

ANALYSIS 7
TIME TO TACKLE ONLINE
GENDER VIOLENCE**MONEY 8**
SENSEX ZOOMS 1,030
PTS, NIFTY TOPS 14,950**SPORTS 12**
PATEL DOMINATES
AT MOTERA

HYDERABAD, THURSDAY FEBRUARY 25, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

HUMOUR IS THE
BEST WEAPON TO
BASH PATRIARCHY:
SHRADDHA SRINATH

Page 11

**SARDAR PATEL CRICKET STADIUM IN
MOTERA RENAMED AFTER PM MODI**

The Sardar Patel Stadium has been renamed to the Narendra Modi Stadium. It will host its first international match from today after renovation. President Ram Nath Kovind inaugurated the newly revamped Motera cricket stadium in Ahmedabad, on Wednesday. The Prime Minister was also formerly a president of the Gujarat Cricket Association. Home Minister Amit Shah and Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju, along with the Board of Control for Cricket in India secretary Jay Shah, were also present at the event. The stadium will be a part of the planned Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Sports Enclave in the city.

**COVID VACCINES FROM MARCH FOR OVER
60s, THOSE OVER 45 WITH COMORBIDITIES**

The second phase of the coronavirus vaccination drive will begin March 1, with priority given to people over 60 and those over 45 but with co-morbidities, Union Minister Prakash Javadekar said Wednesday, adding that details of what counted as a comorbidity will be released by the Health Ministry. The shots will be given at 10,000 government-run centres and 20,000 private centres. Charges for vaccination at privately-run centres will be confirmed in a few days. "From March 1, people above 60 years of age and those above 45 years with comorbidities will be vaccinated," Javadekar said.

**NSE REOPENS AFTER TECHNICAL
SNAG CAUSES LOSS OF CONNECTIVITY**

The National Stock Exchange re-opened following a technical glitch which led to halt in trading across the equity and equity futures and option segments. The NSE and BSE remained open till 5 pm. The NSE benchmark - Nifty 50 index rose 0.6 per cent or 88 points to 14,800 after re-opening and Sensex climbed 308 points to 50,059. Earlier in the day, the NSE had cancelled all open orders of equity, equity futures and option and currency futures after trading was halted. Traders were worried about their positions a day ahead of the monthly expiry of derivative contracts for February, analysts said.

**ED RAIDS DELHI FIRM IN ALLEGED
₹ 800-CRORE BANK FRAUD CASE**

The ED on Wednesday said it has raided a Delhi-based company and is probing two other entities in connection with a money laundering case linked to alleged bank loan frauds of over ₹800 crore. It said the agency searched various premises of a firm, Shree Bankay Bihari Exports Ltd, and its promoters Amar Chand Gupta, Ram Lal Gupta, Raj Kumar Gupta, and their families. The case against them is being probed under various Sections of the PMLA and involves "siphoning and diversion" of funds amounting to Rs 605 crore.

**'US award a recognition
of vibrant nature
of transparency...'**

5

**Preparedness of the
local community is
the best way to
manage disasters**

2

**'Dams, hydroelec-
tric projects don't
harm environment'**

8

TODAY**ALMANAC**

Month & Paksam: Magha & Shukla Paksha
Panchangam
Tithi: Trayodashi: 05:18 pm
Nakshatram: Pushya: 01:17 pm
Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)
Rahukalam: 01:56 pm - 03:23 pm
Yamagandam: 06:40 am - 08:07 am
Varjyam: 01:42 am - 03:16 am
Gulika: 09:34 am - 11:02 am
Good Time: (to start any important work)
Amritkalam: 06:53 am - 08:29 am
Ahijit Muhurtham: 12:05 pm - 12:52 pm

**HYDERABAD
WEATHER**

Forecast: Partly cloudy
Temp: 34/18
Humidity: 40%
Sunrise: 06:37 am
Sunset: 06:21 pm
Current Weather Conditions
Updated February 25, 2021 5:00 PM

KTR puts 'Aa Naluguru' on notice**K VENKATESHWARLU**
■ HYDERABAD

TRS working president and Municipal Administration Minister KT Ramarao on Wednesday put on notice Education Minister Sabita Indra Reddy and Animal Husbandry Minister Talasani Srinivas Yadav as well as party MLAs D Sudhir Reddy (LB Nagar) and Prakash Gowd (Rajender Nagar) for taking their constituencies lightly.

Referring to them as 'Aa Naluguru', KTR, during a meeting with Ministers and public representatives from GHMC limits at Telangana Bhavan, said that the party had faced defeat in their constituencies in the GHMC elections, it is learnt. Hence, they should not let their guard down for the upcoming MLC elections to two Graduates seats.

KTR made it clear that it was imperative for the party to win the elections. So, the quartet (Aa Naluguru) should ensure that voters enrolled by the party cast their votes to the party's candidates.

Ministers, MPs, MLAs, MLCs, Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Hyderabad-Rangareddy-Mahabubnagar candidate S Vani Devi attended the meet-

**■ KTR let them in on
the strategy to be
followed for victory
of party candidate
Surabhi Vani Devi****■ Ministers will be appointed as in-
charges for three districts-
Hyderabad, Rangareddy and
Mahabubnagar to supervise the
Graduates MLC poll campaign**

TRS working president KT Rama Rao addressing a meeting with Ministers and public representatives from GHMC limits at Telangana Bhavan on Wednesday

ing.

KTR let them in on the strategy to be followed for victory of party candidate Surabhi Vani Devi. He directed party leaders to conduct constituency-level general body meetings every Saturday. He asked leaders to counter opposition leaders' criticism of the govern-

ment. Party legislators had to work as in-charges of their respective constituencies, he said. Ministers will be appointed as in-charges for three districts-Hyderabad, Rangareddy and Mahabubnagar to supervise the Graduates MLC poll campaign. He asked MLAs to own responsibility for ensuring

victory of TRS candidates in the ongoing Graduates MLC elections, it is learnt.

Later, speaking to the media, KTR said that the Congress government filled only 24,000 jobs during its 10-year rule in the undivided Andhra Pradesh state.

2

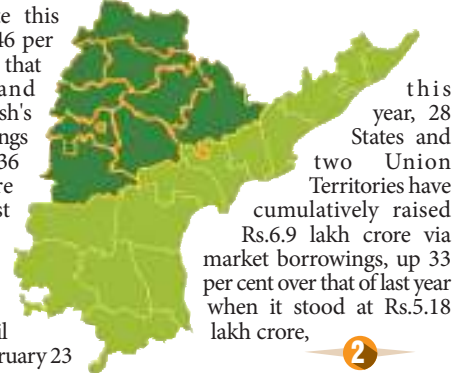
**AP, TS among the highest
borrowing States this year****ML MELLY MAITREYI**
■ HYDERABAD

States, apart from taking a drastic hit in revenues due to Covid-19, have had to endure the added hardship of high cost borrowings at the auction of State development bonds conducted by the Reserve Bank of India. Even in this, Telugu States have borrowed much more than their borrowings in the last financial year.

Telangana has already bor-

rowed till date this financial year 46 per cent more than that of last FY and Andhra Pradesh's market borrowings amounted to 36 per cent more than that of last fiscal, according to a report by Care Ratings.

Between April 7, 2020 and February 23



2

**Nobody has right to question
my nativity: Sharmila****PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's sister YS Sharmila, who has declared her plans to bring back 'Rajanna Rajyam' in Telangana, on Wednesday asserted that nobody had the right to pinpoint her birthplace (to suggest that she is not 'local') and questioned whether Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao and BJP senior leader Vijayashanthi are Telanganites?

Sharmila said that she would make an announcement regarding the launch of her party "very soon" and, in the context, asked scribes whether it would be good to launch her party on May 14 or July 9. She said that she would go to Delhi in support of farmers' issues.

Speaking to media persons at Lotus Pond, Sharmila mentioned that she had full support of her mother Vijayamma. "Party announcement will take place very soon. Have the problems of

**Guv wants govt to
speed up probe of
advocate couple
murder case****PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

Governor Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan on Wednesday addressed a letter to the state government.

2

**SETBACK TO 10K CIVIL
SERVICES ASPIRANTS
SC dismisses
plea for
extra-chance****PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

In a setback to over 10,000 UPSC civil service aspirants, the Supreme Court Wednesday dismissed a plea seeking an extra attempt for those who exhausted their last chance in the 2020 preliminary exam amid the COVID-19 pandemic or have got age barred from appearing in future tests.

A bench of Justices A M Khanwilkar, Indu Malhotra and Ajay Rastogi dismissed the petition filed by civil service aspirants and clarified that its decision would not restrict the Centre in exercising its discretion in future to deal with the difficulties as projected to the court.

Consequently, the petition fails and is accordingly dismissed, the bench said. The top court said that it is not exercising its plenary powers under Article 142 of the Constitution.

2

**Modi: Government has no
business to be in business****PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday made his strongest pitch for privatisation of non-strategic PSUs, saying the government has no business to be in business and sustaining loss-making units on taxpayers' money drains resources that could otherwise have been spent on public welfare schemes.

He said about 100 under-utilised or unutilised assets with public sector units (PSUs), such as those in the oil and gas and power sectors, will be monetised, creating Rs 2.5 lakh crore of investment opportunities.

"It is the government's duty to support enterprises and businesses. But it is not essential that it should own and run



enterprises," the Prime Minister said at a webinar on the privatisation approach in the Budget for 2021-22.

The private sector brings in investment, global best practices, top-quality managers, changes in management and

modernisation, he said, adding the money generated from the stake sales will be routed to public welfare schemes in areas like water and sanitation, education and healthcare.

2

**Harish finds 'sports'
route to win people****PNS ■ SIDDIPET**

TS Finance Minister T Harish Rao on Wednesday expressed his concern over children neglecting sports, while getting immersed in time-wasting activities like playing PUBG and surfing on Facebook.

Children, addicted to mobile phones, were becoming obese and developing complications like BP and diabetes from young age, he observed. Physical exercise was the key to keeping diseases at bay. He recalled the proverb 'Health is wealth' to drive home his point.

The common perception about sports was that it was a time-waste activity; however, PUBG and Facebook chatting



were time-killing activities.

2

**MP woman
dies hours
after 2nd dose
of vaccine****PNS ■ BARWANI (MP)**

A 60-year-old woman employee of the Madhya Pradesh health department died hours after receiving the second dose of a COVID-19 vaccine in Barwani district, an official said on Wednesday.

The district collector has asked authorities to ascertain the exact cause of her death.

Rajni Sen, a clerk with the health department, received the second dose of the vaccine on Tuesday afternoon and her condition deteriorated at night, the district's chief medical and health officer (CMHO), Anita Singare, said.

2

**Centre lifts embargo, permits pvt banks
to participate in Govt-related business****PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The Finance Ministry on Wednesday allowed all private sector banks to participate in government-related business like collection of taxes, pension payments and small savings schemes.

At the moment, only a few large private sector banks are allowed to conduct government-related business. This step is expected to fur-



ther enhance customer convenience, spur competition and higher efficiency in the stan-

dards of customer services, an official statement said.

"Embargo lifted on grant of Govt business to private banks. All banks can now participate. Private banks can now be equal partners in development of the Indian economy, furthering Govt's social sector initiatives, and enhancing customer convenience," Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in a tweet.

2

'This came at a time when I was thinking of retirement'**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

TRS candidate for the Hyderabad-Rangareddy-Mahabubnagar Graduates constituency MLC elections S Vani Devi on Wednesday thanked Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao for giving her MLC ticket at a time when she was thinking of retirement to pursue her interests like drawing and painting. She said that she got an opportunity at a late stage in life, just like her father (PV Narsimha Rao), who got the opportunity of serving as Prime Minister at an advanced age.

Later, speaking to the media

after participating in the meeting of GHMC limits TRS public representatives held at Telangana Bhavan here on Wednesday, Vani Devi said: "I have no commitments. I strive hard to solve the problems of the graduates. Nobody has qualifications like I have. I will prove myself with the given opportunity. I have knowledge on the problems. Public service was digested in my nerves as a PV's child" (sic). She said that she was contesting the election following the call of KCR. She said that she had been in service for the last 35 years after establishing educational institutions. She said



**She said that she
had been in service
for the last 35 years
after establishing
educational
institutions. She
said that students
pursuing education
in her institutions
had secured more
job opportunities**

that students pursuing education in her institutions had

secured more job opportunities. Her students were work-

ing in all sectors --from atomic to aerospace, she added.

Speaking to the media, TRS party secretary general and Rajya Sabha MP K Keshava Rao said that graduates would not be influenced by small words. He thanked KCR for allocating ticket to PV's daughter. He said that he had been seeing some qualities of PV in Vani Devi. Vani Devi was a non-controversial candidate and she had been focused on her work of setting up schools. The TRS party would not disturb others as the party had its own voters. The party would do its own work, KK added.

Preparedness of the local community is the best way to manage disasters

The Himalayan mountains represent one of the most fragile ecosystems and frequently face vagaries of nature. In the long list of disasters, the flood in Rishiganga valley on February 07, 2021 is unique as it happened when the weather in the region was fair, except for the reports of high snowfall a few days prior to the event. There was also no seismic activity reported at that time.

Analysis of images by the Indian Institute of Remote Sensing (IIRS), Dehradun has established that a mass wasting event triggered the flash flood in Rishiganga valley. Most probably, energy created by this fall on soft glacial material resulted in melting of snow. Amateur videos of the event shot by locals show a mighty flood wave approach-

Analysis of images by the Indian Institute of Remote Sensing (IIRS), Dehradun has established that a mass wasting event triggered the flash flood in Rishiganga valley. Most probably, energy created by this fall on soft glacial material resulted in melting of snow.

However, much more efforts need to be made for preparing the local community; that being the first line of defence against such disasters.

It is a fact that disasters, be it earthquakes, flash floods or something else, leave us with very little reaction time. Any worthwhile response can only be made by the local community in such a short time. Of course, long-term relief and rehabilitation measures can



DR SHAILENDRA JOSHI,
Advisor of Telangana govt and former chief secretary of Telangana

community. The teams should be trained regularly and mock drills may be held periodically. The local community should also be provided with basic relief and rescue material as per detailed standard

operating procedures. The important thing is to be prepared for various types of disasters encountered or likely to be faced by the local community in that area. It has to be a highly area-specific drill and needs to be planned in that manner. In order to prepare the community, it is also worthwhile to systematically consider all possible details of past disasters as per local institutional/individual memory. The disaster preparedness has to be done strictly as per the local requirements and conditions. This detailing of incident management is the fulcrum of the effective local disaster preparedness.

Sometimes, sub-optimum planning and inappropriate locations of developmental projects also lead to natural disasters. Even if it is not so, activists against development argue in that manner. In this connection, environmental appraisal norms need to be modified. Mandatory public hearings should not be merely a slanging match to have or not to have a project. Instead, project proponents should identify the local talent who can give inputs as far as various project design aspects are concerned and take them in consideration. Such consultations should be mandatory and invariably be part of the detailed project report.

It is important that scientific and academic institutions in the Himalayan region are strengthened and properly networked. Accuracy of prediction of disasters could be enhanced by proper data collection, collation and analysis. Instead of confining to monsoon months, hydro meteorological data, including monitoring of river flows, should be taken up in-situ as well as remotely all round the year. Monitoring lakes in high altitudes, changes in snow/glaciers should also be part of the decision support system. It is also necessary to have a good command and control centre to prevent valuable delay in communicating information to the functional/field levels.

Actor Balakrishna buys luxury home

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Film star Balakrishna, who is known for his roles in action and faction-related films, has purchased a three-storeyed luxury building at a cost of Rs 15 crore in the upmarket Jubilee Hills area of the city on February 11. The tollywood star, who is also acting in a revolutionary character of Aghora in the flick being directed by Boyapati Srinu, purchased the luxury home with total carpet area of 9,395 sq ft.

According to real estate portal zaapko.com, the tollywood star purchased the building from Nadimpalli Satya Sravani. The building has a ground floor and two top floors. He paid a stamp duty of Rs 82.5 lakh and paid a registration fee of Rs 7.5 lakh.

Farm loan waiver post Ugadi

PNS ■ MEDAK

In an announcement that should bring cheer to the farming community in the State, Finance Minister T Harish Rao on Wednesday said the State government will implement the loan waiver scheme and grant funds for double bedroom houses in beneficiaries' own lands in the 2021-22 fiscal post Ugadi festival.

Addressing a gathering after inaugurating 48 double bedroom houses at Chatriyal and Gajulagudem villages in Papannapet mandal, the Minister said the TRS government had put in all efforts to continue with all the welfare schemes though despite the fact that there was a drastic drop in revenue generation on account of Covid-19 pandemic.



ic in the current financial year. "The State government could not implement the loan waiver scheme and construction of double bedroom houses in lands owned by beneficiaries on account of this issue, but these two promises will be

fulfilled post Ugadi festival. The TRS government never compromised on welfare schemes," Harish Rao asserted.

Pointing out that no other State government or Centre had implemented schemes like

Rythu Bandhu, Rythu Bima, Kalyana Lakshmi, double bedroom houses, free round the clock power supply, among other, the Minister said Chief Minister K Chandrababhan Naidu always wanted to see the farming community and the poor lead a decent life.

Since the government was planning to impound Singur project with Godavari water with the completion of Sangareddy canal under Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Scheme shortly, Rao said that Papannapet farmers can irrigate their crops twice a year. District Collector S Harish, MLA M Padma Devender Reddy and others were present.

Earlier, Rao inaugurated 132/33KV sub-station at Chinna Shankarampet at a cost of Rs 12.38 crores.

Pharmacy student who faked kidnap, rape commits suicide

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The 19-year-old pharmacy student, who purportedly misled the police in Hyderabad by allegedly claiming abduction and gang-rape two weeks ago, died by suicide on Wednesday in Ghatkesar, the police said.

Sources said the girl consumed some pills and was found in unconscious state by her parents, who shifted her to the hospital, where she died.

On receiving information, the Ghatkesar police have reached the hospital to gather more information.

It was earlier this month that the girl, reportedly due to family issues decided to leave the house. For this, she



allegedly staged a drama of being kidnapped and raped by auto drivers.

However, within a few days, the Rachakonda police with the help of scientific evidence proved that it was a cooked up story. The police was also contemplating to book a case against her for the false complaint.

Nobody has right to question my nativity...

Continued from page 1

I was born and brought up in Hyderabad and I became the mother of my children here only. We will continue our brother-sister relationship, though the regions are different. Jayalalitha was also not a 'Tamilian', she said.

another is doing politics in the name of religion. Where is YSRCP in Telangana State? "The state government did not concentrate on giving jobs, except giving sheep and buffaloes. I have full cooperation of my husband Anil in regard to floating a new political party. Chief Minister K Chandrababhan Rao is confined to a farm house. Private hospitals collected lakhs of rupees from Covid patients. The Chief Minister failed to concentrate on hospitals' looting. I will meet the families of Telangana martyrs. My Yatra will start from my residence -- Lotus Pond. I have a lasting relationship with Hyderabad. There is a need for a new

political party in Telangana State. I am a pukka Telangana's daughter. I will go to people through Padayatra", she said. She said that from Polavaram to Pothireddypadu, the interests of Telangana were important to her. She alleged that the present government copied the Rajanna scheme only.

Sharmila earlier had a meeting with students of various universities. While speaking to students, Sharmila said that she was trying to correct society as a sister. "Do not consider me as a political leader; treat me as your sister. YSR kept the Telugu people in his heart and felt that no poor student has to stop his education for lack of money.

Harish finds 'sports' route to win people

Continued from page 1

Sports would boost confidence among children and inject the spirit of competitiveness among them. Children would develop the habit of taking defeat in their stride, he said.

Referring to some students' tendency to take the extreme step of committing suicide for not passing exams, the Minister suggested that such things could be prevented by developing sportive spirit among children. Parents should assume the

The Minister congratulated Vishnu Jagati for conducting sports events in the name of Chief Minister

responsibility of taking children to the sports grounds, just like taking them to schools, he said.

The Minister congratulated Vishnu Jagati for conducting sports and games events in the name of Chief Minister.

AP, TS among the highest...

Continued from page 1

According to data collated by Care Ratings. With this, States have so far raised 84 per cent of the scheduled market borrowings for the fiscal.

At the first auction of State bonds on April 7, 2020, Kerala was forced to offer 8.96 per cent on its Rs.6,000 crore market borrowing. This happened a fortnight after the RBI unveiled a slew of measures to ensure liquidity. This was the highest any State paid in interest cost for a market borrowing in recent

years. Analysts blamed such high cost of debt on the fears of banks and other investors of government debt of massive fiscal slippage due to the pandemic.

In fact, there has been a sustained increase in the cost of market borrowings for the States in the past six weeks even though the yields began to rise only after the budget announcement.

At Tuesday's auction, the weighted average cost of borrowing across the states and tenures at 7.19 per cent was 18 bps higher than a week ago when it was only 7.01 per cent on February 16. The average weekly borrowings so far this fiscal has been Rs.14,584 crore.

Centre lifts embargo, permits pvt...

Continued from page 1

Private sector banks, which are at the forefront of imbibing and implementing latest technology and innovation in banking, will now be equal partners in development of the Indian economy and in furthering the social sector initiatives of the government, the statement said.

"With the lifting of the embargo, there is now no bar on RBI for authorization of private sector banks (in addition to public sector banks) for Government business, including Government agency business. The Government has conveyed its decision to RBI," it added.

The government has already announced its intent to privatise two public sector lenders, other than IDBI Bank, in the Budget 2021-22.

Sitharaman, while presenting Budget 2021-22 earlier this month, had announced the privatisation of Public Sector Banks (PSBs) as part of the disinvestment drive to garner Rs. 1.75 lakh-crore.

"Other than IDBI Bank, we propose to take up the privatisation of two Public Sector Banks and one General Insurance company in the year 2021-22," she had said.

The government last year consolidated 10 public sector banks into four and as a result,

the total number of PSBs came down to 12 from 27 in March 2017.

As per the amalgamation plan, United Bank of India and Oriental Bank of Commerce were merged with Punjab National Bank, making the proposed entity the second-largest PSB.

Syndicate Bank was merged with Canara Bank, while Allahabad Bank was subsumed in Indian Bank. Andhra Bank and Corporation Bank were amalgamated with the Union Bank of India.

In a first three-way merger, Bank of Baroda merged Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank with itself in 2019.

KTR puts 'Aa Naluguru' on notice

Continued from page 1

However, the TRS government filled 1,32,799 jobs directly and through regularization in just the last six years. He said that he was ready for a debate should anyone doubt his statement. The state government filled more than 36,000 jobs through TSPSC and given responsibility of filling another 4,000 jobs to TSPSC. However, the process was stuck due to court cases. The TRS government had filled jobs in a big way and far better than any government in the undivided Andhra Pradesh state, he

asserted. KTR alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party had done nothing for the state. He asked BJP to tell as to why the Centre dropped the ITIR project. He wanted BJP to specify how many jobs were given by Prime Minister Narendra Modi (who had promised 2 crore jobs per year), till date. He asked Telangana BJP leaders to quantify the funds they claimed to have brought from the Centre. In contrast, he said, the TRS government had facilitated the establishment of more than 14,000 companies through TS-iPASS and given

14 lakh jobs. KTR said that the TRS government had given 43 percent fitment to government employees, unlike any other state across the nation. He said that Chief Minister K Chandrababhan Rao would do 100 per cent justice to employees.

The IT Minister said that the state government had established a Lawyers Welfare Board and asked BJP to tell whether any BJP-ruled state had established such a board.

Exuding his confidence that Vani Devi would win the elections with a huge majority, KTR questioned as to why the

Centre had not allocated a single medical college. He sought to know why graduates would vote for BJP candidates. "Do graduates have to vote for BJP for drowning Bhadradi Ramudu?" he remarked sarcastically. He said that only Vani Devi had eligibility and positivity to work in the government. Opposition parties were stating that Vani Devi had all the qualifications, he said. He said that the election campaign would be taken up after the general body meeting of the Hyderabad-Rangareddy-Mahabubnagar district units to be held on February 27.

Guv wants govt...

Continued from page 1

In the letter the Governor requesting it to speed up the ongoing inquiry into case relating to the double murder of advocate Vaman Rao and his wife, and ensure punishment to the culprits so as to do justice to the victims' family.

MP woman dies hours after 2nd...

Continued from page 1

The woman died during treatment at a private hospital late at night, the official said, adding a post-mortem will be conducted and a report will be submitted in three days.

"I got information that the woman was administered the coronavirus vaccine on Tuesday and died at night. The CMHO informed me that the deceased might have suffered a brain hemorrhage (bleeding)," district collector Shivraj Singh Verma said.

A post-mortem has been ordered to ascertain the exact cause of the death, he said.

"The vaccination drive has been going on since the last one-and-a-half months. I have also got inoculated. In my opinion, the vaccine is safe and there is no possibility of side-effects," Verma said.

Committed to selling...

Continued from page 1

Modi said his government was committed to privatising all PSUs barring four strategic sectors – atomic energy, space and defence; transport and telecommunications; power, petroleum, coal and other minerals; and banking, insurance and financial services, where the government will retain a bare minimum presence.

"The government has no business to be in the business," he said. "Modernise and monetise is the motto we will follow."

Modi also said to speed up the disinvestment process, an empowered group of secretaries has been set up to settle investor issues.

The government has to focus on development and the public sector and whenever it engages in business, it leads to losses, he said, adding several loss-making PSUs are supported by taxpayers' money which otherwise should have gone into welfare schemes.

As much as Rs 1.75 lakh-crore is being targeted from the sale of government stake in

firms such as India's second-biggest oil firm BPCL, national carrier Air India, largest shipping line Shipping Corporation of India Ltd, helicopter services company Pawan Hans, IDBI Bank and Container Corporation of India in the next fiscal year beginning April 1.

This, along with an initial public offering of Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) and sale of two public sector banks and one general insurance company, will be the largest disinvestment drive ever.

The government has already received "multiple expressions of interest" for privatisation of Air India, BPCL and Pawan Hans. The Prime Minister further said the current reforms seek to ensure that public funds are used efficiently.

Stating that PSUs are valuable assets that have helped the country in the past and have huge potential in future, he said best global practices for proper price discovery and stakeholder mapping will be followed for the privatisation drive.

SOUTHERN POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY OF TELANGANA LIMITED
Operation, South Circle, Greater Hyderabad.

Tender Notice No.03/2020-21 (Power Notification)

(1) Supply of Armoured Tinned Copper bare wire of pure electronic quality uniformly drawn in circular section conforming to SS of 125W/22 Interlinking of 11KV P&T Cables & Substationary Feeders (2) Interlinking of 11KV Panch Mahal & Moghulnagar feeders (4) Laying of 11KV 3x185sqmm XLPE UG Cable at Usapuguda bridge & stringing of 552mm AAA conductor with line AB switches to 11KV GHI Chowry feeder from 33/11KV Kanchikalgate & Patal Nagar feeder from 33/11KV Kanchikalgate sub-station in OSD-Chennur (B) Replacement of damaged cable of 11KV Deyan Hotel extending from 33/11KV Vittalwadi SS in Begum Bazar Division. Any further details in this regard can be obtained from TSSPDCL website www.tssouthernpower.com.
B.O.No.158-PPCL-AGENCY/ABV11/2020-21 Superintending Engineer, Operation, South Circle, Greater Hyderabad.

‘ICAR modifying curriculum of agri courses to meet future needs’

RAJESH JAIN NIDARKAR
■ HYDERABAD

The two-day 6th national youth convention on innovation and agricultural reforms for farmers' prosperity, jointly organised by Professor Jayashankar Telangana State Agricultural University (PJTSAU) and All India Agricultural Students Association (AIASA), had begun here on Saturday through virtual mode. Dr RC Agarwal, Deputy Director General (education), Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) had delivered the chief guest's address, online, from New Delhi.

While speaking at the virtual meeting Dr Agarwal, had said that, ICAR was frequently modifying the curricula of agricultural courses, based on the present and the future demands in the agricultural sector. He further said that, ICAR was trying to make the students self dependent and turn them into entrepreneurs; to ensure that ICAR was funding to establish incubation centres and experiential learning units in agricultural universities in the country. He urged all the universities to maintain



the data base of experimental learning units of various universities and also to establish as many incubation centers in campuses as possible.

Dr Agarwal had made a clarification call to the youths to engage in agriculture by showing their innovative farming methods and establishing prof-

it- oriented business units.

Dr. Praveen Rao, vice chancellor, PJTSAU, had delivered the welcome address on the occasion. While addressing the gathering from the university auditorium Dr Rao said that Covid-19 had thrown up several challenges as well as opportunities in the agricultur-

al sector. He advised the young graduates to utilise the available opportunities by adopting innovative ways of business. He pointed out the need of safe and nutritional food for public and added that it was essential.

Dr Ashok Dalwai, CEO, National Rainfed Area

Authority, delivered the guest of honour speech. While speaking, Dr Dalwai advised that every agricultural university should start the courses in basic sciences and students must also have knowledge in basic sciences. The graduates pursuing agricultural courses should not feel shy about their courses, he said and went on to add that agriculture was an evergreen subject that paid economic dividend and that agriculture could only sustain the societal development.

As part of this 6th national youth convention several awards were presented in offline mode at the university auditorium at Rajendranagar. Lifetime achievement award was presented to Dr. Vilas Madhukar Bhale, VC, Dr PR Deshmukh Krishni Vidyapeeth, Akola. Best Vice Chancellor award was presented to professor N Kumar, VC, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore. AIASA National Award for outstanding leadership in agriculture-2019 was presented to Dr. GP Singh, Indian Institute of Wheat and Barley Research, Karnal. Several publications were also released on this occasion.



KCR pays rich tributes to Srinivas Goud's father

PNS ■ MAHBUBNAGAR

Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao on Wednesday visited Tourism and Excise Minister V Srinivas Goud's farmhouse in the district in connection with the 11th day ceremony of the minister's father Narayana Goud and paid floral tributes to Narayana Goud at his grave.

Incidentally, Narayana Goud was the leader of the first phase of the movement for statehood to Telangana.

The CM conveyed his heartfelt sympathies to the bereaved family members. Party leaders and activists in large numbers gathered at minister's farm house on the occasion.

Agriculture minister S Niranjan Reddy, MLA Lakshma Reddy, former min-



ister Jupally Krishna Rao, MLAs, party leaders and other activists took part in the pro-

gramme. The police beefed up security for the CM's visit.



50K devotees take part in mini Medaram jatara

PNS ■ MULUG

Mulug district collector Krishna Adithya on Wednesday said that around 50,000 devotees participated in mini Medaram jatara on the first day. Mini Medaram Jatara is being organised as per the schedule announced by Medaram Sammakka and Saralamma Committee president Siddaboina Jaggarao.

Devotees from Mulug, Warangal Urban, Warangal Rural, Jangaon and Mahaboobabad districts came to Medaram to have darshan of the Tribal deities.

It is estimated that about 50 lakh to 1 crore devotees attend Medaram jatara that is organised once in every two years. A few years, several devotees died in stampede that occurred due to sudden surge in devotee turnout.

The district administration has made elaborate arrangements and bandobast for



Devotees offer jaggery to the tribal goddesses Sammakka and Saralamma after their wishes are fulfilled at mini Medaram jatara.

jatara. District collector Krishna Adithya, SP Dr. Sangram Singh G Patil, ITDA PO Hanmanthu Zandanga, ASPs Ghouse Alam Saichaitanya and other officials monitored the arrangements.

Minister of State Sathyavathi Rathod, MP Maloth Kavitha, Trust Board chairman Alem Rammurthy, ZPTCs Sakinaka Bhavani and Nagajothi offered prayers to the tribal deities.

Man held for cyber stalking

PNS ■ MEDCHAL

Rachakonda cyber crime police arrested a person for posting abusive photos and messages. The accused has been identified as Chembeti Charan, 20, a resident of Vanasthalipuram.

Charan, who is studying B. Pharm second year in Gurunanak Institutions, befriended with the complainant in the year 2015 when they were studying in a private school. On a fine day, the accused proposed the complainant which she had rejected. Later, she got married and staying away by from her parents.

Charan created a fake account in Instagram in October, 2020 and started harassing the complainant out of grudge by sending abusive messages and obscene photos to her. The cyber crime team arrested the accused on Wednesday after collecting all the technical evidences on credible information against him.

108 staff held for stealing 2.3 kg gold from accident victim

PNS ■ PEDDAPALLI

The Ramagundam police on Wednesday arrested staff manning the 108 ambulance service for stealing 2.30 kg of gold jewellery from an accident victim in Ramagundam on Tuesday. The accused were brought to book within 24 hours after a complaint regarding the missing of 2.3 kg of gold jewellery worth Rs 1.15 crore was filed.

Ramagundam CP V Satyanarayana explained that two gold businessmen, Kotha Srinivas Reddy and Kotha Rambabu, from Guntur in AP in a car driven by Santosh Kumar were on their way to distribute gold ornaments to various traders in the district. The car met with an accident at Malyalapalli Crossing in Ramagundam mandal in which Srinivas Reddy died on the spot on Tuesday morning.

Responding to the distress call made to the 108 helpline, a team of ambulance staff, technician Chand and driver Rajender, shift-



ed the body of Srinivas Reddy and a seriously injured driver Santosh to the hospital.

At the hospital, they had handed over gold ornaments weighing one kg recovered from the body of Srinivas Reddy to Ramagundam S-I Shailaja. Another ambulance manned by technician Tajuddin and driver G Laxma Reddy shifted the critically injured Rambabu to the Godavarikhani area hospital.

However, on the way, Rambabu breathed his last. In his attempt to revive the victim with emergency measures, technician Tajuddin discovered two packets of gold jewellery worth 2.3 kg. He

informed the driver and both decided to keep mum about the gold ornaments with an aim to steal the gold.

The duo handed over the dead body to the hospital and returned to duty. They also informed the police that nothing had been found either at the accident spot or on the deceased person.

When the police informed the relatives of the victims about the recovery of a total of 3.3 kg of gold ornaments, the kin replied that the businessmen carried 5.6 kg of gold ornaments. They raised suspicion that the remaining 2.3 kg of gold ornaments might have been stolen.

‘TRS, BJP dustbins to dump Cong waste’

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TPCC president Uttam Kumar Reddy ridiculed BJP's 'Operation Aakarsh' of luring Congress leaders into its fold by saying that the defection of a few leaders to TRS or BJP would never impact the Congress party.

"Telangana BJP leaders are acting like scavengers searching for some disgruntled elements within the Congress party. Earlier, TRS had served as a trash can for the Congress party where all unimportant leaders got dumped. Since TRS trash can is almost full, BJP is proving to be a fresh dustbin of Congress party," he said.

Describing the Congress party as a factory which produces leaders at all levels in huge quantities, Uttam, he said TRS, BJP or another party in Telangana became stronger only after a few Congress leaders joined those parties.

"Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao too began his political career from the Congress party and almost half of its cabinet, MPs, MLAs and MLCs are ex-Congressmen." The BJP also has been trying to gain some prominence in Telangana by luring some disgruntled leaders in Congress. Even the BJP's national vice-president originally belongs to the Congress party," he added.

"We are a cadre-based party. Leaders come and go. But the cadre remains firm at the ground level and it never switches loyalties for money or any other thing. Each Congress worker is so capable that his qualities and political understanding are far better than the state-level leaders of other parties. Congress has the capacity to produce leaders in abundance while TRS and BJP could only survive by behaving like vultures," he said.

Former IAS Ram Laxman passes away

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Former TS government's advisor and retired IAS officer Ram Laxman died on Wednesday.

Ram Laxman worked as an IAS officer in united Andhra Pradesh and extended his services to the newly-formed Telangana state as an advisor.

Ram Laxman also worked actively in the TRS party as a politburo member. Ram Laxman had participated in 1,000 days Deeksha celebrations during Telangana movement when the TRS Chief and Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao took up deeksha. Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao and several ministers expressed their deep condolences on the demise of Ram Laxman recalling his services.

MLCs seek funds for local bodies, to meet CM KCR soon

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Members of Telangana Legislative Council headed by Nizamabad MLC K Kavitha, has decided to seek funds for the local bodies by giving representation to Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao and Panchayat Raj Minister Errabelli Dayakar Rao.

The MLCs elected by the local bodies met the Panchayat Raj Minister Erraballi Dayakar Rao here at Ministers' Quarters in Banjara Hills to seek funds for Zilla Parishad Territorial Constituencies and Mandal Parishad Territorial Constituencies by giving a memorandum. The MLCs, earlier, took suggestions from the local body representatives

The meeting was attended by local body quota MLCs including P Mahender Reddy, Bhanu Prasad, Naradasu Laxman, Damodar Reddy, Pochampally Srinivas Reddy, Satish Kumar, T Chinappa



Reddy, Kasireddy Narayan Reddy.

In order to represent the interests and concerns of local body representatives, we as a delegation of local bodies representatives met Minister Dayakar Rao, tweeted MLC Kavitha after the meeting

Addressing the press conference at the Minister Quarter's, MLC Bhanu Prasad said, "We have discussed the issues brought to our notice by the local body representatives in last few meetings. We thank the Minister who have responded positively and will take the issues to the notice of CM."

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA REVENUE (LA) DEPARTMENT

FORM-C PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION

NOTIFICATION (Under Section-11 of the Act where 10 A Exemption is given) (See rule 612)

Gazette No: 25
NoB/15/2021

Dated: 18-02-2021
Dated: 05-02-2021

Whereas it appears to the Government of Telangana/Special Collector (LA) & Commissioner, GHMC, that a total of 60.4 Sq. Yds land is required in the Sunder Nagar Hariganta (V) Ambepet (M) Hyderabad District for public purpose namely Proposed 100'-0" Wide Road from Kachiguda Traffic Police Station to Ambepet. Therefore it is notified that for the above said project in the Aash Nagar, Hyderabad District land measuring more or less 60.4 Sq. Yds of Standard measurement, whose detail description is as following, is proposed for acquisition:

Sl No	Plot Nos	Area in Sq Yds	Area in Sq Yds	Area in Sq Yds	Name & Address of person interested	Boundaries	Taxes	Structures
						N E S W	Survey No	Type of building
1	2-4-88/97	-	-	27.40	Dr. Gaziela Abdul Sattar	7 8 9 10	11 12 13 14	-
2	2-4-88/190	33.00			Mrs. Sharada Hakra	As per sketch	-	-
		33.00	60.4					

This Notification is made under the provisions of Section-11(1) of the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013, (Central Act No.30/2013), as amended by the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (Telangana Amendment) Act, 2016 (Act No. 21 of 2017) local whom it may concern.

A plan of the land may be inspected in the office of the Special Collector & Commissioner, GHMC, Hyderabad on any working day during the working hours. The Government of Telangana / Special Collector cum Appropriate Government is pleased to authorize Officer i.e., Special Deputy Collector, Land Acquisition, GHMC, Hyderabad and his staff to enter upon and survey land, take levels of any land, dig or bore into the sub-soil & do all other acts required for the proper execution of their works provided and specified in Section-12 of the said Act.

Under Section 11 (4) of the Act, no person shall make any transaction or cause any transaction of land i.e. sale / purchase, etc., or create any encumbrances on such land from the date of publication of such Notification without prior approval of the Special Collector. Objections to the acquisition if any, and claims from all the persons interested/affected for settlement by negotiation of the compensation, may be filed by the person interested in the land within 60 (sixty days) from the date of publication of the Notification as provided under Section 15 of the Act before Special Collector/Authorized officer.

Special Deputy Collector (LA)
GHMC, Hyderabad

Special Collector (LA) & Commissioner, GHMC, Hyderabad

DIPR R.O. No: 1250/CL/PP/Adm/Pub/2020-21

Sack Gangula for trying to grab Wakf land: Cong

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress party on Wednesday demanded removal of BC Welfare and Civil Supplies minister Gangula Kamalakara from the state cabinet for his attempt to encroach upon 15 acres of prime Wakf property in the outskirts of Karimnagar city. "Minister Kamalakara is trying to encroach upon the prime Wakf property through fraudulent means. When he failed to register 15 acres of land in his name, he went to court against his own government. Therefore, he should be immediately sacked from the cabinet for his attempt to grab Wakf property and also for opposing the law formed by his own government," TPCC Minorities wing Chairman Shaik Abdullah Sohail said in a statement. He pointed out that 55 acres of lands in survey nos. 122, 126, 129, 154 and 177 at Qazipur in Karimnagar district were Wakf lands and their records were available in the Wakf Gazette issued on 11th January, 1990.

Nizampet civic body produces compost through bio-mining

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Nizampet Municipal Corporation officials have been preparing compost using wet as well as dry garbage and making arrangements to sell the by-product generated to cement manufacturing units. They have employed the bio-mining mechanism to manufacture compost.

The state government allotted 10 acres of land in Sy no. 186 for dumping yard when Nizampet, Bachupalli and Pragati Nagar were gram panchayats. Daily 110 tonnes of



garbage will get processed here. As such, the dumping yard emits a reeking smell and became a breeding ground for mosquitoes. People living in the surrounding areas objected to location of the dumping yard there. As if it is not

enough, the state government built 2BHK houses for the homeless poor in the region.

Therefore, the municipal authorities have been processing the garbage using bio-mining mechanism for the past one month reducing the

heaps of garbage to the valuable compost, which will be used to grow saplings planted in Haritha Haaram.

A huge bio-mining machine was deployed at the dumping yard. With the help of the excavator, the garbage is put into the machine. The machine segregates the garbage into three categories and sends it out segregating it into 6 mm, 16 mm and 30 mm wastes.

While the 6 mm garbage and 16 mm garbage is being used to convert them into compost, the 30 mm garbage will be sold to cement units. The

officials have been processing 400 to 500 tonnes of garbage daily. They even prepared plans to produce bio-gas in future from the garbage. In another six months, the heaps of garbage will get dissolved and the dumping yard will become a good garden.

Nagireddy, assistant municipal commissioner, Nizampet Municipal Corporation, said that the dumping yard would be cleaned completely to plant saplings as part of the seventh phase of Haritha Haaram to groom the area in to a beautiful garden.

‘People will give fitting reply to BJP’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Accusing the BJP of using money power to make the Congress government fall in Puducherry, senior Congress leader M Veerappa Moily on Wednesday said the people will give a befitting reply to the saffron party in upcoming polls for ‘subverting’ a popular mandate, and asserted that upholding democratic ideals will be the main issue in the elections.

Moily, who is the Congress’ senior observer for upcoming polls in the Union Territory, also said the party’s alliance with DMK will continue, and together they will get a “thumping” majority in the elections.

In an interview with PTI, Moily claimed the Puducherry polls will mark the “beginning of the fall of the BJP” in the country and the strengthening of democratic power through the Congress party.

Lashing out at the BJP, the former Union minister said



they never allowed the Congress government to function in Puducherry by fronting then Lieutenant Governor Kiran Bedi.

“Her only exclusive mission was that the Congress government does not function.

From time to time, the issue was brought to the notice of Prime Minister (Narendra Modi) and Home Minister (Amit Shah), either through media or directly by the CM V Narayansamy, but they did not listen,” Moily said.

President opens world’s biggest cricket stadium in Ahmedabad

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

India’s president on Wednesday inaugurated the world’s largest cricket arena here, renamed from Sardar Patel stadium to Narendra Modi stadium in honour of the prime minister who is credited with conceptualising the facility in its current awe-inspiring form.

The state-of-the-art stadium, inaugurated by President Ram Nath Kovind, can accommodate a jaw-dropping 1.32 lakh spectators and it opened with the third Test between India and England, a day-night game from Wednesday. It will also host the fourth and final game of the series from March 4.

At the toss, India skipper Virat Kohli couldn’t help but wonder how it would feel to play in front of a capacity crowd here given that COVID-19 restrictions have ensured that only half of it is



filled for the pink ball Test.

“This stadium was conceptualised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi when he was Chief Minister of Gujarat. He was president of the Gujarat Cricket Association at that time,” Kovind said in his address after the inauguration.

The renaming of the stadium was kept under wraps until after it was formally inaugurated. “It represents India’s aspirations and strength.

The President also performed the ground-breaking ceremony for a sports complex in the stadium, to be named Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel sports enclave, for disciplines like football, hockey, basketball, kabaddi, boxing, and lawn tennis among others.

The ambitious 215-acre project, under which 20 stadiums will be built will have accommodation facilities for athletes and coaches. Another sports complex is coming up in Naranpura for multi-disciplinary sporting events in future.

“I am confident that this enclave will give a new global identity to Ahmedabad in terms of world-class sports infrastructure,” Kovind said.

“These three complexes will be on 233 acre of land which is sufficient to host Commonwealth Games, Asian Games and even Olympics. Ahmedabad can be ready in six months,” asserted Shah.

Spread over 63 acres, the stadium has been built at an estimated cost of Rs 800 crore and with a seating capacity for 1,32,000 spectators, it has surpassed the hallowed Melbourne Cricket Ground which can accommodate 90,000.

“The total area is equivalent to 32 Olympic size soccer fields put together,” stated a note from the Press Information Bureau giving specifics of the enormous structure.

The facility, which was closed for renovation in 2015, was witness to some major milestones in Indian cricket in its previous avatar.

These included Sunil Gavaskar reaching the 10,000 runs mark in Test cricket against Pakistan in 1987 and Kapil Dev claiming his 432nd Test wicket to become the highest wicket-taker in the world in 1994, surpassing Sir Richard Hadlee.



PM biggest rioter, says Mamata

PNS ■ SAHAGANJ

West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday lambasted PM Narendra Modi, branding him as the “biggest rioter”, who will face an “even worse fate” than former US President Donald Trump. Speaking at a rally at Sahaganj in Hooghly district, she said Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah are spreading lies and hatred throughout the country.

“Narendra Modi is the biggest ‘dangabaz’ (rioter) in the country... What has happened to Trump, he (Modi) will meet an even worse fate. Nothing can be gained from violence,” she said.

INDIA CORNER

Woman spends night besides son’s body thinking him to be alive

A 70-year-old woman spent an entire night besides her son’s body and attended to his wounds, believing he is alive after he got injured fatally during a fall at home in Mumbai, police said on Wednesday. The incident took place in the wee hours of Monday when the 42-year-old victim, who was in an



inebriated state, fell in the bathroom at their home in Kalina area. The man, who hailed from Meghalaya, received fatal head injuries, a police official said. After some time, when the woman saw him lying there motionless, she dragged him out of the bathroom and laid him next to her elder son, who is also bed-ridden, he said. Believing him to be alive, she applied turmeric powder on the victim’s injuries. Next morning, when he did not wake up, the woman informed her relatives who rushed to her house. The family members alerted the police who reached the spot and took the victim to a nearby hospital where he was declared dead, the official said. The victim had been out of work following the coronavirus-induced lockdown and the family was facing a monetary crunch, he added.

High Court shocked by murder of inmate in Tihar jail

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday expressed shock at the murder of a Tihar Jail inmate who was knifed to death inside the prison, saying that such things are only seen in fiction. “I don’t know how something like this can happen. It is shocking. We see such things only in fiction,” Justice Prathiba M. Singh said while hearing a plea moved by the victim’s father seeking Rs five crore as compensation for the custodial death of his son. The high court directed the prison authorities, represented by Delhi government additional standing counsel Sanjoy Ghose and advocate Naman Jain, and the police to file a status report indicating whether an FIR has been lodged in connection with the incident and if so, the status of the investigation. The court further said that the report shall also indicate whether the CCTV footage of the cell where the victim was housed has been recovered and preserved and if yes, in what manner. It also asked whether any charge sheet has been filed in the case and if so, the status of the trial in the case.



Yediyurappa calls on public representatives to introspect

Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa on Wednesday said democracy can be successful only if public welfare is the primary goal of every elected representative, as he called on them to introspect. “Both the ruling party and opposition have to work with caution so that no untoward incidents happen in the legislative assembly and the council, but as public representatives we have to question ourselves whether we are following it, we have to introspect,” Yediyurappa said. “Our conduct should be such that it shows the path for the future generations, if we are always conscious about this, mistakes won’t happen,” he said adding successful implementation of democracy is possible with good traditions and practices. The CM was speaking at a meeting on the topic “An introspection-preventing the decline of parliamentary values”, organised by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Karnataka Branch, here.



Will include fishermen’s demands in manifesto: Rahul

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday sought to reach out to fishermen in poll-bound Kerala, assuring them his party would include their needs in its election manifesto as he sailed with a group of fishers and expressed admiration for their work in sea braving odds. During an emotional interaction with thousands of fisherfolk, including women, at Thangassery beach in this southern coastal district, he also lashed out at the LDF government over the controversial pact for building trawlers, claiming it might affect the livelihood of fishermen. “I understand and respect what you do. I admire what you are doing. Many times, we eat the fish but we will not understand the hard work behind and how it reached our plate,” the Congress MP representing Wayanad in the state said. He ventured into the sea with some fishermen in their boat from Vadi beach here around 4.30 am and spent nearly an hour with them before reaching the venue of interaction. Gandhi also cast the net with them but could only catch one squid. Clad in blue t-shirt and khaki trousers, the Congress leader could be seen waving hands to the onlookers from the boat while reaching back to the shores.



Punjab protecting gangster Mukhtar Ansari: UP to SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Punjab government is “shamelessly” protecting gangster-turned-politician Mukhtar Ansari, lodged in Rupnagar district jail in connection with an alleged extortion case, by not sending him to Uttar Pradesh to face trial in several cases, the UP government told the Supreme Court on Wednesday.

A bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan and R Subhash Reddy however took note of the submission of senior advocate Dushyant Dave, appearing for the Punjab government, seeking adjournment in the matter on personal grounds.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Uttar Pradesh government, said he has no objection to Dave’s plea for adjournment.

The top court has posted the matter for hearing on March 2. During the hearing, senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi,



appearing for Ansari, said that he (Ansari) was “small fry” being cornered by the “might of the state”.

To this, Mehta said, “You (Ansari) are such a small fry that a state (Punjab) is shamelessly protecting you.”

Ansari is lodged in district jail Rupnagar in Punjab since January 2019. The UP government also filed written submissions in the top court stating that transfer of Ansari’s custody was meticulously planned and raised a strong suspicion of conspiracy to delay the proceedings before the Special Judge (MP/MLA), Allahabad.

The state government said it has “locus standi” to seek trans-

fer of case pending before Judicial Magistrate Mohali, to the court of Special Judge (MP/MLA) Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh, as UP is “party interested” under Section 406 of Code of Criminal Procedure (Power of Supreme Court to transfer cases and appeals).

“There is no specific provision for transfer of an under trial prisoner under Code of Criminal Procedure or Jail Manual still this Court can pass an order of

Respondent No. 3 (Ansari) to District Jail Banda, Uttar Pradesh considering the facts situation of the present matter by exercising jurisdiction under Article 142 of the Constitution of India,” the UP government said.

It said Ansari’s fallacious plea that he does not want to come to the state as his life is under threat, is contrary to the plea of Punjab which contends that the accused is unable to travel due to medical reasons.

Cabinet okays President’s Rule in Pondi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved a proposal to impose President’s Rule in Puducherry, days after a Congress-led government in the union territory lost power during a vote of confidence.

Announcing the Cabinet decision, Union Minister Prakash Javadekar told reporters that the decision was taken as no party claimed to form a government in Puducherry following the resignation of the CMs there.

Subsequently, the Lieutenant General had recommended President’s Rule in Puducherry and the Union Cabinet has approved the same, the minister said.

After the President’s assent, the assembly will get resolved, Javadekar said, while adding that further necessary steps for administrative work in Puducherry would be taken soon.

MP Assembly: Congress stages walkout over rising fuel prices

PNS ■ BHOPAL

Congress legislators in Madhya Pradesh on Wednesday staged a walkout from the state Assembly to protest against the fuel price hike and rising inflation.

Some Congress legislators got up at their places at the end of the question hour, alleging that inflation and fuel price hike have been creating difficulties for the common people.

They demanded that the state government provide a relief to the people by reducing fuel prices.

Later, senior Congress MLA Sajjan Singh announced that his party would stage a walkout over the rising prices of fuel and essential commodities.

Accordingly, the opposition party legislators walked out of the House shouting slogans. Thereafter, they also held a ‘dharna’ (sit-in) protest in front of the Mahatma Gandhi statue in the Assembly premises for some time.



Some of the MLAs wore black jackets with slogans against rising fuel prices and inflation written on them.

Earlier during the question hour, Congress MLA Sanjay Yadav accused the state government of being anti-tribal, during the discussion on tourism department. In his reply, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, denied the

charges and accused the previous Congress government of stopping the development works in the areas represented by the BJP MLAs.

Chouhan assured that all the approved development works would be carried out and said the state government’s revenue collection has suffered a lot due to the coronavirus pandemic.

‘US award a recognition of vibrant nature of transparency movement’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Picked for the International Anti-Corruption Champions Award by the US administration, RTI activist Anjali Bhardwaj on Wednesday said the recognition is “significant” and will help bring focus towards the movement at a time when those speaking truth to power are

being “targeted and attacked” in the country.

Bhardwaj, the founder of the Satark Nagrik Sangathan (SNS), a citizens’ group with a mandate to promote transparency, has served as an active member of the Right to Information Movement in India for over two decades.

She is one of the 12 “courageous” individuals

named by the Biden administration for the newly instituted International Anti-Corruption Champions Award.

“It (the award) is a recognition of the vibrant nature of the movement working for transparency and extensive use of RTI across the country. This will help bring focus towards the movement at

a time when those asking questions to those in power are being targeted, attacked,” Bhardwaj told PTI.

Nearly 80 transparency activists have lost their lives in their quest for information and accountability, she said, adding that this award is a “recognition of the collective effort of people and groups across the country

who hold power to account.”

The 48-year-old activist, who is also a co-convenor of the National Campaign for People’s Right to Information (NCPRI), has played a major role in bringing about the Right to Information Act, 2005, the Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2011, and the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013.





www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

PAPER WITH PASSION

Trouble next door

Nepal's top court revokes PM Oli's Parliament dissolution decision, forcing him to face trust vote

In a major blow to Nepal's Prime Minister (PM) KP Sharma Oli, their Supreme Court has ruled that the Himalayan nation's Parliament, which was dissolved by Oli in December 2020, must be reconvened. The court has given Oli two weeks to reinstate the legislature, which was dissolved following protracted internal disputes within his ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP). In what is being seen as a major slap on the wrist for Oli, the top court ruled that the PM had overstepped his powers and the dissolution of the House was an unconstitutional act. The apex court's verdict means that Oli will face a no-confidence motion when the legislators reconvene because he had dissolved Parliament about two years before its mandated five-year term was to end, to head off a no-trust



Chinese Ambassador Hou Yanqi and initiated several major development projects as part of Chinese efforts to boost trade and transit links in the region.

Not only did this end India's monopoly in Nepal, it also led to increased tension between the neighbours as Oli issued many unsavoury and unwarranted remarks against India. The relations soured further as Beijing's influence in Nepal and its meddling in Oli's party grew. The last straw was Nepal coming out with a new political map in May 2020 claiming several areas in Uttarakhand to be part of its territory. However, to India's credit, it kept its cool with its long-time ally and made all-out efforts to mend fences. In the end, Oli did come around to better ties with India, particularly after it became clear to him that China was indifferent to his continuation in the Government if it helped avoid a split in the NCP. The shift in Oli's approach could be attributed to an attempt to reclaim the nationalist agenda that was the mainstay of his campaign that resulted in the NCP's win in 2018. That China lately appeared indifferent to his continuation in the Government is also believed to have contributed to Oli's stand. Now India and China, both jockeying for influence in Nepal, will keep a sharp eye on the political developments there. Where India is concerned, a weak coalition Government could be more supportive of New Delhi than hawkish Oli, who is seen as more interested in remaining in power in whatever way he can.

PICTALK



A farmer checks mustard flowers at a farm on the outskirts of Amritsar

PTI

Continuing travails

COVID-19 cases on the rise again, many States make negative RT-PCR test mandatory

It's happened so frequently in the recent history of public health in India that it's almost become a case of "so near and yet so far". Every time the authorities, the healthcare workers and the good Samaritans show due diligence and together bring COVID-19 cases under control, either a new strain is detected reaching our country or people — especially those living away from the metros and tier-I cities — ignore the standard protocols and become victims and carriers of the accursed virus. Now the latest news coming in is that the COVID-19 caseload across the country has shown a northward trend for the ninth successive day, crossing 13,000 on Tuesday, which is the longest such rolling average since infections peaked in September last year. In more worrying news, the Union Health Ministry has said that two new strains of SARS-CoV-2, the virus causing COVID-19, have been detected in India. These new strains — N440K and E484K — have been detected in Kerala and Maharashtra. However, there is currently no evidence to show that the recent spike in COVID-19 cases in parts of these two States is due to these new variants.



Meanwhile, negative COVID-19 test report (negative RT-PCR test) has been made mandatory for entering several States: Delhi, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Uttarakhand, J&K, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura, Ladakh and Chhattisgarh. Meanwhile, with the recent spurt in Coronavirus cases in five States, Delhi will make it essential for those arriving from these States to carry a negative COVID test report. People travelling to Delhi from Maharashtra, Kerala, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Punjab by flights, trains or buses will have to show a negative RT-PCR test from Saturday till March 15. But all's not bleak; there is some good news, too. The Union Cabinet has decided to provide the vaccines for free to certain sections, with Union Minister Prakash Javadekar tweeting that beginning March 1 "people over 60 years of age or over 45 with comorbidities will be able to get vaccinated at 10,000 Government facilities and many private hospitals". As of last week, there has globally been a "strong decline" in Coronavirus infections in the US and the UK since January. Inversely, however, it is very likely that such reports are offering a false sense of security to people to take it easy, which shouldn't be the case. If we let our guard down now, India with its population may find it high impossible to break free from the clutches of this virus. It's now or never!

Time to look and act East

While democracy is the most sought after means of governance, it becomes a farce when core values are compromised, like in the case of Myanmar

The long-awaited goal of democracy in Myanmar was achieved in 2011 after a five-decade struggle led by civil society, international actors and agencies against an autocratic military in the country. However, the recent *coup d'état* by the national Army has once again led Myanmar to uncertain times. The coup surprised the world and it shall be seen as the outcome of a compromised leadership by Aung San Suu Kyi. Despite registering a mammoth victory in the November 2020 elections, the Suu Kyi-led National League for Democracy (NLD) was accused by the Army and Opposition of poll irregularities, corruption and unethical means in "stealing" the victory; hence, the coup.

While the Union Election Commission has refuted all claims of poll irregularities by the NLD, it was in no way possible that the Army would not act to assert its political victory, considering an uneasy ride with the NLD Government in the last six years.

Amid mounting international pressure, the military junta was forced to pave the way for the entry of democratic forces in 2010. The political prisoners were released, including Suu Kyi, but the NLD boycotted the elections over alleged irregularities by the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party. However, over the next five years, the NLD gained popular support which was reflected in the 2015 general elections. The NLD won 168 of the 224 seats in the Amyotha Hluttaw (House of Nationalities), with 25 per cent seats going to the Army without any contest. It indicated more space for pro-democracy leadership and restoration of the multiparty parliamentary system. In 2011, President U Thein Sein had carried out significant political and economic reforms though these were in sync with the needs and demands of the military.

For the current fiasco, one needs to look at the 2008 Constitution of the Myanmar Army as one of the root causes. The Constitution had strength-



ened the Army's role in the parliamentary system on the legal front. Considering the popularity of Suu Kyi in the new political order, the Army had especially added that a President should have a military background and none of his/her spouses be subjects of a foreign power or citizen of a foreign country to limit her chances of holding the President's office as her two sons are British citizens. The Home and the Defence portfolios can be held only by the Army, and the 25 per cent reservation was to keep the military in full control. The emergency powers have further strengthened the Army's position.

In the course of a popular public movement demanding to reinstate a democratic order, Suu Kyi's rise became synonymous to democracy. Yet she failed to condemn and control the gross human rights violations of Rohingyas in the Rakhine State. The refugee Rohingyas moved *en masse* to neighbouring Bangladesh. While the world was looking at Suu Kyi to emerge as a messiah for ethnic Rohingyas, she chose to rescue her own party. More surprisingly, she was seen labelling Rohingyas as



THE CURRENT CASE OF MYANMAR IS NOTHING MORE THAN A MATTER OF COMPROMISED LEADERSHIP THAT WAS UNABLE TO BRING IN FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES IN THE ARMY'S FUNCTIONING

"illegal migrants" who were already tagged as "Islamic terrorists" by the Army. While Amnesty International stripped away her honours, there were calls to take back even the Nobel Peace Prize.

Suu Kyi may have been vocal for democracy in Myanmar but she failed to stand for it while in power. She condemned neither a State-sponsored ethnic cleansing by the Army nor the Buddhist lobby that was reportedly instrumental in the alleged brutalities. Therefore, while the world is condemning the coup, international actors are cautious in defending Suu Kyi. It is an open secret that the NLD co-existed with the Army, but the compulsions of democracy had kept them on different paths. In reality, the Generals never gave up on their political aspirations and failure through the electoral route made the coup evitable.

India has aired its voice in favour of democracy and normalcy in Myanmar. At the same time, New Delhi has opted not to slap any sanctions unlike the US, UK and the EU. As a champion of democracy, India's appeal for its restoration remains the common element across the volatile political surfaces globally. It helps New

Delhi to convey the message of peace and democracy more actively. India's COVID-19 vaccine gift to Myanmar is proof of its commitment to peaceful humanitarian causes.

Meanwhile, as an important country in India's Act East policy, New Delhi needs to look at the Myanmar border with utmost caution. India's challenge will not be limited to tackling an increasing bonhomie between China and the Myanmar Army; the looming political crisis in Bangladesh will double India's Eastern challenge.

The recent *exposé* — 'All the Prime Minister's Men' by Al Jazeera, revealing an alleged criminal nexus between the Bangladesh Army chief, his brothers and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina-led Bangladesh Nationalist Party — has caused an uproar. While the Bangladesh Government has backed the Army, the alleged claims in the *exposé* are of grave concerns. Therefore, the Act East policy needs to include emergency strategies of diplomatic, intelligence, security and political nature. (The author is an ICSSR Doctoral Fellow at the JNU, New Delhi, and Senior Fellow at the AIDIA, Kathmandu. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DISHA RAVI VINDICATED

Sir — While granting bail to activist Disha Ravi, Additional Sessions Judge Dharmender Rana demolished almost every charge levelled against her because "not even an iota of evidence was brought to the court's notice". This a rap on the knuckles of the Centre and the Delhi Police.

Interestingly, before speaking about the conscience of the nation, Judge Rana quoted the *Rig Veda* and reminded the nation: "This 5,000-year-old civilisation of ours has never been averse to ideas from varied quarters." For her part, the activist Disha Ravi said if it was sedition to highlight farmers' protest globally, she was willing to be imprisoned. She also clarified that there was no question of collaborating with the pro-Khalistani group, Poetic Justice Foundation.

But when the court has thrown this "toolkit" charge into the waste paper basket, one wonders whether it has made the BJP feel embarrassed of its own "toolkit": Charging innocent citizens with cooked-up stories, unleashing the ED, IT and/or the CBI on political opponents and toppling State Governments by way of horse trading. I strongly feel that the verdict is an encouragement to and booster for Disha Ravi to stand up against all concocted charges. One should be happy with her bail order but hope she draws a *Lakshman rekha* for herself; otherwise she may keep facing such problems in the future, too.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

PROVIDE FREE JABS TO SENIORS

Sir — Glad to read about the Union Government's decision to vaccinate people above the age of 60 years against Coronavirus from March 1, besides including people above 45 who suffer from comorbidities in the second phase. As per the statement made by Union Minister Prakash Javadekar, India's vaccination drive proposal has been approved by the Union Cabinet and the above-mentioned groups will receive the shot at the Government's expense and at its facilities. The announcement comes at a time when there is an alarming spurt in the

Congress needs a major shake-up



This refers to the editorial 'Shaky leadership' (February 24). With the sun setting for the Congress in Puducherry, it's the ninth State the 'Grand Old Party' has lost since 2014. It now enjoys power in merely three States — Punjab, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh. The story of Congress' decline isn't new; it has virtually been a repeat telecast since the BJP-led NDA came to power. The ideological bankruptcy of the top

leadership has trickled down to the ranks, leading to a crisis at the grassroots.

Though the BJP has the backing of the RSS-type booth-level workers, who are dedicated to consolidating votes in favour of the saffron party, the Congress misses its *Seva Dal* whose political significance has been overshadowed by a lack of intent and commitment. Also, the top leadership needs to acknowledge various inputs by the think tank within the Congress, mainly the G-23 (Group of 23 leaders) who wrote to demand leadership reforms. The party urgently needs an overhaul in ideology, besides flexibility to adapt as per the situation's demands.

By playing the card of soft Hindutva, the Congress is falling for the core competency of the BJP and it is bound to boomerang. The party needs to bridge the trust deficit, make the organisation less of a family enterprise and keep the cadres and alliance partners buoyant even in crises.

Nischai Vats | Sultanpur

number of COVID-19 cases across the country, particularly in Maharashtra, Kerala, Gujarat, Punjab, Karnataka and Jammu and Kashmir. I believe that the Centre does not have any alternative but to provide free vaccination to the citizens as quite a lot of people would not be able to afford it, thus preferring to stay back and take recourse to home-made remedies. This development, if it comes about, would totally defeat the purpose of the world's biggest inoculation programme as there would be critical gaps left uncovered in the chain of vaccinated Indians. Also, the Centre must insist that private hospitals also give free vaccines to people aged 60 and above with the cost being borne by the Government.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

A STADIUM STANDS TALL

Sir — In India, cricket is a religion and we look at our cricketers as demigods. To stay at the pinnacle of our global success in the sport, we need to have world-class stadia

for grooming our youngsters on their way up to the highest level. In this regard, the inauguration of the world's largest cricket stadium in Ahmedabad is a giant leap towards a new era.

The stadium, which was closed for renovation in 2015, has been a witness to some major milestones in Indian cricket in its previous avatar. Sunil Gavaskar reached his 10,000 run-mark in Test cricket here against Pakistan in 1987 and, in 1994, Kapil Dev claimed his 432nd Test wicket to become the highest wicket-taker in the world, surpassing Sir Richard Hadlee. The ground has a state-of-the-art drainage system that will take just 30 minutes from the time it stops raining to flush out the water. Also, it is the only cricket stadium in the world to have four dressing rooms for the players so that back-to-back games can be played on the same day.

CK Subramaniam | Navi Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

I cannot build any other capital (on the demand that Purnia be the State capital). If anyone else becomes the Chief Minister after me, they can do whatever they wish. I cannot do such a thing.

Bihar Chief Minister — Nitish Kumar

I am frustrated that (French company) Naval Group have not yet been able to finalise this contract but it will not be done at the expense of Australian industry.

Australia's Defence Minister — Linda Reynolds

I miss my long hair. I miss tying that rubber band when I'm bare. I miss my long walks at the lake of my hometown's creek. I miss listening to my old-time playlist.

Actor — Ayushmann Khurrana

Playing 100 Tests as a fast bowler is no mean feat and playing especially in our conditions, things can get so difficult. But he (Ishant Sharma) kept working hard.

Indian captain — Virat Kohli


We found that they (the Congress, during the pandemic) had given registration numbers of scooters and three-wheelers. Is this not a joke on the people?

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister — Yogi Adityanath

FIRST COLUMN


TEXAS MUST READ UP ON GLOBAL WARMING

Climate change doesn't care whether you believe in it or not. And it may get worse



GWYNNE DYER

It's not funny when people die of the cold but there was some innocent amusement to be had from the indignation of Texans unable to boil their drinking water during the 'Big Freeze' because the power was still out. Things like that are not supposed to happen in a modern, developed country like the US of A. How dare they? Others, aware that Texas has cut every corner in public services that it's possible to cut, were unsurprised by the five-day mini-disaster that struck the country's second-biggest State. One blogger wrote philosophically: "Occasionally, something will happen in Texas to remind the people who live here that we live in a failed State." A winter temperature 25°C colder than usual for the time of year is rare, but this is not the first time it has snowed in Texas. The electricity failed, triggering a cascade of other disasters, mainly because of a long-standing refusal to connect the State power grid with the two main national ones. (This was done to avoid federal supervision on prices and standards). Others have cold snaps too. Germany, Russia, Canada, even northern China get much colder than Texas, but they don't end up freezing in the dark because they are prepared for it. Texas could have been prepared for it, too, but somebody in power would have had to read science journals for that. Since they almost all got elected with donations from fossil fuel producers, that was never very likely. The "explainers" in the media talk about a rogue 'Arctic vortex', but what's really happening is much simpler.



It's just what global warming has done to the northern hemisphere's 'jet stream.' The northern jet stream is a high-speed, high-altitude atmospheric "river" that flows from the West to the East all the way around the planet. It marks the boundary between the Polar air mass, sometimes called the 'Polar Vortex', and the warmer air masses of the mid-latitudes. East-bound airliners crossing the North Atlantic and the North Pacific often hitch a ride on the jet stream, saving up to an hour. The energy that drives the jet stream comes from the temperature difference between the two air masses it divides. However, the Arctic is warming much faster than the rest of the world, so that difference is shrinking and, with less energy the jet stream is slowing down. It used to blast straight East but even then it occasionally developed long S-shaped kinks called 'Rossby waves.' These are big loops extending far North and South of its usual track. As it has slowed down (the average speed is now 150-225 kmph), the Rossby waves have grown more frequent and bigger. They are often now great loops deviating from the straight track and bring with them cold Polar air rarely seen so far South, or warm air not seen previously so far North. That's what happened to Texas last week: One of those Rossby waves brought cold Arctic air all the way South. This pattern will recur and Texans will have to live with it. Climate change doesn't care whether you believe in it or not. And it may get worse. In June-July 2018 record-breaking heatwaves hit western US, Western Europe and the Caucasus-Caspian Sea region, while there was extreme rainfall and flash flooding on the US east coast, in eastern Europe and Japan. It was all happening in big Rossby loops that had taken over the jet stream. All the loops, containing hot dry air or cool moist air, were stuck for over two weeks. By last year, researchers had found that over the last 20 years the same pattern of seven stalled peaks and lows over the same regions has lasted seven times for more than two weeks. In the previous 20 years (1980-2000), that had not happened even once. This suggests that the pattern is getting stronger. And, since the latitudes where the loops are stalling include most of the major "breadbasket" regions of the northern hemisphere, the crop-killing droughts and heatwaves they bring could cause a big loss in world food production. It's the unknowns that do the worst damage. (Gwynne Dyer's new book is 'Growing Pains: The Future of Democracy and Work.' The views expressed are personal.)

Time to tackle online gender violence

Despite the existence of regulatory mechanisms, we have not been able to effectively handle online safety challenges owing to the lack of proper implementation

The internet has evolved as an indispensable tool for transforming our society and culture. Women, especially those living in rural India, have been empowered to speak about their diverse realities, discuss common concerns and organise for change. However, the challenges of censorship and overregulation emanating from actions like blocking of LGBTQ+ sites or silencing of female voices on social media through misogynistic hate speech and trolling, make it essential to find sustainable solutions to these concerns that are threatening the online safety of vulnerable communities. After all, with the internet becoming the ultimate manifestation of our social reality, attaining online equality is paramount for ensuring the same offline.

The feminist landscape of online hate: The last decade has witnessed instances of cyberstalking, rape threats and other forms of gendered violence increase at an alarming rate on the internet. In stark contrast to claims that "cyberhate" is predominantly innocuous, there are a range of academic studies which prove the widespread suffering caused, owing to the consequent social, psychological and economic harm inflicted upon women due to this challenge. The problem of gendered cyberhate has become far more prevalent since the advent of web 2.0, which was marked by the shift towards a greater amount of user-generated content, collaboration, interactivity and information sharing over the web. This facilitated online antagonists to get easier access to their targets in a manner that was never possible before. According to a 2015 report by the United Nations, 73 per cent of women have experienced some form of online violence. An analysis conducted by a leading daily revealed that out of every 10 writers who receive abusive comments online, eight were women.

Types of online hate: Online abuse can be placed on a wide spectrum of violence, ranging from mildly irritating (cyberstalking) at one end to unequivocally criminal (revenge pornography) at the other. One peculiar characteristic of this challenge as seen in India and many other developing economies, is the dimension of domestic violence which is increasingly being observed as a major component of most of the cases of online harassment. Some of the most prominent forms of gendered cyberhate faced by women online include cyberbullying, a challenge whose primary target is mainly school and college girls. Then there is cyberstalking, which includes the perpetrator making unwarranted attempts to contact the target by installing a spyware on her phone or hacking her email/social media accounts. Plus there is denial of service, wherein, the online platforms disables the person to voice herself, often due to her unconventional views. Other major forms of online harm are doxing, which involves publication of personally identifiable information about a person that enables online antagonists to find their targets offline, and the most critically dangerous of all including revenge pornography (publishing sexually explicit content, often of a former partner without their consent) and sextortion (hacking webcams, installing malwares or impersonating as someone's romantic interest to obtain intimate information and images).

Implications of the harm on users: Extensive evidence exists to show that gendered cyberhate inflicts significant psychological, social, reputational and economic distress and harm upon women.

“

A SURVEY CONDUCTED BY FEMINISM IN INDIA UNDERScoreD THAT 50 PER CENT OF WOMEN IN MAJOR CITIES OF INDIA HAVE FACED ONLINE ABUSE. HOWEVER, WOMEN ARE NOT THE ONLY VICTIMS OF SUCH ABUSE. THERE IS CONCURRENTLY RAMPANT ONLINE HARASSMENT OF INDIVIDUALS FROM MARGINALISED GENDERS AND SEXUALITIES AS WELL



This includes putting limitations on their ability to engage in meaningful activism to respond to the challenge of gendered cyberhate itself. This leads to serious concerns of violation of both rights guaranteed under international human rights laws and the Constitution of India, including their right to free speech, right to informational privacy, right to bodily integrity and right to reputation, to name a few. As another major concern, it is seen that women who depend on the internet to earn their livelihood are more prone to receiving online hate. This causes serious repercussions for them to find and keep access to their jobs and social- and professionally network themselves — causing blatant breach of their right to livelihood and gender equality.

Understanding and solving the problem: We must not forget that India has not only bagged one of the top ranks for having the highest number of internet users, but it is also the country that tops the statistics of global sexual harassment. The harassment faced by women in the physical world is mirrored by the image harassment faced by them in the online world. A survey conducted by Feminism in India underscored that 50 per cent of women in major cities of India have faced online abuse. However, women are not the only victims of such abuse. There is concurrently rampant online harassment of individuals from marginalised genders and sexualities as well. A truly intersectional view of the issue demands that it is specifically

addressed through policy and law, as it is evident that the laws at present that were created with the purpose of protecting women are failing at their task to create a safe place online. Cyberhate, specifically, is a growing issue in the Indian online space. With a charged society polarised by religion and politics, the instances of hateful, violating, or mean comments that occur in the comment sections, forums and on other websites or social media have multiplied. In the case of cyberhate not all violations may be explicitly against the law, they are still serious and unacceptable as a part of online presence, as much as it would be in the physical society. It is important to recognise that to truly tackle the issue of cyberhate, our society, platforms and institutions including the Government must come together. Cyberhate must be dealt with at a societal level through awareness and change in mindsets while institutions must provide for zero tolerance and also grievance redressal. It must exist at all levels. For example, employers must show a responsibility and obligation towards staff to provide them with tools or resources to deal with the cyberhate that they might face as a consequence of the work they are required to do online. Also, legal measures and institutional methods against hate speech are unlikely to be able to tackle the sheer volume of online publications. A complete solution would be to work together with ISPs and platforms i.e. intermediaries to develop comprehensive codes of conduct or community guidelines based on

which removal of offensive content takes place. Platforms have the ability to use their technology to detect such content and thereby filter/flag or even remove it. It is equally important to enhance their responsibility in these scenarios to be able to complement the efforts of law enforcement.

The way forward: With the IPC, IT Act and the POCSO rules in place we have adequate laws to tackle cyberhate. The challenge is to effectively implement these laws to ensure safe online space. The Draft Intermediary Guidelines, 2018, envisaged under the IT Act received extant criticism owing to its deleterious impact on free speech and privacy of users. If implemented, it would pierce the encryption-enabled anonymity enjoyed by women and marginalised groups. This anonymity is crucial to tackle trolls with counterspeech and ensure online safety. A recent study explains how the mandate of proactive monitoring under the Draft Guidelines by using automated tools and introducing traceability, by breaking encryption, would undermine the safety of users.

Despite the existence of regulatory mechanisms, we have not been able to effectively handle online safety challenges owing to the lack of proper implementation. The onus of reform cannot be entirely placed on regulation and also lies on the participants in the ecosystem who have a major role in ensuring that progressive laws and policies are rightly implemented and followed. It is the duty of the State to effectively prosecute perpetrators of online hate.

Shreya is Policy Research Assistant and Mehta is Strategic Engagement and Research Coordinator, The Dialogue. The views expressed are personal.

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

FOR ME, COMING TO KERALA WAS REFRESHING AS I FOUND THAT PEOPLE ARE INTERESTED IN ISSUES. NOT SUPERFICIALLY BUT GOING INTO DETAILS. —CONGRESS LEADER RAHUL GANDHI



A FEW DAYS AGO HE WAS IN THE NORTH-EAST SPEWING VENOM AGAINST THE WESTERN PART OF INDIA. TODAY HE IS SPEWING VENOM AGAINST THE NORTH. —BJP PRESIDENT JP NADDA



Bumps in the way of adoption of EVs in India

EV technology is the future of mobility but dithering Government measures mean that this amazing technology is still stuck in neutral



KOTA SRIRAJ

Rising fuel prices, a nascent electric vehicle (EV) support infrastructure and the recently-announced vehicle scrappage policy amid worrying pollution levels, are creating an unprecedented crisis of sorts for Indians as far as commuting is concerned. These conditions are exacerbated by a creaking public transport system that is bursting at the seams. The seemingly unstoppable rally of fuel price hikes is undoubtedly the most disturbing development so far for a nation that is battling a pandemic-induced economic downturn and dwindling income levels. In view of a divided and weak Opposition, that repeatedly fails to take up key issues that affect the common man, the Government has mustered enough confidence to dish out 21 fuel hikes in the

The writer is an environmental journalist. The views expressed are personal.

first two months of the new year, if media reports are to be believed. For many of us, the rise in pollution levels and fuel prices has come as an indication to shift towards EVs or public transport, but in these times of Coronavirus-induced social distancing, jostling in a crowded public conveyance does not seem to be a natural choice. The finality of making an alternative choice for commuting has been further strengthened by the announcement of the vehicle scrappage policy which makes owning an old vehicle in Delhi-NCR impossible and very costly elsewhere in the country. Though this policy has delighted auto manufacturers as new vehicle demand is expected to soar, the citizens whose budgets have been severely hit by the pandemic may not share the same enthusiasm, as many of their perfectly maintained vehicles will end up in scrapyards. In the midst of this chaos, the EV industry is emerging as the apt solution for all the existent problems, but the Indian EV sector is anything but fully ready to meet the challenge. The auto sector, which was experiencing a slowdown even before the virus' outbreak, came to its knees as the full impact of the COVID-19 contagion was unleashed. The Union Budget addressed the sector's concerns by focusing on reliefs such as tax holidays for EV startups. The setting aside of ₹2,217 crore for 'Clean Air', for 42 urban centres with a million-plus population is also a good move that can spread awareness about the environmental benefits of EVs.



Similarly, the Government's plan for strengthening the public transport sector under the Public-Private-Partnership model with an outlay of ₹18,000 crore for operating 20,000 buses is encouraging for the EV industry. The scheme can help fight air pollution effectively. But inexplicably, this is where the Government's vision gets blurry as the Budget does not mention any EV-focused initiative or policy, including Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles (FAME). Other expectations, including the ramping up of EV charging infrastructure, enablement of retail financing for EVs and moderation of the inverted Goods and Services Tax (GST) structure along with lowering of taxes on EV input components, including battery, were also not addressed. The EV manufacturers were hopeful of a firmer policy commitment from the Government, especially in the duty structure pertaining to batteries. The Budget platform could have been used to fix the inverted duty structure for components such as batteries from 18 per cent to five per cent and for charging/swapping infrastructure services, too, from

18 per cent to five per cent. For instance, a lithium-ion battery fitted in an EV attracts 12 per cent GST but it is 18 per cent GST when sold separately. Correction of such issues would have lent enormous confidence to EV manufacturers and provided a much-needed push to the sector. Similarly, lowering of import duties on automotive parts instead of raising them would have had the same positive impact on the spirit of the industry, besides lowering the critical costs of production. The absence of an aggressive push from the Government for the indigenous EV industry has raised concerns for its future. World leading EV manufacturers such as Tesla are already eyeing the huge potential of the Indian market. In fact, Tesla has already registered itself as an entity in India in Bengaluru, with the intention of manufacturing EV cars. Hyundai's Kona and Morris Garages' ZS EV, are already making inroads in the Indian market as we speak. With competition already getting hot, Indian EV manufacturers need more support from the Government in the form of sops, tax holidays for four-wheel EV makers, better GST structures and lower import duties besides robust financing options for the consumers. These measures combined with superior nationwide charging infrastructure can render fossil fuel cars obsolete, paving the way for their phase-out. EV technology is the future of mobility but dithering Government measures mean that this amazing technology is still stuck in neutral in the country.

Sensex zooms 1,030 pts, Nifty tops 14,950

Trading halted for some time on NSE due to connectivity issues

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Trading halted for some time on NSE due to connectivity issues. Equity benchmark Sensex soared 1,030.28 points and the Nifty rallied over 270 points on Wednesday, tracking strong buying in financial stocks, after trading hours were extended following a technical glitch at NSE.

After resumption of trade at 3.45 pm, NSE Nifty zoomed 274.20 points or 1.86 per cent to end at 14,982.

Similarly, the 30-share BSE index settled 1,030.28 points or 2.07 per cent higher at 50,781.69.

Axis Bank was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, surging around 5 per cent, followed by HDFC twins, ICICI Bank, Bajaj Finance and SBI.

On the other hand, PowerGrid, Dr Reddy's, TCS and Asian Paints were among the laggards.

Minutes before the scheduled closure of trade at 3.30 pm, leading bourses BSE and NSE said their equity and derivatives markets will remain open till 5 pm.



The move came after the National Stock Exchange (NSE) suffered an outage earlier in the day due to technical glitches. Trading across segments came to a halt at 1140 hrs due to connectivity issues.

However, the broader Indian markets were not impacted as communication lines at BSE remained operational.

"Technical glitch did not impact domestic market sentiment though volatility was high with a positive prejudice, in the first session. During the extra session, the market gathered more strength and hugely outperforming the global peers, triggered by squaring-off F&O positions a day ahead of the prefixed monthly expiry date.

"The global market was mixed, not very convinced that world central banks like Fed will maintain a flexible monetary policy even during rising bond yield and inflation. And the Asian market was negatively impacted by a hike in stamp duty on equities," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Investcorp on-boards Safari with Rs 75 cr investment

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The third largest luggage and bags major Safari Industries on Wednesday said that it has received Rs 75 crore equity investment from leading global alternative investment manager Investcorp.

The transaction is subject to shareholders and regulatory approvals, the company said in a statement.

Set up in 1974, Safari Industries is the third largest and fastest growing luggage brand in the country today.

Sudhir Jatia, who is the current chief executive, acquired Safari in 2012.

Gaurav Sharma, head of private equity at Investcorp India, said that this investment into Safari, which enjoys a strong brand recall, aligns with our thesis of targeting unique businesses in mass consumption market.

Jatia said he expects to get shareholders' and regulatory approvals soon and close the transaction next month.

In India, Investcorp invests in mid-market companies across consumption-linked sectors and in the real estate.

‘Dams, hydroelectric projects don’t harm environment’

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Power Minister R K Singh on Wednesday brushed aside apprehensions that water storage or dam projects, which also generate hydro electricity, harm environment, and urged experts to commission an authoritative and scientific study to find out the truth.

Speaking at a symposium on sustainable development of dams and river basins, Singh said, "I have not seen science of environment being harmed. I see science of progress in this (water storage). Punjab and Haryana developed and they are where they are today because of Bhakra Nangal dam."

He further said, "If you ask any person in Bihar, then his dearest wish is to construct large dams on the river Kosi in Nepal. Wherever we constructed large dams, we have improved the lives of people...generations. This is the message we need to convey."

He brought attention toward pushback to water storage or dam projects in the country by NGOs (non-government organisations) or civil societies which claim that these would harm environment.

The minister said, "In our country, there is a decade or



two of push back (to water storage projects) by NGOs without any authoritative study that says that dams are harmful to environment."

Currently, India is developing around 14,000 megawatts of hydropower generation capacity.

He said, "In water resources, in the past decade also, we have faced headwinds in harnessing our water resources. There was concerted movement against harnessing the water, dams, against any project which sought to harness our water resources."

He said the movement still persists. "That push back against dams still persists. That is something which we have to address."

The minister urged all to first accept that humans have been harnessing water right from the time our civilisation began.

"The earliest dam started on the Nile (in Egypt)...harnessing water was there before Christ (BC). It is not that it is happening now," he said.

The minister stated that the proposition is that if some how you stop the natural flow of water, then it harms the environment.

He added that the water storage projects do not stop the natural flow of the water and just the excess flow of water is harnessed through storage so that it can be used as and when needed.

"Does that harm the environment? Is there any study? I think you need to commission a study and examine whether it actually harms the environment... I think we need to come out with an authoritative study on this," the minister said.

The minister also said that in some areas, it is essential to set up water storage projects like Brahmaputra river. If India does not do it, its rival China would do it, he added.

He said, "They (China) are planning construction of large dams. So, we have to start construction of large dams. If they construct large dams before us then they can squeeze our (water) supplies in Assam and North East."

ABFRL partners with Tarun to launch men’s ethnic wear brand

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail Ltd has partnered with fashion designer Tarun Tahiliani to form a new entity that will soon launch a contemporary men's ethnic wear brand.

"Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail Ltd (ABFRL) has announced a strategic partnership with India's ace designer Tarun Tahiliani to form a new entity that will soon launch a contemporary men's ethnic wear brand. "The new brand will operate in the premium occasion wear segment and will offer the entire range of



high quality, sophisticated celebration wear for men at accessible price points," the company said in a regulatory filing.

ABFRL will hold 80 per cent stake in the new entity, while Tarun Tahiliani will hold the remaining 20 per cent.

The new brand aims to build a Rs 500 crore business

in the next 5 years with more than 250 stores across the country, the statement added.

The brand plans to launch retail stores by September 2021.

As part of the deal, ABFRL will also acquire a 33 per cent stake in the existing Luxury Couture business of Tarun Tahiliani, with the option to increase it to 51 per cent in the next few years. ABFRL MD Ashish Dikshit said, "Over the next few years, ethnic wear is going to be an important category as confident Indians rediscover their culture and heritage.

RBI concerned over impact of cryptocurrency

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is concerned over the impact of cryptocurrencies may have on the financial stability in the economy and has conveyed the same to the government, Governor Shaktikanta Das said on Wednesday.

"We have certain major concerns about cryptocurrencies. We have communicated them to the government. It is under consideration in the government and I do expect and I think sooner or later the government will take a call and if required Parliament also will consider and decide," he said in an interview with CNBC-TV18.

"I want to make it clear that the blockchain technology is different. Blockchain technology benefits have to be exploited, that is another thing. But on cryp-



to we have major concerns from the financial stability angle and we have shared it with the government. The government will consider and take a call," Das said.

While Das did not elaborate further, the central bank had in the past expressed concerns on digital currencies being used for money laundering and terror funding.

The government is planning to introduce a bill in Parliament to bar companies and individuals from dealing in cryptocurrencies while creating a framework for an official digital currency.

Rupee surges 11 paise to close at 72.35 against USD

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The rupee gained 11 paise to settle at 72.35 against the US dollar on Wednesday supported by positive domestic equities and weakness of the American currency in the overseas market.

At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened at 72.35 against the greenback and witnessed an intra-day high of 72.26 and a low of 72.41. It finally ended at 72.35 against the American currency, registering a rise of 11 paise from its previous close. On Tuesday, the rupee had settled at 72.46 against the American currency. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.10 per cent to 90.08. On the domestic equity market front, the BSE Sensex was trading 191.39 points or 0.38 per cent higher at 49,942.80.



German economy grew 0.3% in Q4

PNS ■ BERLIN

The German economy grew 0.3 per cent in last year's fourth quarter compared with the previous three-month period, official data showed Wednesday — a better performance than first thought.

The Federal Statistical Office had reported in late January that gross domestic product edged up 0.1 per cent in the October-December period.

Wednesday's revision meant that last year's overall drop in GDP was a touch less sharp than originally reported — 4.9 per cent rather than 5 per cent. That fall ended a decade of growth and was the biggest decline since the financial crisis in 2009.

Germany's economy did better than several others in the 19-country euro-zone as it was supported by manufacturing, which has taken less of a hit than services during the pandemic.

Tata Power raises Rs 900 cr via debentures



PNS ■ BERLIN

Tata Power has raised Rs 900 crore through issuance of NCDs.

The company issued 9,000 unsecured, redeemable, taxable, listed, rated NCDs worth Rs 900 crore on Tuesday, a BSE filing said.

The series-I debentures worth Rs 400 crore would mature on February 23, 2024, while series-II debentures of Rs 500 crore would mature on February 23, 2026, it said.

Saltmine raises \$20mn from JLL Spark, Jungle Ventures

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Saltmine, an end-to-end digital workplace platform, on Wednesday said it has raised USD 20 million (about Rs 144.8 crore) in funding that saw participation from JLL Spark, the strategic investment arm of commercial real estate services firm JLL.

Existing investors, Singapore-based Jungle



Ventures and Xplorer Capital also participated in the series A round. In addition to its capital investment, JLL has entered into an agreement to sell

Saltmine's software directly to its customers, creating a powerful distribution channel for Saltmine's platform, a statement said.

Founded in 2017 by Indian-origin Shagufta Anurag, the workspace management platform has grown to have global presence with offices in Asia, Europe and North America with headquarters in San Francisco.

Professionals confident about career progress

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Professionals in India are confident about their career progress despite growing uncertainties about the job market and financial future in the current environment, says a survey.

According to the latest LinkedIn Workforce Confidence Index, there has been a decline in India's overall confidence, as the composite score dropped from 58 in December 2020 to 54 in January 2021.

The survey attributes this dip in optimism to the workforce's growing concerns about the status of the pandemic, surmounting expenses, and job availability in the present economic climate.

This professional uncertainty comes right after the year-



end holiday season, when India's hiring rate dropped to 17 per cent year-over-year in December 2020, according to the latest edition of LinkedIn's Labour Market update.

The survey findings from January 1-29, based on responses of 1,752 professionals, noted that despite growing uncertainties 80 per cent pro-

fessionals are confident about skilling opportunities, while 79 per cent are confident about the strength of their CVs.

"Skills are expected to become the new professional 'currency' this year as workers from different generations rely on learning new skills to future-proof their careers, at a time when industries continue

to strengthen their remote operations," said Ashutosh Gupta, India Country Manager, LinkedIn.

Sector-wise, professionals from corporate services, healthcare, and software and IT industries are the most confident about the future of their employers.

"Employees from traditional sectors such as corporate services, healthcare, and software and IT industries are found to be most confident about the future of their employers, as companies continue to adopt newer technologies, and revamp their talent strategies. "Reimagining employee skills and roles to welcome the post-pandemic ways of working will be crucial to building resilience for companies across sectors," Gupta said.

Daimler delivers largest 10 tonne staff bus post-Covid

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Stuttgart-based Daimler has delivered 25 BharatBenz 1014 buses to a Bengaluru-based tour operator, marking a revival in the economy and the bus industry, according to a top official of the German company.

The delivery of the buses to Sree Travels was also the largest 10-tonne staff bus to be handed over to the customer post-COVID-19 pandemic.

"Delighted to have delivered 25 staff buses to Sree Travels. This order demonstrates the customer's faith



in us and points to a recovery in the transport segment," Daimler Buses India head Karl-Alexander Seidel said.

Sree Travels purchased their first BharatBenz range of buses in 2019 and followed it up with the latest 25 buses this year.

MONEY MATTERS

Airtel enters advertising tech industry with Airtel Ad



Bharti Airtel on Wednesday marked its entry into advertising business with launch of 'Airtel Ads', a move it said will enable brands to pitch consent-based and privacy-safe campaigns to over 320 million customers across its various businesses like mobile, DTH and homes. Airtel Ads — that underlines the company's efforts to get a foothold in the booming Indian advertising industry — leverages the company's data science capabilities, and would enable brands to create deep engagement and high-impact campaigns for most relevant customer cohorts. Airtel asserted that its customers would receive only the most-relevant brand offerings, and not unwanted spam. "We are not in the quantity mode, we only want to bring it to customers who care. erefore, volumes may be less but quality will be high," Adarsh Nair said.

Sebi offers exemption to Pantone from takeover norms



Markets regulator Sebi has granted exemption to Pantone Finvest Ltd from complying with certain requirements of takeover norms with respect to the proposed direct acquisition in Tata Communications. The exemption granted is subject to certain conditions and is limited to the requirements of making an open offer and pricing condition under the Substantial Acquisition of Shares and Takeovers (SAST) Regulations. The order came after Pantone filed an application with Sebi seeking exemption from the applicability of certain provisions of SAST norms. Tata Communications has a public shareholding of 25.01 per cent and non-public shareholding of 74.99 per cent which is entirely held by the promoters and the promoter group.

Flipkart to deploy over 25,000 EVs in supply chain



Walmart-owned Flipkart on Wednesday said it will deploy more than 25,000 EVs in its supply chain to completely transition to electric mobility by 2030. The company has partnered with key players including Hero Electric, Mahindra Electric and Piaggio to procure electric vehicles (EVs) through logistics partners for specific vehicles to be played for its first and last mile delivery fleet across the country. This is in line with Flipkart's public commitment to transition to EVs across its city logistics fleet and help set up charging infrastructure around delivery hubs and offices to fast-track the adoption of such vehicles in India, a statement said.

Govt clears PLI scheme to boost manufacturing of PCs



The government on Wednesday approved a production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for laptops, tablets, all-in-one PCs and servers, as it looked to woo global players to tap India's manufacturing capabilities. The approval of PLI scheme for these hi-tech IT hardware gadgets comes after the Cabinet last week cleared a Rs 12,195 crore scheme for telecom equipment manufacturing. Briefing reporters after a meeting of the Cabinet, Communications and IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said the Cabinet cleared the about Rs 7,350 crore PLI scheme for IT hardware that would cover laptops, tablets, all-in-one PCs and servers.

Cricket, we say, is one religion that unites India. But have we gone too far in glorifying that sport alone? A thoughtful community of people in the city are aware of the needs of other sports like Throwball, and have come forward to support them in time. Still a long way to go; yet it has started somewhere, writes **The Pioneer's RACHEL DAMMALA**



SUPPORTING THROWBALL PLAYERS BEFORE THEY'RE FORCED TO THROW IT OFF

up. "It's tough for most players to fund themselves, most of them are from middle and lower middle class families. The government did help at times with a few concessions, but that is almost never enough," shares Kiran, who represented India at the World Games held in Nepal and secured a gold medal. He had been giving intensive coaching to the Under-15 and Under-19 Telangana state teams just before the National Championships and they have, in turn, secured medals at national platforms.

Even he, who had been representing Telangana state in consecutive senior nationals till date and lead the team on many occasions, apart from coaching kids in throwball and handball, holds a job as a sales executive to help him make ends meet. "The sport did give me so much, my proudest moment in life is being able to represent my country on an international platform. But finances, not so much. Hence another job by the day. It's only my passion for the sport that keeps me and many others like me, going. Despite not having financial support from the government, team Telangana has been performing excellently. But we don't even have a ground to practise," Kiran laments.

Many others like him including Suchetana, who is also an international player, make do by coaching Under-15 girls team during national championships.

Kiran, however, is grateful for a few individuals and schools in the city that allow them to the use their playgrounds after school hours. Jagan Mohan Goud, General Secretary, Telangana Throwball Association has gone out of his way and has been rendering his services from the very inception of Telangana state. "V Naveen Yadav, a social worker has sponsored our expenses several times. Others like D Kalayan

Chakravarthy, MD, Technogence; VSN Raju, CEO, Globarena; Malka Komaraih, Chairman, Delhi Public School; Sunir Nagi, Principal, Pallavi Model School; Arundhati, Sangamithra School; and Prof. Ranga Rao; are some of the many who have been doing all they can, to encourage, support and help us in times of need. They never said no whenever we approached them for help. With their support, we hosted nearly 20 inter district championships (all categories) and 4 national level championships," Kiran tells us. Their



biggest feat towards raising awareness about the game, he says, is hosting the Hyderabad Throwball School league in which 54 teams participated in under-16 category and 21 teams in under-19, which includes both boys and girls.

"This is something big we achieved recently, where nearly 300 debutants participated," Kiran shares with a smile.

It wasn't long ago when Indian Football captain Sunil Chhetri had to make a public appeal after only a few fans turned up to watch his team's game. We sure don't need another sportsperson to embarrass us by pleading us to support them, we can do better. What you can do next is support them at the Throwball Premier League from March 22 to April 2, 2021 at Mumbai.

Few players from the city have been listed to represent Telangana in the Throwball Premier League and they include Kiran Chary himself, DN Charan Kumar, Sharath Kumar Reddy, Siddheshwar Reddy, Suraj Goud and Revanth. It's time to go do our bit by cheering for them, talking about them and celebrating their wins and losses.

'The future lies in digital processes'

Fashion industry will see innovations as new technology as well as changing customer needs and demands will transform the industry challenging students, says **TARUN GOEL**



The fashion industry will see huge amounts of innovation in coming years as new technology and changing customer trends and demands will transform the industry which brings more new challenges for students. Apparel industry moves at breakneck speed and due to COVID-19 outbreak has sped up the pace considerably fashion industry operators have had to switch to a multi-channel strategy and become more data-driven in their decision-making. Here are few changes that must be required in 2021 for the professionals working in the fashion design industry

Data-driven

Many stores and brands use data to predict the rise and fall of trends. Predictive analytics consider everything from climate to color preferences, social media trends and political movements. The benefits of using data in fashion are numerous from only producing pieces consumers will actually wear to reducing waste and connecting the right consumers with pieces they will enjoy. Fashion brands now use data to understand and monitor their customer preferences, their shopping behaviour and after analysing they create products that meet their needs.

Sustainability

Over recent years sustainability has been one of the hottest topics in terms of fashion because after all, fashion is one of the most polluting industries on the planet. With fast-fashion taking over, clothes quickly becoming outdated, and being made with cheap materials it isn't setting the world up for much hope. But the tides are changing, and brands are moving towards more sustainable fabrics and

manufacturing methods. Although brands are trying to incorporate more sustainable practices.

Digitalisation

Due to restrictions of COVID-19, consumers increasingly prefer the convenience and speed of online shopping, even if it means not being able to try an item on in person. Successful fashion brands of the future won't just make their clothing available online they will also create an immersive digital shopping experience with virtual showrooms, virtual fits or sizing tools and virtual style lists. The future of fashion is happening online, and brands will have to adjust how they create and sell clothing to make it work in a digital world. With more shoppers taking advantage of online shopping, fashion retailers have to follow suit.

Fashion brands will also leverage technology like AR and VR to allow consumers to try on items digitally from the comfort of their own homes.

Simplified

With many people working from home and social distancing for the foreseeable future, mostly fashion brands have toned down their styling in favour of comfortable loungewear and clothing that works for sleeping and living. Even after the pandemic, clothing will likely stay simple and comfortable.

The new shift in fashion is to two collections a year spring/summer and fall/winter. The future of fashion will focus on customers and provide an innovative experience. The industry is continually evolving, but changes in the future will create a more sustainable, customer-centric and efficient industry.

(The writer is the director at The Design Institute of India.)

Throwball, not many know, is a game that took birth on Indian soil. It is specifically known to be one of the most common games played by both men and women, given the least amount of risk and wounds the game has. Sadly, it is also one of the most ignored sports in India, and is often considered as a beach sport to be played for casual recreation. But did you know throwball teams from India have been winning medals and trophies at the World Games all along and most of us hadn't an inkling about it? No wonder the players 'don't get proper funds, especially the team from Telangana. But thanks to a few individuals who chose to rise to the occasion, the team is limping to success. Telangana Throwball Association still needs more funds to get to where they deserve, and have the potential, to be. Kiran Chary, international throwball player and Office secretary, Telangana Throwball Association says the failure of the government to help them with adequate funds had, at one point, resulted in players giving

Learning is an extensive process. Teaching a child is different and difficult. Upon not finding a creative starter pack for her kid, Neha Gupta Kapoor founded Ilchi Pilchi, which ensures creative and fun learning. She talks to **The Pioneer's SHIKHA DUGGAL** about the birth of the idea, how it benefits kids and parents, especially during school-from-home amid the pandemic.

Creative learning to ignite your child's mind

How wonderful it is to acquire knowledge from graphics! With multiple trends circulating on various social media platforms, one of them is the info series that is making some noise. With the sole aim to convey information quickly and easily to kids, Ilchi Pilchi is the first-of-its-kind info-series that not only talks about the animal kingdom but also about why they're important to planet earth through storytelling and scrapbooking! And to visualise that in an even better way, the founder of Ilchi Pilchi, Neha Gupta Kapoor is creating educational kits that tell you all about animals through fact-filled storybooks, an activity-filled scrapbook, and a DIY craft as memorabilia.



The scrapbook activities will challenge the child to recall what was read in the storybooks and enforce automatic learning by enabling him/her to compare the animals.

"Ilchi Pilchi emerged when I was unable to find an encyclopedia that is more like a fun storybook that also talks about conservation for my kid. This is exactly what the

Ilchi Pilchi educational kits do — create picturesque storybooks, activities in an album-like scrapbook with a subtle mention about why animals are important to our planet. Because learning should always be fun! Writing has always been my passion, I had worked with several magazines earlier, during which, my skills as a researcher were perfected. I decided to keep my career as an editor of a business and travel magazine on hold when I became a mum. Some two years later, Ilchi Pilchi was born, a name by which I lovingly call my daughter," Neha shares.

The pandemic also brought along with it the multiple changes in the normal lives of people and amongst them were parents around the world. "Parents were always

in search of creative ways to make a memorable experience with regards to their child's education. In order to fill this gap, after an extensive survey, Ilchi Pilchi came to the fore, to enhance a child's learning experience," she adds.

A good learning environment always has the greatest amounts of creativity in it and with the right mix of creativity comes better ways to be innovative in future. Creativity blended well with learning can really transform the way kids acquire knowledge and allows them to apply them in their real lives as well. Creative expression is a stepping stone for a child's emotional development so with Ilchi Pilchi, let your kids make their way onto this staircase towards immense creativity, and learn with fun.



Humour is the best weapon to bash patriarchy: Shraddha Srinath

Actress Shraddha Srinath says laughter is the best way to deal with the hard reality of patriarchy. This was reflected in a social media she made shortly after actor Varun Dhawan's marriage.

Shraddha had written on Instagram, on January 24: "Another good actor bites the dust. Sad that we will not see him on screen again. Obviously, his wife and in-laws will not be okay with him acting with other heroines. Maybe he will switch to doing male-oriented films? But how to balance personal life and work-life ya. Tough. Will miss him. Congratulations though, Varun (sic)."

Asked about what was she thinking while making such a post after Varun's marriage, Shraddha said, "You know

when I started my career, one of my well-wishers told me that you are a girl and you only have three to four years to shine as an actress because the career span of any actress is short-lived. Whenever I would go for an audition, I was asked, 'Shraddha Srinath, Srinath who?' and I would answer that it is my father's name. Why do we women have to face that? Why we are told that the career of an actress ends after marriage and motherhood? Why is it not the same with men? I see how I am growing as an actress and I see no end in my growth because I am working hard to make sure I grow."

"I think my sense of humour is my weapon to bash patriarchy. I have nothing against anyone, I just wish we really broaden and open our mind, it makes society a better place," she added.

Is she planning to shift her work base from Tollywood to Bollywood? "Well, I am satisfied as an actress with the kind of opportunity I am getting in the South Indian film industry and Bollywood is a space where everyone wants to look for a chance. But I am not working here so that I can

“For me, any opportunity, from any film industry is welcome. All that matters is what am I doing in the film

head to Bollywood. For me, any opportunity, from any film industry is welcome. All that matters is what am I doing in the film," Shraddha signed off.



RAASHI AND GOPI AGAIN

The makers of Gopichand-starrer *Pucca Commercial*, which was launched earlier this month, finalised Raashi Khanna as the leading lady. This would be the third time that the diminutive actress will be featuring in a film opposite Gopi, while with Maruthi this is her second film on the trot after *Prathiroju Pandage*, which was a box-office smash. Raashi was attached to the project before it was made official but back then grapevine was abuzz with the news that Gopi was averse to her casting as he already did a couple of films with her.

While it is believed that Maruthi did try roping in a new face, his search, it seems, didn't yield positive results. Left with no great options, the makers later signed on Raashi, as they are keen on completing the film on time and release it during October.

The principal photography of the film will commence from March 5 in



Hyderabad. Gopi will be seen as a criminal lawyer in the film, an action-drama laced with humour. Maruthi will be working with Malayalam composer Jakes Bejoy for the first time, while Raveendar will head the art department.



Adith and Tanya Hope team up for a road movie



Tamil writer Stalin is making his directorial debut with the project, which will be a Telugu-Tamil bilingual. To roll next month, it would be shot in Talakona, Karnataka and Goa.

The filming will start next month and the plan is to wrap it up in 50-55 working days. *Jaguar 420* is the title under discussion for the Telugu version, while *Jaguar* has been locked as the title for the Tamil version."



Actor Adith, who is awaiting the release of KV Guhan's techno thriller *WWW (Who.. Where.. Why)*, has green-lit a Telugu-Tamil bilingual next. Tamil writer Stalin is directing it from his own script while another Tamil name Madan, who is the president of south India casting association, will be producing it.

A source close to the development tells us, "The film is a travel drama with filming set to take place in parts of Talakona, Karnataka and Goa. Tanya Hope has been finalised opposite Adith, who will be going for a makeover for the project. The actress too will be seen in a unique role from the ones she played so far.

The source adds that the project is an attempt from Adith to balance both Tamil and Telugu films. "His films *WWW* and *Dear Megha* are shot in Telugu but they will get a dubbed release in Tamil too. So the actor felt the need to do a straight Tamil film. Luckily, the script of *Jaguar* had the potential to attract Telugu audiences as well, so the makers decided to make it as a bilingual," the source ends. — NG



PRIYA PRAKASH VARRIER OPPOSITE SUNDEEP KISHAN

After roping in Varalaxmi Sarath Kumar for the role of a cop, Veda Vyas, director of Sundeeep Kishan's next, has signed on wink girl Priya Prakash Varrier to play the film's leading lady.

Priya, who is awaiting the release of her maiden Telugu film *Check* this Friday, will be seen in a substantial part in the untitled action-thriller. "While the film revolves most-

ly around the parts played by Sundeeep and Varalaxmi, Priya too has her prominence in the narrative, and it is the reason why agreed to be a part of the project," reveals a source.

Veda Vyas remained unavailable for a comment. Mahesh Koneru, who made profits with Vijay-starrer *Master*, which he dubbed into Telugu, is shepherding the film under his East Coast Productions. He earlier said that Sundeeep will be seen in a

complete new role in the film, which has music by Vizag lad Sricharan Pakala.



FIRST LOOK

As Nani celebrated his birthday Wednesday, the makers of his next, *Shyam Singha Roy*, unveiled his first look from the film, a period drama. In the look, Nani is seen sporting a moustache while a woman hugs him from behind. The project is the actor's first collaboration with Rahul Sankrityan, who made *Taxiwaala* earlier. Sai Pallavi and Krithi Shetty are the leading ladies while Madonna Sebastian plays a supporting role.

Chaavu Kaburu Challaga talks about life and death in an entertaining fashion: Director

Debutant director Koushik Pegallapati says *Chaavu Kaburu Challaga (CKC)* will see leading light Karthikeya as a hears driver, who falls in love with a nurse (played by Lavanya Tripathi), who is mourning the loss of a dear one. "The film is told from the point of view of the hero and discusses life and death in an entertaining fashion. Entertainment aside, it is a hard-hitting story," the director said. He was speaking at the launch of the film's second song in Hyderabad recently.

Karthikeya said acting-wise, the film is a 360 degree turn for him from the roles he played earlier. "For the first time in my career I've tried

using slang besides adopting free style body language for the role. I was afraid how it would be received but Aravind garu, after watching the film, lauded my performance. I felt happy," the actor said.

Bunny Vas, who is producing the film under GA2 Pictures, said it was intentional from their end to produce a hatke movie away from the regular films. "When Koushik gave me a 10 minute narration of *CKG*, I instantly felt the need to give him a complete freehand in executing it. Otherwise, I generally sit on a story and exchange my ideas. While discussing a novel point, the film has all the trappings of a commercial entertainer," he pointed out.



Patel dominates at Motera

Axar's 6/38 dismantle England for 112 runs before Rohit's fifty cuts lead

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Axar Patel's devastating six-wicket haul bundled England out for 112 before Rohit Sharma's languid elegance shone through in an unbeaten half century that handed India the edge on the opening day of the day-night third Test here on Wednesday.

The spin combination of left-arm Patel and off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin exploited the turning Motera pitch at the newly-inaugurated Narendra Modi stadium to the full and England's first innings folded in just 48.4 overs after the visitors opted to bat.

Patel (21.4-6-38-6) grabbed his second five-for in his second Test while Ashwin (16-6-26-3) took three.

At stumps, India were 99 for 3 from 33 overs with Rohit batting on 57 off 82 balls. Ajinkya Rahane (1) was giving him company following skipper Virat Kohli's dismissal in the last over of the day.

Kohli was dismissed for 27 off 58 balls by left-arm spinner Jack Leach (10-1-27-2).

India trailed by just 13 runs with seven first innings wickets in hand.

Before this, it was a nightmare that unfolded for England with the 47-run stand for the third wicket being their best.

They lost their last six wickets in the second session. The last seven wickets yielded just 38 runs.

This was after Ishant Sharma, only the second Indian fast bowler after Kapil Dev to play in 100 Tests, fittingly took India's first wicket in the third over to open the floodgates for the hosts.

In reply to a below par score, India negotiated the opening spells of much-vaunted England seamers James Anderson and Stuart Broad without any damage in the tricky twilight period. Rohit and Shubman Gill (11) did not face too much trouble seeing out the precarious phase.

Anderson and Broad did not get much the desired movement with the pink ball and the dew factor did not have a big role either.

But Jofra Archer (5-2-24-1) gave England the breakthrough



3rd Test. Day 2
Live from 2:30pm IST
STAR SPORTS 1 NETWORK

the hosts.

In reply to a below par score, India negotiated the opening spells of much-vaunted England seamers James Anderson and Stuart Broad without any damage in the tricky twilight period. Rohit and Shubman Gill (11) did not face too much trouble seeing out the precarious phase.

Anderson and Broad did not get much the desired movement with the pink ball and the dew factor did not have a big role either.

But Jofra Archer (5-2-24-1) gave England the breakthrough

in the 15th over with Gill, trying a pull shot from the off stump, top-edged for Zak Crawley to end the 33-run opening partnership.

India lost another wicket soon after in Cheteshwar Pujara with Leach getting him trapped LBW for a first-ball duck to reduce India to 34 for 2.

After that, Rohit and Virat shared 64 runs for the third wicket, rotating the strike and finding the gaps as well for regular boundaries. Kohli was dropped by Ollie Pope when he was on 24. Pope also put down

a difficult chance to dismiss Rohit when the batsman was on 52.

Earlier, after Ishant had taken the first wicket, it was an Ashwin and Patel show as the duo bamboozled the England batsmen to complete the submission. Crawley (53 off 84 balls) was the lone exception and hit a delectable half-century.

Crawley's brilliance was, however, neutralised by the Indian spinners as England were left reeling at 81 for 4 going into tea after an exciting opening session.

Two wickets fell in as many overs after the resumption of the second session, with

Ashwin and Patel taking one each, to reduce England to 81 for 6.

Ashwin sent Pope's (1) off-stump cart-wheeling with a beauty of a delivery, bowling round the wicket, before Patel trapped Ben Stokes (6) LBW in the next over with a ball that spun in.

Jofra Archer (11) did a tad better as he hit a four off the second ball he faced and another boundary off Ashwin. But Patel dismissed him soon, cleaning up his off-stump to send England innings into a mess.

Padikkal's career-best 152 hands Karnataka big win

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Talented opening batsman Devdutt Padikkal continued his sizzling form to notch up a List A career-best score of 152 to help defending champions Karnataka register a massive 101-run win over Odisha in a Group E match of the Vijay Hazare Trophy here on Wednesday.

The 20-year-old opener smashed five sixes and 14 fours en route to his third List A century in his 16th game to propel Karnataka to 329 for five after being invited to bat at the KSCA Ground 3 in Alur.

The Royal Challengers Bangalore opener paced his innings brilliantly, taking 55 balls to reach his half-century and 119 deliveries for his ton.

But he took off in the final 10 overs as he cracked 52 runs off his last 21 balls to cruise to his maiden 150 off 138 deliveries.

Padikkal now has 301 runs from three matches, averaging 100.33 with scores of 52 and 97 in the first two matches.

In reply, Odisha were bowled out for 228 in 44 overs with Prasidh Krishna and Sheyash Gopal grabbing three wickets each to hand Karnataka their second win from three matches as they moved to second spot in the standings.

In another Group E match, Kerala defeated Railways by seven runs in a high-scoring thriller at the Just Cricket Academy to register their third win on the trot and consolidate their position atop the table.

Veteran opener Robin Uthappa (100 from 104 balls; 8x4s, 5x6s) cracked his second century from three matches in company of fellow opener Vishnu Vinod (107 from 107b;



5x4s, 4x6s) before Sanju Samson took charge with an explosive 61 to power Kerala to a massive 351

for 6.

Samson, who was appointed Rajasthan Royals skipper after they parted ways with Steve Smith, clobbered six fours and four sixes in his 29-ball knock, while Vathsala Govind remained unbeaten on a 34-ball 46 (2x4s, 3x6s).

Half-centuries from Mrunal Devdhar, Arindam Ghosh, Saurabh Singh and Harsh Tyagi meant the match went down to the wire.

But medium pacer MD Nidheesh (3/83) took two wickets — Amit Mishra and Tyagi — in successive balls in the last over to take Kerala over the line in a dramatic finish.

Baroda continue winning streak

SURAT: Baroda continued their winning streak in the Vijay Hazare Trophy after beating Hyderabad by 110 runs in their Elite Group A match, courtesy Kedar Devdhar's hundred and impressive show by the bowlers.

This is Baroda's third win on the trot after they had defeated Goa and Tripura.

Put into bat at the Lalbhai Contractor Stadium, Baroda rode on Devdhar's stroke-filled 131 to post a competitive 316/7 on the board, and then bundled out the opposition for 206, with Babashafi Pathan (3/37) doing the bulk of the damage.

Devdhar was back among the runs as he tore apart the Hyderabad attack with his 139-ball innings, hammering 14 boundaries and two maximums.

PUNJAB BEAT ANDHRA

In Group B matches at Indore, Punjab bounced back from back-to-back defeats to

beat Andhra by seven wickets to register their first win.

Punjab skipper Mandeep Singh won the toss and sent Andhra in to bat. A disciplined bowling effort from Punjab meant Andhra innings never had the momentum. Kaul picked up four wickets while left-arm medium-pace Barinder Sran took three as Andhra were bowled out for 175 in the 49th over.

Chasing the target, Mandeep starred with an unbeaten 64 (81 balls, 8 fours) to take Punjab home in 36 overs and register their first win in the tournament.

In the second match of the group, Tamil Nadu, the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy winners, suffered their second defeat in the tournament after losing by 11 runs to Madhya Pradesh.

In the third game, Jharkhand beat Vidarbha by three wickets to top the standings with three wins from as many games. **PTI**

President inaugurates Narendra Modi stadium

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

India's president on Wednesday inaugurated the world's largest cricket arena here, renamed from Sardar Patel stadium to Narendra Modi stadium in honour of the Prime Minister who is credited with conceptualising the facility in its current awe-inspiring form.

The state-of-the-art stadium, inaugurated by President Ram Nath Kovind, can accommodate a jaw-dropping 1.32 lakh spectators.

"This stadium was conceptualised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi when he was Chief Minister of Gujarat. He was president of the Gujarat Cricket Association at that time," Kovind said in his address after the inauguration.

The renaming of the stadium was kept under wraps until after it was formally inaugurated.

"It represents India's aspirations and strength. India is called hub of cricket, so it is appropriate that we have the largest stadium. It will give India a new identity," Kovind said.

Also present on the occasion was Home Minister Amit Shah and Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju along with a host of other dignitaries.

"We have decided to name it after the country's Prime Minister. It was Modi ji's dream project," said Shah after the inauguration.

The President also performed the ground-breaking ceremony for a sports complex in the stadium, to be named Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel sports enclave, for disciplines like football, hockey, basketball, kabaddi, boxing, and lawn tennis among others.

Shah said that a complex spread over an area of 17 acres of area with world-class facilities



President Ram Nath Kovind and Union Home Minister Amit Shah during the Bhumi Pujan of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Sports Enclave at Motera Stadium in Ahmedabad

ey, basketball, kabaddi, boxing, and lawn tennis among others.

The ambitious 215-acre project, under which 20 stadiums will be built will have accommodation facilities for athletes and coaches. Another sports complex is coming up in Naranpura for multi-disciplinary sporting events in future.

Spread over 63 acres, the stadium has been built at an estimated cost of ₹800 crore and with a seating capacity for 1,32,000 spectators, it has surpassed the hallowed Australia's Melbourne Cricket Ground which can accommodate 90,000.

Ahmedabad will emerge as India's sports city: Amit Shah

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday said that Ahmedabad in Gujarat would emerge as the country's "sports city" as world-class facilities for all kinds of games are being put in place here.

Shah made the statement after President Ram Nath Kovind inaugurated the Narendra Modi stadium.

The president also performed the ground-breaking ceremony of a sports complex in the stadium, to be named Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Sports Enclave, for disciplines like football, hockey, basketball, kabaddi, boxing, and lawn tennis among others.

Shah said that a complex spread over an area of 17 acres of area with world-class facilities



for different sports will also come up in Naranpura area of Ahmedabad.

"The Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Sports Enclave, the Narendra Modi stadium and the sports complex at Naranpura will offer complete facilities within the same city at the same place for any sports played internationally. With all these facilities, Ahmedabad will

be in a position to get ready within six months to host any international sports event," Shah said.

The minister said that the sports enclave will be available to play all the games that are played in Olympics, and it will have stadiums for football and hockey as well as an indoor stadium.

"Such sports facilities are not available in any other city in India at present. Ahmedabad, which Modiji transformed into India's heritage city, is now ready to become the country's sports city...Ahmedabad will be considered as India's sports city."

"With such sports infrastructure, Ahmedabad will be known as India's sports city, which is the dream that Prime Minister Narendra Modiji saw when he was the chief minister of Gujarat," Shah said.

Woods seriously injured in roll-over car crash



Workers move a vehicle after a rollover accident involving golfer Tiger Woods on Tuesday in Rancho Palos Verdes, a suburb of Los Angeles

AFP ■ LOS ANGELES

Tiger Woods suffered serious injuries to both legs as his car flew off the road on Tuesday near Los Angeles in a crash he was "very fortunate" to survive, law enforcement officials who found the US golf legend said.

Woods did not appear to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol during the early-morning incident, and underwent surgery after the roll-over collision, said Los Angeles County Sheriff Alex Villanueva.

No other vehicles or passengers were involved in the crash which occurred on a steep stretch of road known as a "hotspot" for high-speed accidents in recent years.

"I will say that it's very fortunate that Mr Woods was able to come out of this alive," said deputy Carlos Gonzalez, the first law enforcement official to arrive on scene.

Gonzalez found Woods trapped in his vehicle but conscious, appearing "calm and lucid" and able to identify himself.

"It is my understanding that he had serious injuries to

both legs," said Los Angeles County fire chief Daryl Osby.

Firefighters and paramedics extricated Woods from the wreckage of his SUV and transported him with a neck collar and backboard to a local hospital via road, where he underwent surgery.

There was "no evidence of impairment at this time" including any influence of narcotics, medication or alcohol, said Villanueva, adding that the crash remained "subject to investigation."

He added that no blood was drawn at the scene of the crash because the sheriff's office does not have that capability.

Woods, one of the most successful golfers of all time, has won 15 major golf championships.

He recently underwent his fifth back surgery, and said he was uncertain if he will be able to play at the upcoming Masters, which he last won in 2019.

Woods, 45, was in the area for his annual Genesis Invitational golf tournament at the Riviera Country Club, and was driving a courtesy car on the morning of the crash.

Advantage Chelsea

Giroud's bicycle kick gives Blues edge over Atletico

AFP ■ BUCHAREST

Olivier Giroud's magnificent bicycle kick broke Atletico Madrid's resistance and earned Chelsea a crucial away goal on Tuesday, a 1-0 victory giving Thomas Tuchel's side a slender advantage in the Champions League last 16.

Giroud's acrobatic strike was initially ruled out for offside but stood after VAR showed Mario Hermoso had got the final touch, delivering a huge blow to Atletico's hopes of reaching the quarter-finals.

"I didn't know what to think about the goal, I just focused on hitting the ball," said Giroud. "I love an overhead kick and I was just pleased to see the ball hit the back of the net. I had no clue about being



Olivier Giroud scores for Chelsea against Atletico Madrid in CL game

offside or not." Diego Simeone's side had put on a typically disciplined

defensive performance until that point but Giroud's moment of genius means they will have

to score in London on March 17 if they are to avoid an early exit.

It also continues a worrying dip for Atletico, whose lead in La Liga is also under threat after one win in four matches.

Chelsea, meanwhile, passed their biggest test since Tuchel was appointed at the end of January, backing up a strong run against lesser lights in the Premier League with a polished display against one of Europe's elite.

Giroud's goal in the 68th minute was only the third Atletico have conceded in 14 home legs of the Champions League knockout stages under Simeone, even if this fixture was at home only in name.

Their defeat makes it three home losses out of three for Spain's teams in the Champions League last 16 so far, after Barcelona were thrashed by Paris Saint-Germain and Sevilla were beaten by Borussia Dortmund last week.

Bayern rout Lazio

AFP ■ ROME

Holders Bayern Munich brushed off their recent poor domestic form by throwing down a Champions League marker with an emphatic 4-1 win at Lazio in Tuesday's last-16 first leg to take a "huge step" towards the quarter-finals.

Robert Lewandowski gave Bayern an early lead before 17-year-old Jamal Musiala scored his first Champions League goal on only his fourth appearance in Europe.

Lewandowski's strike was his 72nd Champions League goal, taking him solo third on the all-time list ahead of Real Madrid great Raul.

While, Stuttgart-born Musiala, who

turns 18 on Friday, is now the youngest English goalscorer in Champions League history.

A Leroy Sane strike gave Bayern a three-goal half-time cushion at the Stadio Olimpico before Francesco Acerbi scored an own goal just after the break.

"We are a huge step closer to the quarter-finals," Bayern coach Hansi Flick told Sky.

Joaquin Correa pulled a goal back early in the second half to give the scoreline some respectability for Lazio.

Simone Inzaghi's Lazio need a near miracle in the return game in Munich on March 17 to reach the last eight.

