GLOBAL SHARES MOSTLY LOWER AS INVESTORS WARY OVER STIMULUS

SPORTS 12

WTC WIN WILL BE SAME AS WORLD CUP: ISHANT



BHOPAL RAIPUR CHANDIGARH BHUBANESWAR RANCHI DEHRADUN VIJAYAWADA

*LATE CITY VOL. 3 ISSUE 123 *Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

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'FILM WITH RAVI GARU WILL BE A HILARIOUS ENTERTAINER'

HYDERABAD DELHI LUCKNOW

Page 11

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AYODHYA AIRPORT TO BE NAMED AFTER LORD RAM

he under construction airport in Ayodhya will be named Maryada Purushottam Sriram Airport, Ayodhya after Lord Ram and a provision of Rs 101 crore has been made for it in the budget presented in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly on Monday. Besides the provision for the Ayodhya airport which will subsequently be made an international airport, the budget also provides for Rs 2,000 crore for increasing the number of airstrips at Jewar Airport from 2 to 6. Cities like Aligarh, Moradabad, Meerut will also be linked through air service soon, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath told reporters after the presentation of the budget by Finance Minister Suresh Khanna.



given the optimism of the rev-

enue generating departments

enue was over Rs 54,000 crore

and it is expected to garner

another Rs 10,000 crore at least

In the last fiscal – 2019-20, the

State's own tax revenue was

about Rs 65,000 crore and the

effort would be to reach that

mark before the end of March

this year. "This in itself is an

achievement as the government

before end of March.

TOP DOCTOR BODY CRITICISES HEALTH MINISTER PRESENCE AT CORONIL LAUNCH

oga teacher Ramdev's claims on Patanjali's Coronil as the "first evidence-based medicine for COVID-19", made in the presence of Union Health Minister Harsh . Vardhan, has drawn blistering criticism from the IMA. The medical body has questioned how the Health Minister could promote a "falsely fabricated, unscientific product" before the country. On Friday, Ramdev launched the Patanjali product in the presence of Harsh the trio were claims that the "medicine" was CoPP and WHO GMP certified - meaning it



DADRA AND NAGAR HAVELI MP MOHAN **DELKAR FOUND DEAD IN MUMBAI HOTEL**

ohan Delkar, seven-term Lok Sabha member from Dadra and Dage. ... was found dead in a Mumbai hotel on The body of Delkar (58) member from Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Monday, police said. The body of Delkar (58), Independent MP from Dadra and Nagar Haveli Union Territory, was found at the sea-facing hotel in south Mumbai's Marine Drive area, a police official said. The official said a suicide note in Gujarati was also found along with the body. The cause of death will be known after autopsy, he added. An accidental death report was registered, the official said. Delkar was in May 2019 elected to the 17th Lok Sabha,his

of revised budget estimates of 2019-20 when the budget out-

However, soon after the bud-

get presentation, the State gov-ernment had to contend with

the unexpected setback in the form of Covid-19.

The State's total revenue receipts including borrowings

and Central allocations registered a growth of 7.5 per cent till

January -end over that of corre-

This year, the Cabinet

Subcommittee on Resource

Mobilisation, as part of pre-bud-

getary exercise, proposed that

about Rs 30,000 crore could be

mobilised through monetisation

of land bank given the revival of

land transactions, one-time set-

tlement of pending dues in

Commercial Taxes and other

departments, sale of idling assets

of government like Rajiv

Swagruha, disinvestment in

sponding period last year.

lay was Rs 1.47 lakh-crore.



RS 450 CR IN UNDISCLOSED INCOME

ver ₹450 crore in undisclosed income has been recovered from raids on business premises owned by the family of Madhya Pradesh Congress MLA Nilay Daga, the Income Tax Department said Monday evening. The raids had been carried out since February 18 across 22 locations in the state's Betul and Satna districts, as well as Mumbai and Kolkata. The raids uncovered unaccounted cash stores of ₹8 crore, unexplained foreign currency amounting to ₹44 lakh and information about nine bank lockers.

NIA chargesheet says terrorists

planned hit on Hyd, Bengaluru

scribed terror organisations

Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) and

Harkat-ul-Jihad-e-Islami

(HuJI) to commit subversive

activities and wage a war

against the government of India, the NIA official said.

duo had procured illegal arms

As per the chargesheet, the

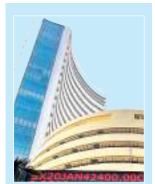


chest for Assam ahead of polls



VSP privatisation decision is conscientious, beneficial





Sensex sinks 1,145 points; Nifty drops below 14,700



TODAY

Month & Paksham: Magha & Shukla Paksha

Panchangam Tithi: Ekadashi: 06:04 pm Nakshatram: Ardra: 12:31 pm

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

Rahukalam: 03:23 pm – 04:50 pm **Yamagandam:** 09:35 am - 11:02 am Varjyam: 12:54 am - 02:33 am 12:29 pm - 01:56 pm Good Time: (to start any important work)

Amritakalam: NII **Abhiiit Muhurtham:** 12:06 pm − 12:52 pm

HYDERABAD

Forecast: Partly cloudy **Temp:** 32/17 Humidity: 38% **Sunrise:** 06:38 am Sunset: 06:20 pm Current Weather Conditions

Vardhan and Nitin Gadkari. On a poster behind

holds a certificate of pharmaceutical product.

Till January-end, the State's own

another Rs 10,000 crore at least

and it is expected to garner

before end of March

is matching the revenue of last

fiscal effectively in only 10

months this year, despite loss of

economic activity for about two

revenue was over Rs 54,000 crore over that of



Telangana

revenue

receipts

ations

including

State's total

borrowings and

Central alloc-

registered a

growth of 7.5

per cent till

January-end

responding

period last

vear.

down in national economy and

the State's revenue growth

reduced to 7 per cent making it

eligible for GST compensation



PNS BENGALURU

The NIA filed a supplementary chargesheet before a special court here on Monday against

two terrorists of Pakistan-based

terror group LeT for their alleged involvement in a con-

spiracy to commit subversive

activities and wage a war against India, besides killing key person-alities of the Hindu communi-

ty in the country, an official said. The chargesheet was filed against Dr Sabeel Ahmed of

Bengaluru and Asadulla Khan

of Hyderabad under Sections

of the IPC and the Unlawful

Activities (Prevention) Act

(UAPA), a spokesperson of the

country's premier investigation

in August 2012 in Bengaluru,

pertains to a conspiracy

hatched by members of pro-

Telangana State Medical and

Health Minister Eatala

Rajender stated that the state

government, unlike the

plans of imposing curfew as

of now in view of increasing

corona cases. He said that the

corona cases were increasing

in Maharashtra, Karnataka

and Chandigarh. However,

the government had alerted

the officials concerned to

concentrate on the borders of

spike in active

K VENKATESHWARLU

■ HYDERABAD

No plan to impose

curfew in State: Eatala

The case, initially registered

agency said.

FOUND IN RAID ON CONG MLA'S FIRM



killings of important person

alities of the Hindu communi-

ty in Karnataka's Bengaluru

and Hubli, Maharashtra's

Nanded and Telangana's

Hyderabad to disturb commu-

nal harmony and strike terror

in the society, the official said.

Congress

expels Palvai

Harish, woos

PNS HYDERABAD

Harsha Vardhan

TPCC Disciplinary Action Committee chairman M

expelled Dr Palvai Harish of

Sirpur Kagaznagar con-

stituency from the party for

alleged 'anti-party activities',

following complaints from

leaders of the constituency.

sion, Telangana Congress Affairs in-charge Manickam

Tagore tweeted saying

"Gandhiji party cannot keep

those persons who want to

have relationship with

have relactions Godse's party.
Good step by the Congress Congress

Telangana Congress Disciplinary Committee

towards a better and loyal

Congress team".

Reacting to the expul-

Telangana budget outlay may cross Rs 2 lakh-crore The Telangana government's budget outlay for 2021-22 may touch Rs 2 lakh-crore mark,

PM opens treasure



KTR upbeat over response to TRS membership drive

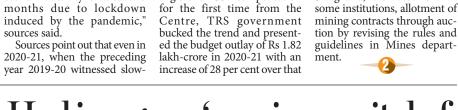
PNS HYDERABAD

An upbeat TRS working president and Municipal Administration Minister KT Rama Rao on Monday said that the TRS membership drive has met unexpected success 'above and beyond' the target set by the party.

Reminding that membership drive is currently underway across the state, KTR directed the party workers to try and wrap up the member-ship drive by the month-

Participating in a telecon-ference with in-charges of the membership drive on Monday, KTR advised them to work simultaneously on the membership drive as well as digitalisation of the memberships. He sought details of district-wise membership

In response, the in-charges informed KTR that the response from the people was good. They said that the membership drive is continuing in several constituencies even though the target set by the party has been surpassed. KTR expressed pleasure at this and thanked them.



Hyd image as 'vaccine capital of world' further bolstered: KTR

Monday said Hyderabad's position as the 'vaccine capital of the world' was further bolstered following the COVID-19 pandemic. He said it is a matter of pride that the world is looking towards the country and

The visit of foreign envoys from different countries and that of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to 'Genome Valley' in the city is testimony to the cluster's significance in the global con-



"Our dream and vision of growing the life-sciences industry in Telangana to over USD 100 billion looks plausible and we remain committed to it," he said while speaking at the inauguration of BioAsia, an annual biotechnology and life- sciences forum, organised by the government of Telangana.



Varavara gets bail on medical grounds

PNS MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Monday granted interim bail for six months on medical grounds to ailing poet and activist Varavara Rao, an accused in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case.

The court said it could not be a "mute spectator" and permit 82-year-old Rao's health condition to deteriorate in custody. A bench of Justices SS Shinde and Manish Pitale said

there existed no doubt that given his current medical condition, Rao would face "acceleration and intensification of ailments" if he continued to remain in custody.

It noted that medical facili-ties at the Taloja prison's hospital in neighbouring Navi Mumbai were inadequate. Rao is currently admitted in Nanavati Hospital, a private medical facility in Mumbai.





On November 27, the active caseload was 4,55,555 - an increase of 3.85 percent from the 4,38,667 recorded on November 24.

Monday was the fifth consecutive day in which active cases have increased; 13,506 new cases have been added in this period.



candidate known for his inci-

sive analysis socio political and

economic issues, are promi-

nent among those in the field

for MLC seat from Hyderabad,

Benami deals in Amaravati: Transcript of conversation is not enough, says SC

PNS NEW DELHI

Maharashtra, he said.

At present, there was no

record of a huge increase in

corona cases in Telangana, he

said and informed that the

state government had taken

all possible measures in

Gandhi, TIMS and NIMS

hospitals to face any situation.

He said that they would con-

duct more tests to control the

corona in the state.

The Supreme Court Monday said it cannot hold an inquiry as to what was there in the phone conversation between former Andhra Pradesh high court judge Justice V Eswaraiah and a suspended trial court magistrate with regard to various issues including alleged 'Benami' transactions related to the Amaravati land scam case.

A bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan and R S Reddy also reserved its order on the plea of Justice Eswaraiah seeking a stay on the Andhra Pradesh high court order directing a probe into his conversation with suspended District

Munsif Magistrate. The high court had said that their phone conversation had allegedly disclosed a serious conspiracy against the

This court cannot hold an



inquiry as to what is there in the transcript of the conversation and what is missed out. Let the HC take a call, the bench said in the proceedings held through video conferencing.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing or former HC judge, said that the high court order needed to be stayed as allegations have been made without hearing the former judge.



Minister K T Rama Rao on



Genome Valley is an organised cluster for life-sciences R&D with a number of companies located there.

Covid cases PNS ■ NEW DELHI Active Coronavirus cases in

Sharpest

India shot up by 4,421 in 24 hours - a spike of 3 percent - to go back over the 1.5 lakh mark for the first time in 17 days and register the steepest increase since end-November.

'Seasoned' candidates in MLC polls up the stakes Nageswara Rao, Independent ting above the party lines, on

ML MELLY MAITREYI

It is normally political parties that steal the limelight in an election but this time, an array of seasoned political leaders and individuals with proven track record may also end up influencing the outcome in polls to the two Legislative Council seats under the

Graduate constituency. It is the profile of candidates, carefully chosen by the ruling TRS and opposition BJP and Congress parties that has changed the complexion



MLC election into a keenly

contested electoral battle on

the lines of general Assembly

N. Ramachandra Rao of the normally low profile



voters may well weigh the profile of candidates, their contribution and performance before casting their vote, cut-

March 14.

be entirely on the basis of political party, say some observers keenly watching the developments and campaign by rival parties. Former Minister and AICC general secretary G. Chinna

The voting pattern may not

Reddy from the Congress, N. Ramachandra Rao, advocate and outgoing MLC from BJP, Surabhi Vani Devi, educationist, social worker and daughter of late Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao and former MLC Prof K

Reddy Mahbubnagr Graduate constituency.
The selection of Ms.Vani Devi as TRS candidate is seen as a deft move by TRS supremo to leverage the goodwill of people for late PV Narasimha Rao and 'son of the soil of

Telangana'.

judiciary.

VSP privatisation decision is conscientious, beneficial

who have been giving Visakhapatnam Steel Plant' speeches are the ones who have looted Vizag city in one way or the other.

Some of these leaders treated the steel plant as their personal property and amassed crores of rupees. Some even eyed lands of the steel plant, while others have built huge buildings on the Beach Road violating rules.

Those who indulged in nefarious deals left, right and centre have been undertaking padayatras for the steel plant and shedding crocodile tears.

None of them will talk about who pushed VSP into losses, or who drove people displaced by it onto the streets despite promising a job to each household. Who looted public funds by escalating the tender value indiscriminately? Who forced VSP to protect their rights?

Though the foundation stone for the steel plant was laid in 1971, why were suitable funds not allotted to it for the next seven years?

Under whose regime, was construction of the steel plant stalled in 1985? Who wanted to dispose of the Steel Plant as scrap after Rs 1,500 crore was spent to build it? Why did TDP and Congress gov-ernments fail to allot captive iron ore mines to the steel

Who caused a loss of Rs 1,100 crore to the steel plant to satisfy Congress chairperson Sonia Gandhi in the name of Raebareli Wheel

So-called leaders were silent when iron ore worth lakhs of crores was being exported instead of being allotted to domestic steel

The Modi government contemplates equal partnership for both private and public sectors. What did the country achieve by giving management of the PSUs to IAS officials alone? Youth should be provided with opportunities, Modi told the Niti Aayog **Governing Council.**

launched the 'Save VSP' agi-

Those who paved the way for privatisation of many PSUs are now questioning the Modi Government.

It is not true that though the Centre gave the nod for the steel factory in Kadapa district, the then state government failed to allot suitable iron ore mines to it?

The Minister for Major Industries told Parliament that 70 PSUs were in losses as of March 2019. The Modi Government took a policy

decided to implement measures like reorganisation of the business, promotion of ioint investments, modernisation of the PSU, implementing better marketing stratagem, corporate style of management, appointing experts on the board and so on.

It is not limited to the steel plant alone, but to many PSUs in the country. The Modi government

contemplates equal partnership for both private and public sectors. What did the country achieve by giving management of the PSUs to



Y SATYA KUMAR **BJP National Secretary**

IAS officials alone? Youth should be provided with a majority of the opportunities and the private sector should be respected as it is creating wealth in the country, Modi told the Niti Aayog Governing Council.

Is it not true that Governments failed to use the economic and industrial Narsimha Rao's

Is it right to **SPEAKING** take recourse to public funds without mobilising

internal resources of the PSUs, without modernising amenities and without augmenting the production capacity?

We should question our-selves whether is it proper to shut doors on foreign invest-ments ready to come to the

country on a large scale? Modi felt that tough decisions should be taken to create world-class basic amenities in the country, to improve living standards of common man, to inject momentum into our economy and took such decisions. He favoured encouraging MSMEs and

Like previous regimes,

tise vote bank politics. It's not Modi's policy to hoodwink people, make false promises and discard them once the purpose is

The Modi government has set itself a policy objective to give the private sector a chance since the public sector alone is not able to attract

more investments into the

country Maruti Udyog Corporation chairman RC Bhargava, in an interview, said that the car company sold 1.20 lakh units in 1993 upon its privatisation in 1992. It reached the stage of selling 18 lakh car units by 2019-20 and achieved cash surplus of Rs 38,000 crore. Irrespective of the tough competition from other players, Maruti cars constitute 50 per cent of the total cars sold

VSP, are not able to attract private investments and earn huge profits like the Maruti

Why should the government invest in production business and service sectors instead of lodging its funds in the public welfare sector, infrastructural development, medical and education, housing sectors or to provide drinking water and other basic ameni-

Disinvestment of public sector investments and pumping funds by private sectors does not mean the government shirking its responsibility. The Government is saddled with the responsibility of coming to the rescue of downtrodden sections and ensuring fruits of development reach them.

This is the objective of the Modi's government of minimum governance and maxi-



Hyd image as 'vaccine capital of world' further...

Continued from Page 1

Life-sciences sector in the state has attracted new investments to the tune of about Rs 3,700 crore in the last one year with an employment potential for around 14,000 people, Rama Rao said. Meanwhile, Bharat Biotech CMD Krishna Ella said the city would contribute significantly to vaccine production and related areas in the future.

A substantial chunk of vaccine production involving different reputed companies comes from the city, he said.

However, it does not get much publicity, he said.

"The pandemic vaccines, anything in the future. It will come only from Hyderabad. That's also please (be) assured (of) that. Whether it comes from BE or Bharat Biotech. It doesn't matter. But, it comes from Hyderabad,"

With major companies like Dr Reddy's Laboratories and Aurobindo Pharma also entering the area of vaccines, it is going to be a bigger game, he said. He was speaking after receiving the Genome Valley Excellence Award for 2021.

The award given to him is not for him alone but goes to all entrepreneurs, Ella said.

'Seasoned' candidates in MLC polls up the...

Continued from Page 1

high command for his immense contribution to the

For Warangal, Nalgonda and Khammam Graduate constituency, it's former MLC Ramulu Naik (Congress) Premender Reddy (BJP), Palla Rajeswahar Reddy, outgoing MLC and chairman of Farmer Coordination Committee, and Prof Kodandaram president, Telangana Jana Samiti who are sweating it out and influential among their constituents at grass root level.

Whatever may be the outcome, this time, the House of Elders will get two more candidates who can contribute to meaningful deliberations.

Leopard spotted relaxing on treetop outside forest in TS directed to remain available

Panic gripped the villages around Kongala waterfall, as some villagers noticed the leopard perched atop a leaf-

Villagers of Kongala village in Wazeed mandal of Mulugu district spotted a leopard relaxing on a treetop about 2 km from the village close to the Kongala waterfalls in the forest area on Monday.

As the photos of the leopard on tree went viral, panic spread among people.

The forest officials imme-

diately visited the spot but the leopard had left by then. They installed trap cameras in the surrounding area to capture its presence.

Confirming the presence of the leopard near Kongala village, district forest officer Pradeep Kumar Setty said the leopard is not a new spotting and it has been on record as a resident of the forest area for

Congress

expels Palvai

Harish, woos

Continued from Page 1

spokesperson

er in the day.

Harsha Vardhan

Meanwhile, Congress work-

ing president A Revanth

Reddy began efforts to convince TPCC official

Harsha



two or three years.

Pradeep Kumar Shetty appealed to people not to harm the animal. Officials believe that the leopard had retreated deep into the forest and that it might not pose any threat. However, people should exercise caution while

"It is good that we got visibility today. We are creating awareness among the vil-lagers regarding the movement of the leopard. The forest officials concerned were

in case of any need. We will also take the assistance of local police and revenue officials if needed. Most importantly, we will take all the required steps to see that there no man and animal conflict. Currently, the leopard has moved into the forest and there is no indication of movement near the village, the District forest officer said.

The Forest department officials made a fervent plea to villagers in Venkatapur mandal not to harm a leopard.

Meanwhile, the villagers were terrified as the word of the leopard being spotted spread and are choosing to remain indoors until they

Just in last October, villagers spotted a tiger in the adjacent forest areas of Kannai Gudem mandal under Eturnagaram wildlife sanctuary, which is on the other side of River Godavari.

Benami deals

Continued from Page 1

Justice Eswaraiah had moved the Supreme Court against a High Court order directing a probe into the phone conversation between him and a suspended trial court magistrate on the ground that it allegedly disclosed a serious conspiracy against the judicia-

In an affidavit filed in the top court, Justice (retd) Eswaraiah said he had sought information from a suspended judicial officer regarding the benami transactions in a phone conversation, which purportedly pertained to corruption allegations related to land deals in the state's new capital region.

The affidavit was filed in pursuance to the apex court's January 11 direction asking Justice (retd) Eswaraiah to clarify his stand with regard to his conversation with the suspended district munsif.

The special leave petition has been filed against the August 13 order of the Andhra Pradesh High Court ordering an investigation into a private phone conversation between the petitioner and a suspended District Munsif Magistrate of Andhra Pradesh, by terming the contents of the conversation to disclose a 'serious conspiracy' against the Chief Justice of the Andhra Pradesh, a senior sitting judge of the Supreme Court and thereby to destabilize the judiciary, said the appeal filed through lawyer Prashant Bhushan.

The former judge said the high court's order was made on the basis of an application for reopening and intervention filed by the suspended District Munsif Magistrate (S Ramakrishna) in an unrelated PIL pending there for seeking implementation of the COVID guidelines in the court building and premises.

The TRS leaders often lamented that late PV was not given his due by the Congress national economy.

In the changed political scenario, the three political parties are leaving no stone unturned with their top leaders canvassing for their respective party candidates and candidates themselves actively meeting people and explaining their party agenda.

Chief Ministers in undivided AP and Telangana Chief Minister were on record acknowledging the contribution of Legislative Council members for informed debates.

Sharpest spike in active Covid cases

The 3 percent increase in active cases is also double that recorded this time last week - 1.5 percent - and a massive 2.9 percent bigger than two weeks ago, when active cases decreased by

Continued from Page 1

Vardhan Reddy, to take back the resignation he had ten-The total number of new dered from the party earlicases reported per day has also increased - from a low of 9,121 He also asked Harsha on February 16 to 14,199 today, Vardhan Reddy to withdraw with the seven-day moving his nomination papers filed average increasing by 13.8 per for the Hyderabadcent. The spike in national Rangareddy-Mahbubnagar numbers comes as five states graduate MLC constituency. Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Revanth Reddy later said Chhattisgarh and Madhya that the party will launch its Pradesh - report increased daily campaign for Dr G Chinna numbers.

The Centre has warned all five states that continued "adherence to Covid-appropriate behaviour" is critical to break the chain of transmission and contain the novel Coronavirus.

"Over 74 per cent of active cases are in Kerala and Maharashtra... there has also been a spike in Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh... Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir are also witnessing a surge in daily new cases," the Health Ministry said Sunday. In Maharashtra, the worst-affected state, the seven-day moving average of new cases was 5,230 this morning - the highest since 5,576 on December 2. This morning 6,971 new cases were reported in 24 hours - the most since October 24, when 7,347 were

detected. In Kerala, the second worstaffected state, the seven-day moving average of new cases was 4,361 this morning and 4,070 new cases were reported in 24 hours.

Varavara gets bail on... Continued from Page 1

He has been in custody since August 28, 2018, awaiting trial in the case, which is being probed by the National Învestigation Agency (NIA).

The bench granted bail to Rao for six months, while directing him to stay within the jurisdiction of the NIA court in the city during this period.

Rao will be discharged from the hospital depending on his health condition and then released on bail, as per the HC.

While granting Rao bail on medical grounds, the HC dismissed NIA's argument that he was not entitled to relief on humanitarian grounds.

However, the court imposed a host of stringent conditions on his bail, including prohibiting him from establishing contact with his co-accused in the case. It also dismissed the Maharashtra government's subRao would be shifted to the prison ward of the state-run JJ Hospital in Mumbai.

'We are of the opinion that this court, as a constitutional court, cannot be a mute spectator to the undertrial (Rao) being sent to prison and then to government hospitals where his health deteriorates further. To be ultimately shifted to private super-speciality hospitals, upon intervention of courts...," the HC said in its 92-page judgement.

The bench said given the material on record, it had concluded that sending Rao back to the Taloja central prison where he was lodged as an undertrial, before he was shifted to the Nanavati Hospital, would "certainly endanger his life" and breach his fundamental right to health and life.

The HC noted that in the

mission that after discharge past, Rao's family had to tion on his health condition

while in prison.

It also observed that while Rao continued to suffer from multiple ailments in the prison and even contracted the COVID-19 infection, he was shifted to the Nanavati Hospital only after the HC's intervention. "The undertrial's (Rao's) repeated admissions to government facilities which have proved to be inadequate (in the past), would lead to the undertrial or his relatives repeatedly approaching courts for appropriate directions for dealing with deterioration of his health if he is put back in custody," the bench said.

"In the said process, the possibility of casualty cannot be ruled out," the court observed. It said Rao's medical reports in the past pointed out that he suffered from several serious and age-related ailments.

HYDERABAD **BULLION RATES** ₹ 47, 190 (10 gm) ₹ 74, 400 (1kg)

RATES ₹/KG Dressed/With Skin ₹148 Without Skin ₹168 Broiler at Farm

CHICKEN

RATES ₹/100 397 **HYDERABAD** VIJAYAWADA 506 VISAKHAPATNAM 480 RETAIL PRICE

Telangana budget outlay may cross Rs 2 lakh-crore

Reddy, who is contesting from Hyderabad-

Rangareddy-Mahbubnagar

constituency from February

Continued from Page 1

Though there is no indication yet if the ruling party, in line with its election promises, will bring down the age limit for Aasara pensions from 65 years to 57 years or sanction unemployment dole in this Budget, Minister Chandrasekhar Rao indicated that new ration cards and pensions will be issued soon to pending eligible applicants.

There was also assurance to

allot funds for loan waiver

scheme to farmers and Rs

1,000 crore to CM's SC

Empowerment Scheme. That

itself will increase the spend on

welfare schemes that now cost

more than Rs 50,000 crore. The Finance Department is

also taking into account additional expenditure of Rs 4,200 crore if pay revision to government employees even at 7.8 percent fitment is finalised. This will entail at least 10 percent increase in budget outlay for 2021-22 to touch Rs 2 lakh-crore, it is said. There are suggestions to

rationalise welfare schemes like one kg subsidy rice scheme which costs exchequer Rs 3,200 crore annually to extend it to the deserving and also limit the Rythu Bandhu scheme to farmers with landholdings below five acres and exclude persons of high income groups, people's representatives and Income Tax payers. The government earlier had opted for 'Give it up' option from the well to do individuals as it felt 80 percent of farmers who got benefit were small and marginal farmers. But the 'Give it up' programme did not generate much response and the government did not even save Rs

100 crore. Apart from 86 lakh white ration cards in the State, another six lakh plus new applicants were waiting for ration cards since the last four years. Of this, about four lakh applicants are found to be eligible, sources

NIA chargesheet says terrorists planned hit on Hyd...

The NIA re-registered the case in November 2012 and has filed chargesheets against 17 accused.

LeT members Ahmed and Khan were involved in a criminal conspiracy, along with other accused, in supporting and furthering the cause of the terror outfit in Saudi Arabia's Dammam and Riyadh, the NIA spokesperson said.

They actively participated in meetings, where terrorist activities like targeted killings of important personalities of the Hindu community in Bengaluru, Hubli and Nanded were planned, the official The special NIA court in

Bengaluru convicted 13 accused in the case in September 2016 and sentenced them to five years of imprisonment for their involvement in offences under the UAPA, IPC, Arms Act and Official Secrets Act.

A trial is continuing against three accused who were named in an earlier chargesheet, the NIA official said, adding that further investigation against six absconding accused is underway.

No plan to impose...

Continued from Page 1 He advised people to be care-

ful till the corona threat existed. He said that the state government was alert as the corona cases were increasing across the nation. The Health Minister said that the state government was going to enhance the funds meant to fight corona in the coming

While speaking to the media on Monday, Eatala said that the centre had to

bring corona vaccine to the market so that the people could avail it and that the state government was ready to take steps in this regard if the centre released corona vaccine to the markets. He further said that the state had received more than 11 lakh vaccine doses. There was a need to administer the vaccine to the persons, who had crossed 50-years and the persons suffering from chronic diseases, he said.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA ROADS & BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT "e"Procurement Tender Notice

"e"NIT No.05/ENCJR)/MDK/EEJR)/DEE6/AEE/2021, Date:19.02.2021 . Online tenders are invited on "e" procurement platform in Sangareddy District under Non-Plar MDR)/FDR 2020-21. (i)One(1) Road work under Non-Plan (MDR) for 2nd call. 2. Tenderers can download the tender schedules from e-market place i.e., https://tender.tetangans.gov.in. The last date of receipt of tenders for road work is 03.03.2021 up to 3.30 P.M. 3. Further details can be

een at e-procurement market place i.e., https://tender.telanguna.gov.in. Sdl- Engineer-In-Chief (R&B). R.O. No.:1033-DPICL-AGENCY/ADVT11/2020-21, D1:22.02.2021

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Gearing up to tackle cyber crimes

With the spurt in cyber crimes in the villages too and citybased cyber criminals spreading their tentacles there, the Telangana State Police Department officials are gearing up and taking steps to tackle the cyber crimes.

The incidents of cyber crime range from hacking to data tampering.

A senior police official acknowledged, "The police personnel have no training till now on how to tackle such crimes." He stated that most police

personnel loathed investigating cyber crimes. "People who have suffered

cyber crimes will find it difficult to get their complaints registered in any of the police stations," he said.

With absolute focus to put brakes to the ideas of cyber criminals, DGP Mahender Reddy has organised special online training classes for the cyber warriors for one week, beginning Monday.

Cyber warriors are police personnels working in their respective police stations. They will be trained in investigating cyber crimes.

In all, 1,950 cyber warriors



DGP Telangana Police (@TelanganaDGP) For the first time in India #TelanganaStatePolice started a new initiative to curb #CyberCrimes. Providing training for 2 to 5 members from each police station as #CyberWarrior (across the state) to prevent, to create awareness amongst people & to investigate #CyberCrimes.

have been selected from all the police stations across the state. While two police personnel have been chosen from every

rural police station, three personnel have been selected from each semi-urban police stations and five police personnel from

the tri-commissionerates Hyderabad, Cyberabad and Rachakonda. The main aim of the online training is to thwart criminals to dupe people and to minimise the number of

In this one week the selected police personnel will be trained in solving cyber crime cases. The training includes identifying the modus operandi, steps to be followed in solving a crime, using of modern technology in solving the crime, safety steps to be fol-lowed and identifying how cyber criminals approach their victims.

Further, they will be told about the ways to make people aware about cyber crimes and criminals, the types of cyber frauds, ways the cyber criminals use to approach the victims and others. They will be also trained in the ways of collecting data from the victims the way they are approached and finally robbed - and collecting other necessary data, which will be useful for inves-

A booklet will be provided online to all cyber warriors for revising the lessons taught in the classes. These cyber warriors will be linked to the district cyber crime cells for better results in stopping cyber

Hyd's protection quotient dips

ANUSHA PUPPALA

Urban Hyderabad's protection quotient declines marginally by 1 point to 45 during Čovid-19 pandemic, city witnesses decline in security level, life insurance ownership reveals Max Life's India Protection Quotient 3.0. in its third edition of flagship survey.

According to the survey, the city was also the only metro to register marginal drop in life insurance ownership levels from 82 per cent during IPQ 2.0 to 80 per cent during IPQ 3.0. Mumbai demonstrated highest life insurance ownership at 91 per cent, followed by Kolkata with 89 per cent ownership. The capital city Delhi displayed an ownership level of 81 per cent.

The survey also revealed that the degree to which urban Hyderabad is aware about life insurance products or the knowledge index remained stagnant at 56 during the pan-

In the backdrop of Covid, while Hyderabad's security level plummeted, the city was found to be less anxious about financial commitments and was more prepared to sustain lifestyle and expenses with are yet to become more proactive about financial planning, overall health and fitness. In the backdrop of Covid, 41% of Hyderabadis said that they're proactive about financial planning and 38% said that they believe in saving more than spending

IPQ revealed that urban Hyderabadis

current earnings and provide for family's financial needs in the absence of the breadwinner, in comparison to other metro cities.

Furthermore, the survey revealed that while term insurance awareness remained stagnant at 54 per cent in Hyderabad, there was a notable increase in the city's level of term insurance ownership. As a result, Hyderabad witnessed the highest term insurance uptake of 9 per cent among metros. They survey revealed that amidst total or partial job losses, a promising 84 per cent of Hyderabad respondents felt secure about their job, highest in comparison to other metros. 75 per cent of Hyderabadis felt they could fulfil basic/luxury needs post retirement. Medical expenses involving high expenditure, fulfilling family's basic needs, child's education and marriage are some of the few facets that Hyderabad felt financially secure about

On the back of health and financial challenges, the survey revealed that anxiety levels of Hyderabad stood at 49 per cent, the lowest in comparison to all metros including hyper anxious Kolkata (78%) and Delhi (71%).

Despite an environment of increasing worries and reducing security, IPQ 3.0 revealed that urban Hyderabadis are yet to become more proactive about financial planning, overall health and fitness. In the backdrop of Covid-19, only 41 per cent of Hyderabadis said that they're proactive about financial planning and a paltry 38 per cent said that they believe in saving more than

CITY LIGHTS

No water supply in some areas of Hyderabad on February 24

ue to the junction work on Krishna drinking water supply phase-II ring main-II under the alignment of SRDP flyover and underpass from LB Nagar junction to Bawarchi and for



facilitating the construction of the underpass, there will be shutdown of drinking water supply for 24 hours from 6 am on Wednesday. Following this, there will be no water supply to the some areas including Balapur, Maisaram, Barkas, Mekalamandi, Bholakpur, Tarnaka, Lalapet, Boudhanagar, Marredpally Cantonment, Prakashnagar, Patigadda, Hashmathpet, Vaishalinagar, BN Reddynagar, Vanasthalipuram, Autonagar, Maruthinagar, Elugutta, Ramanthapur, Uppal, Nacharam, Habsiguda, Chilkanagar, Berrappagadda, Boduppal, Badangpet and Meerpet reservoir areas On Sunday, Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board has requested the consumers to use water conservatively to avoid inconvenience during the shutdown of water supply.

BA LLB spot admissions for TSWREIS women's college

he spot admissions for vacant seats in fiveyear BA LLB course in Telangana Social Welfare Residential Law College for Women, Ghatkesar for the academic vear 2020-2021 will be held on Thursday. February 25, according to



Telangana Social Welfare Residential Educational Institutions Society (TSWREIS) here on Monday. Candidates who have qualified in TS LAWCET-2020 are eligible and will be admitted as per the merit secured in TS LAWCET-2020. Spot admissions will be conducted from 10 am to 2 pm at the Residential Law College for Women in Ghatkesar. Interested candidates can visit TSWREIS website (www.tswreis.in) for details.

Telangana schools asked to upload student data online

he Examinations wing on Monday issued a notification to all headmasters of secondary schools in Telangana, instructing them to upload regular student data online. The headmasters can login



with their school ID and password on the board website www.bse.telangana.gov.in to submit online application forms and printed nominal roll. They have also been instructed to finish this process as per the due date issued by the department.

Hyd among top 5 cities leading online searches in January '21

study was undertaken by Sulekha.com, India's leading Aldriven tech platform for expert services has unveiled interesting Atrends and insights about the service categories that have seen an increase in January 2021. This study is based on visits and searches by nearly more than 3,00,000 users across the top eight cities that landed on Sulekha in January 2021. The top 3 service categories that have seen a spike in online searches include Placement Consultancies, Domestic Help Services and Paying Guests. The top 5 cities that are leading in online searches across service categories include-- Chennai Delhi and Bangalore followed by Hyderabad and Mumbai. In Chennai, the top 3 services that are leading include: Paying Guests, Domestic Help Services and Placement Consultancies. These services have grown by 20 per cent since December 2020. In Delhi, the top 3 services that are leading include Domestic Help Services, Placement Consultancies and Job Training



Somesh stresses need for synergy between depts on skill development

PNS HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar has under-lined the need to have synergy between various departments towards skill develop-

A meeting on Skill Development and Entrepreneurship programme was held at BRKR Bhavan on Monday. Presiding over the meeting, the Chief Secretary discussed

the issues relating to skill development, entrepreneurship and training were discussed at the meeting.
These issues will be brought to the notice of the Telangana

Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao for necessary instructions. Officials from Rural Development, Youth Services, Technical Education, Mepma, TASK, NAC Medical and Health, SC, ST, BC and other Welfare Departments made a



power point presentation highlighting the skill development programmes being taken up by their departments.

Rani Kumidini, Special Chief Secretary of LET&F, Arvind Kumar, Principal Secretary of MA&UD, Sunil Sharma, Principal Secretary of TR&B, Jayesh Ranjan, Principal Secretary of ITE&C, S Ghosh, Principal Secretary of Youth Services, Sandeep Kumar Sultania, Secretary of PR &RD, Naveen Mittal,

Commissioner of Technical Education, Sreenivas Raju, Secretary of YAT&C, Dr N Satyanarayana, CDMA, Raghunandan Commissioner of PR & RD, Rahul Bojja, Secretary of SC Development, SAM Rizvi, Secretary of Health, KY Naik, Director of Employment and Training, Bikshapathi, DG of NAC, Dr S Chinnam Reddy, Director of NITHAM and other officials attended the

Police bust fake passport racket, arrest 6 persons

PNS HYDERABAD

A racket in getting passports using fake documents has been busted in Nizamabad district of Telangana and six people arrested in this connection, Police said.

Police were also probing if any Bangladeshi nationals were part of the racket.

Based on specific information, police busted the racket and it was revealed the six facilitated some people in getting the passports by submitting fake documents, the official said. "A detailed investigation is going on...we are working on who got the passports...we are also probing if Bangladeshi nationals were also part of this racket," the official said.

BJP leader Dharmapuri Arvind had earlier said passports were obtained by submitting fake documents in Bodhan of Nizamabad.

Telangana logs 114 fresh Corona cases PNS HYDERABAD

Telangana reported 114 new Covid cases on Monday, taking the state's tally to 2,97,712.

According to the health department, one more person succumbed to the virus during the last 24 hours, pushing the death toll to 1,625.

The fatality rate remained 0.54 per cent against the national average of 1.4 per cent. According to the director of public health and family welfare, while 44.96 per cent of the deaths occurred due to Covid, 55.04 per cent had comorbidities. The drop in daily count of cases was on account of the fewer tests conducted over the weekend. Director of public health and family welfare said 14,744 tests were conducted during the last 24 hours. While government-run labs tested 11,647 samples, the private labs conducted 3,097 tests.



With this the cumulative number of tests conducted in the state rose to 84,71,684. Tests per million population climbed to 2,27,611. Greater Hyderabad saw the maximum number of cases at 24 followed by Rangareddy (12). Nine districts reported no cases while the number in the remaining 22 districts was in single digit. A total of 143 people recovered from the virus during the period, taking the cumulative numbers to 2,94,386. The state's Covid recovery rate improved to 98.88 per cent against the national average of 97.2 per cent.

TN man held for cheating medical firm of Rs 4.43 cr

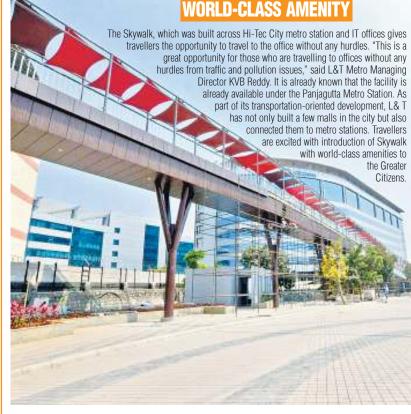
The sleuths of Central Crime Station, Hyderabad, arrested Raman Ramesh Babu from Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, who is said to have cheated people to the tune of Rs 4.43 crores.

The cops acted based on a complaint by Daniel Solomon from Hyderabad. Dr Arphita of Arpitha Diagnostics at Habsiguda approached Astler Medicss, represented by its manager Ramesh Babu, for the supply of GE 1.5 Tesla Supercon MRI equipment. Ramesh agreed to supply the equipment at a cost Rs 4,43,10,000.

The amount was paid by the complainant's firm through a loan to the account of Astler Medicss. The complainant said that Ramesh did not supply the equipment with malafide and dishonest intention to cheat the complainant firm.

The accused was on a run since the FIR was registered. "Inquiries revealed that he has also taken about Rs 10 lakhs from one Bala Murugan of Krishnagiri of Tamil Nadu promising to supply an X-ray machine and other equipment which he did not supply," the police said.

"On receiving information about the movements of the accused, a special team lead arrested him on February 20 and brought him to Hyderabad," the police said. The accused was produced before the court and was remanded to judicial custody.







Conman takes CA for a ride, flees with Rs 6 lakh

PNS HYDERABAD

A chartered accountant who posted an advertisement to sell ĥis used bicycle on an e-commerce site was duped by cyber fraudsters, reportedly to the tune of Rs 6 lakh.

The chartered accountant from Gachibowli had recently posted the bicycle with a price tag of Rs 3,500 and immediately received a call from an unidentified person showing interest.

Police said the duo negotiated on a price and the fraudster told the victim that he would send a QR code to his phone, which he had to scan to receive the advance pay-

The CA, who realised that he was cheated. approached the Cyberabad Cybercrime cell and lodged a complaint

At first when the CA scanned the code, Rs 2 lakh were debited from his bank account. When he informed the same to the fraudster, he said he would resend Rs 2 lakh and the advance money now and asked the victim to

rescan the code. When he did, another Rs 2 lakh was deducted from the account.

The victim called back again and the fraudster said it was a technical glitch, and asked him to scan the QR code again, for the third consecutive time.

Rs 2 lakh was deducted for the third time, making it a total of Rs 6 lakh. When the victim tried calling, the fraudster's mobile was switched

The chartered accountant, who realised that he was cheated, approached the Cyberabad Cybercrime cell and lodged a complaint.

A case was booked and investigation is on.

Woman falls off building, police suspect suicide

PNS HYDERABAD

Depressed reportedly over having no children, a homemaker allegedly jumped to death from a building at Keesara on the city outskirts on Sunday night.

The victim woman identified as K Satya Santoshini, 27, was married to Pavan three years ago and the couple lived in a flat in Srinivasa Nagar colony.

On Sunday night the couple reportedly had quarrel between them after which the woman allegedly jumped on from the building.

The police are investigating. The body was shifted to Gandhi Hospital.

S-I held for taking bribe in SR Nagar

PNS HYDERABAD

A Sub-Inspector working at the SR Nagar police station in Hyderabad was trapped redhanded by the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) sleuths on Monday when he allegedly demanded and accepted a bribe of

Rs 25,000 from a person. The Sub-Inspector, Bellana Bhaskar Rao, allegedly demanded a bribe of Rs 25,000 from one Mohammed Khasim for not initiating action in a criminal case registered at the SR Nagar police station in the city and also to influence civil supplies officials to release a vehicle seized by them



On a complaint made by Mohammed Khasim, the ACB laid a trap and caught the SI when he accepted the bribe amount of Rs 25,000 in denomination of Rs 500 currency notes.

Béllana Bhaskar Rao was arrested and was produced before court.

IIT-Hyderabad researchers predict lifetime of SARS-COV-2 droplets

HYDERABAD

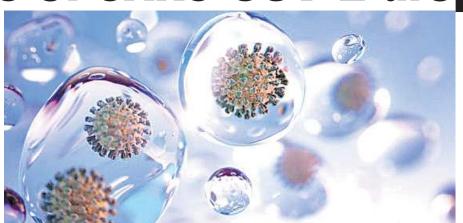
An interdisciplinary research group of faculty at Indian Institute of Technology-Hyderabad (IIT-H) has predicted the lifetime of SARS-CoV-2 droplets on surfaces in different environmental conditions, such as ambient temperature, relative humidity, and volume and composition of droplets.

Under the same environmental conditions, the drying time for droplets on a smartphone screen is three times longer than that on a normal glass surface.

Respiratory infections such as the SARS-CoV-2 virus spreads primarily by respiratory droplets (size > 10μm) of saliva or discharge from the nose of an infected person during coughing/sneezing. Fluid dynamics plays an important role in the study of the life of these droplets migrating in the air or deposited on surfaces. Spread of virus is minimal after drying of droplets containing virus.

The study focuses on various factors affecting the drying time of saliva droplets whereas earlier studies were based on water droplets.

Saliva droplets consist of salt, protein (mucin), and surfactant in addition to water. These ingredients delay the evaporation of respiratory droplets significant-



as compared to pure water droplets.

Increase in humidity will make the droplet to take longer than an hour compared to a droplet under a lower humid environment that will dry-up in minutes. Lower ambient temperature also increases the drying time of the

The angle made by a droplet on the surface (which is known as "contact angle") plays an important role in the drying time of the droplet and hence highly hydrophilic surfaces may be less susceptible to prolonged contamination.

Saliva droplets consist of salt, protein (mucin), and surfactant in addition to water as reported in the earlier study published in the Journal of Royal Society

By conducting a theoretical and numerical study, Dr Saravanan Balusamy, Dr Sayak Banerjee of the Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering and Prof Kirti Chandra Sahu from Department of Chemical Engineering of IIT-H showed that these ingredients delay the evaporation of respiratory droplets significantly as compared to pure water droplets. The work appears in the International Communications in Heat and Mass Transfer, a leading journal in this field.

Dr Balusamy said "A simple classical theoretical model developed in this study that takes into account the dynamic contact

of low ambient temperature and high relative humidity, while the drying time progressively reduces as the humidity falls and the temperature rises. Researchers also found that for a fixed initial volume of the droplet, increasing the initial contact angle increases the drying time. This follows physical intu-

about an hour. Of course, virus-

es could still be alive in dried

droplets. This requires further research involving biologists."

The longest drying times are observed with the combination

ition, as a droplet with a smaller contact angle has a greater wetting radius and surface area for the same volume resulting in a larger interface area over which the diffusion-driven evaporation can occur. Thus, highly hydrophilic surfaces may be less susceptible to prolonged contamination in comparison to less hydrophilic surfaces, which is somewhat a counter-intuitive

The study conducted by IIT-H faculty shows the importance of properly sanitising the contact prone surfaces in different seasons and air-conditioned indoor areas and advises following World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines, such as wearing face masks and maintaining social distance as the preventive measures for air transmission of Covid-19.

Kishan urges Gadkari to expedite RRR works

PNS NEW DELHI

Union Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy on Monday urged Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari to expedite the work on the proposed Regional Ring Road (RRR) around Hyderabad by notifying its southern part as a

national highway.

The Union Minister, along with BJP vice-president DK Aruna and the party's OBC Morcha president L Laxman met Gadkari in New Delhi to submit a memorandum. Kishan Reddy, who is a Member of Parliament from Secunderabad, urged Gadkari to consider sanctioning of two PIUs (Project Implementation Units) for RRR.

According to him, Gadkari assured the delegation that the work will be expedited on the project subject to the land acquisition process is completed on a fast track by the state government. The proposed RRR will traverse around Hyderabad at an average distance of 40 km to 50 km and it will have a length of about 340 km. The overall cost of the pro-

ject will be Rs 16,003 crore. The northern and southern parts of the proposed project will connect Sangareddy-Narsapur-Toopran-Gajwel-Jagdevpur-Choutuppal-Shadnagar-Sangareddy. Important national and state



Union Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy addresses the media in New Delhi on Monday, BJP vice-president DK Aruna and BJP OBC Morcha president Laxman are also seen

The Union Minister, along with BJP vice-president DK Aruna and the party's OBC Morcha president L Laxman met Gadkari in New Delhi to submit a memorandum. Kishan Reddy, who is a Member of Parliament from Secunderabad, urged Gadkari to consider sanctioning of two PIUs (Project Implementation Units) for RRR.

highways like NH-65 (Pune-Machilipatnam), NH-161 (Sangareddy-Nanded-Akola), NH-765D (Hyderabad-Medak), (Srinagar-Kanyakumari),

(Hyderabad-Ramagundam) and NH-163 (Hyderabad-Bhopalpatnam) will also be connected through this RRR. The project is expected to cater to about 40 per cent of the population of the state. The RRR will also provide connectivity to tourist places such as Yadadri.

Once this project is constructed as an Access Controlled Expressway, the travel time and the vehicle operating costs for the commercial and non-commercial vehicles will be reduced by a great extent. Several industrial clusters, IT centres, logistic parks, pharma industries and recreational facilities are expected to be established around the project road, which would provide a big boost to the econo-

my of Telangana. The construction of the project road will also improve the condition of the arterial roads and other link roads connected with the project which will reduce the travel distance and

CAPSULE

Bada Pahad Urs in Varni from Tuesday

Nizamabad: The three-day Urs celebrations of the famous Bada Pahad Syed Shadulla Hussaini Dargah will be held from Tuesday in Varni mandal of Nizamabad district. Thousands of devotees from Telangana, Maharashtra and Karnataka will be participating in these celebrations. Due to Covid-19, celebrations were held in a simple manner last year, devotees were not allowed to participate in the celebrations. Officials are expecting a huge turnout this year. Revenue department and Wakf Board officials have made elaborate arrangements for conduct of celebrations. Banswada RDO Rajeshwar Goud and Varni tahsildar Vittal supervised the arrangements.

Aggigundalau at Cheruvugattu

Nalgonda: Aggigundalu (Firewalking), a ritual in which devotees walk on coal fire, during Sri Parvathi Jadala Ramalingeshwara Swamy Jatara celebrations at Cheruvugattu of Narketpally mandal in Nalgonda district, attracted thousands of devotees on Monday. Amid chanting of Vedic hymns by the temple priests, the ritual was conducted at the hillshrine in the early hours of Monday. Aggigundalu would be considered as one of the key rituals of annual jatara. As per the tradition, the farmers also offered castor seeds and millets cultivated by them to the fire ignited for Aggigundalu. The devotees competed to walk on the coal fire with bare foot by bearing the palanquin of presiding deities of Goddess Parvathi and Lord Jadala Ramalinge shwara Swamy on their

GRADUATE MLC POLLS

CM ridiculed for picking up PV's daughter

PNS HYDERABAD

Leaders belonging to all the political parties launched a tirade against TRS Chief and Minister Chandrasekhar Rao for picking up the daughter of former Prime Minister PV Narsimha Rao to gain political mileage. Congress, BJP and CPI have

lashed out at the Chief Minister for picking up S Vani Devi as the TRS nominee for Hyderabad-Rangareddy-Mahbubnagar Graduate MLC constituency elections. They alleged that KCR picked up Vani Devi for the election where the TRS definitely loses.

Congress working presidents A Revanth Reddy and Ponnam Prabhakar have the TRS to give the Rajya



alleged that the Chief Minister gave the MLC ticket where TRS will not win.

Revanth Reddy asked KCR to field his family member if he feels that the party would win Hyderabad-Rangareddy-Mahabubnagar Graduate MLC constituency polls. He asked Vani Devi not to be part

of the KCR's conspiracy.
Ponnam Prabhakar asked

PV's grandson and BJP leader Subhash alleges KCR deceived their family

angle and the insoluble surfac-

tants is capable of accurately pre-

dicting the evaporation time

droplets to dry also depends on

the nature of the surface mater-

ial on which it falls as it dictates

how far the droplet spreads out",

Speaking about the findings of their study, Prof Sahu said,

"While the lifetime of a small sali-

va droplet of size 1 nanolitre is

less than a 1 minute, a normal

size saliva droplet of 10 nanolitres

takes more than 15 minutes to

evaporate at room temperature

and relative humidity of 50 per

cent. For high relative humidity,

say of greater than 90 per cent,

the droplet stays live on the sur-

said Dr Banerjee.

"The time taken by saliva

under different conditions.'

TRS won't win Hyderabad-Rangareddy-Mahbubnagar even it fields KTR, says N Ramchander Rag

Sabha ticket or Governor's post instead of MLC to Vani Devi if KCR has real love towards the PV's family. He asked the TRS not to use the PV's family for their political benefits. He asked Vani Devi to think twice before contesting the elections on the TRS ticket. On the other hand, PV's grandson and BJP leader NV Subash alleged that the TRS gave the ticket to his

aunty of losing constituency. He alleged that KCR deceived the PV's family with conspicuous politics. "It is nothing but an effort of dividing the votes of Brahmins", he alleged.

Sitting MLC and BJP candidate for Hyderabad-Rangareddy-Mahabubnagar N Ramchander Rao alleged that KCR is going to make PV's daughter a scapegoat. He exuded confidence that BJP will win even if TRS working president KT Rama Rao contests from the Hyderabad-Rangareddy-Mahabubnagar constituency.

CPI national secretary K Narayana stated that KCR has given the ticket to PV's daughter to get an edge over the BJP after facing a drubbing in the recent elections.

Medak municipal chairman greets Medak MLA

PNS MEDAK

Medak Municipal chairman Chandrapal, councillors and constituency leaders greeted Medak MLA Padma Devender Reddy on her wedding anniversary. Medak Municipal Chairman Chandrapal MLA accompanied by councillors Vasant Raj, Kishore, Samiuddin, Srinivas, leaders Madhusudan Rao, Boddula Krishna, Prabhu Reddy, Muthyam Gowd, Madhu, , Srinivas Reddy, Venkat Reddy and others went to her home in Hyderabad gave bouquets and wished the couple.

One more accused of advocates' murder held

PNS PEDDAPALLI

The police on Monday arrested the fourth accused in the double murder of advocates, who supplied car and two knives to the accused. The police recovered a two-wheeler used by one of the accused Chiranjeevi and his mobile phone.

Based on the information provided by the arrested Kunta Srinivas (A1), Sivandula Chiranjeevi (A2) and Akkapaka Kumar (A3), the police arrested Bittu Srinu, who supplied car and knives to the accused.

Additional DCP (Admin) Ashok Kumar is the main investigation officer in the case. People have been urged to proBased on the information provided by the arrested Kunta Srinivas (A1), Sivandula Chiranjeevi (A2) and Akkapaka Kumar (A3), the police arrested Bittu

vide any evidence with them related to the case for forging ahead in the case investigation. which is underway under the supervision of Pramod Kumar, DÎG Karimnagar Range.

Srinu, who supplied car

and knives to the accused

National Science Day to be celebrated at GITAM

PNS PATANCHERU

National Science Day (NSD) was celebrated every year on the February 28 to commemorate the discovery of the Raman Effect by Sir Chandrasekhara Venkata Raman. He went on to receive the Nobel Prize for this discovery in 1930. The day is celebrated to mark the importance of contributions made by scientists towards the development of the nation and the world as a whole. The theme for National Science Day 2021 is 'Future of STI: Impact on Education Skills and Work'.

Schools of Science and Technology, Gandhi Institute of Technology and Management (GITAM), Hyderabad, have been organising 'All India Essay Contest



and 14.

on Science and Technology' ahead of National Science Day. The topics -- 'Life during Covid-19, Online Teaching: Benefits and limitations and Social Ethics, Morals and

In all, 121 students across the country responded to this contest and 88 manuscripts were accepted for consideration. A team of faculty evaluated the manuscripts and they had shortlisted 38 students from 14 states for online oral

presentation on February 13

Meera Venkatesh, former Director, Physical and Sciences, Chemical International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and former head, Radio Pharmaceuticals Division, BARC, will deliver the guest lecture on 'Science and its progress in India' on March 1, followed by online oral presentation by contest winners. Later, prizes will be distributed to them.



Cong leader Feroz Khan to join BJP?

Another Congress leader Feroz Khan, too, will join the BJP, according to sources. He had contested from the Nampally Assembly constituency on the Congress ticket. Feroz Khan has reportedly held discussions with Telangana BJP chief Bandi Sanjay Kumar, it is learnt. According to BJP sources, Feroz Khan may join the BJP in a couple of



Several candidates filed their nominations on a penultimate day Monday of filing of nom-

inations for the Graduate MLC elections to be held for two constituencies -- Nalgonda-Khammam-Warangal and Hyderabad-Rangareddy-Mahabubnagar --on March 14. BJP candidate N Ramchander Rao filed his nomination for Hyderabad-Rangareddy-Mahabubnagar constituency at the GHMC head office. Party leaders-Perala Sekhar Rao and Anthony Reddy participated. Earlier, Ramchander Rao went to the GHMC office in a massive rally from Barkathpura party office.

However, Telangana BJP general secretary Gujjula



Premender Reddy filed his nomination for Nalgonda-Khammam-Mahabubnagar constituency at Nalgonda town. Telangana BJP chief Bandi Sanjay Kumar, former minister and Telangana BJP Core Committee member Mothkupally Narsimhulu and others were present. Speaking on the occasion, Bandi Sanjay said that Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao confined

to a farmhouse instead of solving the problems of the people. TPCC working president A Revanth Reddy, TPCC vice-

MP Anjan Kumar Yadav accompanied Congress candidate Chinna Reddy while filing nomination at the GHMC office for Hyderabad-Rangareddy-Mahabubnagar constituency. Revanth Reddy after filing nomination asked the graduate voters to ensure

the victory of Chinna Reddy. On the other hand, Telangana Jana Samithi (TJS) chief Prof Kodandaram filed his nomination for Nalgonda-Khammam-Warangal constituency at Nalgonda collectorate office. New Democracy State secretary Potu Ranga Rao, TIS leaders Badruddin, Gopal Reddy, P Srisail Reddy, Ratan Rao, Dharmarjun, Bairi Ramesh, Gopagani Shankar Rao, Sridhar and others par-

This trust helps in performing marriages of poor girls

TADURU KARUNAKAR KARIMNAGAR

Moved at the plight of poor families in performing marriages of girls in the families, youth of a village floated a trust called Maa Voori Mahalakshmi on Sri Rama Navami day in 2018 to assist the families financially in celebrating girl child's

weddings. The trust was floated in Kondayyapalli village of Gangadhara mandal of Karimnagar district. There are 300 families in the village, whose population is put at 1300. The majority of the villagers migrated to either Bhiwandi or Mumbai or Gulf countries in search of

livelihood. Spurred some unsavoury incidents that had taken place

village floated the trust with the objective that the girl child in the family should not be a burden. The decision is helping the save girl child movement in a big way. Rendla Srinivas was the founder of the trust while Anganwadi activist Madupu Govindamma officiated as the chairperson of the trust. The trust ĥas I Aruna, M Sunita, P Madhu, Gopu Raju as members. The trust has been functioning with the financial support of the villagers settled in Bhiwandi, Mumbai and Gulf countries. The trust was floated to mitigate the plight of the families having girl children.

A weaver from the family with two girl children went to Bhiwandi in Maharashtra for greener pastures. The eldest daughter was aged 10 when the



breadwinner in the family left for Bhiwandi. The father did not even visit the village at least once as the girl turned 18 years and did not support the family financially. Therefore, the villagers pooled money and performed the marriage of the girl fulfilling the responsibility of the father. Another family from the village has two daughters in it. The bread winner in the family has debt-ridden having celebrated two weddings in the family. He took the extreme step of committing suicide caught in debts on one hand and unable to face the miserable

The trust was floated in Kondayyapalli village of Gangadhara mandal of Karimnagar district

conditions on the other.

In another incident, a person from the village who was in the dire straits could not perform the wedding of the daughter, who married someone from a different caste. Feeling ashamed, he took the extreme step of committing suicide.

Moved at these developments, the youth of the family was forced to think about giving birth to Maa Voori Mahalakshmi. The trust deposits Rs 10, 000 - Rs 5000 contributed by the trust and equal sum by the family - in the name of the girl child the moment the girl was born in a family in the village under the Sukanya Samrydhdhi Yojana. The relevant passbooks would be given to the family members.

The trust has plans to deposit Rs 50,000 in the name of the girl child in the future provided the donors come forward and the financial position of the trust improves, according to Revandla Srinivas, the trust founder. In 2018, the trust deposited funds in the name of eight girls, while nine girls were benefited in 2019.

Beware of Corona, cautions Collector

PNS SANGAREDDY

District Collector Hanumantha Rao urged the people of the district to be vig-ilant following the rise in the number of Corona cases in some states, though the number of cases has come down in Telangana.

People should not neglect taking precautions assuming that they are out of Corona threat. It is suggested that people should undergo tests if they find Corona symptoms. Beneficiaries, who registered for the vaccine, were told that the vaccine was safe and that they should be vaccinated at the hospital that was allotted to them.The Collector clarified



that even after taking the vaccine, wearing a mask, sanitising and keeping physical distance should be followed. He urged the people to take all precautions to keep Corona at bay and cooperate with the government to prevent the spread of the virus.



Smriti Irani buys land in Amethi

PNS AMETHI

Union Minister Smriti Irani on Monday bought a plot of land in Amethi to make a house for herself and, in an apparent dig at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, said no MP from here ever made

the constituency his home. Without taking names, she said the history is witness to the fact that no Amethi MP ever built his house and

stayed here. The people of Amethi always wondered if their MP would ever reside here after building his house," she claimed while talking to reporters. Irani had won the 2019 Lok Sabha elections from Amethi after defeating the then MP, Rahul Gandhi.

"During the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, I had promised that I would make my house here and do all my work from here. For this I have got a plot of land registered," she added.

PM opens treasure chest for Assam ahead of polls

PNS DHEMAJI

Opening the coffers of his government for election-bound Assam, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Monday slammed the successive Congress dispensations that ruled the country since Independence gor the "neglect" of the state and the northeast for decades.

On his third visit to Assam in a month, Modi, whodedicated to the nation three major projects in the petroleumsector worth over Rs 3,222 crore, enumerated steps taken bythe state government led by Sarbananda Sonowal and the centreover the past few years for its balanced growth.

He also inaugurated Dhemaji Engineering College and laid the foundation stone for Sualkuchi Engineering Collegewith initial project cost of Rs 45 crore and Rs 55 crorerespectively in this town on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra.

He had unleashed a major development offensive in



therun up to the state polls on February 7 when he laid thefoundation of and dedicated to the nation infrastructureprojects involving Rs 9,310

Again, on February 18, he

had gifted a bouquet of development projects worth about Rs 10,000 crore to the state. Those who ruled for

believed Dispur was too dis-

hai' (Delhi is not far now, it stands at your doorstep," he told a massive gathering. decades since Independence

The previous governments adopted "step-motherly" approach to the north bank tant from Delhi. 'Dilli ab

door nahi aapke darwaaze par

region and neglected connectivity, health, education and industry, he alleged.
"I had come earlier to

Gogamuk in the state's north bank and said that Assam and the northeast will become the new growth engine of the country and now we see this belief bear fruit," he said.

The prime minister said due to sustained efforts by the Assam government more than 20 engineering colleges havebeen set up.

Referring to the new National Education Policy (NEP), he said its emphasis on teaching in local languages will helpchildren from even poor families become doctors and engineers.

Modi said hardly 40 per cent families in Assam had cooking gas connections till 2014 despite the state being rich in oil and natural gas and refineries. Almost entire population of the state has now been covered under the Ujjwala Yojana and one crore women have benefited, he



CRPF DEPLOYMENT

West Bengal not singled out, says EC

PNS NEW DELHI

The Election Commission on Monday said that central police forces are being sent to all poll-bound states and not specifically to West Bengal, stressing that it is a routine practice for several decades.

In a statement, the poll panel said the CPFs are routinely sent to all the states and UTs where Lok Sabha or assembly elections are to take place, for advance area domination, especially in the critical and vulnerable sectors.

It said these sectors are identified by meticulous advance reviews and concrete feedback from various sources, including political parties and

entities. This practice is going on since the late 1980s, it observed.

The Commission was responding to certain reports claiming that central forces were being specifically sent to West Bengal

During the 2019 Lok Sabha elections also, central forces were sent to all states and UTs, and the same has been done in all assembly polls.

"In the instant case also, the CPFs have been sent to all the four states namely Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and the UT of Puducherry where assembly elections are to take place," the statement said.

It also said that the or

INDIA CORNER

CBI visits Abhishek's sister-in-law in coal theft case

team of CBI visited the residence of TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee's sister-in-law Menaka Gambhir in Kolkata on Monday to examine her in connection with the coal pilferage case, officials said. Two woman officers of the CBI examined Gambhir for nearly three hours

at her residence off Eastern



Metropolitan Bypass after a notice was served to her on Sunday, they said. The officers of the CBI's anti-corruption branch sought to ascertain her financial accounts, sources said. Gambhir is the sister of Abhishek's wife Rujira Banerjee who told the CBI earlier in the day that she will be available for examination in connection with the case at her residence in Harish Mukherjee Road between 11 am to 3 pm on February 23, they added. Abhishek, the Trinamool Congress's Diamond Harbour MP, is the nephew of Chief Minister Mamata Baneriee. The CBI had registered an FIR in November last year against the alleged kingpin of the pilferage racket Manihi alias Lala. Eastern Coalfield Ltd General Managers Amit Kumar Dhar (of then Kunustoria area now Pandaveswar area) and Javesh Chandra Rai (Kajora area), besides ECL Chief of ecurity Tanmay Das, Area Security Inspector, Kunustoria Dhananjay Rai and SSI and security in-charge Kajor area Debashish Mukherjee. It is alleged that accused Lala is involved in the illegal mining and theft of coal from leasehold mines of ECL in Kunustoria and Kajora areas, ources said.

Rs 335-cr black money found during raid on Pune firm

he Income Tax Department has detected about Rs 335 crore undisclosed income after it raided a Pune-based business group engaged in packaging and sale of tobacco products and related items, the Central Board of Direct Taxes said on Monday. The searches, which were launched at 34 locations across Maharashtra



on February 17, led to the seizure of "unaccounted" cash of Rs 1 crore, it said. "Profit on un-recorded transactions of sale of real estate amounting to Rs 9 crore has been accepted by the assessee," the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), the body that frames policy for the Income Tax Department, said in a statement. "Total undisclosed income amounting to Rs 335 crore has been detected so far." it said. The group is based in Pune's Sangamner area and its entities are largely engaged in packaging and sale of tobacco and related products, generation and distribution of power, sale of FMCGs, and real estate development, the CBDT added.

Surge of Corona cases in Kerala: TN steps up vigil

With neighbouring Kerala and four other states in the country witnessing a surge in daily Coronavirus cases, the Tamil Nadu government on Monday said surveillance in districts bordering Kerala has been intensified and it has been made mandatory for all returnees by flight to



compulsorily undergo RT-PCR test. The state health department continues to aggressively test for the virus and is involved in tracing the contacts, as it is determined to further bring down the cases, Health Secretary Dr J Radhakrishnan said. Expressing concern over non-co mpliance by people, including those who gather for political rallies, he appealed to the people not to lower the guard as five states in India have recorded an increase in cases. "Wearing of masks and maintaining social distancing should strictly be followed. It was noticed during certain political meetings that the cadres did not wear face masks or follow social distancing. Such an offhand attitude could lead to unpleasant consequences." he said and pointed out to an incident in Amaravathy district in Maharashtra where a family has been infected by the virus. Maharashtra, Punjab, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh, apart from Kerala have recorded a surge in daily new cases of COVID-19.

Mayawati terms UP budget 'disappointing'

PNS LUCKNOW

BSP president and former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Mayawati Monday termed the state government's budget "extremely disappointing", saying it just has promises for people but nothing to address unemployment. The Adityanath-led BJP government presented a Rs 5.5-lakh crore budget for 2021-22 in the Assembly with a target of making Uttar Pradesh self-reliant.

India will enhance capabilities in defence manufacturing: PM

PNS NEW DELHI

India is working hard to enhance its capabilities and capacities in the defencemanufacturing sector at a fast pace, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Monday, noting that there were hundreds of ordnance factories before independence with large-scale weapons export from the country in both world wars but this system was not strengthened. Addressing a webinar on

of the Union Budget's provisions in the defence sector, the prime minister listed a series of measures taken by his government to boost selfreliance in the defence sector and rued the fact that the country is amongst the biggest defence importers in

"An India that has the capacity to reach Mars could have made modern weapons also, but it became an easy way to import weapons from

the effective implementation abroad," he said. But now, the country is working hard to change the situation and also to enhance its capacities and capabilities at a fast pace, the prime minister asserted.

"Before independence, we used to have hundreds of ordnance factories. In both the world wars, weapons at large scale were exported from India. But for various reasons, this system was not strengthened as much as it should have been after independence," he said.

EC official likely to issue guidelines for CRPF deployment

Kolkata: Deputy Election been asked to prepare Commissioner Sudip Jain, PowerPoint presentations on who is in charge of West PowerPoint preparations for the elec-Bengal, will be visiting the state on Friday to oversee the preparedness for the upcoming assembly elections, officials

During his visit, Jain is scheduled to hold meetings with district magistrates, police superintendents and other senior officials of the state, they said. "Mr Jain is scheduled to come this Friday to have a look at the overall preparedness for the assembly elections. He will also take stock of the law and order situation in the state. The district administrations have

tions," a poll panel official told on Monday. Jain may also meet officers transferred to the different departments, mainly in the administration

police, during his visit to West Bengal, the official said. "There have been several

shuffles in the administration as well as in the police departments recently. Mr Jain may meet them as well as ADG (Law and Order), senior police officers, and the Chief Secretary and Home Secretary," he said.

UP govt presents Rs 5,50,270-cr budget



PNS LUCKNOW

With a target of making Uttar Pradesh 'atmanirbhar', the Yogi Adityanath government on Monday presented a Rs 5,50,270.78 crore budget for financial year 2021-22 in the state Assembly.

With Assembly elections in the state less than a year away, the budget includes new schemes of Rs 27,598.40 crore, with infrastructure development bagging the lion's share.

The budget presented by Finance Minister Suresh Kumar Khanna, in the presence of the chief minister, is over Rs 37,410 crore more than the previous year's budget size, making it the largest fund allocation in the state. Reading out the bud-

PNS CHANDIGARH

SURGE IN COVID INFECTIONS

Khanna said the target was to make Uttar Pradesh "atmanirbhar" and ensure all round development of the

This is the Adityanath government's first paper-less budget. The budget for 2021-22, is also the last budget of the present Adityanath government before the next UP

Assembly polls.

The budget makes a provision of Rs 101 crore for the under-construction airport in Ayodhya which will be named 'Maryada Purushottam Sriram Airport, Ayodhya' after Lord Ram and also earmarks Rs 2,000 crore for increasing the number of airstrips at the Jewar Airport in Noida

'Kerala govt had sent letter to Centre on deep sea fishing'

PNS THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

In what could spell fresh trouble to the Left government in Kerala, opposition leader Ramesh Chennithala on Monday released a copy of the state's letter to the Centre regarding a US-based firm, with whom he alleged that it had earlier entered into a pact for deep sea fishing.

In the purportedletter sent in December, 2019, state Principal Secretary K R Jyothilal wanted the Centre to verify the credentials of the EMCC International, the USbased firm.

The official, in the letter,



had specifically mentioned that the company was interested in innovative technology development for the upgradation and promotion of deep sea fishing in the state of

Joint Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, he also said

that the firm had submitted a

In the letter, addressing

concept note to the state government regarding this. Chennithala, at a press meet

here, said the government was well aware that the project submitted by the company was for deep sea fishing, which had been denied by Chief MinisterPinarayi Vijayan and Fisheries Minister J Mercykutty Amma for the last two days.

"They have been saying that the Chief Minister and other ministers concerned were not aware about the firm and its project. Then, how did the government send such a letterto the Centre?" he asked.

Suspected IED in Nowgam destroyed

PNS SRINAGAR

Security forces destroyed a suspected object, believed to be an IED, found by a patrol party on the Srinagar-Baramulla highway near Nowgam area of the city on Monday, police said. Central Reserve Police

Force (CRPF) personnel, patrolling the Srinagar-Baramulla highway, found a tin can by the busy roadside at Nowgam, a police official said.

Fuel prices: PIL in MP HC claims discrepancy in ethanol tax

PNS JABALPUR

A Public Interest Litigation was filed in the Madhya Pradesh High Court on Monday seeking reduction in fuel prices, with the petitioner claiming that consumers have to pay high levies for mixing of ethanol in petrol and diesel. Petitioner Manish Sharma, coordinator of NGO Nagrik Upbhokta Margdarshak Manch, told tax on ethanol was

Oil companies blend 6 to7 percent of ethanol in petroland diesel per litre under the National Policy on Biofuels, he said, adding that fuel pumps do not mention the ethanol details in the purchase bill.

5 to 7 per cent but the levy charged from consumers is as

high as 25 to 35 per cent per litre of petrol and diesel, which means the buyer ends up paying Rs 4 to Rs 5 extra as tax.

Puducherry development unfortunate, says Gehlot

PNS ■ JAIPUR

With the Narayanasamy government losing power in Puducherry, Rajasthan Chief Minister Áshok Gehlot on Monday accused the BJP of grabbing power by destabilising Congress governments.

The Congress government in Puducherry fell on Monday after Chief Minister V Narayanasamy resigned ahead of the confidence vote sought by him in the Assembly after his government was reduced to a minority due to a spate of resignations of party MLAs and a DMK legislator over

the past few days.

In a tweet, Gehlot said, "What has happened in Puducherry is most unfortunate and yet another case of how BJP is destabilising Congress governments to grab power through unethical means. First, they created problems in running the administration through the Lieutenant Governor and

now this has happened."
"Luring Congress MLAs



has been their modus operandi in all Congress ruled states. We saw this in Karnataka, MP and now in Puducherry. They tried it in Rajasthan but people of Rajasthan taught them a lesson," he said. Gehlot accused the BJP of

undermining democracy in the country.
"The people are watching

what tactics BJP is adopting and the party will be taught a lesson by electorates in the elections Puducherry," the chief minister added.

department data, Punjab has recorded daily cases between 200 and 350 for the last several days. It added almost 5,000 cases in a period of 21 days starting February 1. The number of

masks and maintaining social



Officials ascribe to people not following norms

stood at 3,019 as against 2,101 on February 1, an increase of 44 per cent, the data showed. "People are not following COVID-19 safety precautions like wearing masks and maintaining social distancing which is the main reason behind the surge in cases in the state," said Rajesh Bhaskar, Punjab's nodal officer for COVID-19. Officials stressed that people

should shed the casual approach. They said some students and teachers testing pos-itive for coronavirus in Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar, Ludhiana and other districts has also contributed to the infection tally.

Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar has the highest number of active cases in the state at 583, according to health department data. When the COVÎD-19 pandem-

ic first hit the country last year, SBS Nagar had emerged as one of the hotspots. However, later the authorities successfully managed to contain infections.

Punjab Health Director G B Singh said, "We have sent a team of experts to SBS Nagar to see why the cases are on the rise in the district." The state health department

has also sent some samples for genome testing to the Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology, Delhi to check for the possibility of another strain of the virus, he said.

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-PAPER WITH PASSION-

COVID returns?

Contrary to expectations, active cases are on the rise, especially in Kerala and Maharashtra

he new year had brought relief to India from the pandemic and, as late as February 11, the country had been consistently following a declining slope of COVID-19 active cases with the load dropping to 1.41 lakh and 33 States and Union Territories reporting less than 5,000 active cases. This, combined with the world's largest vaccination drive in the country, had given people the hope that we would soon be seeing the end of the outbreak that had crippled our ailing economy and resulted in major salary cuts, job and business losses and long periods of isolation and mental distress for millions of Indians. However, last week seems to have dashed all hopes of recovery from the contagion as we are seeing a surge in Coronavirus cases again.



India has reported close to 87,000 infections in the last seven days, with the highest addition on Sunday when the country saw 14,264 fresh cases within a span of 24 hours. More worryingly, India now has all three Coronavirus variants that have caused a massive resurgence of cases globally, i.e. B.1.1.7 that was first discovered in the UK, B.1.351 which is dominant in South Africa and P.1 from Brazil. These have a unique collection of mutations, which make them spread more readily or cheat vaccine immunity. Even though there has been a spike in daily cases in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir, Kerala and

Maharashtra are the major worrying factors as they are bearing the brunt of the new strains, with over 74 per cent of the nation's active cases in the two States.

While in the last month, the average weekly cases in Kerala have fluctuated between 34,800 and 42,000, weekly positivity in the State has ranged from 13.9 per cent to 8.9 per cent. In Maharashtra, too, in the last four weeks the cases have increased from 18,200 to 21,300 and weekly positivity has increased from 4.7 per cent to eight per cent. The areas of concern are mainly in suburban Mumbai where the weekly cases have risen by 19 per cent. In Nagpur, Amravati, Nashik, Akola and Yavatmal, the weekly cases have increased by 33 per cent, 47 per cent, 23 per cent, 55 per cent and 48 per cent, respectively. This has led to experts warning that the new strains could be highly transmissible and dangerous and could even cause re-infections in people who have developed antibodies to the virus. In fact, AIIMS Director Randeep Guleria has warned that herd immunity is a "myth" in the country because at least 80 per cent people need to have antibodies for the whole of the population to be protected. So what it effectively means for a poor country like ours, which is highly populated and where a large part of the populace does not have medical insurance, is that we cannot let our guard down till we have seen the last of this pandemic. Either we follow the rules or suffer yet another surge of the dreaded pandemic. The choice is ours.



A fisherman fishes through a hole in frozen Walden Pond in Massachusetts

Harvesting votes

The BJP and the AAP, besides other satraps, are wooing Jat farmers in western UP

t's obvious for a party that has its origins in a mass movement to use a similar opportunity for expanding its base. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which rules the roost in Delhi, is now envisaging prop roots in the heartland of western Uttar Pradesh (UP), also called Jatland, riding on its support for the farmers' agitation. However, the road to power in the politically sensitive State is no cakewalk as, unlike in Delhi, here religion, regional, caste and traditional loyalties matter in elections. These factors play a decisive role at the hustings. Besides, if the anti-incumbency factor comes



into play in next year's Assembly elections, regional parties rather than the AAP are more likely to harvest it. Furthermore, any possible expansion of the party will be at the cost of satraps like the Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD), SP and BSP who count on their traditional vote banks. These regional players will never allow an "outsider" to dent their vote banks. Even if the AAP forges an alliance with these parties, they will most likely not offer it the 'winnable" seats, certainly not at the expense of their vote bank.

Meanwhile, what leaves the BJP concerned after the Red Fort siege on Republic Day is that the agitation focus has shifted from Punjab's growers to

the Jat cultivators of western UP and Haryana. The BJP well understands that if the strong Jat community decides not to favour the party in the UP Assembly polls, its chances of retaining power would be next to impossible. It is for this reason that the BJP leaders, including Union Minister Sanjeev Balyan and many Ministers in the Yogi Adityanath Government, are wooing influential *khap* leaders. They will definitely leave no stone unturned to make the situation favourable for the party. On the other hand, AAP convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal recently met farm leaders over lunch to discuss the ongoing protest against the Centre's farm laws. He will also address a Kisan Mahapanchayat in Meerut on February 28 to show solidarity with the farmers. The AAP has already revealed its ambition by announcing that in the next two years, it will contest elections in six States including UP and Uttarakhand. Well, there is no harm in trying one's luck but whether the party is able to leave any real imprint or would end up as an "also-ran", only time will tell. As of now, its prospects don't seem too promising, at least not in UP.

Questioning pullback from Afghanistan



Personal experience should guide Biden while deciding on US troop withdrawal commitments and imperatives in Afghanistan

n January 3, 1973, 30-year-old Joe Biden got elected for the first time to the United States (US) Senate. On January 27, 1973, just 24 days later, a facesaving "Agreement on Ending the War and restoring Peace in Vietnam" was signed with full knowledge among the belligerent parties of what was inevitable. This sham "peace accord" enabled the battle-weary US troops to withdraw and the last troops were airlifted on April 30, 1975 — later that day, the US ally in southern Vietnam capitulated and its leader Thieu was left fuming: "The US did not keep its promise to help us fight for freedom. It was in the same fight that the US lost 50,000 of its young men." Then US President Gerald Ford argued about opening the doors to South Vietnamese who had fought on the US side. However, the young Biden insisted that the US had "no obligation, moral or otherwise, to evacuate foreign nationals". Biden's youthful bravado aside, the US troops' withdrawal from the unpopular war did not end as scripted in the

purported "peace accord".

In 1995, the US troops escorted out the final remnant of the UN peacekeeping force from Somalia even as local militiamen were firing upon the withdrawing force. Banalities from the UN Secretary General, that efforts to bring peace and aid to Somalia would continue, flew in the face of the ground reality of advancing militias. Over 100 UN peace-keepers and 42 US troops had died before the final withdrawal. Importantly, the nemesis of the UN/US force i.e. ruthless warlord General Aidid was still alive, and gaining ground. Expectedly, General Aidid soon declared himself the President of Somalia and a full-fledged civil war broke out. By now, Biden was no longer a wet-behind-the-ears Senator and had already run for the 1988 Democratic presidential nomination. Also as a longtime member. of the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, the immediate impact of troop withdrawal from Somalia would not have been lost on Biden.

Cut to 2011. By now the Vice-

President, Biden was personally entrusted the task of yet another troop pullout, this time from Iraq (Biden had earlier voted for authorising military force in 2002, then as the Chairman of Senate Committee on Foreign Relations). This withdrawal of 1,50,000 troops when the "enemy" was clearly not defeated, was to prove fatal. It created a sudden vacuum and the Al-Qaida metastasized into ISIS and, within a couple of months, the "caliphate" had emerged over most of the Syrian-Iraqi swathes. A new dimension of global terror, regional upheaval and religious extremism was born all fingers pointed towards a premature withdrawal of US troops, among other factors. Importantly, Biden had then personally punted on one of the most controversial, sectarian and irresponsible locals, Nouri al-Maliki, to manage the show in the absence of US troops. The troops had to return to Iraq in 2014 to undo the damage of what was clearly a wrong decision to withdraw. Around the same time, Biden was pushing hard for a similar scale-down of the US troops in Afghanistan with a limited mandate of counterterrorism, like proposed in Iraq — however, President



BIDEN MUST BE **GUIDED BY HIS** MEMORY AND EXPERIENCES OF THE EARLIER **WITHDRAWALS** AND THE SUBSEQUENT COSTS TO THE US. ITS GLOBAL INTERVENTIONS HAVE RARELY SUCCEEDED, AND LEAVING MID-COURSE HAS WORSENED SITUATIONS Barack Obama heeded the counsel of his Generals, who suggested otherwise.

In 2021, President Biden has inherited Donald Trump's decisions for complete withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan and Somalia where, yet again, the "enemy" in the form of Taliban (and affiliates) and Al-Shabab, respectively, is waiting menacingly. Somalia withdrawal has already happened and the ravaged territory is again left precariously poised. Afghanistan as the hub of regional/global terror has an altogether different portent at stake. Clearly the deadline for complete withdrawal of the troops by May 1, 2021, is staring in the face for the force of about 2,500 troops (down from 1,00,000 in 2011) and the conflated "peace agreement" with the Taliban that underwrites such a withdrawal, remains routinely and supremely violated. The surge of marauding Taliban towards an embattled Kabul continues and herein to assume that 2,500 US troops would be able to withstand pressures that a one-time composition of 1,00,000 could not — let alone the situation when even this miniscule element departs as planned — is disastrous.

ence does not hold good, as vetted by history. Blind adherence to commitments without assuming inevitabilities will deligitimise the cost in terms of lives lost, resources and rationales invested in the last 20 years, besides affording a terrorbased sovereign. A recent bipartisan US Congressappointed Afghan Study Group has concluded a damning assessment of the Taliban's own commitments towards conditionalities so far, and forewarned of impending bloody civil war, therefore suggesting the abandonment/extension of the May 1 timeline. Biden must be guided by his memory and experiences of the earlier US withdrawals and the subsequent costs to the US. Its global interventions have rarely succeeded, however, leaving mid-course has always made situations worse. Timing is everything and, as things stand in Afghanistan, currently it looks ominous. Biden must rethink withdrawal commitments and imperatives in Afghanistan — personal experience should advise him so.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and The practical logic of Puducherry. The views "counterterrorism level" pres- expressed are personal.)



tax imposed by both Centre and State

Governments at present? While the Centre claims

the fuel prices are deregulated, but it is only in

in India — when global prices go up, it is passed

on to the consumer, who has to cough up more

for every litre of fuel consumed. But when the

reverse happens and prices go down the

Government — almost by default — slaps fresh

taxes to ensure that it rakes in extra revenues,

even as the consumer, who should have ideal-

ly benefited by way of lower pump prices, is

short- changed and forced to either pay what he's

already paying, or even more. The key benefi-

ciary in this subversion of price decontrol is the

middle age should walk. It helps in main-

taining the cholesterol level and burning

extra body fat. However, it is seen that

many people even take doctors' advice for

granted and do nothing to control their

blood pressure and sugar levels except tak-

these days and lakhs of people die because

of it. The urban lifestyle and extreme work

pressure has given us a convenient life but

diseases are irreversible and if a person falls

prey to these, s/he can lead a healthy life

only by taking precaution and medicines.

While COVID-19 has devastated our

lives, it was witnessed that those having

co-morbities were more vulnerable.

Lifestyle diseases coupled with COVID are

has taken a toll on our health.

Lifestyle diseases are very common

The cause of concern is that lifestyle

ing medicines.

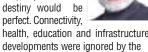
dangerous.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

Government. The consumer is a clear loser.

The oil price decontrol is a one-way street

We are correcting the faults of the previous regimes. If the policy is accurate, destiny would be perfect. Connectivity.



previous Governments Prime Minister — Narendra Modi



On February 26. 117,000 doses of Pfizer vaccines will arrive in the country and the vaccines will be administered to medical

patients Coronavirus starting February 27.

South Korea PM —Chung Sye-kyun

I reached the top two in Bigg Boss and surprisingly I am not sad that I have not won. I am more than happy that I

—Rahul Vaidya

have played the game gracefully



Life has always thrown challenges. Haryana has three spinners who have already played for India. I always knew that if I get an

opportunity, I must make it count. Cricketer -Rahul Tewatia

We have decided to launch a mass registration and awareness programme for construction

workers and labourers so that they can avail welfare schemes. **Delhi Deputy CM**

Govt has failed to control fuel prices

INVOLVE PRIVATE PLAYERS IN VACCINATION

Sir-It is worrying that the number of COVID-19 infection cases is again on the rise and States like Maharashtra and Kerala are the worst affected. With new mutants of the deadly virus invading India, it seems that our vaccination programme will fall flat as against these new strains there are no vaccines developed yet and if it starts to rapidly spread, then we will be facing a crisis more devastating than the first wave

For rapid vaccination, the Government must involve private players, else the spread of infection will supersede the rate of vaccination and recoveries. The Government should ask the private companies to divert their funds under the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) for the cause. Rapid and mass vaccination is not possible without private participation.

Further, instead of developing different vaccines for different mutations, the scientists must try to develop a single vaccine which should work against all the present strains and also future possible mutants. Also, all States must cooperate in terms of logistics and resource sharing in fighting the pandemic. All the States who are failing to control the spread of the pandemic must be penalised heavily and, if required, the Centre should impose President's Rule citing extraordinary situation or health emergency. On the other hand, people must take all necessary precautions like wearing of masks, sanitising their hands, maintaining social distancing to keep the infection at bay. We cannot act carelessly at this juncture, it's a question of life and death.

M Raghuraman | Mumbai

SHAME ON CHINA AND THE PLA

Sir —This refers to the editorial 'Chinese checkers' (February 20). Finally, the Xi Jinping-led Chinese administration admitted the loss of four soldiers during the Galwan Valley faceoff with India in June last year. It is a matter of shame for China that it took the PLA eight months to recognise the demise of its soldiers and that must have sent an indication down to its

Even if we consider the previous Governments' failure to reduce the dependence on the import of crude oil, what's about the huge



ne sky-rocketing prices of petrol and diesel are also driving up the prices of essential commodities — as a consequential effect. The common man, already battered by the adverse effects of COVID-19 pandemic and strin-

gent lockdown, has been put into unprecedented hardships by this price rise. The rising prices of commodities on the one hand and loss of income on the other, is a double whammy that ranks that the Chinese Army does not care for the martyrdom of its soldiers, unlike

India which honours its martyrs. These exchanges and clashes at the friction points are more of a perception battle rather than being a stage for "war",

and it is more prudent to accept and lead swiftly with changing scenarios instead of hiding the facts, ignoring the truths and bearing the brunt later.

Such instances by the Army and administration might lower the morale of soldiers, which is evident on the Chinese side, but India is leading with high emotional quotient and the morale of our Army personnel is high as ever. It was also evident during the recent disengagement dialogue. The morale of our soldiers is much higher than that of their Chinese counterparts.

Nischai Vats | Sultanpur

ALL MUST WALK FOR HEALTH

Sir —It is not only for the elders to jog and walk but even yongsters and people of N Soumik | Bhubaneswar

letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Send your feedback to:

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FIRST COLUMN

MUST REDUCE MONEY POWER IN POLITICS

What is needed is political will and a consensus on reforms in the electoral system



KALYANI SHANKAR

unding is vital for a political party and more so for one that is ■not in power. The Congress Party is going through a severe financial crunch and has sought help from its Chief Ministers and officebearers. The forthcoming Assembly elections in Kerala, Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry have increased pressure on the party, which is in power only in Punjab, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh and Puducherry. The cash crunch in the 'Grand Old Party', which was in power for 56 years, is because of various reasons. It has been receiving fewer funds for the last six years because of a perception that the Congress is unlikely to resume its primacy. Second, the BJP has overtaken the Congress since 2014. Third, it is facing a leadership crisis and fourth, regional parties are also vying for donations. Fifth, any party's funding from private donors depends on public trust. Earlier the Congress had fund managers in each State, but this system has collapsed now due to central control.

The party is in need of funds to run State units, headquarters, pay salaries to the staff, for election campaigns, for building a new party office and so on. In 2018, it touched rock bottom and launched a 40-day booth committee fundraising programme in October appealing for funds. In fact, the Congress had to resort to crowdfunding.



Some of the most popular fundraising methods for political parties are individual and corporate funding. The BJP's phenomenal ability to capture a massive chunk of corporate donations is closely connected to the Congress' sharp deceleration and financial woes. The BJP has been occupying the pole position for long in tapping corporate contributions, even when the Congress was in power, with the saffron party allegedly cornering 90 per cent of the funding.

In recent years, the Modi Government has introduced three significant changes in political funding and parties can now receive foreign donations. Any company can give any amount of money to a political party and third, any individual, group of people or firm can donate money anonymously to a party through electoral bonds. These bonds have been available since January 2018 and the gap in corporate donations between the BJP and the Congress is growing wider. Whatever be the reason, such a major gap in political contributions between the ruling and the main Opposition party is not good for democ-

The Congress received ₹139 crore as donations during 2019-2020, according to an Election Commission (EC) report. It is still the second most prosperous party but far behind the BJP. According to the Congress' constitution, the lawmakers and workers are supposed to pay one per cent of their income to the party but this does not happen. It needs to encourage its members to donate more and emulate Congress leader Kapil Sibal, who, in 2020 was the highest individual donor and had given ₹3 crore to the party fund. A political party may acquire funds through donations during rallies, relief funds, the sale of coupons and other miscellaneous allocations. However, if poll expenses are cut there is no need for a party to collect huge funds.

The EC has a long list of suggestions including reforms of political parties, auditing of accounts, checking black money and capping of anonymous donations to 20 per cent. Several panels have recommended poll reforms. This included the Goswami Committee (1990), the Vohra Committee (1993) and the Law Commission. One of the suggestions was State funding. The need of the hour is electoral reforms and it is time to push through these reforms to cleanse the electoral system so that money power becomes less. What is needed is political will and a consensus on reforms.

(The writer is a senior journalist. The views expressed are

Time for Govt to make a clear-cut choice



If the Centre allows gas producers to charge what they want, one shudders to even think of where the fertiliser and power subsidy bill will reach

The State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) is forming a new wholly-owned subsidiary company with the objective of sourcing, marketing and trading natural gas. The company is already into exploration and made at the office (beginning and made at the company) and the office (beginning and made at the company). ration and production of gas (besides crude oil) which it sells to a variety of industries manufacturing fertilisers, power, chemicals, petrochemicals, CNG, gas for household consumption and

So what has prompted it to set up a separate company solely for the purpose of trading and marketing of gas? It is not a simple case of business restructuring, but an attempt to circumvent control on the price of gas imposed by the Union Government. To understand how it seeks to do so, let us have a look at the extant pricing structure.

Under the pricing guidelines effective since November 2014, for all domestic supplies from fields given under the New Exploration and Licencing Policy (NELP), as also blocks given on nomination to ONGC and Oil India Limited (OIL) before the NELP, the price — call it normal price — is a weighted average of prices at four interactional locations in the LIC the LIC. international locations in the US, the UK, Canada and Russia. It is revised every six months in a financial year and the current price, from October 1, 2020, is \$1.79 per million Btu (British thermal unit).

Also, under a special package for deep/ultra-deep, high-pressure/high-temperature (HP/HT) fields announced in March 2016, the supplies are allowed a market-based price, subject to a ceiling which is linked to the prices of alternate fuels, including fuel oil, naphtha and LNG. The current ceiling price is \$4.06 per million Btu, known as the "premium" price, the applicable price is arrived at based on competitive bidding — in which earlier, affiliates of gas producers were not allowed to participate. If the discovered price exceeds the ceiling, then the buyer pays only the ceiling price. From October 2020, the bar on participation of affiliates of the gas producing firm was removed. This means that the producer can buy its own gas (albeit through its affiliate) and sell it to third parties at a higher rate thereby circumventing the ceiling price. Reliance Industries Limited (RIL), which produces gas from the KG-D6 field in the Krishna Godavari basin, did precisely this. In an auction on February 5, offering 7.5 mmscmd (million standard cubic meter per day) of new gas from this field, its subsidiary Reliance O2C Limited bought 4.8 mmscmd at a price of \$4.06 per million Btu and sold it for \$6-7 per million Btu to GAIL India Limited (Ltd), Shell and others.

The ONGC wants to do a repeat of what Reliance has done by forming a wholly-owned subsidiary which will buy any new gas coming from the former's deep/ultra-deep fields such as KG-D5 also in the KG basin (projected at about 15 mmscmd) and in turn, sell it to firms such as Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd (MRPL) at a price much higher than \$4.06 per million Btu. Being a company whose majority is owned by the Centre, any decision by the ONGC Board could not have been taken without its prior approval. In other words, the Centre is amenable to the gas producer breaking the ceil-



IF THE CENTRE FEELS THAT A HIGH PRICE TO GAS PRODUCERS IS THE ONLY WAY TO MAKE THEM DELIVER MORE SUPPLIES, THEN IT SHOULD REMOVE ALL CONTROLS ON FERTILISERS, POWER AND SO ON AND LET THEM ADJUST AS PER MARKET FORCES. IF IT CAN'T, IT SHOULD REGULATE GAS PRICES AND STRICTLY ADHERE TO THE NOVEMBER

2014 GUIDELINES



ing (set by none other than the Centre itself) and selling at a higher market discovered price. Put simply, the Government's initial decision to put a cap on the price gets nullified by its subsequent action of allowing an affiliate of the gas producer to bid.

The supplies from fields given under the Open Acreage Licencing Policy (OALP) (introduced in July 2017) are already eligible for mar-ket-based pricing. This also applies to unconventional hydrocarbons such as shale gas, coal bed methane (CBM) from the fields awarded under the NELP. Further, supplies from the so-called marginal fields (a total of 149) previously with the ONGC and OIL and recently auctioned to private entities, also qualify for complete freedom of pricing. Now, gas companies are building pressure on the Government to alter the mechanism of fixing even the normal price applicable to supplies from fields given under NELP and nomination blocks to the ONGC and OIL before the NELP. The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas had agreed to look into this and even set up a committee. That was in October, 2020 when an idea was mooted to fix a floor price linked to the Japan-Korea Marker (JKM) — a benchmark index used to determine LNG tariff in North Asia

Putting all the pieces together, one gets a sense that gas firms will

-with a discount. This would

have yielded a floor of \$4 million

with a minimum of \$4 per million Btu and maximum, hitting any level depending on the demand-supply scenario. Is this what the Modi Government had planned

It may be worthwhile to go back to 2014 when it had undertaken a review of the gas pricing formula finalised by the then UPA Government (January 2014) which could not be implemented in view of impending general elections. Then Team Modi had categorically rejected market-based pricing, arguing that domestic supply of gas being far short of demand, this would result in high price, which users, particularly the fertiliser industry, power and city gas — they account for nearly three-fourth of total gas use — can't afford. In fertilisers, bulk of the gas is used for producing urea, whose maximum retail price (MRP) is controlled at a low level to make it affordable to farmers. The excess cost of supply is reimbursed as subsidy to manufacturers. If gas is priced high, cent in 2025-26). with the MRP remaining The Govern unchanged, this will result in higher subsidy, which the Government wants to avoid.

Likewise, States want to pay less on power subsidy even as they order a big slice of it to be supplied at low tariff or even free to farmers and poor households, unrelated to cost.

These overarching considerations weighed heavily on the ruling dispensation when it decided

receive price on an escalating scale to stick to price regulation. For the same reason, it exercises control over the allocation of gas. Of the total supply, 31 per cent is given to power, 24 per cent to fertilisers and 22 per cent is allotted for city gas. Since then, nothing has changed as to warrant a move towards marketbased pricing. Neither has the Government done away with control on urea's MRP nor do States have any plans to shed supply of ee power to key constituents.

In this scenario, if the Government allows gas producers to charge what they want, one shudders to even think of where the fertiliser and power subsidy bill will reach (every one dollar per million Btu hike in gas price increases urea subsidy by about ₹4,000 crore annually). To accommodate the rising subsidy, it may have to further loosen the already relaxed fiscal deficit trajectory, outlined by the Finance Minister on February 1, for the next five years (6.8 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product in 2021-22 gliding down to 4.5 per

make a clear-cut choice. If it feels that high price to gas producers is the only way to make them deliver more supplies, then it should remove all controls on fertilisers, power and so on and let them adjust as per market forces. If it can't, it should regulate gas prices and strictly adhere to the November 2014 guidelines annulling all subsequent modifica-

The Government needs to

policy analyst. The views expressed are personal.

The writer is a

New Delhi-based

I AM THE ONLY ONE WHO REFUSED TO DO ITEM NUMBERS AND BIG HERO FILMS WHICH MADE THE ENTIRE 'BULLYWOODIA' GANG TURN AGAINST ME. -ACTOR

KANGANA RANAUT





LOVED YOUR DANCING IN THIS ITEM NUMBER IN THE FILM *Rajjo*. You are a great performer AND A GREAT DANCER KANGANA.

—ACTOR

SWARA BHASKER

India must migrate to 'happy fuels' for a sustainable future

Energy independence needs to be a major focus area to shape the country as a DESH, i.e. having Development, Energy, Security and Harmony

doday, human societies have a wider array of options towards making lifestyle and economic choices. But it is becoming increasingly clear that all our choices need to remain within the 1.5° Celsius Paris Agreement goals, for shaping our pathways responsibly and leaving a cleaner environment as a legacy. All too often, investments in the environment are seen as costs but the reality is that spending on green initiatives now would be the biggest cost saving of all times. It is high time we realised that the economy is a subset of the environment and not vice versa and a green recovery will provide thriving economics

and a safer planet for everyone. World leaders have come together on the need to counter the challenges of climate change and the COP-26 International Climate Summit, scheduled to be held later this



ASHUTOSH KARNATAK

The writer is Member,

Appellate Tribunal for Electricity.

The views expressed

moment for the world to agree on actionable steps to prevent the catastrophic warming of our planet. India, being the world's fourth-largest carbon emitter with a population of 1.3 billion people, requires significant strides in greening its energy ecosystem with more sustainable and benign technologies, including fast tracking the adoption of renewable resources for propelling socioeconomic development.

Our country's transition to a fully sustainable energy system shall be enabled by the push for cleaner energy and decarbonising the energy sector, which accounts for a quarter of global emissions, will be vital for the same.

Fossil fuels make up 75 per cent of India's energy mix (with coal as the major contributor), while the spectrum of renewable power including hydro,

year, is going to be a pivotal solar and wind energy with zero carbon emissions comprises just 10 per cent, the rest being biomass, urban and industrial waste power. A desired change in the energy mix will depend on innovative technologies, growing energy demand, strong wind and solar resources, policy support and growing investments to ensure smart, reliable, clean and affordable energy to over a billion people with an energy consumption rate growing faster than all major economies in the world.

One of the key success indicators of any country is positive balance of payments with exports in surplus to imports. Our economy is largely dependent upon the import of oil which is to the tune of ₹7.5 lakh crore annually (15 per cent of the total import bill). Reduction in this will go a long way in fostering India's energy



independence and a solid action plan is required to gradually migrate from the use of fossil fuels to renewable sources, including the usage of

hydrogen in the energy sector. This will ultimately lead us to the basket of "Happy Fuels" i.e., a fuel bringing happiness to self, society and the nation by way of being economical, environment friendly, safer with more affordability and better

To reduce petroleum use, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, air pollution, and contribute to more diverse and efficient energy infrastructure, the Centre has focused on pioneering initiatives like the International Solar Alliance and new initiatives like 'One Sun, One World, One Grid', World Solar Bank and so on.

Technological progress is on the cusp of making decarbonisation economically viable. India's story on solar energy encapsulates the economic argument to switch to cleaner sources of power generation. The most recent auction for solar energy received bids of a record low of ₹2 per unit indicating that the transition to an economy with net-zero emissions can both be viable and sustainable. Green hydrogen as an energy resource is gaining momentum. Already major developed countries have forayed in this area, with Japan being the leader. Produced

from renewable energy, green

hydrogen is a zero-emission multipurpose fuel used for long-term energy storage and helps decarbonise transport, heating and industrial processes such as steel and cement making. With huge renewable potential, India has a tremendous opportunity to explore the green hydrogen route to kick-

off energy transition. The Centre, in the recent Budget, announced the establishment of a Hydrogen Mission, which is a step in the right direction. Several initiatives to convert coal to gas are underway and migration to the hydrogen economy needs to be

ramped up in the same way. Significantly, businesses must maintain a balance to protect, sustain and enhance human and natural resources that will be needed in the future. Organisations are required to shift from wealth creation to value creation with increased social responsibility. If we are to match the pace of energy development in the world, following a super-conscious approach and methods need to be adopted. We must develop a vision with a target to become energy independent by 2047; develop a hybrid model i.e., blending of conventional and renewable energy sources and formulate an action plan. There must be aggressive implementation for achieving scale and affordability, plus energy efficiency must be a Key Performance Area of organisations. Schools, colleges, civil society and organisations should partner and engage Generation Next in making a change for a better tomorrow.

Energy independence needs to be a major focus area to shape India as a DESH i.e., having Development, Energy, Security and Harmony.

Rupee surges 16 paise to close at 72.49 against USD



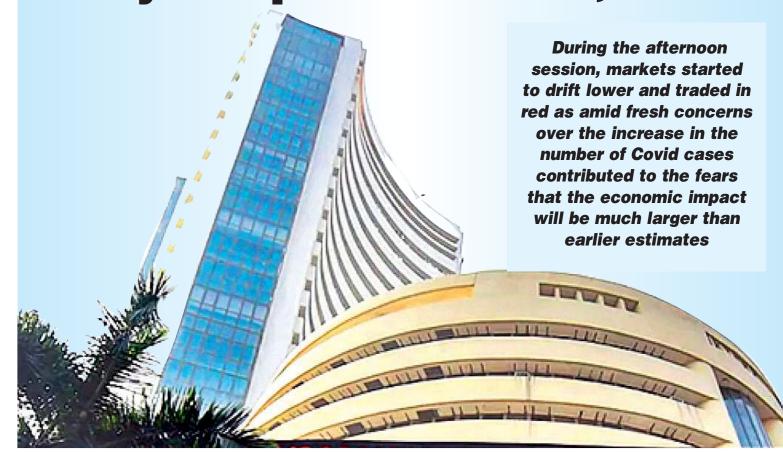
PNS MUMBAI

The rupee gained 16 paise to settle at 72.49 against the US dollar on Monday supported by sustained foreign fund inflows and expectation of improved macro-economic data.

At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened at 72.58 against the greenback and witnessed an intra-day high of 72.29 and a low of 72.58. It finally ended at 72.49 against the American currency, registering a rise of 16 paise from its previous close. On Thursday, the rupee had settled at 72.65 against the American currency. The forex market was shut on Friday on account of Shivaji Maharaj Jayanti.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, advanced 0.04 per cent to 90.40. "Rupee gained strength amid steady FII inflows and expectation of improved macro-economic data. India's GDP data is fore-cast to show that economy expanded in Q3 FY21 after 2 consecutive quarters of contraction," said Saif Mukadam, Sharekhan by BNP Paribas.

Sensex sinks 1,145 points; Nifty drops below 14,700



PNS MUMBAI

Extending its losses for the fifth straight session, equity benchmark Sensex plummeted 1,145 points on Monday, tracking heavy losses in index majors Reliance Industries, HDFC and TCS amid negative cues from global mar-

The 30-share BSE index ended 1,145.44 points or 2.25 per cent lower at 49,744.32. The broader NSE Nifty sank 306.05 points or 2.04 per cent to finish at

Dr Reddy's was the top loser in the Sensex pack, shedding around 5 per cent, followed by M&M, Tech Mahindra, Axis Bank, IndusInd Bank and TCS.

On the other hand, ONGC, HDFC Bank and Kotak Bank were the gainers.

"India markets opened on a cerns over the increase in the flattish note tracking mixed Asian number of COVID-19 cases conmarket peers with China trading in losses as PBoC kept interest tributed to the fears that the economic impact will be much largrates unchanged while Japan was er than earlier estimates, he trading with marginal gains," said Narendra Solanki, Head-Equity Research (Fundamental), noted.

"Also, the major western markets failed to provide any support as it opened to trade in red with equity investors growing concern about rising bond yields in recent weeks which could hurt high-

growth companies reliant on easy borrowing," Solanki added.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Shanghai, Hong Kong and Seoul ended on a negative note, while Tokyo traded with gains. Stock exchanges in Europe were also trading in the red in mid-session deals. Meanwhile, the global oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 0.66 per cent higher at USD 62.55 per barrel.

Global shares mostly lower as investors wary over stimulus

PNS ■ TOKYO

Global shares were mostly lower on Monday, with Japan's benchmark rising but most others slipping despite hopes for a recovery from the coronavirus pandemic with the global rollout of vaccines.

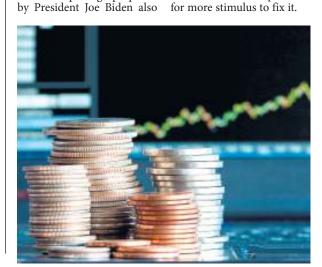
France's CAC 40 slipped 1.1 per cent in early trading to 5,708.39, while Germany's DAX dove 1.3 per cent to 13,816.87. Britain's FTSE 100 declined 1.1 per cent to 6,554.12. U.S. shares were to open lower, with the future contract for the Dow industrials sliding 0.7 per cent to 31,224. The S&P 500 future fell nearly 1 per cent to 3,865.12.

Benchmarks rose in Japan but fell in South Korea, Australia and China. Investors remain focused on the future of global economies badly hit by COVID-19 and when and whether there will be enough stimulus to fix it.

But the U.S. USD 1.9 trillion economic package proposed by President Joe Biden also

heralds hope for export-reliant regional economies.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 gained 0.5 per cent to finish at 30,156.03. South Korea's Kospi dipped 0.9 per cent to Australia's S&P/ASX 200 edged 0.2 per cent lower to 6,780.90. Hong Kong's Hang Seng fell 1.1 per cent to 30,319.83, while the Shanghair Composite dropped 1.5 per cent to 3,642.44. Japan began administering vaccines for COVID-19 last week. It was the last of the Group of Seven industrial nations to get started, beginning with health workers. Prospects for further shipments of vaccine remain uncertain, according to Taro Kono, the Japanese minister tasked with overseeing the effort. Vaccination drives are set to start soon in other Asian nations, such as Malaysia, Vietnam and the Philippines. Investors remain focused on the future of global economies badly hit by COVID-19 and the potential



L&T wins large contracts in power transmission segment

Engineering and construction major Larsen & Toubro (L&T) on Monday said its power transmission and distribution business has bagged large domestic and overseas contracts across its spectrum of

Though the company did not specify the exact value of the contracts, as per its specibetween Rs 2,500 crore and Rs 5,000 crore.

The Power Transmission & Distribution (PT&D) Business of Larsen & Toubro has secured two engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) orders to establish more than 400 MW solar photo-



voltaic projects in Gujarat, the company said in a statement. L&T is one of the leading

renewables space with a track record of having built some of the largest solar plants.

The company said it has also received a 765kV double circuit transmission line package in Rajasthan through a project specific transmission

In West Bengal, orders have been received to supply and install high voltage distribution systems in certain districts on a turnkey mode, the company said adding that another order to construct 220kV and 132kV transmission lines has been won from the state transmission utility.

The business has won a 400 kV substation order in Tamil Nadu. This project is aimed to the Coimbatore region and to strengthen the evacuation system of an upcoming pumped storage power plant.

In Qatar, it said the business has won an order to install line connected current limiting reactors for the first time in the country's network.

Exim Bank extends LoC worth USD 50 mn to Maldives

During the afternoon session,

markets started to drift lower and

traded in red as amid fresh con-

PNS MUMBAI

Anand Rathi.

Export-Import Bank of India (Exim Bank) on Monday said it has extended a line of credit (LOC) worth USD 50 million to the Republic of Maldives for financing of defence projects in the agreement for repurposing an existing LOC of USD 40 million to include road projects in Maldives was also signed between Exim Bank and Maldives government last week, a release said.

MEA to discuss socioeconomics

PNS MUMBAI

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) will be holding a three-day conference focused on geoeconomics during the coming weekend, which will have India's Foreign Minister S Jaishankar among speakers, the organisers said on Monday.

The conference, being held Pune International Centre, will also see senior representatives from the governments of Australia, Japan, Mauritius, Maldives and Bhutan speaking, they said.

It can be noted that the conference comes amid frosty



ties between India and northern neighbor China and attempts are on to reach agreements to contested border lines which became ugly last year resulting in face-offs at icy Gautam Bambawale, who has served as Indian Ambassador to China till 2018 and is also the event convenor, told reporters that the event has representation from across the world and will steer clear

MONEY MATTERS

CEAT opens all-women operated customer service centre



Monday announced the opening of all-women operated customer service centre Shoppes at Bhatinda in Punjab and said it plans to set up such outlets pan-India in the next few

Vodafone Idea on Monday

Video On Demand

(PVOD) service on

Vi Movies and TV

App, in partnership

with Hungama, as

announced the launch of Premium

months. The all-women CEAT Shoppes include women workforce for all service-related assistance to customers. This also includes manual jobs like wheel changing, balancing and operating various had earlier this month said that these service outlets will work as full-fledged customer service centres. At the time of the global crisis due to the pandemic, many people have lost their jobs but with this initiative, CEAT Tyres is opening avenues for women and creating more employment opportunities. The first of such Shoppes has been opened in Bhatinda, north India followed by introduction of 10 Shoppes in the next few months across India, it said.

Voda-Idea launches premium

the telco looks to strengthen its OTT play. The PVOD market in

India is "premature but promising" as the Indian audience

continues to be price-conscious and choosy, Vodafone Idea

the new post pandemic era as consumers explore alternate

options of entertainment from comfort of their homes. The

allow users to watch content at no extra cost as per their

company said Vi Movies and TV Pay per view model a natural

extension of its entertainment offerings. The current offerings

(VIL) said in a statement adding such models are changing in

VOD service on Vi Movies

FAA orders United to inspect Boeing 777s

Federal aviation regulators have ordered United Airlines to step up inspections of all Boeing 777s equipped with the type of engine that suffered a catastrophic failure over Denver on Saturday.

United said it is temporarily removing those aircraft from service, as meanwhile Boeing recommended grounding aircraft with that model engine until the Federal Aviation Administration sets an inspection regime.

Pratt and Whitney, maker of the engine, said it was sending a team to work with investigators while coordinating with airlines and regulators. The announcements come a day after United Airlines Flight 328 had to make an emergency landing at Denver International Airport after its right engine blew apart just after takeoff.

Pieces of the casing of the engine, a Pratt and Whitney PW4000, rained down on suburban neighbourhoods.

The plane with 231 passengers and 10 crew on board landed safely, and nobody aboard or on the ground was reported hurt, authorities said. The Federal Aviation

Administration Administrator Steve Dickson said in a statement Sunday that based on an initial review of safety data, inspectors "concluded that the inspection interval should be stepped up for the hollow fan blades that are unique to this model of engine, used solely on Boeing 777 airplanes." Boeing said it supported decisions by the Japan Civil Aviation Bureau and FAA to suspend operations of all 777 aircraft powered by Pratt and Whitney 4000-112

It said there were 69 of the engines in service and anoth-

er 59 in storage.
"We are working with these regulators as they take actions while these planes are on the ground and further inspections are conducted by Pratt and Whitney," it said.

CIL inks pact with CRIS for sharing of coal freight data

State-owned Coal India on Monday said it has signed a pact with the Centre for Railway Information Systems (CRIS), a wing under the railways ministry, for monitoring the movement of rakes laden with fossil fuel and coal despatch activity.

The first-of-its-kind data sharing offers Coal India Ltd (CIL) a bouquet of benefits that help it in rationalising

the entire coal supply matrix through rail mode, according to the company. It will provide precise details of loading, weighment and unloading along with turnaround time of rakes, it added.

Primarily, it is a handshake of freight operation information between the networks of CIL and CRIS regarding Coal India's rail movement of coal, the company said, adding that it also includes other logistics

tomised automated access to data, through Freight Operations

Information System (FOIS) of Indian Railways, which would help Coal India ...monitor movement of coal laden rakes and coal despatch activity, the company on Monday entered a Memorandum of Understanding with Centre for Railway Information Systems," the PSU said in a statement.

Myshubhlife gets \$ 4mn from Patamar

PNS MUMBAI

Mobile app-based lender MyShubhLife (earlier Shubh Loans) has raised USD 4 million (about Rs 29 crore) in a funding round led by Singaporebased Patamar Capital and some of its existing investors.

Myshubhlife offers loans, savings products like insurance, SIPs, egold, and e-filing taxes.

After plunging to 16-yr low, yields soar 31 bps

PNS MUMBAI

The massive spike in 2021-22 borrowing target at Rs 23 lakh crore, has led to a 31 basis points rally in benchmark bond yields to well over 6 per cent since the announcement of Budget, and RBI needs to contain the same by reining in the short-sellers, says a report.

The Reserve Bank's assiduous support to the Centre's debt management has ensured that in the first half of 2020-21 the borrowing cost for the Centre was the lowest in past 16 years as bond yields were below 5.75 per cent, the report by SBI Research

said on Monday. It primarily blames short-sellers, who are worried over the large borrowing plans, for the sudden spike in the yields and urges lakh crore, up from the revised the central bank to rein them

The report expects the Centre's gross borrowing in this fiscal year to touch Rs 13.9 lakh crore, higher than the revised estimate of Rs 12.8 lakh crore, and net borrowing at Rs 11.6

estimate of Rs 10.5 lakh crore. The combined gross borrowings of the Centre and states are seen at Rs 22.1 lakh crore this year, higher than the revised estimate of Rs 21.5 lakh crore, and net at Rs 18.4 lakh crore, up from Rs 17.8 lakh crore, according to the report.

The report also sees gross borrowings Centre inching down to Rs 12.1 lakh crore next fiscal year, and net

Rs 9.2 lakh

crore but the combined gross debt borrowing jumping to Rs 23 lakh crore and net inching down to Rs 18.1 lakh crore.

The current fiscal is an interesting year with the two halves having diametrically opposite narratives. During April-September(H1), bond yields were mostly below 6 per cent (the lowest borrowing cost in the past 16 years) on the back of effective yield management by RBI. However, all this changed after the Budget when the government upped its borrowing programme for the current fiscal and announced an aggressive one for 2021-22 and with just over a month left in 2020-21, the market is still expecting a consolidated borrowing amount of more than Rs 2.5 lakh crore, notes the

Expect domestic PV industry growth in double digits in '22



recharge or post-paid plans.

rata Motors expects domestic passenger vehicles industry to grow in double digits in 2021-22 on the back of continued robust demand momentum driven by shift towards personal mobility in the aftermath of COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with a low base effect, according to a

top company official. Despite uncertainties over increasing commodity prices and supply of semiconductors, Tata Motors expects its growth in the upcoming fiscal to be better than that of the industry. There is a momentum which continues on the demand side because of the shift towards personal mobility. That will remain till everybody nets vaccinated. We don't know when everyone will get vaccinated Tata Motors President – Passenger Vehicle Business Unit Shailesh Chandra told PTI. Still people will be cautious and therefore there is this gravity towards personal mobility, he said.

Lyclethe pioneer Dack the pioneer

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Tuesday February 23, 2021

Seeking refuge in FASHION AND

Project', it is aimed at cre-Sustainable is the good, don't we? ating circular solutions by Highly coveted designer outfits, utilising off cuts from past seasons and breathing new way to go this expensive ones, life into them, infusing them with the innocent decade and when jewelry that we quirks of growing up and the splendid creative spirit see in fashion magazines and more! Fashion, at fashion labels take of childhood. "There is the blend of social enterprise times, becomes so selfit up, it only consuming but for Genes here which brought us on Lecoanet Hemant, it is all board for this project. about making the country pushes consumers a better place through their latest sustainability initia-Going ecological and green is the new beckon. This to make more tive in collaboration with the NGO — Silai Wali. was an inspiring move, we weren't aiming for a marinformed choices Happiness takes a new ket competition but rather form as the apparel joins hands with the NGO to make hand crafted dolls send a joint-message of for the planet. empowerment with the The Pioneer's addition of hand crafted for a nostalgic trip back to our childhood dolls," shares Hemant Shikha Duggal Sagar, the co-founder of the apparel.
The dolls are made by days! Titled talks to Genes such inspiring women through a longstanding Lecoanet social campaign. Hemant Talking about their new green initiative.

marvels Dame Judi

for Trees. That makes the forest

nothing short of a vast universe

where every orb is inexplicably

phology of an ecosystem that

linked to the other. It is this mor-

Dench in her documen-

tary series My Passion

morning, it's praiseworthy to witness such sheer hardwork." Sustainability manifests in different forms and it pivots around taking responsibility to better the planet and the communities that share it at every step along the way. 'The Joy Project' is another step in Genes Lecoanet Hemant commitment towards sustainability through 'closing the loop' for their fabric waste. The donated post production fabric waste that is hand sewn by the artisans into dolls exemplifying the ethos of the GenesTribe.

who were successful in

'silai-walis' managed to

give them a contemporary

cum-fresh outlook for an

individual to stop to definitely take a glance at it. Additionally, they operate so methodically while

walking all the way to

attend their workshops in

The Joy Project rediscovers the joie de vivre, innately present in all of

weaving fine hand-crafted dolls that one can't take we always carry with ourselves! their eyes off from, he tells, "There is zero-"They are so good at what commercial sagacthey do, very wonderfully they used all the scrap without making use of any exterior material because then what's the point of going sustainable. Their hand-work along with the judgment of the quality of the efforts they added was so spectacular! When you take a look at those dolls, it's highly different from the traditional 'putlis', the finishing is so good. The

to take place. nationalities as the this venture is an son who works along is French and few of the artisans are Afghani refugees,"

the cofounder con-

cludes.

more about the 'silai-walis' us, a little bit of childhood that ity prevailing here, it's a social act! The artisans are the pure master curators for it. An ideology is being pushed to the pinnacle to expose consumers to ecological integrity and social justice. We barely talk two cents about social evolution! Having said that, sustainable fashion is the sign of the times and an uprising is yet Moreover, this project is highlighting the unification of different one who is initiating Indian while the per-



VIKAS BAGARIA, founder of Pee Safe, talks about how the pandemic has highlighted the need of maintaining hygiene and feels that it is high time that feminine hygiene is given equal importance

ow many of us knew what a sani-tiser really was before the pandemic? And even if we did, it goes without saying not many used it so frequently. In fact, for many, it was nothing but a medical luxury.

However, COVID-19 taught us the importance and necessity of sanitation and hygiene. But long before this people like Vikas Bagaria have already been working towards improving the sanitary conditions with innovative products and campaigns such as Pee Safe.

"In 2013, my wife and now the co-founder of Pee Safe suffered from Urinary Tract Infection because of using dirty public toilets while travelling. It was then that we of maintaining sanitary hygiene. That got us thinking and we decided that the need of that hour was for a toilet seat sanitiser spray which is easy to carry and cheap enough to buy. After a lot of reasearch, it was in 2017 that we finally ventured into femále hygiene and intimate hygiene for both men and women with an aim to improve the conditions in the country regarding this issue," savs Bagaria.

Although feminine hygiene has been a taboo in the country for generations and not many people prefer to talk about it in open, the recent years has seen a change. With the youth talking and discussing such issues to raise awareness and create dialogue, the situation is definitely

improving, if not more.
"Since the youth has always been the drivers of change, our target audience is also Gen Z and the millennials. They don't beat around the bush, they are vocal, bold, upfront and social media friendly about issues like sex. menstruation and intimate hygiene. This is exactly what we need. It remain healthy," he is to target these people

that we launch various campaigns including, Own the Red, in 2019, where for the first time we depicted the men-strual blood in advertisements as red and not the standard blue. It is absolutely imperative to acknowledge and work on these little things to make bigger

changes," he says.

Not only this, but the growing demand of the youth insisted the husband-wife duo to launch their range of female condoms. "It was on the demand of the consumers that we launched our female condoms 'Domina'. They are the ones who encouraged us by saying that this is something they want to talk about, we worked purely on their demand," he

says.

The credit of the success of the brand and its campaigns has to be given to the young and dynamic team that Bagaria has. "The very reason behind such different ideas, campaigns and products is that our team consists of extremely young and energetic people. Their average age is around 23-25 and if they are given the freedom to express themselves on social media, they make sure they make every post worth it. All our campaigns are in house and all the credit goes to the creativity of the team," Bagaria added.

The unfortunate part id that the high of sanitation has gone down again. "I believe we used to use more sanitiser sitting at home than we do now, but the good news is that the pandemic made people concerned about hygiene. I know although awareness regarding feminine hygiene has grown immensely, it will still be some time till it becomes a household topic. Even the budget has given a concession to health and wellness, and anything that emphasis awareness and increases access is a good thing. I am positive it will also boost the sector of feminine health because as long as our women are healthy, our nation will





tucks are reminiscent of

mushrooms. Lichens leave

a graphic signature on the

pieces in the form of intu-

itive typography. The clothes

mark an innate exploration

of the forest with a keen

the structure of wild

For women, hues of eucalyptus

green, amethyst, dandelion yellow

and cinnamon are seen in quaint

silhouettes. The approach is clean, also reflected in the campaign

imagery. Think quiet details mim-

icking the shapes and forms of the

botanical world of the forest







what's brewing?





WELL AND GOOD

Shivani Mohan and Rina Hindocha curated a Yoga and Wellness program for Mercure Hyderabad KCP. A lucky few guests were given the chance to indulge in an evening of relaxation in a serene environment, where they particularly and the production of the serior of the seri

partook in spa treatments at the newly-opened Somara spa outlet, followed by a healthy 5-

Photos by SV Chary





ARCHIE



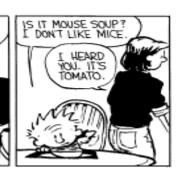












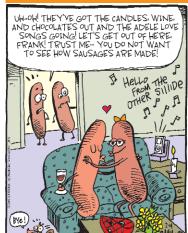
GARFIELD











REALITY CHECK









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ACROSS

DOWN

2 Normal

1 A tank for live fish

CROSSWORD

- 6 Mix this with yellow to get
- 5 A female sheep 8 Large extinct animals 7 Stopped doing something
- 9 A pale purple colour 11 A crown-wearing woman
- 12 A female relation
- 13 Workers sit at these in
 - offices
- 16 Hot coals left after a fire 18 A list of restaurant meals
- 19 People who work in classrooms

1 An emergency vehicle

10 Very old

17 Adult males

3 A feeling that makes

4 Check the length of

you want to scratch

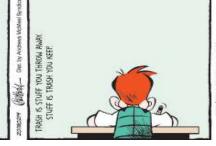
14 A person from Sweden

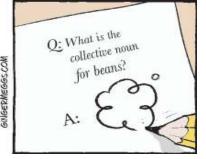
15 The largest continent

GINGER MEGGS

Q: What is the collective noun for beans?







The sum of all numbers in any row or column must equal 45.

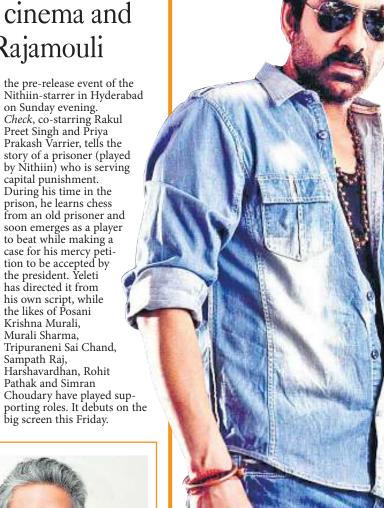
tollywood

Check will break the barrier between mass cinema and class cinema: Rajamouli

ilmmaker SS Rajamouli, who is a big admirer of Chandra Sekhar Yeleti's body of work, believes that the latter's Check will breach the barrier between mass cinema and class cinema. "As soon as Check's teaser was dropped, I felt the urge to catch it in theatres as and when it opens. It has an interesting theme of a prisoner playing chess in a prison. The audiences have been

exposed to world cinema due to coronavirus and they are hungry for different subjects now. Check is a subject on such lines. I'm confident that it will break the barrier between mass cinema and class cinema. I believe that different films from now on will attract the patronage equivalent to that of mass cinema," the leading director observed. He was speaking at the pre-release event of the Nithiin-starrer in Hyderabad on Sunday evening. Check, co-starring Rakul Preet Singh and Priya Prakash Varrier, tells the story of a prisoner (played by Nithiin) who is serving capital punishment. During his time in the prison, he learns chess from an old prisoner and soon emerges as a player to beat while making a case for his mercy petition to be accepted by the president. Yeleti has directed it from his own script, while the likes of Posani Krishna Murali. Murali Sharma, Tripuraneni Sai Chand, Sampath Rai. Harshavardhan, Rohit Pathak and Simran

Choudary have played sup-



n development for over a year, Ravi Teia's next with the successful writer-director duo of Prasanna Kumar Bezawada and Trinadha Rao Nakkina was finally made official over the weekend. People Media Factory will jointly be producing it with Abhishek Agarwal Arts, with the filming set to commence after Ravi wraps up Khiladi with Ramesh

Varma. Speaking to us, Prasanna states that he initially worked on a period drama for the actor but as it couldn't be made

The writer, whose bona fides include Nenu Local and Hello Guru Premakosame, tells us that Ravi Teja will be playing dual roles in the yetuntitled out-and-out entertainer which rolls after the actor wraps up Khiladi

to various reasons, he narrated another story which the actor green-lit 20 minutes into the narration.

"The project got delayed because of COVID-19. It is an outand-out entertainer and will see Ravi garu playing dual roles. People who've heard the script so far have told me that

it's tailor-made for the actor," the writer says, while dismissing claims that the actor will be seen as a lawyer in the film. The writer has been in touch with the actor for over a couple of years and cherishes his bond with him. 'The story factor aside, he gives his nod to any-

one who he believes is

anthology, also fea-tures Divya Sripada,

Uttej and Praanya P

Rao in supporting

Harsha Pulipaka

said, "Every living

Sri Vidya, Vikas,

Film with Ravi garu will

Writer Prasanna Kumar

be a hilarious entertainer:

craft and realizes that he can deliver a super hit. He was supposed to do a film with Venu Sriram sometime back but it was shelved after the launch. He recommended my name to the film's unit as a dialogue writer. I remember after Hello Guru

Premakosame went to floors, he invited me to his place and said that we should work together. Admirers of Cinema Chupista Maava (CCM) and Nenu Local kept telling me that my lead actors were an extension of characters Ravi Teja played. In fact, during *CCM* promotions I said that I like Ravi *garu* a lot and since I couldn't get him for my films, I saw him in the lead roles I've written. Now that I have him in this film, I will do what I need to," the writer declares with an air of

confidence. He goes on, "When I started writing this film, Krack didn't make it to the screens yet, and his previous films failed to light up the box-office.



So the idea was to not just smash a six but a monster one at it such that the ball deposits outside the stadium. The film is filled with some six to seven hilarious episodes and I'm pretty sure that the audiences will roll in the aisles watching them. Also, for the people who have been missing the Ravi Teja of Venky and *Kick*, this untitled film will be a treat,"the writer promises, signing off.



Cashing in on the craze

of Sam and Sethupathi

he Telugu dubbed version of acclaimed Tamil film *Super Deluxe*, a crime black comedy-

drama film with elements of sci-

ence fiction and fantasy, will be released in Telugu states this

April. The Tamil drama, directed by

Thiagarajan Kumararaja, features the likes

of Vijay Sethupathi, Samantha Akkineni

Preeti Asrani to surprise with her performance in A: Makers

of Avanthika Productions the film is scheduled to release on March 5. The makers said that Preeti, who has been paired opposite Nithin Prasanna, has and Ramya Krishna in lead

While Ramya and Samantha are popular names here, Sethupathi has won plaudits for his turn in the recently released box-office smash Uppena, prompting P Madhu Babu of Siddeswara Vaishnavi Films to acquire the dubbing rights and give it a release.

Brahmi and Rahul Vijay got a meaty role and she will sur-prise the audience with her terrific performance. The film's trailer, released by Vijay Sethupathi recently, has garnered good response. creature needs the five senses of touch, sight, hearing, smell and taste. The film's story is woven around them. The story and screenplay are honest and mirror the thought process of today's youngsters." Sandeep Raj, who shot to fame



as a filmmaker with Colour Photo, is penning the dialogues, while Prashanth R Vihari has been tapped to compose music.

The film's first schedule-of 13 days in Hyderabad-commenced on Monday. Later, the action will shift to Visakhapatnam and



Teja announces Chitram 1.1 on his b'day

s he celebrated his birthday on Monday, director Teja announced *Chitram 1.1*sequel to his maiden directorial *Chitram* (2000). He will be introducing 45 news faces with the film, a musical love story. Speaking to us, he said, "It has a similar story to that of *Chitram*. RP Patnaik is scoring tunes right now and once he gives the six songs, I will proceed with the shoot. The film is set in Hyderabad and I will complete the shooting formalities in 40 days. The male face has been locked, while in another couple of days I will reveal the names of the leading ladies."

The director was flooded with fancy

offers from various territories after the announcement. "All the area-wise distributions rights have been sold. When I asked the distribution parties why they are acquiring it at the mere announcement, they said since it is Chitram 1.1 we are purchasing it. When I wanted to know what if the story is not good, they said I'm a master of the genre," the director, clearly

amused with the offers this early pointed out.

That leaves us with the question on That leaves us with the question on the status of his proposed project Alamelu Manga Venkata Ramana with Gopichand. It was to go in front of the cameras this month. The director clarified that it is on but delayed.

"For a long time we couldn't get the right actress for the film. The film depends a lot on her performance and we tapped someone who even allotted."

we tapped someone who even allotted dates from June. Once the paperwork regarding his participation is completed, an official announcement will be made," he noted.

As soon as he made the announcement, area-wise distribution rights of the film have been sold like **hotcakes**



has merit: Anderson



PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Veteran fast bowler James Anderson is pretty sure that the newly laid track at the Motera Stadium will be devoid of any grass for the upcoming Day/Night Test against India even though there is a nice green cover on it at the moment.

The third Test under lights will start from Wednesday and for England's premier fast bowler, he doesn't expect it to behave much differently from the second Test track at the Chepauk

which India won by 317 runs. The pitch, it has got grass on it but I am pretty sure it's not going to be there when we turn up on the match day," Anderson said with a wry smile during a virtual conference with British media on

"So we have to wait and watch. As seam bowlers, we have to be prepared to bowl as best we can in any given condition. If it swings, it's great and if it does not, we still have a job to do," Anderson said.

He felt that the pink SG Test ball that he bowled with during the net sessions, swung more than its red counterpart.

"Look this is the second pink Test in India and first in February so we don't know how it would behave."

He urged critics of the much-debated rotation policy to look at the "bigger picture", considering the massive amount of cricket to be played by the England team in the

England did not play Jonny Bairstow and Mark Wood in the first two Tests but have brought them back for the final two games as part of a rotation policy while firstchoice keeper Jos Buttler is back home after the opening Test. The idea is to help players cop up with life inside the bio-bubble.

"You have got to try and look at the bigger picture. The idea was if I missed that one, that would give me the best chance of being fit and firing for the pink-ball Test," Anderson said during virtual press conference.

Former players, especially Kevin Pietersen, have criticised ECB's thought process, saying the board must play its best players in a big series like this against India.

Looking at bigger picture rotation policy WTC win will be same as World Cup: Ishant



PTI AHMEDABAD

n the cusp of becoming only the second Indian pacer after the legendary Kapil Dev to play 100 Tests, Ishant Sharma on Monday attributed his remarkable longevity in the game to understanding what the "captain wants from him".

Ishant made his Test debut as a gangly 18-year-old in Bangladesh when Rahul Dravid was the captain and subsequently was led by Anil Kumble, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Virat Kohli and Ajinkya Rahane during the last decade and half.

So which captain understood him the best in all these

years? "It is difficult to say who understood me the most as all of them understood me really well. But more than the captain understanding me, it was always important as to how I understood the captain," Ishant said during a virtual press conference ahead of the third Test against England, beginning here on

"That's very important. What does the captain want from me specifically. If those things are clear, communication becomes easier," said the man who has 302 wickets from 99 Tests so far.

Wednesday.

Does he think that being dropped from white ball squads and also missing out on a cou-

ple of seasons of IPL helped him HUNDRED IS JUST A than many others? NUMBER FOR ME. IT'S LIKE "I normally treat this as a HOW I PLAYED MY 99TH

AND SAME AGGRESSIVENESS, I WILL GO INTO MY 100TH MATCH. I DON'T PLAY FOR NUMBERS, I PLAY TO WIN.

MATCH, WITH THE SAME

FEELING, SAME INTENSITY

—ISHANT SHARMA (ON HIS MOTIVATION AS HE GOES INTO HIS 100TH TEST)

blessing in disguise. It's not that

that he forgets what's not there and be grateful for what he has. "I didn't want my Test cricket to get affected because of my

be grateful that I am at least playing one format," he said.

reach the milestone quicker

I don't want to play white ball as that's what is the job of a sportsman but if he is not playing, what does he do? At best he can For him, it was important

non-selection in ODIs. I should

"May be it helped me in completing 100 Tests. Having said that, I don't think had I

"I think I don't want to take one name. You are good and So does crossing Kapil Dev's that's why you play for India. But I think, after me, it is Jasprit Bumrah, who will play most matches for India.

"I think he has to lead the way and also it will depend on how he speaks to youngsters, take them under his wings, grooms them."

For fast bowlers to blossom, one needs to understand their skill sets and plan accordingly.

Anderson playing at 38 and if he could continue till that age, he "(Navdeep) Saini has pace, (Mohammed) Siraj has control. You have to understand people's strength. Skill sets are different and if you tell Saini to bowl one area and Siraj to hit 140k, then you are not doing justice to their strengths," he explained.

As a parting shot, Ishant added: "As long as I can maintain the intensity in my game, I will play for India.'

Fit again Umesh added to squad

PTI AHMEDABAD

Pacer Umesh Yadav was on Monday added to India's squad for the last two Tests against England after he passed a fitness test, while Shardul Thakur was released to compete in the ongoing Vijay Hazare one-day

have played 100 Tests. May be it

would have taken a bit longer. I

"(Crossing) 131 will take a

long time. I only want to think

about qualifying for the World

Test Championship (WTC) final. This is my World Cup

where if I win, I can have the

same feeling that others had

while winning the ODI world

laughs. "I will go one game at a

time. You never know what comes next. Yes, I am more pro-

fessional about my recovery

now. Earlier, I would train hard

but didn't focus on my recovery.

As you grow older, you need to

recover well to bowl long spells,

the pack once he leaves the

On who will be the leader of

take care of your body."

Ask him about Jimmy

Cup."

am only 32 and not 42."

131 Tests cross his mind?

Championship.
"Team India fast bowler Umesh Yadav appeared for a fitness test on Sunday, 21st February at Motera. He has

cleared his fitness test and has been added to the squad for the last two Tests of the ongoing Paytm India-England Test series," said the BCCI in a statement. "Shardul Thakur has been released from the squad to take part in the Vijay Hazare Trophy," it added.

Yadav had suffered was a calf muscle injury during the Melbourne Test against Australia in December, ruling him out for the rest of that

Stokes has ability to put bowlers on back foot: Thorpe

PTI AHMEDABAD

 $E^{ngland\ assistant\ coach\ Graham\ Thorpe}$ $E^{ngland\ assistant\ coach\ Graham\ Thorpe}$ $E^{ngland\ assistant\ coach\ Graham\ Thorpe}$ forget that he has the ability to put bowlers on the back foot as he tried to play down the star all-rounder's apparent struggles against seasoned Indian off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin.

Stokes was dismissed thrice by Ashwin in the first two Tests in Chennai. The power-hitter was, in fact, stifled quite remarkably by the local favourite in the second game. When asked about Ashwin's command

on Stokes, Thorpe said, "It is a challenge. Ben actually has at times different styles He can build into an inni

"I think Ben also has that ability to put a bowler on the back foot as well, that is something which he certainly should not



Thorpe also hinted that all players including Zak Crawley, who was ruled out of the first Two tests due to an injury, are available for selection.

"He (Crawley) is looking fit and I think we have probably got a full complement of players to pick from, so he (Crawley) will be certainly in the mix, and his injury seems to have healed for me, watching him in the nets," said Thorpe.

The assistant coach also said that the seamers could have more impact in the dav-night Test despite the track being expected to favour slower bowlers.

"It is possible, I mean without looking into it, the crystal ball, but I would imagine that the ball generally does swing more he reckoned

"They (India) don't have a huge database of pink ball cricket in India, maybe the second one, so looking forward to it, it is a fantastic stadium. We have prepared as well as we can," he added.

'Game may change session wise in D/N Test'

PTI AHMEDABAD

The game may change ses-I sion wise in the third Test, reckoned Ishant Sharma on Monday, as India and England dive into an uncharted territory made up of pink balls, new stadium, newly laid strips and floodlights of different make.

India will take on England in a day-night Test at the Sardar Patel Stadium, the world's largest cricket venue with a seating capacity of 1,10,000, from Wednesday.

Asked whether the Indian bowlers would use the shortnall tactic during the twilight period, Ishant said, "That we get to know once we play at this ground, because it is renovated I can't really say anything



"We can't say what (will) trouble the batsmen and what will not, there will be a lot of things (that) we will have to see, we don't know how we will have to tackle all these things, there will be dew ... ?

Ishant, who is standing on the cusp of playing his 100 Tests, said each bowler will have to take responsibility session wise.

"How the wicket is here and how they (England) play, obviously under lights the ball swings, but you will have to see the dew factor, so there will be many things, and you cannot fast bowlers will remain in the game or the spinners.

"I feel the game will change session wise and each bowler will have to take responsibility session wise, who knows the ball might turn in the begin-'Who knows if the spin-

ners come to play in first two

sessions, but under lights, when

there is dew, the ball does not

swing, but skids and comes onto the bat. "Then, spinners are not in the game and fast bowlers are, so it depends on the situation and how the ball and wicket is

behaving at that time," he said. The veteran pacer backed the team's batsmen to come

good, saying they are capable of dealing with the conditions. m sure our batsmen ar really capable enough to tack-

le all those things, how they need to go and build their innings, to go on through the Test match," he added.

India-SA series likely from March 7

NEW DELHI: The planned eightmatch series between India and South Africa women is likely to be held from March 7, which will mark the return of the home team to competitive crick-

et after almost 12 months. The series, comprising five T20Is and three ODIs, is likely to be held in either Lucknow or Kanpur in a bio-bubble, a BCCI official said on Monday. A 22member Indian team has been picked for the contest.

With the fixtures of the series vet to be announced, a Cricket South Africa (CSA) source confirmed that their team is set to travel to India this

have been done, the team is ready to leave anytime," the source said. Both teams will have to undergo a six-day quarantine which means they will get a

week. "The Covid tests

series opener. South Africa played recently but India have not played since the T20 World Cup in March last year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

week of training before the



Deadly Devon

Conway's third nineties score in as many innings helps Black Caps beat Australia by 53 runs

AFP CHRISTCHURCH

Devon Conway batting Amasterclass inspired New Zealand to a 53-run win over Australia in the opening T20 International in Christchurch on

Conway smashed an unbeaten 99 off 59 balls as the Black Caps overcame a shaky start to finish on 184/5 after losing the toss and being

out in to bat. In reply, the tourists were all out for 131 after 17.3 overs, with Black Caps spinner Ish Sodhi taking 4/28 to give the hosts an early edge in the five-match h

Richardson, fresh from signing a multi-million dollar Indian Premier League contract, was the pick of the Australian bowlers, taking 2/31.

But the tourists could not dislodge Conway, whose 59-ball knock included 10 fours and three sixes, helping the Black Caps bounce back.

Conway said he was "pretty chuffed" with his career-best effort, even though he was stranded just short of a century after failing to take two runs off the final ball. The frustrated Australians

then suffered a horror show early in their innings, as seamers Tim Southee and Trent Boult tore through the top order. Luckless debutant Josh

Philippe departed for two after sending a top-edge skyward. But old campaigners such as skipper Aaron Finch and Glenn Maxwell also failed to deal with the swinging ball and the tourists

were soon 19/4. Mitch Marsh top-scored with 45 and Ashton Agar contributed 23 a string of batting failures gave New Zealand a

Sreesanth's fifer keeps Kerala perfect



PTI BENGALURU

On a comeback trail after the end of his spot-fixing ban, pacer S Sreesanth on Monday picked up his first five-wicket haul in List A cricket in almost 15 years to help Kerala pull-off a three-wicket win over Uttar Pradesh in the Vijay Hazare Trophy

The 37-year-old, who was not shortlisted in IPL 2021 auction's final list, returned figures of five for 65 in his first List A game in more than eight years.

petitive cricket last month after his life ban was overturned, opened his account by dismissing opener Abhishek Sharma.

dismiss UP under 300 with wickets of skipper Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mohsin Khan, Akshdeep Nath, and Shivam Sharma en route to his only the second five-for of his List-A career.

pacer, who has played 27 Tests, 53 ODIs

and 10 T20Is, picked up two for 41 against

In reply, Kerala sealed the chase in 48.5 overs. Robin Uthappa (81 from 55 balls; 8x4, 4x6) and Sachin Baby (76 from 83 balls; 6x4, 1x6) gave the start before Jalaj Saxena (31) and MD Nidheesh (13 not out from six balls; 1x4, 1x6) sealed the chase with seven balls to spare.

This was Kerala's second successive win in Group C but they remained second in table behind Railways who thrashed Odisha by eight wickets at the M Chinnaswamy to be ahead by net run-rate.

Defending champions Karnataka bounced back with a bang after their firstmatch loss with a 267-run rout of Bihar.

Skipper R Samarth led the charge with an unbeaten 158 from 144 balls (15x4, 1x6), while fellow opener Devdutt Padikkal smashed a 98-ball 97 (8x4, 2x6) in a commanding 153-run opening partnership after Bihar opted to bowl at the Just Cricket

The only blip was youngster Padikkal missing a century by just three runs after being castled by Rahul Kumar as he once again failed to convert his fifty. After Padikkal's departure, Samarth

took charge with Krishnamurthy Siddharth who chipped in with a quickfire 76 (55 balls; 5x4, 4x6) to propel them to a huge

In reply, Karnataka dismantled Bihar for 87 runs in just 27.2 overs with opener Sakibul Gani being their top-scorer (37), while eight batsmen failed to reach dou-

Prasidh Krishna was Karnataka's wrecker-in-chief (4/17) and had fine support from Abhimanyu Mithun and Shreyas Gopal who claimed two each.

Two in two for Gujarat seven-wicket win over Tamil Nadu in

Hosts Gujarat recorded their second successive win after they beat Goa by eight wickets in an Elite Group A game

Gujarat had started their campaign with a three-wicket win over Chhattisgarh. Opting to bat at the Lalbhai Contractor Stadium, Goa were bundled out for 159 in 45.4 overs, with Gujarat's slow-left arm spinner Hardik Patel (3/34) doing the bulk of the damage.

Gujarat then chased the target in 27.4 overs with half centuries from Priyank Panchal (57 not out off) and Bhargav Merai (57 off 55 balls).

In the other two league games, Baroda rode on skipper Krunal Pandya's unbeaten 127 to beat Tripura by six wickets, while Hyderabad defeated Chhattisgarh by seven wickets.

HEBBAR'S TON UPSET TN

Indore: Ashwin Hebbar slammed an unbeaten 101 and powered Andhra to a

Group B match at the Holkar stadium. Andhra captain G Hanuma Vihari won the toss and sent Tamil Nadu in to bat and the bowlers did very well to dismiss the opponent for 176 in 41.3 overs.

Left-arm medium-pacer C Stephen (3/46), off-spinner Shoaib Mohammed Khan (3/24) and right-arm mediumpacer Girinath Reddy (2/33) struck at regular intervals to restrict a strong Tamil Nadu batting line-up, led by Dinesh Karthik

In reply, Hebbar was in cracking form and toyed with the opposition to attack to fashion a comfortable win. He found an able partner in Ricky Bhui (52 not out, 41 balls, 6 fours, 2 sixes) and the duo added 114 runs for the fourth wicket to power Andhra.

In other matches, Jharkhand beat Punjab by 2 runs in a nail-biting encounter, while Madhya Pradesh lose second consecutive game in span on 48 hours after Vidarbha beat them by 4

Solskjaer not giving up hope of catching Man City

MANCHESTER: Ole Gunnar Solskjaer is not giving up hope that Manchester United can challenge Manchester City for the Premier League title, despite the scintillating form of the league leaders.

City have soared 10 points clear of their local rivals thanks to an 18-game winning streak in all competitions.

United's own inconsistent form has helped open up the gap, but the Red Devils beat Newcastle 3-1 on Sunday to win for just the second time in six league games.

'We've got to be there just in case," said Ŏle. "Every time we get three points we've done our job and that's what we've got to do and see what other teams do."

Bruno Fernandes and Marcus Rashford were again on target on a night United needed their star men to paper over the cracks of another unconvinc-

ing performance. We had to find a way to win it in the second-half. The first-half wasn't up to the standard that we wanted," added Ole. "Maybe because of Newcastle, maybe because of what we did in the week. We asked them to go again after a high-intensity game and it took us to half time

to get our legs and energy." A run of two wins in 14 games has left Newcastle just three points clear of the drop zone, but Steve Bruce remains confident his side will survive.

"Fulham have had a good week and won a couple of games, which at the bottom end of the table is big, but there are a few of us: Brighton, Burnley and maybe Crystal Palace looking over their shoulders," said

terms so he resigned," a senior Vaas was appointed to replace added.

Vaas resigned just before the

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Tn a dramatic turn of events, Sri Lankan pace great Chaminda Vaas on Monday resigned as the national team's fast bowling coach due to a pay dispute with his board, barely three days after being appointed to the post.

team's departure for a tour of the monetary gain," SLC said in a West Indies. "We could not agree to his

Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) official

Vaas resigns 3 days after being appointed SL bowling coach

"It is particularly disheartening to note that in an economic climate such as the one facing the entire globe right now. Mr Vaas has made this sudden and irresponsible move on the eve of the team's departure, based on personal

statement. It was only last week that

Australian David Sakar following the team's poor show against South Africa and England in the recent times.

Vaas incidentally was to leave for the West Indies with the team on Monday night to play three matches each of the two shorter formats and two Tests.

One of the country's finest pacers, Vaas has also resigned from his position as the SLC Academy coach, a board official

Sreesanth, who had returned to com-

He then returned in the death overs to

On his List-A return, the former India