized and promising asset in the Vodafone group's operating markets, is now looking at a bankruptcy procedure in India. At the heart of it all is a princely sum of \$3.9 billion in adjusted gross revenues it immediately has to deposit with the Government, over a dispute on definitions spanning nearly two decades in various courts of the country. This potential exit is likely to have a lasting negative impact on the Indian economy and most importantly the nearly 300 million consumers of the company. This may smother an already crumbling telecom sector into a duopoly market with just Airtel and Reliance Jio left in the fray. State-run telecom companies Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) and Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL) jointly have a less than 10 per cent market share in the highly-competitive telecom market and have been surviving on Government economic packages for years.

A duopoly market would be a disaster for telecom equipment vendors and tower companies operating in the country. There are four large network equipment firms, which have an exposure of nearly half a billion dollars in dues towards Vodafone Idea. Recovering dues from the service provider will be a challenge for these vendors as the court proceedings arising out of bankruptcy procedures may take a significant amount of time. Meanwhile, a market with just two addressable telecom service clients is likely to see an exit or substantial scaling down of the four equipment suppliers' business operations.

This, along with the economic slowdown that the country is witnessing, will deliver a body blow to the job market in the telecom sector. Vodafone Idea has nearly 13,500 employees on its payrolls and employs another 1,00,000 indirectly through its operations. This means nearly 1.5 lakh job losses in a sector which has seen two large players, namely Reliance Communications and Airtel, exit in recent years. Add to this, the fate of a multinational tower company American Tower Corporation (ATC), which has spent nearly \$1 billion in acquiring Vodafone's standalone towers in the past. Vodafone Idea going belly up would mean ATC would have to switch off 20,000 towers.

Incidentally, each tower provides livelihood opportunities to nearly four to five people, whose jobs are in jeopardy now. A similar fate awaits other tower companies like Indus, as their tenancies or number of operators beaming from each tower is likely to be reduced. Vodafone Idea currently beams from close to 2,00,000 towers covering all telecom zones, many of which are via shared resources, with Airtel sharing half the cost of a tower. A shutdown will take away Vodafone's signals from these shared towers leading to cost increase for a single tenant (in this case mostly Airtel), as well as switching off for other towers. That would be an additional blow on employment.

A major portion of the collateral damage, however, will have to be borne by the over 300 million customers of Vodafone Idea, who will have to find a new service provider out of the two left in the market. Accommodating a customer network nearly the size of the entire European subscriber base will be a technological challenge for remaining operators. Analysts point to a nearly 15-20 per cent increase in operational expenses for Airtel due to reversal in existing tower-sharing agreements. The companies will have to invest heavily in augmenting their network capacity to accommodate the expected surge of customers. Many analysts point that the remaining two operators will have to, in a short span, deploy nearly 2,00,000 towers and get additional nodes for fibre network.

The quality of the telecom network, which already has a dubious reputation in the country will go down further. The cost of services, the cheapest data and voice calls in the world right now (1 Gigabytes of data at around \$0.20, with voice calls being almost free) will go up. Already telecom operators, including Vodafone Idea, have announced a nearly 50 per cent hike in select tariff plans and in the likelihood of two players remaining, the bargaining chip available to consumers would be gone.

The Government, like telecom vendors and consumers, will have to silently bear the brunt of a two-player market. This also constrains Indian consumers from upgrading to fifth generation or 5G telecom technology at par with their counterparts in 80 plus countries. Having joined the race early, India had expressed the desire to be a global leader in the 5G technology deployment for providing high-speed wireless broadband services to its citizens. This multi-billion-dollar, new capacity addition and upgrade to faster technology may now be left crippled, with the only two players left in the fray, reluctant to make fresh investments. In the end, Indian consumers will be left with high tariffs and a poorer and older technology telecom network in case Vodafone Idea fails to make it through.

(The writer is Country Manager, India, ITC Council)

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

THEY (CENTRE) ARE BLOWING THE CORONA THREAT OUT OF PROPORTION SO THAT THEY DO NOT HAVE TO EXPLAIN THEIR FAILURE IN CONTROLLING DELHI RIOTS.

—WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER

MAMATA BANERJEE



THE PM HAS ALREADY CONDEMNED THE DELHI RIOTS BUT DIDI HAS NOT SAID A WORD AGAINST THOSE WHO BURNT TRAINS IN BENGAL IN PROTEST AGAINST CAA.

—BJP STATE PRESIDENT

DILIP GHOSH

How to harness nari shakti

Chetna Sinha set up the Mann Deshi Foundation with the aim of economically and socially empowering women in Maharashtra's Mhaswad village. She has never looked back



MOIN QAZI

Mhaswad village is a mere blip on India's vast geographic radar but it shines brightly on the country's development landscape. The lodestar in this parched village is a woman of indefatigable stamina and unshakable courage. Chetna Gala Sinha has dedicated her life to empowering some of the area's most impoverished and dispossessed women by giving them the tools to run businesses of their own. Her work has transformed the lives of nearly half a million women and she hopes to help one million women by 2024. Mhaswad village, which has become a crucible for some of the most revolutionary social experiments, nestles in Satara district, on the placid banks of Manganga River, some 300 km south-east of Mumbai.

Rural areas typically face several developmental impediments: Small land holdings; low savings and capital formation; stagnant factor productivity; limited market access; low levels of human development; paucity of resources and a young population alienated from farming and other rural occupations. Reliant for the most part on subsistence agriculture, villagers are packing up in droves and heading to cities. They need solutions tailored to their needs and problems. Short-term palliatives like loan waivers and cash transfers cannot cure or address the pathology of poverty or fix the deep fault lines in the rural economy. Sinha's work with marginalised communities is now a legend. Described variously as a social entrepreneur, a microfinance banker, an economist, a farmer and an activist, Sinha has set a path that continues to remain relevant and resonant. She has nurtured social entrepreneurship at the grassroots that is redefining the way the world thinks about rural distress. Sinha has been able to build women's perspectives in the context of development, enabling them to claim space in the political, economic, societal and cultural systems. Women are reframing crucial questions on burning issues, about their experiences, problems, needs and are developing a different narrative.

Sinha grew up in Mumbai where she obtained a postgraduate degree in economics. She then moved to Bihar to work with landless labourers. She came in contact with the youth movement led by Jaiprakash Narayan and was inspired by his socialist philosophy. She met her husband Vijay Sinha, a farmer from Mhaswad, during a farmers' movement in Maharashtra between 1984 and 1985. She moved from Mumbai to Mhaswad after marriage.

Transplanted to a totally alien culture, Sinha initially found it difficult to strike roots. She spent time helping her husband on the farm and organising the local community on different issues. The world of inequities that surrounded her kept her restless and she soon found her bearings. With the ebullient spirit that was honed in JP's movement, she set her sights on toppling the status quo in her husband's country. She followed through to tackle inequities and eradicate dysfunction in the local society. "I found life completely different from Mumbai. It opened my eyes to the plight of people at the grassroots level and the challenge of working for their benefit came with the idealism I had grown up with," recalls Sinha.

In 1996, Sinha founded the Mann Deshi Foundation with the aim of economically and socially empowering rural women. One of Sinha's first actions was to set up a bank for village women. She believes access to finance is an important piece in the development ecosystem and has necessarily to be at the core of any economic strategy. "Financial

SINHA'S WORK HAS SEVERAL LESSONS FOR POLICYMAKERS WHO MAY THINK OF CHANGING THE DIRECTION OF THEIR DISCOURSES. INDIA SPENDS MORE ON PROGRAMMES FOR THE POOR THAN MOST DEVELOPING COUNTRIES BUT IS NOT GETTING THE EXPECTED DIVIDENDS THAT SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC EXPENDITURE WOULD SEEM TO WARRANT. THE GOVERNMENT CAN COMPLEMENT THE EFFORTS OF CRUSADERS LIKE SINHA BY IDENTIFYING, ADAPTING AND SUCCESSFULLY SCALING UP PROMISING INTERVENTIONS INSTEAD OF ROLLING OUT MORE AND MORE REFORMS



services are like safe water and clean energy — they are essential to leading a better life", says Sinha. Mann Deshi Mahila Sahakari Bank is India's first bank that runs for and is managed by rural women. It began with 840 women members, each contributing a share capital of ₹600. Today, it has nine branches, more than 28,000 members and a share capital of ₹69 crore. It has enabled thousands of women to save, insure and to responsibly borrow — allowing them to build their assets and improve their well-being and financial prospects. The bank offers specially-designed savings accounts, pension services and insurance products as well as individualised loans. Financing is perhaps the biggest problem faced by small businesses in the developing world. People need credit to increase their financial prospects. "The greatest fracture facing India is women's inequality", reiterates Sinha. "The majority of women are doing business on roads in cities and villages, selling things in haats but they do not have access to funds. Regular banks aren't typically an option; they have several formalities, fee and documentation that can be intimidating and require an arduous trek to the nearest town, which can compromise a day's wages. Banks find this segment unviable because they feel the costs of underwriting and originating these small loans are substantial", she says.

Mann Deshi serves as an umbrella platform for several community initiatives like cattle camps; mobile para-veterinary services; erection of check dams; running a farmer produce company; local radio stations and sports talent hunts. Some of the more modern innovations include a business school and the Mann Deshi Chamber of Commerce for Rural Women (MCCRW) in partnership with the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI)

Mann Deshi Business School for Rural Women (MDBSRW) is a unique nursery for unlettered women. It places "professional" expertise in the hands of the

weakest of the weak and the poorest of the poor: Village women. Set up in 2006, MDBSRW offers a menu of 25 courses, largely developed in-house. These include classes in finance and marketing management and vocational skills such as screen-printing, chutney-making, bag-making, tailoring and catering among others. The courses are certified by the National Skill Development Corporation of India (NSDC). This ingenuity was recognised alongside Harvard Business School and Fuqua School of Business in a *Financial Times* ranking of the best B-schools.

A unique idea is the Business School on Wheels. The state-of-the-art bus travels with computers and micro ATMs. MDBSRW also offers a Deshi MBA, which is a year-long course where women attend workshops on finance, planning, inventory, marketing and accounting. The course syllabus was developed by Mumbai's SP Jain Management Institute and acclaimed non-profit Accion. When the programme was set up in 2015 just 286 women participated. This year, 958 women graduated. A Deshi MBA student is also provided with a mentor. With chapters of the business school in 12 centres equipped with nine buses, MDBSRW has unleashed an entrepreneurial wave in villages across Maharashtra, Gujarat and Karnataka.

Mann Desha has helped over 4,00,000 women set up businesses and access new markets. Traditionally confined to the home, these village women have now become productive, articulate and confident in their ability to think for themselves. Sinha argues that rural women should be acknowledged for who they really are — a new generation of dynamic entrepreneurs, job-creators and economy drivers, committed to bringing a change in their communities.

Women have also been trained as "barefoot professionals". Four years ago, Mann Deshi started a unique initiative to train women in goat farming, vaccinations,

first aid and artificial insemination. They are popularly known as "goat doctors." Today the team has 19 para-veterinarians.

The biggest contribution to the local economy are the cattle camps. This year, the cattle camp was set up in January in collaboration with the Bajaj Foundation and two other organisations. It provides fodder, water and shelter needed to sustain cattle from surrounding villages when periodical and recurrent drought stares at them. Spread over 100 acres, it sheltered 7,000 cows and 20,000 goats belonging to more than 50 villages. Along with the cattle shed, smaller tents — made out of cloth, straw, leaves and plastic sheeting — are built for families accompanying the scrawny cattle. People work through the day, chopping sugarcane and preparing wet fodder for the cattle.

Sinha has been awarded the Nari Shakti Puraskar, India's highest civilian award for women who work in the area of women's empowerment, Schwab Foundation's Social Entrepreneur of the Year Award (2013), Forbes Social Entrepreneurs of the Year Award (2017). She has served as a Co-Chair of the World Economic Forum in Davos (2018) and as a Co-Chair of Financial Inclusion at the W20 Summit (2018) in Argentina.

From Mumbai to Mhaswad, Sinha has come a long way. She succeeded because she looked at the familiar problems with fresh eyes. Sinha's work has several lessons for policymakers, who may think of changing the direction of their discourses. India spends more on programmes for the poor than most developing countries but is not getting the expected dividends that significant public expenditure would seem to warrant. The Government can complement the efforts of crusaders like Sinha by identifying, adapting and successfully scaling up promising interventions instead of rolling out more and more reforms.

(The writer is a reputed development professional)

Ignore the ramblings of a 'sick mind'

While a US publication printed an offensive article, many US-funded enterprises and charities provided China with aid for epidemic prevention and more than 20 countries gave emergency materials to it, says LONG XINGCHUN

China is under attack by the Coronavirus. As the Chinese Government and people are battling this epidemic, governments and people around the world have expressed their sympathies and support to the nation. Many countries have extended help by providing China with a large number of material for epidemic prevention. However, some individuals in some countries maliciously referred to the virus as "Wuhan virus" and "China virus" on social media.

A mainstream US media publication even printed an article under the headline *China is the real sick man of Asia*. The article also downgraded China's economic outlook. Some senior US officials even claimed that the outbreak in China would help bring jobs back to America.

The history of human development is one of constant battle with infectious diseases that have caused massive casualties. In ancient society, due to poor transportation and communication, people moved around in a limited area, thus restricting the geo-

graphical scope of infection. For example, the Black Death that occurred in Europe in the 14 century caused more than 25 million deaths, wiping out almost a third of the European population at that time. When that happened, let alone be infected, Asia, Africa and the US did not even know about the epidemic.

With the development of science and technology, as well as new means of transportation such as steam engines, came the global mobility of human beings. The emergence of airplanes, in particular, enabled people to travel from the eastern hemisphere to the western hemisphere and from the southern hemisphere to the northern hemisphere within half a day. While enjoying the convenience, people also had to bear the concurrent negative influences, such as the rapid spread of diseases worldwide, which no country can cope with single-handedly. What is needed is global governance through all nations in the world working together. The concept of "saving others is saving ourselves" is deeply-rooted in people's hearts,

resulting in the formation of a community of shared destiny in public health. When a major natural disaster or severe epidemic hit a country, aid and help flow in from all over the world.

For instance, China's medical team has made outstanding contributions to the fight against Ebola in Africa. China is also an important contributor to the World Health Organisation's (WHO) funding, fulfilling its responsibility as a major country for international health cooperation and human health improvement.

Infectious diseases are often transmitted all over the world. In many cases, it is difficult to identify the original source. Anyone, regardless of race, may fall victim to the infection. Therefore, it is not fair to equate any infectious disease with a specific country or race. Any attempt to name the naturally-occurring viruses after a country or city will only encounter protests. The Ebola virus was not called the "African virus". The seasonal flu that infected millions of

Americans and killed thousands of them was not called the "American flu" either. Nor has any foreign Government or media called the US a "sick man", let alone blaming the US political system for its occurrence. Linking a virus with a specific country or city, or attacking the country that is combatting the epidemic, is not only a display of ignorance about the disease but it is also a racist discrimination and denial of the epidemic-control effort of the country in question. It undermines the cooperation of the international community to fight against infectious diseases. People doing such deeds are the real "sick-minded" ones.

The article that described China as "the real sick man of Asia", has not only been condemned by the Chinese Government and people but has also been widely opposed and slammed by people with a conscience around the world, including the US.

Catherine Zenia Choy, a professor of ethnic studies at the University of California, Berkeley, criticised the article saying, "This is extremely

harmful and wrong" arguing that the consequences of publishing an opinion like this include stoking fear and anxiety and increasing hostility against the Chinese and other Asians throughout the world.

The White House website has received more than 100,000 signed petitions asking the publication for an apology. Many people wrote directly to accuse the author of the article, Walter Russell Mead. But Mead said that the headline was given by the newspaper editor and he had nothing to do with it. It is clear that Mead has already recognised the offensive nature of his piece.

The Chinese Government and people do not need to overly worry about individuals or views attacking China, nor should they be distracted. There are people with extreme ideologies in each and every country who are vicious and arrogant. However, their views can never become the viewpoint of the mainstream.

While the US publication printed such an offensive article, US-funded enterprises and charities pro-

vided China with a large amount of aid for epidemic prevention as quickly as they possibly could. Many Americans expressed sympathies and support to Beijing.

More than 20 countries, including Japan, South Korea, Russia, Singapore and Pakistan, provided emergency materials to aid China. In Sri Lanka, the Prime Minister led a countrywide prayer to invoke blessings for China and Lankan Cabinet Ministers joined in giving donations.

The Union of the Comoros, a tiny African nation, one of the least developed, has given China a symbolic gift of 100 euros. It's not a lot, but it means a lot. Governments of many countries and the WHO have recognised the measures taken by the Chinese Government to respond to the epidemic and acknowledged the sacrifices and contributions made by China to prevent the epidemic from spreading globally. In the battle against the epidemic, China is not alone.

(The writer is a professor at the School of Foreign Languages of China West Normal University)



A BREATH OF FRESH AIR

The lifting of a destructive ban on new onshore wind power is a breath of fresh air. The influence on public life of climate deniers including former chancellor Nigel Lawson has dramatically waned — with the 2019's upsurge of climate activism among the causes. The UK has a mountain to climb to reach emissions targets and the Government's record so far is not encouraging. But the return of onshore wind is a move in the right direction. (The Guardian editorial)

CAPSULE



Gold falls Rs 157, silver prices decline Rs 99

NEW DELHI: Gold on Thursday fell by Rs 157 to Rs 44,250 per 10 gram in the national capital amid muted demand for the precious metal. In the previous trade, it had closed at Rs 44,407 per 10 gram, according to HDFC Securities. Likewise, silver prices also declined Rs 99 to Rs 47,517 per kg from Rs 47,616 per kg on Wednesday. Spot gold for 24 Karat in Delhi pared previous gains and traded lower by Rs 157. Rupee fluctuation kept prices in range throughout the day. HDFC Securities Senior Analyst (Commodities) Tapan Patel said. The Indian rupee continued its downward journey on Thursday, sliding another 5 paise to trade at 73.44 against the US dollar amid mounting fears of a coronavirus-led economic slowdown.



Facebook to help combat virus misinformation

BANGKOK: Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg says the social network is stepping up its efforts to combat virus-related misinformation by giving the World Health Organization free advertising. Zuckerberg said in a post on his Facebook account that the company is working with national health ministries and global organizations like the World Health Organization, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and UNICEF to get out timely and accurate information on the virus. Zuckerberg said Facebook will also give support and millions more in ad credits to other unspecified organizations.



Money laundering; ED books former Jet Airways boss Goyal

MUMBAI: Jet Airways founder Nareish Goyal and few others have been booked by the ED in a money laundering case even as the agency is conducting searches at his premises, officials said on Thursday. They said a criminal case against the former chairman of the airlines has been filed under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) after taking cognisance of a recent Mumbai Police FIR filed against him.

Zydus Cadila gets DCGI nod for Saroglitazar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
Pharmaceutical major Zydus Cadila on Thursday said it has received Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) approval for its new drug application for Saroglitazar to treat a particular condition of liver, commonly known as NASH in India. Non-Cirrhotic Non-Alcoholic SteatoHepatitis (NASH) is a progressive disease of the liver, which starts with fat accumulation in the liver known as non-alcoholic fatty liver disease. This condition could progress to cirrhosis and liver failure, the company said in a statement. Commenting on the approval, Zydus Group Chairman Pankaj Patel said, "We are happy that our efforts to discover and develop a novel drug for patients living with NASH, an unmet healthcare need globally, have been successful. Saroglitazar will provide hope and new lease of life for millions of patients in India suffering from NASH".

Coronavirus does not spread through chicken, mutton, seafood: FSSAI chief

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

There is no scientific evidence to show that coronavirus spreads through eating chicken, mutton and seafood, FSSAI chief G S G Ayyangar said on Thursday and asserted that the virus would not survive in higher temperature.

"It is basically an animal virus. Let us leave it to scientists to figure out how it has been transmitted...however, ours is a tropical country and once the temperature crosses 35-36 degrees celsius, no virus will survive.

"Let us pray to God that winter ends and temperature rises," he said.

There are at least 29 confirmed cases of coronavirus infection in India.

Amid apprehensions that the infection could spread through eating chicken, mutton and seafood, the Food



Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) CEO said there is a misconception about it. "There is a misconception that coronavirus will spread through chicken, mutton and seafood. There is nothing like that. It is scientifically not proven. "I am a scientist, I will not

buy this argument," Ayyangar told reporters here.

Ayyangar, who was earlier with Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), said it is a matter of time that vaccine for coronavirus will be developed as India has a good track of handling viruses.

"Whether it is Ebola virus or

"Whether it is Ebola virus or Avian flu, we have handled them very well. It is a matter of time. We have to take precaution. We have to be on our toes," he said.

Avian flu, we have handled them very well. It is a matter of time. We have to take precaution. We have to be on our toes," he said.

Urging people to take precautions, he said coronavirus is like many other viruses and developing a vaccine will depend on the complexity of the virus.

The government is making all efforts to isolate the virus. "Once we are able to isolate the virus, then it takes sometime to find a vaccine to counter the virus," he said at an event organised by industry body

Assocham.

Addressing the event on nutrition and functional foods, Hexagon Nutrition Managing Director Vikram Kelkar said prices of vitamin supplements have been volatile recently and spread of coronavirus has affected the supply across the world.

On March 2, poultry breeders demanded a relief package from the government claiming that the sector has incurred heavy losses of around Rs 1,750 crore in a month due to fake news that eating chicken could spread coronavirus.

Poultry bird prices have plunged to Rs 10-30 per kg at farm gate level due to a slump in chicken demand while the average cost of production is Rs 80 per kg, the All India Poultry Breeders Association had said in a representation to the Ministry of Animal Husbandry.

General insurers say existing health policies cover coronavirus

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The General Insurance Council, the apex industry lobby of the 44-member strong non-life insurers, on Thursday said almost all health insurance policies cover epidemics, including coronavirus.

The statement comes after the regulator Irdai on Wednesday asked insurers to cover coronavirus cases in their existing policies and also to ensure that they expeditiously attend to the coronavirus claims.

"Almost all the existing health policies cover almost all epidemics, which includes the coronavirus too. What the regulator (Irdai) said was not to frame a new policy but asking the industry to treat coronavirus cases expeditiously," A V Girija Kumar, chairman of the General Insurance Council, told PTI here on the



sidelines of an industry event to launch an awareness campaign to increase adoption of general insurance policies.

There are 30 confirmed cases of coronavirus infection in the country as of Thursday, of which 16 are Italian tourists.

On Wednesday, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai) asked insurers to expeditiously settle hospitalisation claims related to coronavirus disease under health policies. It also instructed insurers to come out with policies to cover treatment costs for coronavirus infection, which has impacted thousands of people worldwide.

"For the purpose of meeting health insurance requirements of various sections, insurers are advised to design products covering the costs of treatment for coronavirus," Irdai said in a circular.

The more dire prediction amounts to a 19 per cent loss in worldwide passenger revenues, IATA said.

"Financially, that would be on a scale equivalent to what the industry experienced in the global financial crisis," said a statement from the group.

Virus could cost airlines USD 113 bn revenue in 2020: IATA

PNS ■ SINGAPORE

The airline industry could lose up to USD 113 billion in revenue this year due to the impact of the new coronavirus, an industry body warned Thursday, as the epidemic spreads rapidly worldwide.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) estimated revenue losses to airlines' passenger business of between USD 63 billion and USD 113 billion -- with the higher figure for a scenario where the virus spreads more widely.

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It was a far bleaker assessment than two weeks ago, when IATA forecast revenue losses would come in at USD 29.3 billion.

But since then the virus has spread rapidly outside China, where it first emerged late last year, and has now reached some 80 countries and territories. More than 95,000 people have been infected and over 3,200 have died worldwide.



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HC dismisses Kochhar's plea against termination

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Thursday dismissed a petition filed by Chanda Kochhar against her termination as managing director and CEO of the ICICI Bank, noting the dispute arises from a contract of personal service.

A division bench of Justices N M Jamdar and M S Karnik accepted the bank's contention that Kochhar's petition was not maintainable as the dispute was contractual and concerns a private body.

"The termination of the petitioner is in the realm of contractual relationship," the court said in its order.

Courts cannot exercise their writ jurisdiction when employment in a private entity is regulated by contracts, it further said.

"Contractual duties are enforceable as matters of private law by ordinary contractual remedies such as damages, injunction, specific performance and declaration," the high court said.

The bench in its order noted that even if an institution is performing a public duty and is amenable to writ jurisdiction, all its decisions would not be subject to judicial review.

"If the private body is discharging a public function and the denial of any right is in connection with the public duty imposed on such body, the public law remedy can be enforced," the court said.

It took note of the fact that ICICI was a private bank governed by a board of directors and did not receive any funds from the government. The ICICI Bank's counsel Darius Khambata earlier argued

that a judicial review cannot be incurred under Article 226 of the Constitution, which empowers high courts to issue directions, orders or writs in such a matter.

The bank sought dismissal of Kochhar's petition.

Kochhar was terminated from the ICICI Bank months after she voluntarily left the second largest private sector lender.

The high-profile former banker moved the high court on November 30, 2019, challenging "termination" of her employment by the ICICI Bank.

She contended that the bank also denied her remuneration and clawed back all the bonuses and stock options between April 2009 and March 2018, for her alleged role in granting out of turn loans worth Rs 3,250 crore to the Videocon Group which benefited her husband Deepak Kochhar.

Kochhar's counsel Vikram Nankani earlier argued that her termination came months after the bank approved her voluntary resignation on October 5, 2018 and therefore, the termination is "illegal, untenable and unsustainable in law".

The ICICI Bank then filed an affidavit, contending the reliefs in the petition are not maintainable and it deserves to be dismissed as ICICI is a private bank and is administered under the Companies Act, not the state or its agency.

Khambata argued that ICICI was a private banking company and Kochhar's petition seeks to contest what are purely private contractual terms.



Sensex ends 61 pts higher; SBI spurts on Yes Bank stake buzz

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Giving up most early gains, equity benchmark Sensex ended 61.13 points higher on Thursday as domestic investors weighed the impact of rising coronavirus cases in the country.

After rallying over 478 points during the day, the 30-share index settled 61.13 points or 0.16 per cent higher at 38,470.61.

On similar lines, the broader NSE Nifty advanced 18 points or 0.16 per cent to finish at 11,269.

Top gainers in the Sensex pack

included Kotak Bank, HCL Tech, HUL, TCS, Bharti Airtel, Asian Paints, Bajaj Finance and SBI, while Reliance Industries, Tech Mahindra, ICICI Bank and Infosys ended with losses.

SBI jumped 1.05 per cent following reports that the government has given the go-ahead to the lender and other financial institutions to take over capital-starved Yes Bank.

According to analysts, despite trading significantly higher through the day on positive global cues, market failed to hold on to most gains as domestic investors turned increasingly risk averse amid rising cases of coronavirus in the country.

The bank's capital buffers have come down due to non-performing assets.

The sources said the government has cleared a plan for an SBI-led consortium to acquire a controlling stake in the bank.

In a clarification to stock exchanges on reports that the government is said to have approved SBI's plan to buy stake in Yes Bank, the state-

Sebi bans 4 entities for fraudulent trading

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi has restrained four entities from accessing securities market for two years for executing fraudulent trading in the scrip of Seshasayee Paper and Boards Ltd (SPBL).

Sebi conducted an investigation into the trading of the scrip of the firm during December 2011 and October 2014 and found a sharp rise in the scrip price and volume.

It noted that the entities had traded among each other as a connected group.

Sebi said the entities were "connected to each other and bought and sold shares of SPBL through a common connected broker, acted as a group under a premeditated scheme / plan to indulge into circular trades at BSE (con.27 per cent of total market volume) and NSE (contributing to 21.10 per cent of total market volume) ... and created misleading appearance of trading in the scrip without any intention of change in beneficial ownership."

The entities are Bharat Jayantilal Patel, Fidelity Multitrade, Pasha Finance and Acira Consultancy.

Barring the entities from securities market, Sebi said if the entities have any open positions in any exchange traded derivative contracts, they can close out or square off such open positions within 3 months or at the expiry

of such contracts, whichever is earlier.

They can also settle the pay-in and pay-out obligations in respect of transactions which have taken place before the close of March 4, 2020.

In a separate order, Sebi restrained 21 entities from accessing the securities market for one year as they carried out fraudulent trading in the scrip of Jolly Plastic Industries Ltd.

Apart from 9 individuals, the 12 firms that have been banned from securities market are Aavia Buildtech, Aavia Softech, Accurate Buildwell, Aglow Financial Services, Bluechip Fincap Serve, Capital Securities, Century Buildmart, Mould Trading, Ocean Share Brokers, Steady Capital Advisory Services, Sure Portfolio Services, Surya Medi Tech.

Senior officials of Hindustan Paper Corporation Limited (HPCL), including its former chairman-cum-managing director MVN Rao, have been booked by the CBI in a Rs-64 crore bamboo purchase scam, wherein inflated prices were allegedly paid to the Dima Hasao Autonomous Council (DHAC) in Assam, officials said.

The scam pertains to alleged irregularities in the procurement of bamboo by Cachar Paper Mill (CPM) from the DHAC. Bamboo pulp is used for producing paper.

Besides Rao (now retired), the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has also

SBI-led consortium to buy controlling stake in Yes Bank

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government has approved a plan for a consortium of lenders, led by State Bank of India, to acquire a controlling stake in Yes Bank, highly placed sources said on Thursday.

An announcement is expected soon, they added.

Yes Bank, which is grappling with bad loans, is looking to raise fresh capital but the plans are facing uncertainties.

It has also delayed announcement of 2019 December 2019 quarter results due to the ongoing crisis.

The bank's capital buffers have come down due to non-performing assets.

The sources said the government has cleared a plan for an SBI-led consortium to acquire a controlling stake in the bank.

In a clarification to stock exchanges on reports that the government is said to have approved SBI's plan to buy stake in Yes Bank, the state-



owned lender said it would disclose developments, if any, as per Sebi regulations.

"... we will abide by the timelines under Regulation 30 of Sebi (LODR) Regulations 2015 in disclosing the developments, if any in the matter to stock exchanges," it added.

Yes Bank has been passing through a tumultuous period ever since the Reserve Bank, in August 2018, asked the then chief executive Rana Kapoor to leave by January 31, 2019, amid concerns on governance

and loan practices.

Under his successor Ravneet Gill, the lender has disclosed large under-reported stressed assets.

The bank reported its maiden loss in the March 2019 quarter.

Yes Bank had initially planned to raise capital of over USD 2 billion in the current fiscal. Later, its board rejected a USD 1.2 billion investment in the bank by Canadian investor SPGP Group/ Erwin Singh Braich.

CBI books former senior officials of Hindustan Paper Corporation Ltd in Rs-64 cr scam

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Senior officials of Hindustan Paper Corporation Limited (HPCL), including its former chairman-cum-managing director MVN Rao, have been booked by the CBI in a Rs-64 crore bamboo purchase scam, wherein inflated prices were allegedly paid to the Dima Hasao Autonomous Council (DHAC) in Assam, officials said.

The scam pertains to alleged irregularities in the procurement of bamboo by Cachar Paper Mill (CPM) from the DHAC. Bamboo pulp is used for producing paper.

Besides Rao (now retired), the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has also



booked the then director (operations) SN Bhattarcharya, director (finance) Amitabh Banerjee and company secretary LR Ekanath of HPCL.

The agency has also named as accused the then chief executive of CPM Pratap Goswami, acting chief executive TR Gowda, other senior officials

and RS Gandhi, the proprietor of Hill Trade Agency, which was given a subcontract by DHAC for the bamboo supply to CPM.

The DHAC, formerly known as the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council (NCHAC), is an autonomous district council in Assam that

The agency has also named as accused the then chief executive of CPM Pratap Goswami, acting chief executive TR Gowda, other senior officials and RS Gandhi, the proprietor of Hill Trade Agency, which was given a subcontract by DHAC for the bamboo supply to CPM

had entered into an agreement with HPCL for the supply of bamboo in 1980 for a period of 30 years, officials said.

Till 2006, HPCL used to cut and transport bamboos, for which a fixed royalty was paid to DHAC under the agreement.

The agreement, which came into affect in 1982, had

to remain in force till 2012. However, a supplementary agreement was signed in 2006 between the two sides, under which DHAC employed a sub-contractor -- Hill Trade Agency -- for the purpose of cutting and transporting bamboo, resulting in an increase in the supply rates and transportation costs, the officials said.

Binding people through

BANGLES

Hyderabad has always been known as a city of pearls, biryani and more. Of this, one such item is lac bangles, manufactured locally. These bangles made on the streets of Old City are famous across the world for their beauty. K RAMYA SREE takes you through these streets and the making of lac bangles

The city of Hyderabad is famous for many things, and the Laad Bazaar is among the most popular.

According to one legend, it was built by the Qutub Shahis, who founded the city of Hyderabad in the 1590s. One of the popular stories credits the establishment of Laad Bazaar to Sultan Mohammad Quli Qutub Shah, who set it up to provide bridal trousseau for his daughter's wedding. The market continues to trade in a variety of items that are part of the standard wedding trousseau.

Despite various kinds of bling available in the market, nothing comes close to the lac (lacquer) bangles sold here. In fact, it is believed that Laad Bazaar derives its name from 'lac', which is the local word for lacquer.

With barely enough space to park two-wheelers side by side, the tiny lanes are a feast for the eyes and thanks to the lac bangles, mesmerising. From simple chudis to heavy bridal bangles, the bazaar offers it all in terms of variety and design. Even designer bangles pale in comparison.

The bazaar is home to hundreds of bangle stores, right from the posh-looking air conditioned ones, to street vendors carrying the bangles on their shoulders. The specialty of these bangles is that they are all manufactured locally. They are made in small karkhanas (workshops) tucked away in narrow by-lanes or attached to the rear of the shop. The hard work of the bangle makers is visible in the patterns of these famous bangles. The bangles made here are most sought after and are even given as souvenirs to tourists.

For

many, a visit to Hyderabad is incomplete without including Laad Bazaar in their itinerary.

Syed Akhter of Akhter Bangles and Jewels set shop 40 years ago and learnt the art of making lac bangles from his father and grandfather. "Lac is a resinous secretion produced by the Kerria lacca insect and the raw material is sourced from the kusum tree on which these insects are farmed. Raw lac is purchased and processed, coloured and shaped into various designs using a technique called slow heating. The bangles are then decorated with various glass and bead embellishments," he said, describing the process.

Akhter was kind enough to take us to the karkhana and we were able to witness first-hand the various techniques, skills involved in bangle-making. Initially, thin aluminum wires are carefully made into rings using a *khol*a to give it a spherical shape. They are then beaten flat on a hot platform before lac is carefully mixed with a base and applied.

Then, the desired colours are added on the surface. The process is repeated and one bangle is stuck to the other to get the required size.

They are then heat rolled to get the fine finish.

The work is then taken over by women, who stick stones and pearls to the hot bangles.

"In a day, with a group of six people, seven to eight sets of bangles are made. One set includes 16 bangles," said Akhter, adding that one woman can make one set per



day as it is hand-made. Women are paid between Rs 120 to Rs 150 per set.

Speaking of the sales, he said, "Hyderabad is the only place where such bangles are made. Although Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh make bangles, they are not as glossy. Bangles here are most sought after and are exported across the world."

Taufeeq who works for another bangle store said, "Laad Bazaar is famous for lac bangles, which have been famous for years. These bangles are of two types — thandi lac and hot lac. The minimum price of these bangles is Rs 500 for a set of 16 bangles."

Explaining the difference between cold and hot lac bangles he said, "As the name says, the design on cold lac bangles are made with glue and do not break easily, while the hot ones are easily breakable."

When asked about the type of bangles customers prefer, Akhter said, "For the last one year, thandi lac bangles have been in demand as they are more durable when compared to hot lac, which can be used for only one to two years."

"A type of thandi lac bangles known as jhoomar bangles are currently in demand," he continued.

Like all other businesses, GST imposed on bangles has resulted in a sharp drop in sales over the last two years. Many shopkeepers are upset about this, saying that GST has hit their sales by up to 30 per cent. "Once a *mashoor* place, with people buzzing all the time, the area now has shops that crave for attention. Many people are not interested in buying these bangles, except during festivals, as they find them expensive," Akhter sum-



marised.

It can be safely said that bangles form an integral part of Telangana culture, cutting across religious denominations. Be it weddings, Ramzan or Bonalu Jatar, new bangles are worn on most auspicious occasions by women of all ages and regions.

(How to reach: Easiest way is to take Metro till Gandhi Bhavan and hire an auto or a taxi to Laad Bazaar from Gandhi Bhavan Metro station)

The final output before adding the glitter



Lac is a resinous secretion produced by the Kerria lacca insect. The lac is wound on thin aluminium wire



Thin aluminium wires are carefully made into rings using a *khol*a

The bangle is heated on coal



They are then beaten flat on a hot platform



The desired colour is added on the surface. They are then heat rolled to get the fine finish



Towards India's next hip-hop star

Hyderabad-based rappers Zachariah Prasad and Waseem, who have emerged winners in Red Bull's Spotlight competition in the city, are all set to test their luck to become country's next big hip-hop stars in the finals scheduled to be held in April, finds V SATEESH REDDY

Two Hyderabad youngsters Zachariah Prasad and Waseem were declared winners of the Hyderabad leg of Red Bull Spotlight, a nationwide hunt for the country's next hip-hop star season III. They have been selected for the finals to be held at the national level in April. Conducted all across the country, the city-wise winners will go head-to-head next month.

The champions will be allowed to record a full-length album in a studio, along with a photo shoot and a music video. Each of the city winners will be given time to record one song in a studio along with a video.

Speaking to *The Pioneer*, Zachariah Prasad shares, "The competition started with the contenders performing a cipher. A cipher according to the hip-hop culture is where a group of hip-hop artistes get together

in a circle and perform one by one. As an MC, the biggest strength is how they open themselves to a huge group of audience or listeners. That is quintessential to any performing art but when it comes to being an MC (called rappers

these days) one has to generate and circulate the energy of the crowd."

About his preparation for the finals, Prasad says, "We have a set of songs and are trying to experiment a little and see how they work out. We need to be at our best so that we

can show that Hyderabad has a strong hip-hop community. Our dream is to keep making authentic art and inspire the coming generations to appreciate art in whatever form. Art is an expression of self; it's the reflection of how one perceives the world around them. Whatever we create lives on by itself, it's beautiful."

When asked about the hip-hop culture in the country, Prasad says, "Ever since the movie *Gully Boy* we've seen a spike in the number of hip-hop music consumers in India. I think it's a great start, but there is a lot of room for refinement. I am looking forward to seeing different artists let go of the current norms and make art that is true to them."

Prasad adds, "When I starting rapping for fun, it was a great learning experience. This art form helped me realise that everything has its purpose and cause and there will be certain things that

outlive the creator. It's been nine years since I first started freestyle rapping which eventually lead me to take this up seriously."

Another rapper Waseem says, "I was very happy to meet my fellow competitors, judges during the state-level competition. The competition is hosted for college students who aspire to be rappers/artists. Red Bull helps people like us produce our first album. Our competitors were great rappers and we all carry different techniques."

"I have been performing rap for 16 years. I have performed in different places in Saudi and do various forms of art on stage. It has been fun performing on stage after coming back to India. I wish this continues and I keep growing through time. I'm practicing very well for the finals and I hope to become the national champion," Waseem concludes.



PARTY

TOGETHER FOREVER

Political leaders and well-wishers attended in large numbers for the walima ceremony of Mohammed Zeeshan Azam Ali, son of Mohammed Azam Ali, with Uzma, daughter of Mohammed Abdul Aleem, and blessed the newly-weds. The guests had a great time over the delicious food.



● Janaki Lagadapati



● Nayani Narasimha Reddy and Ateeq Siddiqui



● Uzma Aleem

● Zeeshan Azam Ali



● Jabir Patel



● Krissann Barretto



● Adnan Altinors and Kubra



● DT Naik

Photos by SV Chary

CITY GUIDE

EVENTS

POETRY SESSION

● The poetry session open mic event will be held on March 8 at Phoenix Arena from 6 pm.

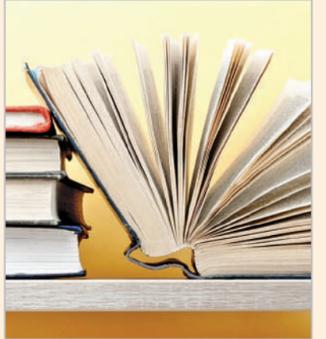


PAINTING WORKSHOP

● Lamakaan, Banjara Hills is conducting a painting workshop on its premises on March 22 from 11:30 am.

PUPPETRY DAY

● Nori Art and Puppetry Centre is conducting World Puppetry Day Celebrations on March 21 at Lamakaan from 6:30 pm.



BOOK READING

● Hyderabad Readers and Writers Group is hosting a book reading session on March 21 at Phoenix Arena from 6 pm.

COMEDY NIGHTS

● Stand-up comedian Vivek Muralidharan is hosting his new stand-up show on March 8 at Phoenix Arena from 5 pm.



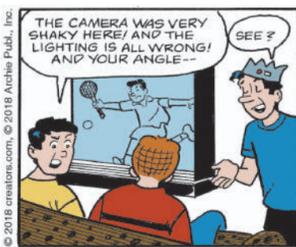
MADHUBANI PAINTING

● Madhubani painting exhibition will be held on March 14 at Phoenix Arena from 2 pm onwards.

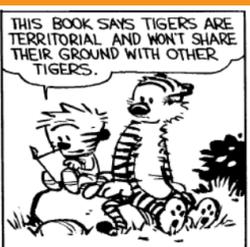
GET YOUR EVENT LISTED: To get your events listed, send your details along with a poster and contact number to pioneer.features@gmail.com

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



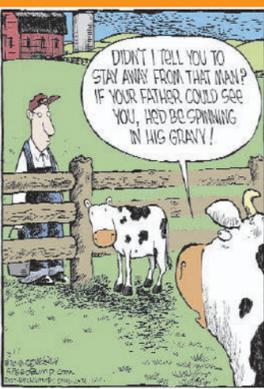
GARFIELD



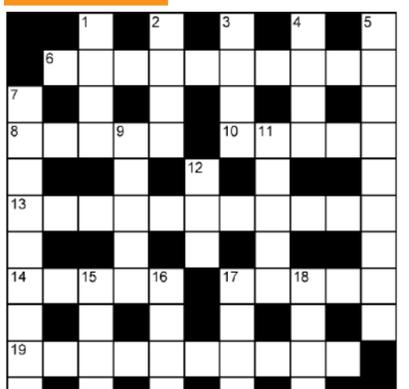
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

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

ACROSS

- 6 A team game
- 8 Foe
- 10 A bamboo-eating animal
- 13 Measure temperatures with this
- 14 Player of bagpipes
- 17 Stairs
- 19 Book of word meanings
- 9 A radio code that uses dots and dashes
- 11 Wide awake and ready for anything
- 12 An animal kept for milk
- 15 Choose
- 16 Spoil completely
- 17 Gritty stuff on a beach
- 18 Your hearing organs

DOWN

- 1 Not in danger
- 2 All right, but not especially good
- 3 Halt
- 4 A sign of tiredness
- 5 A big sea bird
- 7 A many-legged creature

SOLUTION

B	A	J	O	L				
S	O	C	K	M	A	R	B	L
T	S	N	E	V				
A	S	M	B	E	N			
U	L	I	B	R	A	R		
T	K	L	I	O	L			
H	A	N	G	A	R	K	N	E
O	R	Z	F					
R	O	T	S	D	E	T	E	S

ANUPAMA TO REPRISE

Anna Ben in *Helen* Telugu remake

Starring *Kumbalangi Nights* fame Anna Ben in the titular role, *Helen*, a survival drama, told the story of a girl who gets trapped in a freezer room, finds **NAGARAJ GOUD**



Nikhil's next gets Sukumar style title

Announced last December, *Kumari 21F* director Palnati Surya Pratap's next with Nikhil Siddhartha has been titled *18 Pages*. The film, a joint production venture between GA2 Pictures and Sukumar Writings, was launched in Hyderabad on Thursday. Sukumar, who was written the film, directed the honorary first

shot as Allu Aravind's granddaughter Arha sounded the clapperboard. While there is no word yet on when the film will go to sets, as Nikhil will begin shooting for good friend Chandoo Mondeti's *Karthikeya 2* shortly, it will, however, have music by Gopi Sunder. Yuvaraj, who shot films like *Krishnagadi Veeraprema Gadha* and *Lie*, has been signed on as the cine-

matographer. The makers haven't disclosed the film's genre as well but we hear it is a quirky love story, which will tell the tale of an 18-page love story of the lead actor and so, the title. Plus, Sukumar, once a mathematics teacher, is known to have a penchant for numbers and it reflected in previous titles like *100 % Love*, *1: Nenokkadine* and *Kumar 21F*.

PVP acquired the Telugu remake rights of Tamil fantasy drama *Oh My Kadavule*, featuring Ashok Selvan, Ritika Singh, Vani Bhojan and Vijay Sethupathi in the lead roles. While there has been no significant development on who will spearhead the Telugu version, *The Pioneer* has now exclusively learnt that the producer has also bagged the Telugu remake rights of last year Malayalam super hit *Helen*.

According to a well-placed source, PVP, who struck gold last year with *Evaru* (a Telugu remake of Spanish film *The*

Invisible Guest.) has even zeroed in on the leading lady to front the Telugu version. "He has spoken to Anupama Parameswaran to headline the film and she readily accepted. She saw the film when it released in Malayalam, and was mighty impressed with it. She never thought the Telugu remake would come her way but as luck would have it, she was at the right place right time. PVP is keen on tailoring the script to suit Telugu sensibilities and work on it has begun full-swing. The project will go to floors later this summer and will be wrapped up mostly in a start-to-finish schedule," the source said.

Starring *Kumbalangi Nights* fame Anna Ben in the titular role, *Helen*, a survival drama, told the story of a girl who gets trapped in a freezer room. Directed by Mathukutty Xavier, it got both critical acclaim and commercial success alike. Just last month, the film's Tamil remake with Keerthi Pandian and Arun Pandian went to floors in Chennai. Kannada remake



with Lasya Nagaraj has also been announced earlier this week in Bengaluru.



Naresh on a leave, Banerjee steps in



Troubles in MAA seem far from over and President Naresh VK is caught in the eye of the storm once again. With him going on a leave of 41 days over a "tight schedule", the disciplinary and executive committee of MAA has swung into action swiftly. They met at Film Chamber, Hyderabad on Wednesday evening and decided to make vice-president Banerjee as the acting president with the help of by-laws. Krishnam Raju, Chiranjeevi, Murali Mohan, Jayasudha and Ali were



among the many who attended the meeting. A source close to MAA says this is the end of the road for Naresh as the president. "The image of MAA took a severe beating ever since Naresh came into power. The fact that he was not available for the most of the time for the association meant that other members were dejected with his

conduct. Major works of the body have been pending because of his constant absence. Chiru was particularly unhappy over this and had to step in to curtail the damage further. The chances of Naresh returning to the president post are unlikely now. Banerjee has been told to conduct day-to-day operations of the body without attracting controversies," the source said. However, putting a brave face, Naresh extended his best wishes to Banerjee for his new assignment. "I thank the disciplinary committee of *maa jr da* acceptance of my leave letter *fr da* next 40 days due to my tight schedule. Our *vp mr* Banerji has been appointed as acting president wishing him and our committee *da* best to take the good work forward. All for *maa (sic)*," he wrote on Twitter.

Suresh Babu and Dil Raju join the OTT bandwagon

With their counterpart Allu Aravind consumed neck-deep with Aha app, how can one leave behind other two top producers of the industry-Suresh Babu and Dil Raju. We've reliably learnt that both the producers are planning to make their entry into streaming services later this year. While Suresh has always been cautious when it comes to embracing new forms of storytelling, Raju, who is in tune with time, has been silently listening to the scripts for the past four months. "Without naming his production house, Raju even issued an advertising sometime back that he is looking at stories for web series," says a source close to Sri Venkateswara Creations.



THE SOURCE ADDS THAT BOTH SURESH AND RAJU BELIEVE OTT PLATFORMS ARE THE FUTURE AND THEY DON'T WANT TO LAG BEHIND ARAVIND

The source adds that both Suresh and Raju believe OTT platforms are the future and they don't want to lag behind Aravind. "Suresh is getting help from his older son Rana, while Raju is seeking the counsel of his brother Sirish and directors who he worked with. Both the producers are looking at Telugu content like Aha. The fact that they've produced a good number of films over years mean that those films can always be streamed on their platforms, helping them to attract initial viewership," adds the source.

Vijaya Shanti is my inspiration, says PAYAL



At a presser in Hyderabad recently, the makers of Payal Rajput's next have announced the film's title as *5Ws*. The film marks the directorial debut of

Pranadeep, who assisted director Gunasekhar in the past, and is crime investigative drama. Produced by Kaivalya Creations, it is in the last leg of shooting. Speaking later, Payal, who will be seen as a cop in the film, said that it's any actor's dream to play an IPS officer and she realised that with *5Ws* very early in her career. "I thank Pranadeep sir for showing faith in me. It's a challenging role and I hope I did it well. The film helped me to learn and do many things that I haven't done in my career previously. I've performed the stunts on my own without a body double," she pointed out. She added that Vijaya Shanti is her inspiration in the industry. "I saw a lot of her films where she played a cop. So when Pranadeep narrated me the story, I didn't think twice to greenlight it. The film will shed the glamorous image I have. As a part of my prep for the role, I interacted with cops who are a part of my friends circle. The conversations helped me with my body language," she informed.

Rain takes India to final

Women in Blue pip England by virtue of wins in group stage to enter maiden T20 World Cup summit clash

PTI ■ SYDNEY

An unbeaten run in the group stage propelled India into their maiden Women's T20 World Cup final against defending champions Australia after their last-four clash against England was washed out here on Thursday, prompting both captains to say that reserve days are essential for knockout clashes.

Persistent rain since morning delayed the toss and eventually the semifinal was called off without a ball being bowled, taking Indians into the summit clash and leaving England players in tears.

"Really frustrating. Not how we wanted the World Cup to finish for us. No reserve day, no chance of getting play, and ultimately that loss against South Africa cost us," a dejected England captain Heather Knight said after the game was abandoned.

Her India counterpart Harmanpreet Kaur also agreed that the semifinals should have had a reserve day, a request which was made by host Cricket Australia but turned down by the ICC.

"Unfortunate we didn't get a game, but there are rules and we have to follow it. Having reserve days in the future will be a great idea," said Kaur.

Knight said her team paid the price for not starting the tournament well.

"It's all very English isn't it, talking about the weather and



getting knocked out. It felt that we gained a bit of momentum in the last few games and we were pumped up for the semifinals," she added.

"Lessons are to win the first game I guess (laughs). It's become a trend, not to start well in tourna-

ments, and that has cost us."

India had topped Group A with four victories in as many matches while England had finished second in Group B with three wins and a defeat.

"From day one, we new we have to win all the games because in case the semis don't happen, that would be hard for us. In that sense, credit to the team for winning all the games," said Kaur.

"Everybody is looking in great touch - Shafali (Verma) and Smriti (Mandhana). They are giving us good starts, and that helps. Me and Smriti are trying to spend more time in the nets," she added reflecting on her and Mandhana's so far indifferent form.

"We are looking more positive now. Unfortunately we haven't come up with big innings, but our teammates are, and at the end of the day it's a team game."

Unhappy Knight calls for rule change

PTI ■ SYDNEY

England captain Heather Knight on Thursday called for a rule change after a rained-out semifinal clash against India knocked them out of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup here.

ICC regulations dictate that in the event of a semi-final washout, the winners of each group automatically go through to the final in Melbourne on Sunday. The world body had earlier declined Cricket Australia's request for a reserve day.

"They're the rules that everyone signed up to," Knight said of the absence of a reserve day.

"You'd hope now that there



Heather Knight acknowledges crowd gesture after completing fifty

has been this situation and the game tonight is potentially going to be rained off as well, so you'd hope now there is going to be a

"Congratulations to the Indian Women's team on qualifying for the @T20WorldCup Final. We are proud of you girls and wish you all the luck for the finals."

—VIRAT KOHLI

"...A reward for winning all the matches in the group stage. Congratulations @BCCIWomen and wishing you glory this Sunday #T20WorldCup."

—VIRENDER SEHWAG

"Would have been great to see the match, but many congratulations to @BCCIWomen for making it to the finals of the #T20WorldCup. A reward for winning 4 out of 4 in the group stages. Wishing the girls the very best for the finals on #WomensDay."

—VVS LAXMAN

"It's wonderful news. They played the tri-series against England and Australia very well. They won all the four group matches in the World Cup and that too by huge margins. So they definitely deserve to be in the final. My best wishes are with them. Hopefully, we will return with the Cup."

—KULDEEP YADAV



Meg Lanning hits a four against South Africa

Lanning, Schutt lead Southern Stars win

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Four-time champions Australia used their rich big-match experience to surpass a spirited South Africa by five runs in a rain-hit semifinal here on Thursday, setting up a title clash against first-timers India.

There were fears that the second semifinal between Australia and South Africa at the SCG too will be washed out like the India and England match earlier in the day. But the weather improved just enough to get a game albeit a curtailed one.

Australia skipper Meg Lanning led from the front with unbeaten 49 off as many balls to take her team to 134 for five in 20 overs. Rain returned during the innings break and South Africa were set a revised target of 98 runs in 13 overs as per the D/L method.

South Africa ended at 92 for five despite a fighting 41 not out off 27 balls from Laura Wolvaardt, leaving them dejected.

Hosts Australia, who did not have the services of injured star all-rounder Elysse Perry, were ecstatic after Jess Jonassen was able to defend 19 runs in the final over with South Africa getting only 13.

With the win, Australia advanced to their sixth successive final out of the seven editions held so far.

"It was extremely tense. Even in the last couple of balls it just wasn't safe. They needed 19 off the last over and we knew we had to nail it. But that's T20 cricket for you; I was extremely nervous," said skipper Lanning.

On the final against India, she added: "India are a class side, they have been playing excellent cricket. We are going to have to play really well. We have been improving each day, it hasn't been an easy road.

"We wanted to give ourselves a chance of playing in the finals, and now we just need to enjoy ourselves. We are travelling to Melbourne tomorrow, train on Saturday and play on Sunday. I doubt there'd be much sleep happening tonight."

South Africa skipper Dane van Niekerk said her team tried its best.

"...We have to give credit to Australia for the way they bowled and we just came six short. We brought them back with the ball really well, they got off to a flier and we thought they'd get to 160.

"All the bowlers did really well, and credit to them for how they brought it back. It was very emotional to see the ladies like that.

Double delight

Harman's parent were in attendance at SCG for first time as she leads India to final



Harmanpreet speaks during press conference

PTI ■ SYDNEY

It was double delight for captain Harmanpreet Kaur as India entered their maiden T20 World Cup final and in attendance, for the first time in her international career, were her parents.

"It was the first time they were going to watch me playing cricket since my dad did when I was in school, and my mother

has never watched me play cricket," Harmanpreet said at the post-match conference.

"They wanted to see today's game, but unfortunately, they didn't get to watch.

"It means a lot because from day one I wanted them to watch me playing cricket and today I got this opportunity. They have come here to watch all of us playing, and I hope we get all support from all the parents and try to win this tournament."

Her parents will remain in Australia to watch India play in the final at the iconic MCG, which will take place on her 31st birthday.

Harmanpreet said the team knew the importance of winning all matches from the beginning.

"From day one, we knew we have to win all the games because in case the semis don't happen, that would be hard for us. In that sense, credit to the team for winning all the games," she added.

Harman & girls have firepower to win T20 WC

IAN S ■ KOLKATA

Former captain Jhulan Goswami has put her money firmly behind the Indian team, saying that the Harmanpreet Kaur-led side has the arsenal to win their maiden Women's T20 World Cup title. India qualified for the final as their semi-final clash against England got washed out at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Thursday.

"It is great news. They have dominated the World Cup. They topped the group and made it to the semis. The semi-final was washed out but this is part of the game," Jhulan told IANS. But in Heather Knight's England, India had the toughest challenge as they have never beaten them in the compe-



tion. However, Goswami said now that they are in the final, their real task would be to not get bogged down by the pressure of the big stage and keep playing fearless cricket.

"Pressure will be there. World Cup final

is the biggest stage. Handling the pressure is the key. They have played fearless cricket so far and I am hopeful they will continue playing good cricket and will win the World Cup," said Goswami who was part of India's gut-wrenching 2017 50-over World Cup final loss to England at Lord's.

The 35-year-old added that reaching the final is an achievement in itself and the fearless brand of cricket the team has played can help them win the trophy.

"Reaching the final and in this fashion is a big achievement. They should continue playing the fearless cricket they have been playing," said Goswami who is the only player in the world to take more than 200 wickets in women's one-day internationals.

Rahul & Pant doing well, but Dhoni is missed: Kuldeep

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

India spinner Kuldeep Yadav has once again highlighted the position former skipper MS Dhoni has in the Indian set-up. The bowler has said that while KL Rahul and Rishabh Pant have been performing well behind the stumps, the experience that Dhoni brings is being missed in the team.

"Mahi bhai obviously brings a lot of experience with him and he has given the Indian team a lot. So when a player like that is not playing of course you miss him. They (Rahul and Pant) are young and are doing well. Both are keeping well so it has not made too much of a difference,

but yes, you do miss his presence," Kuldeep told reporters on Thursday.

While Pant was pushed as Dhoni's replacement post the 2019 World Cup, the 22-year-old's inconsistency with the bat led to Rahul taking his place behind the stumps. Consequently, Rahul's supreme form with the bat and ability to play in a variety of positions across the order seems to have led to him making the position his own.

"They are catching well and batting pretty well. I have not felt too much of a difference in that way. Every player has their good days and bad days and it's important to back them when they have bad ones. It's not that



you play for one day, there are lots of days in a year for cricket," he said.

Kuldeep felt that from a bowler's point of view, adjusting to Rahul or Pant from Dhoni has not been too much of a leap.

Kuldeep and Yuzvendra Chahal's rise as a deadly wrist spin duo was a theme for India going into the 2019 World Cup. Since then however, the return of Ravindra Jadeja to the limited-overs setup has led to the pair rarely getting to play together in a match. Kuldeep said that it's all down to the team management when asked if he expects to play once again with Chahal at the T20 World Cup later in the year.

"Our team is very strong and we will make as much effort as possible to put up a strong performance. As far as wrist spin goes, it depends upon what the management decides. If there are two players who are very good at forming batting or bowling partnerships, it is always great for the team. So it will be good if we play together," he said.

"It's all on the team combination. Jadeja has been playing very well as a batsman, bowler and fielder. Because of him the combination has become stronger. He gives a lot of depth to the batting. Whenever Chahal and I get chances we try to perform to our best."

Mashrafe steps down as B'desh ODI captain



AFP ■ SYLHET

Bangladesh pace bowler Mashrafe Mortaza, one of the country's biggest sports stars, stepped down on Thursday as captain of the national one-day side, possibly ending his international career. Friday's 50-over game against Zimbabwe in Sylhet will be his last as captain, said the 36-year-old, who already has a new career as

a member of parliament. Mashrafe said he would remain available for selection as a player, but selectors are under pressure to bring in fresh blood ahead of the 2023 World Cup in India.

"I would like to thank Bangladesh Cricket Board for keeping confidence in me for such a long period," said Mashrafe.

"I will try to give my best as a player if I get the opportunity."

Mashrafe, who withdrew from a lucrative national team contract in January, said the decision to rebuild the team for the next World Cup had convinced him to step down.

"Until yesterday I was undecided, but this morning I thought 'that's enough'" he said. Mashrafe, who has had seven operations on his knees, acknowledged that he had been lucky to play so long. The bowler has cult status in Bangladesh for his role in taking the team from being international whipping boys to becoming a respected limited-overs side.

Kohli just out of form:Sehwag

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

Former Indian opener Virender Sehwag believes Virat Kohli, who struggled in New Zealand across formats, is just suffering from lack of form and "doesn't have hand-eye coordination issues." "When you are out of form, nothing works for you. It is not that Virat is not making efforts but luck has deserted him," Sehwag was quoted as saying by Sportstar. "Virat certainly doesn't have hand-eye coordination issues. Your hand-eye issue deteriorates over a period of time. Not overnight. I am sure it is just lack of form. Also, he has got out to good deliveries."

In the two Test matches against Kane Williamson's men, Kohli managed just 38 runs at an average of 9.50 — his worst in recent times. He amassed a total



Virat Kohli walks from the field after he was dismissed AP

of 218 runs in the 11 innings (four T20Is, three ODIs and four Tests) that he played against the Black Caps and ended a pathetic tour with just 14 in his last innings.

The end result was that the number one Test side had to face a crushing defeat at the hands of Black Caps, who made amends following their 5-0 whitewash in the T20Is and came back strongly to win the ODIs and the Test matches — 3-0 and 2-0, respectively. "Here (in New Zealand) the ball has seamed a lot and if you are not getting runs then the challenge multiplies. Of course, you can adapt, playing more on the front foot, by leaving the ball," said Sehwag.

"For me, it is important to know which ball to leave and you can do that when you are feeling confident. The pressure also may have got to Virat," he added.

Janneman maiden ton helps SA seal series

AFP ■ BLOEMFONTEIN

Janneman Malan, snubbed for South Africa's upcoming tour of India, hit a match-winning century as the Proteas clinched their one-day international series against Australia with a six-wicket victory in the second match at the Mangaung Oval on Wednesday.

Malan made 129 not out to enable South Africa to chase down a target of 272 and seal the series with a game to spare their first win in five series in all formats in home internationals this season.

Malan, 23, was out for a first-ball duck on Saturday and was not selected in a 15-man squad which will depart on Sunday for a three-game tour of India.

"They were great partners to have in the chase," said Malan. "My partners kept me calm when I was itching a bit."

He made his runs off 139 balls and hit seven fours and four sixes.

Malan had to

share the man-of-the-match award with fast bowler Lungi Ngidi, who took six for 58.

Finch said his team had finished 20 or 30 runs short because of their costly late-innings collapse.

"When you've got 'in' batters batting right to the end it makes a huge difference," he said.

Ngidi said: "I was given the challenge before the game by the coach (Mark Boucher) to knock over the big three."

Finch and Warner posted 50 off the first 37 balls of the innings before Ngidi had Warner caught at cover. He followed up by dismissing Steve Smith and Marnus Labuschagne off successive balls.

Labuschagne's wicket was Ngidi's 50th in his 26th ODI — the fastest South African to the landmark.

D'Arcy Short, who gained a place on the tour when Glenn Maxwell was ruled out because of surgery, made 69, his maiden one-day international half-century, before he was out in the 42nd over to start Australia's slide.

