

ANALYSIS 7

SHOULD THE GLOBAL DEBT PANDEMIC WORRY US?

MONEY 8

INDIA TO CLOCK 13.7 PC GROWTH IN FY '22, CONTRACT 7 PC THIS FISCAL

SPORTS 12

PITCH WAS GOOD, QUALITY OF BATTING WASN'T: KOHLI

HYDERABAD, FRIDAY FEBRUARY 26, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

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I DON'T DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN SMALL AND BIG ROLES: NANDITA

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US DIPLOMATS ASKED TO TAKE ANAL SWAB TESTS FOR COVID, CHINA DENIES

China's foreign ministry denied on Thursday that U.S. diplomats in the country had been required to take anal swab tests for COVID-19, following media reports that some had complained about the procedure. U.S. media outlet Vice on Wednesday cited a State Department official as saying the test was given in error and that China had said it would stop such tests on U.S. diplomats. "To my knowledge...China has never required U.S. diplomatic staff stationed in China to conduct anal swab tests," foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told a daily news briefing in Beijing.

**COVID NEGATIVE REPORT MANDATORY FOR PASSENGERS FLYING TO INDIA: AIR INDIA**

In the wake of a sudden rise of coronavirus cases, Air India Express on Thursday rolled out new guidelines for the passengers travelling to India making it mandatory for them to submit a valid negative COVID-19 RT-PCR test report on the website prior to their departure. It has also stated that the travellers are required to take coronavirus screening test "not more than 72 hours before departure". All passengers travelling to India must carry the original negative RT-PCR test report with the test conducted within 72 hours of the scheduled departure. Fill in the self-declaration form on the Air Suvidha portal.

**MURDER ACCUSED COOKED VICTIM'S HEART WITH POTATOES SERVED TO FAMILY**

A man accused of a triple murder in the US state of Oklahoma sliced one victim's heart from her body and cooked it with potatoes to serve to other victims before attacking them, US media reported Wednesday. The suspect, Lawrence Paul Anderson, allegedly removed the organ from the body of a neighbor he had stabbed to death, according to Oklahoma City News 4 TV and the Oklahoman newspaper. He allegedly then brought the heart to his uncle's home where he cooked it and tried to serve it to the uncle and his wife, investigators reportedly told the Grady County Court in Chickasha on Tuesday.

**JOE BIDEN REVOKES TRUMP BAN ON MANY GREEN CARD APPLICANTS**

U.S. President Joe Biden on Wednesday revoked a proclamation from his predecessor that blocked many green card applicants from entering the United States. Former President Donald Trump issued the ban last year, saying it was needed to protect U.S. workers amid high unemployment due to the coronavirus pandemic. Biden rejected that reasoning in a proclamation on Wednesday rescinding the visa ban. The Democratic president said it had prevented families from reuniting in the United States and harmed U.S. businesses.



New guidelines to curb 'misuse' of social media

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

jurisdiction.

The norms on social media come weeks after a spat between the government and Twitter over certain messages around farmer protests that the government saw as inciting violence. The government sought removal of about 1,500 accounts and messages, a request that Twitter complied with, only after being warned of penal action.

IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad on Thursday said concerns have been raised over rampant abuse of social

Social media companies are welcome to do business in India, and empower Indians... We welcome criticism and dissent... but it is important that users of social media are given a proper forum for resolution of their grievances in a time-bound manner," Prasad said

media platforms and spread of fake news.

"Social media companies are welcome to do business in India, and empower Indians... We welcome criticism and dissent... but it is important that users of social media are given a proper forum for resolution of their grievances in a time-bound manner," Prasad said.

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India is a large market for digital and social media companies and is witnessing strong growth on the back of booming smartphone sales and availability of dirt cheap data.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday said the government is committed to providing a level-playing field to all digital media and OTT platforms but they will have to abide by Indian laws.

Social media platforms must abide by Indian laws: Shah

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday said the government is committed to providing a level-playing field to all digital media and OTT platforms but they will have to abide by Indian laws.

Budget marks directional change for the economy: FM

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday said this year's budget has negated the notion that welfare state is a socialist prerogative, and added that it has given a directional change to the Indian economy, wherein the government trusts wealth creators and citizens.

She lauded the reform of faceless assessment for direct and indirect taxes, saying that tax terrorism will be a thing of the past, but also warned that "technology terrorism" will now gain ground.

"This is a budget for new decade. This budget clearly says- private sector we trust you and you are welcome to participate in the development of the



country. It's a budget in which we are recognising what a government can do or how far it can do... so it's a budget that gives directional change to the Indian economy."



Nadda visits Bankim's residence at Naihati

5



State to vaccinate 55L people in second phase from March 1

3

PNB SCAM CASE Nirav Modi loses extradition fight

UK judge rules he has case to answer in India

PNS ■ LONDON

In a comprehensive extradition win for the Indian authorities, a UK judge ruled on Thursday that fugitive diamantaire Nirav Modi not only has a case to answer in the Indian courts but that there is no evidence to suggest he would not receive a fair trial in India.

Nirav Modi, wanted in India on charges of fraud and money laundering in the estimated USD 2-billion Punjab National Bank (PNB) scam case,

HC asks govt to issue Covid bulletin within 24 hours

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana High Court on Thursday asked the state government to release Covid

bulletin from Friday. The HC directed the health department to resume issuing of Covid health bulletins "within 24 hours".

TRS govt filled 1.3 lakh posts, says KTR

ML MELLY MAITREYI

■ HYDERABAD

TRS working president KT Rama Rao, in an open letter on Thursday, gave again a break-up of the vacancies filled and jobs created in various government departments to expose what he called "the attempts of some opposition leaders to create confusion and chaos among the unemployed".

The Congress and BJP parties had started a new drama

of suppressing facts' about the recruitment to fill vacant posts in various government departments since 2014 with a game plan to mislead people, particularly youth, with lies and half truths, Rama Rao said.

"I presented the details of department-wise posts filled in the government through the media (on Wednesday). As per the information collected from the departments, 1,32,899 posts were filled from 2014 to 2020. I also said if any one has

The Cong and BJP parties had started a new drama of suppressing facts' about the recruitment to fill vacant posts

any doubts about Telangana Government's commitment, they could cross-check with the

departments concerned," he said.

However, it was unfortunate that, unable to digest the facts related to recruitment, even senior leaders like Jana Reddy were spreading lies. To set the record straight, the TRS working president gave in tabulated form details of the vacant posts filled in various departments through recruitment boards, along with his open letter.

2



Principal secretary IT Jayesh Ranjan handed over the SKOCH Award to IT Minister KT Rama Rao in Hyderabad on Thursday

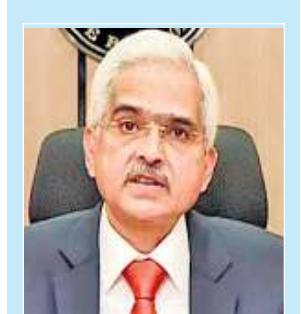
Newspapers ask Google for 85% ad revenue

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

An association of India's biggest newspapers on Thursday asked search giant Google to compensate them for carrying their content online and share 85 per cent of the ad revenues amid a widening global face-off between Big Tech and media companies.

In a letter to Google spurred by the closely-watched tussle between the Australian government and Facebook, the Indian Newspaper Society or INS, which represents around 800 publishers, said the US company "should pay for news generated by the newspapers which employ thousands of journalists".

"Since the content which is generated and published by newspapers at considerable expense is proprietary, the Society pointed out that it is this credible content which has given Google the authenticity in India ever since its inception," the INS said in a statement.



Need coordination between Centre & states: RBI Gov

8

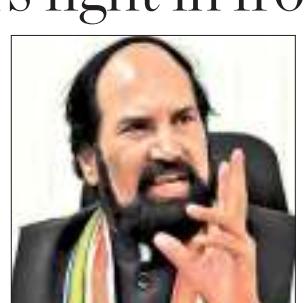
Cong leaders fight in front of Uttam

K VENKATESHWARLU

■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Congress' campaign meeting on Thursday for the Nalgonda-Khammam-Warangal Graduates' seat MLC polls ended in total chaos amidst tense moments, with rival factions clashing in front of TPCC chief Uttam Kumar Reddy at Mahabubabad.

The simmering differences among Congress factions of Dornakal and Mahabubabad came to a boil with irate members arguing and shouting down one another. Elections for the Nalgonda-Khammam-



MLC seat is scheduled for March 14. Congress leaders Ramchandru Naik, Nehru Naik from Dornakal as well as

President's rule imposed in Puducherry

PNS ■ PUDUCHERRY

Puducherry has been placed under President's rule days after the Congress-led government collapsed following multiple resignations.

The BJP and its allies did not stake claim to form government in the union territory, where polls are due in three months.

2

KTR adjudged best IT Minister in country

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

SKOCH group chairman Sameer Kochhar congratulated KTR and also the Government of Telangana. He urged the Government to continue to extend IT services to people. He congratulated the IT Minister and the government on the extensive use of IT in the state during the turbulent times of the pandemic.

This is in addition to the e-governance State of the Year Award presented by the SKOCH group -think tank dealing with socio-economic issues with focus on inclusive growth since 1997.

Yechury slams govt over rise in fares of short distance trains

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury on Thursday hit out at the government over the rise in the ticket fares of short-distance passenger trains, and accused it of being "disconnected" with the masses.



Traffic snarls dog Begumpet-Sec'bad road

Smooth ride for VIP convoys, agonising wait for aam admi

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Begumpet flyover leading to the Punjagutta junction. On Thursday too, the situation was more or less the same, indicating that traffic authorities just don't bother unless a VIP is scheduled to pass that way. Vehicles were stranded for several hours around noon along the Paradise to Begumpet stretch. The vehicles coming from Banjara Hills Road No 1 and 3 and those coming from Punjagutta flyover remained stranded. There was no scope for even ambulances to negoti-

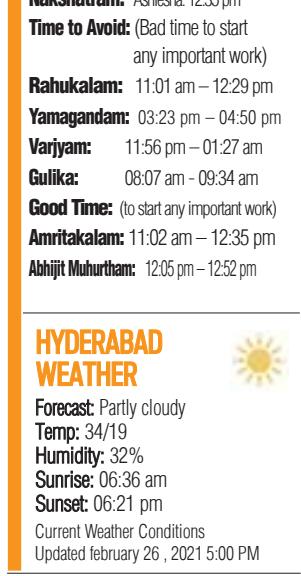


ate the traffic. Vehicle owners, at the end of their tether, were seen arguing with the police. They found fault with the police for

stopping the vehicles without giving minimum information about the movements of VIPs. The Begumpet road is usually

busy with traffic. If any large vehicle gets stranded by chance or is stopped for some VIP movement, it will complicate matters for others. Regulating traffic during the visits of VIPs would translate to simply stopping movement of all vehicles, except for the convoy of the VIP. Motorists and riders fume because they are stopped much in advance of the arrival of the convoy of the VIP concerned.

People travelling regularly along the route have lost all hopes that things will improve.



HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Partly cloudy

Temp: 34/19

Humidity: 32%

Sunrise: 06:36 am

Sunset: 06:21 pm

Current Weather Conditions Updated February 26, 2021 5:00 PM

TODAY ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:

Magha & Shukla Paksha

Panchangam

Tithi : Chaturdashi: 03:49 pm

Nakshatram : Ashlesha: 12:35 pm

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

Rahukalam: 11:01 am – 12:29 pm

Yamagandam: 03:23 pm – 04:50 pm

Variyam: 11:56 pm – 01:27 am

Gulika: 08:07 am – 09:34 am

Good Time: (to start any important work)

Amritakalam: 11:02 am – 12:35 pm

Abhijit Muhrum: 12:05 pm – 12:52 pm

State to vaccinate 55L people in second phase from March 1

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Health authorities in Telangana are making arrangements to administer the COVID-19 vaccine to 55 lakh people under the second phase of vaccination from March 1. With the Union government giving the green signal to administer COVID-19 vaccines for people above 60 years of age and those above 45 with comorbidities, the Health Department started making arrangements for administering the shot to beneficiaries in these two groups.

Health officials estimate that there are around 45 lakh people who are above 60 years old and about 10 lakh people in the 45-60 age group with co-morbidities in the state.

The department has decided to set up 1,500 centres across the state to cover both the target groups.

Authorities had initially worked out plans to vaccinate about 75 lakh people including 3.5 lakh healthcare employees, 2.5 lakh employees of various frontline departments, 65 lakh



people who are above 50 years and four lakh in 18-50 age group with comorbidities. However, with the Union government making some changes in the target groups, the overall number of beneficiaries came down by 14 lakh.

Telangana currently has six lakh doses of the vaccine and the Health Department expects to receive another 10 lakh doses in the next couple of

days, health officials informed.

Officials said that the vaccine will be administered at all government hospitals and 230 private hospitals linked with Aarogyasri Trust.

In addition, 1,000 primary health centres in rural and urban areas and Basti Dawakhana will also serve as vaccination centres.

The beneficiaries can register themselves on the Co-WIN

app by uploading an Aadhaar card as proof of age and voter card or any of 11 other identity cards.

Those with comorbidities have to submit a certificate from the doctors treating them. The beneficiaries can also choose the vaccination centre where they want to take the jab. However, they will not be given the option to choose the brand of vaccine. "Beneficiaries

will have to take whichever brand is available," an official said. Those with successful registration will receive a password on their mobile phones. They will also be sent an SMS, informing them about the date and time for taking the vaccine.

They will have to report to their respective vaccination centres and show their original identity cards and certificates in case of comorbidities to the officers concerned. They will also have to share the password.

Those who can't register themselves online can directly go to the vaccination centres and show their relevant documents to the staff, who will register them on the app.

Healthcare workers and employees of various frontline departments, who could not take vaccines earlier, will get a final chance to receive the shot from Thursday.

Health officials made it clear that all those who missed the vaccine will have to take it before March 1, when the next phase begins.

Additional Collectors were directed to inspect GPs and

Implement all new Acts with true spirit: Somesh to Addl Collectors

PNS ■ HYDERABAD



As per the directions of the Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar Rao, Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar has conducted a detailed meeting with Additional Collectors of Local Bodies (ACLBs) along with senior officers of Panchayat Raj and Municipal Administration Departments on Palle and Pattana Pragathi programmes on Thursday.

The Chief Secretary stated that Telangana State has brought new Acts for gram panchayats and municipalities, which has to be implemented in true spirit.

The post of Additional Collectors local bodies has been created to ensure that both the Acts are implemented. He reiterated the Chief Minister's vision to make every gram panchayat and Urban Local Body (ULB) clean, green and hygienic. Tractors, tankers and regular release of Rs 456 crores per month to gram panchayats and ULBs is completed early to ensure that there is no issue.

Additional Collectors were directed to inspect GPs and

ULBs to ensure that streets and drains are cleaned on daily basis. If there is any slackness by officials action would be taken.

A number of construction activities have been taken up like segregation and dumping sheds, Vydkantdhamas, integrated vegetarian and non-vegetarian markets. All these structures should be completed and made functional by March, 2021, Chief Secretary said.

Similarly for greening Palle Pragathi Vanam, tree parks, multi level avenue plantation should be taken up and completed.

As per the new Act, 10 per cent of the budget should be

used as green budget. Casualties should be replaced. Special effort should be taken to ensure survival of plants in coming summer season by using gram panchayat tractors and tankers.

In order to ensure transparent and hassle free building permission, TS-BPAS has been introduced. Additional Collectors were directed to ensure that early clearances should be given for building permission and also ensure that there are no encroachments.

Principal Secretary of MA&UD Arvind Kumar, Principal Secretary of GAD Vikas Raj and other officials attended the meeting.

CITY LIGHTS

Be careful while using social media, says Cyb CP Sajjanar



Cyberabad Police Commissioner CP Sajjanar stressed the need to exercise caution and vigil while using social media. Addressing an awareness seminar on Cyber Crimes and Financial Frauds, with a special focus on cyber-crimes against women organised by the Cyberabad Commissionerate on Wednesday, he emphasised on the constant vigilance that needs to be maintained by citizens to ensure they don't fall victim to cyber-crime. "We have to be very careful in using social media, online transactions, matrimony sites, etc as these are some of the common ways in which people can fall prey to cyber-crimes," he said. Sajjanar also spoke about the various technological ways in which the Commissionerate is now equipped to combat cyber-crime and said that nabbing perpetrators has now become relatively easier. The seminar was conducted in conjunction with Rotary Club, with Rotarian Dr Chetan Kumar moderating the online event. Rotary Club also assured Sajjanar that they will extend their support in spreading awareness on cyber-crime and ways to combat it.

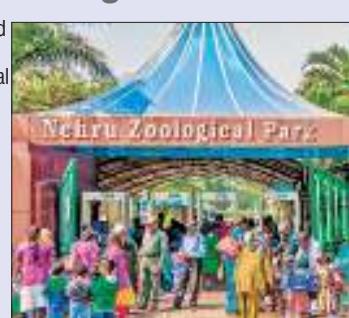
Free Sanskrit classes resume at Sri Sankara Vidyalayam

M arappally-based Sri Sankara Vidyalayam Primary School has resumed offering its free Sanskrit classes on Wednesday, after months-long Covid-induced lockdown. The school, established in 1968, has also initiated its plans to conduct online classes simultaneously. School principal C Sunder Reddy, in a press note, urged parents to send interested wards to the school for making the most of its unique Sanskrit classes. Interested adult learners also can attend the classes, which include building word banks with 'One word a day' and 'One sentence a day' modules.



2 children adopt 3 birds at Nehru Zoological Park

T wo children adopted five small birds at the Nehru Zoological Park in the city for a period of three months. According to the zoo officials, Sahasra Sri who is celebrating her birthday visited the zoo along with her brother, Charvik and parents, to adopt the birds and made a payment of Rs 5,000 online to the authorities on Thursday. Sahasra's father, Naresh, said both the kids were very fond of wild animals and thus, the family decided to adopt the birds on the occasion of her birthday. Zoo curator, VVL Subhadra Devi, appreciated the gesture shown by the children.



TS Physical Education Common Entrance Test notification issued

T he Telangana State Council for Higher Education (TSCHE) has issued a notification regarding the common entrance test (CET) for Bachelor of Physical Education (B.P.Ed) and Diploma in Physical Education (D.P.Ed) courses. This was announced at the first CET committee meeting held on Thursday under the supervision of TSCHE chairman, Prof T Papi Reddy. Accordingly, Telangana State Physical Education Common Entrance Test (TSPPECET - 2021) will be conducted by Mahatma Gandhi University, Nalgonda, on behalf of TSCHE and will serve as the mode of entry into the first year of the two courses for the academic year 2021-2022. Candidates who clear this test will be eligible for the courses in universities, private unaided and affiliated colleges in Telangana.



'Big cat' attacks goat herd, kills 4 in Vikarabad

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Panic gripped residents in Kulkacherla of Vikarabad after a wild animal, suspected to be a leopard, attacked a herd of goats, killing four in cattle shed at Cheruvumundali thanda on Thursday.

The big cat is suspected to have sneaked into a cattle shed and attacked the herd.

The animal fled the spot after dogs began barking. The incident came to light in the morning when the locals found the carcass of the goats a little away from the cattle shed and informed their shepherd. On being alerted, officials from the Forest Department began investigations.

The officials examined the spots where the big cat attacked the goats and are checking for traces including pug marks. They are also verifying footage from surveillance cameras in the surroundings. Based on further clues, a trap may be set up to catch the unidentified animal, officials said.

The order stated, "As per the building rules, the owner of an establishment has to provide parking to their employees and customers."

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana High Court on Thursday asked the Telangana state government to take a high-level decision on whether

to restore the historic Osmania Hospital building or rebuild it.

Disposing of a batch of public interest litigations (PIL) on Osmania General Hospital, the High Court asked the state gov-

ernment to let the court know its decision in four weeks. It asked the state government to keep in mind the rules against pulling down the heritage structures.

Citing the delay in taking the decision, the Telangana High Court asked the state government why it is not able to take a decision on the issue for the past five years.

The Telangana High Court directed the government to submit a comprehensive report to it including blue print of the Osmania General Hospital.

EVDM issues orders on collection of proper parking ticket fees in city

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Enforcement, Vigilance and Disaster Management (EVDM) wing of GHMC on Thursday has issued instructions to commercial establishments to ensure adherence to the parking policy in Hyderabad and other urban areas of Telangana.

The EVDM has issued these instructions to bring in uniform functioning and accountability, after many complained about illegal parking charges. On March 20, 2018, the Telangana government issued an order to regulate parking fees at all commercial establishments.

The order stated, "As per the building rules, the owner of an establishment has to provide parking to their employees and customers."

The EVDM had also inspected certain malls and multiplexes and found irregularities such as parking tickets not being issued to the customers and complete details not being written on the parking ticket such as date and time of parking.

"The department is issuing a format for the parking ticket system in which the name of the agency with the address and mobile number should be invariably be printed on the tickets," said the EVDM.

According to the format, for parking up to a duration of 30 minutes, no parking fee should be collected. For parking duration up to an hour, parking can be charged or can be free depending on whether the customer produces a bill of shopping done at the commercial estab-

lishment during the time of parking. For a parking duration of more than one hour, parking can be free if the customer produces a bill or a movie ticket more than the amount of the parking charge.

Further, the parking ticket should be handed over to the customer even if the parking amount is not applicable. A paid stamp should be marked, and if not exempted should be stamped. The EVDM has directed the parking agency to start this process within 15 days. The department also said that they will start the inspections and thereafter if the parking policy is seen violated, a penalty of Rs 50,000 per instance will be imposed under Sections 24 and 28 of the Telangana Apartments Act and Rules, 1987.

Wine shops with permit rooms flout norms

PNS ■ HYDERABAD



Excise officials, it has been alleged, are not accepting any charges against the wine shop owners, who are not maintaining the permit rooms according to the government orders and norms.

A few days ago a man belonging to the Old City died at a permit room in a mysterious manner, wh-

en he came to drink alcohol.

Allegations were made that he was beaten to death by the snacks' sellers in the permit room. But police did not support that claim.

Large numbers of snack sellers are however, doing business illegally in the permit rooms, thereby flouting the government norms

and they do so with the help of the wine shop owners.

At a given point in time nearly 10 to 15 snack sellers could be found in a permit room, recording sales of around one lakh rupees. Moreover, the food they sold lacked in quality, thereby affecting the health of the people consuming those.

Long queues could be spotted in front of the wine shops and the permit rooms, and people drinking in the permit rooms hardly maintained the Covid regulations. This negligence, health experts feel, could lead to second strain.

Moreover, the permit rooms should be under CCTV surveillance, so that any untoward incident could be spotted.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA

REVENUE (LAND ACQUISITION) DEPARTMENT FORM-VI

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION

(See rule 11 of rule 25 and Section 19(1) of the Act 30/2013)

Sub-Collector, Bhadrachalam, Land Acquisition Officer, Surveyor Major, Multi-Purpose Project, Re. No. C/16/10/2019-26 Date: 12/02/2021

District Collector, Bhadrachalam Kothagudem Date: 13/02/2021

District Gazette No. 83/23/2020 Date: 15/02/2021

Whereas it appears to the District Collector, Bhadrachalam Kothagudem that a total area of 2.36 Gha land is required in the Regd no. 26 Village, Chora Mandal of Bhadrachalam Kothagudem District for public purpose, namely, for the Construction of Seemangal Sagari Multi Purpose Project, therefore, a decision is made that a piece of land measuring, more or less 2.36 Gha of standard measurement under Land Acquisition for the above said project in the Regd no. 26 Village, Chora Mandal of Bhadrachalam Kothagudem District whose detailed description is as follows:

SCHEDULE

Sl. No.	Village, Gramapanchayat	Mandal	Town/ City	Date of Land	Area in Hectares	Name & Address of person interested	Tree Structure
1	35/2/35 Patta /J.B	Patta			0.04	Impa Sammakkai W/o China Ramudu	-
2	37/1/37 Patta /J.B	Patta			1.18	Impa Sammakkai W/o China Ramudu	-
2	35/33/35/3 /J.B	Govt Land			0.05	Govt Land	-
3	34/4/35/4 Patta /J.B	Patta			0.03	Impa Venkateswara Ramudu	-
4	36/1/36 Govt	Govt Land			1.08	Impa Venkateswara Ramudu	-
TOTAL							
2.38							

ABSTRACT

Sl. No.	Type of Land	Extent(Acres)
1	patta Land	1.25
2	Govt Land	1.13
TOTAL		2.38

India, Pak agree to follow ceasefire pacts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and Pakistan have agreed to strictly observe all agreements on ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC) and other sectors, according to a joint statement on Thursday.

The decision on ceasefire, effective since Wednesday midnight, was taken at a meeting between the Director Generals of Military Operations (DGMOs) of India and Pakistan.

India and Pakistan signed a ceasefire agreement in 2003, but it has hardly been followed in letter and spirit over past several years with more violations than observance of the pact.

The DGMOs held discussions over the established mechanism of hotline contact and reviewed the situation along the Line of Control and all other sectors in a "free, frank and cordial atmosphere".

"In the interest of achieving mutually beneficial and sustainable peace along the borders, the two DGMOs agreed to address each other's core issues and concerns which have propensity to



disturb peace and lead to violence.

Both sides agreed for strict observance of all agreements, understandings and cease fire along the Line of Control and all other sectors with effect from midnight of February 24/25," the joint statement said.

They also reiterated that existing mechanisms of hotline contact and border flag meetings will be utilised to resolve any unforeseen situation or misunderstanding, it added.

In written response to a question in Lok Sabha earlier this month, Union Minister of State for Home G Kishan

Reddy said a total of 10,752 cases of ceasefire violations have taken place along India's border with Pakistan in the last three years, in which 72 security personnel and 70 civilians were killed.

He said 364 security personnel and 341 civilians were injured in cross-border firings along the International Border and the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir in 2018, 2019 and 2020.

Last week, the armies of India and China which have been engaged in a border stand-off in eastern Ladakh concluded withdrawal of troops and

weapons from north and south banks of Pangong Tso in the high-altitude region.

However, issues still remain. In the talks held between Indian and Chinese armies on Saturday which continued till the wee hours of Sunday, India is learnt to have insisted on a faster disengagement process in areas like Hot Springs, Gogra and Depsang to bring down tension in the region.

The disengagement of armies of India and China from north and south banks of Pangong Tso is a "very good end result" and a win-win situation for both the sides. Army chief Gen M M Naravane said on Wednesday but stressed that there is a long way to go and the next steps towards it are de-escalation and de-induction of troops.

He also said there were no signs of an "overt collusion" between China and Pakistan during the Ladakh standoff but India caters to a long-term strategy for not a two, but a two-and-a-half front war. With the half front, he was referring to the internal security.

J-K parties welcome agreement

Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (JKNC) and the PDP on Thursday welcomed the agreement between the armies of India and Pakistan on ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC) and other sectors.

"We welcome it and hope that the statement will be followed in letter & spirit. JKNC has always been a strong supporter of the ceasefire along the LoC," the party said in a statement.

"This will allow people living along the LoC & IB (International Border) to go about their normal lives with minimal disruption & risk," the party said.

Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti in a tweet welcomed the ceasefire announcement and said dialogue was the only way forward.

"A big & welcome development that India & Pakistan have agreed to a

ceasefire along the LoC. Dialogue is the only way forward if both countries want to stop the unending cycle of violence & bloodshed across the borders and J&K," Mehbooba said.

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"This will allow people living along the LoC & IB (International Border) to go about their normal lives with minimal disruption & risk," the party said.

"In the interest of achieving mutually beneficial and sustainable peace along the borders, the two DGMOs agreed to address each other's core issues and concerns which have propensity to disturb peace and lead to violence," according to the joint statement.



Cong joined hands with Ajmal for 'lust for power': Amit

PNS ■ BORDUWA

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday attacked the Congress for joining forces with Badruddin Ajmal's AIUDF in Assam because of its "lust for power".

The Congress' "greed" to capture power in the state will remain unfulfilled and the BJP along with its ally Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), which symbolises Assamese identity, will win the assembly polls with a two-thirds majority, Shah told a public rally at Borduwa, the birthplace of Srimanta Sankardeva, a 16th century saint, scholar and religious reformer, in Nagaon district.

Congress leaders are sighted in the state only during elections and later get busy making rounds of the corridors of power in New Delhi to fulfil their vested interests, he alleged.

Prime Minister Modi will never turn his back on Assam and the North East, and will go to any extent to make the region a growth engine of the country, he said.

It is with this intention that Modi visited different states of the North East at least 35 times during the last five years, Shah said.

"The prime minister wants to take the region forward on the path of progress and make it free from corruption, violence and infiltration," he asserted.

The home minister extolled Srimanta Sankardeva for his role in unifying Assam with the rest of the country more than 500 years ago which prompted Mahatma Gandhi to remark that it was he who initiated 'Ram Rajya' in the state. The spirit will be rekindled, he said.

Shah had, during an earlier visit to Guwahati on December 26 last year, remotely laid the foundation stone for the development and beautification of Badravati Than at Borduwa, the birth place Sankardeva at an estimated cost of Rs 188 crore.

The Than, a Vaishnavite monastery, is being developed as a centre of art, culture, research and spirituality.

INDIA CORNER

PM Modi pays tributes to social reformer Mannathu Padmanabhan

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday paid tributes to Mannathu Padmanabhan on his death anniversary, and recalled the social reformer's long lasting contributions towards social welfare and youth empowerment. "Tributes to Sri Mannathu Padmanabhan Ji on his Punya Tithi. We recall his long lasting contributions towards social welfare and youth empowerment. His rich thoughts continue to motivate many," Modi tweeted. Mannathu Padmanabhan was a social reformer and freedom fighter from Kerala. He is recognised as the founder of the Nair Service Society (NSS).



TN govt announces 'all pass' for Class 9, 10

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Students of class 9, 10 and Plus One in Tamil Nadu will not have to take the exams, Chief Minister K Palaniswami announced in the assembly on Thursday as he declared them "all pass" this academic year in view of the Coronavirus pandemic.

"Taking into consideration the unusual situation being faced by teachers and students, the views of parents, besides the opinion of experts, the students of standards 9, 10 and 11, facing the annual/board exams in 2020-21 education year, are announced as passed without writing the examinations," the chief minister said.

Throughout the year the students were taught through the state-run Kalvi Tholaikatchi (education TV channel).

"The syllabus was downsized by taking into account the practical difficulties of the teachers and students," Palaniswami added.

As the entire world battled against the pandemic, the Tamil Nadu government ordered the closure of schools to prevent the spread of the virus.

"The schools were ordered to close from March 25, 2020, to contain the spread of the pandemic and were reopened only for classes 10 and 12 on January 19, after Coronavirus was brought under control considerably," Palaniswami said.

Students who came to school were given vitamin and zinc tablets in order to enhance their immunity.

Cooperation of constitutional bodies vital, says Speaker

PNS ■ SHILLONG

It is important for all constitutional institutions to complement and cooperate with each other for a strong democracy, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said on Thursday.

He was addressing the members of the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly.

"Democracy can be strengthened only when all constitutional institutions work in tandem and cooperate with each other within their respective constitutional jurisdictions. All the institutions should complement each other," he said.

"There can be dissent during discussions but we should not reach an impasse. Our dis-



cussions should lead to the welfare of the people of the country," the Speaker added.

Birla, who is currently on a two-day visit to Meghalaya, said one of his foremost priorities in Parliament was to make women, young and newly-elected MPs aware of various parliamentary conventions and practices.

"I always promote and welcome their active participation in debates and discussions that take place in the

House. It is very important to ensure the capacity-building of the members to pave way for constructive debates in Parliament," he said.

The Speaker also talked about some of the new initiatives being taken in Lok Sabha to enhance the practical knowledge of the members, including briefing sessions on the bills being introduced in the lower house.

He advised that similar programmes should be organised in the legislative assemblies as well.

Birla also talked about PRISM, a new service that was introduced in Parliament during the Budget Session, to provide MPs with parliamentary research and information support.

Rajkummar Rao, Bhumi wrap up shoot for film 'Badhaai Do'

Actors Rajkummar Rao and Bhumi Pednekar have finished shooting for their schedule of the upcoming comedy "Badhaai Do". Backed by Junglee Pictures, the film is a sequel to the National Award-winning hit "Badhaai Ho". It is directed by Harshvardhan Kulkarni, who helmed the Gulshan Devaiya-starrer comedy "Hunterrr" (2015). Rao and Pednekar were shooting the film for almost two months in Mussoorie and Dehradun. The official handle of Junglee Pictures posted a video on Instagram, featuring the cast and crew of "Badhaai Do" announcing the completion of the schedule on the lines of the viral "Pawri ho rahi hai" trend. "This is our team. This is their madness. And here we are having our schedule wrap up pawri," the post read. The upcoming film is written by Suman Adhikary and Akshat Ghildial, who had co-written "Badhaai Ho". "Badhaai Do" marks the first collaboration between Rao and Pednekar. Rao, 36, features in the film as a cop, while 31-year-old Pednekar will be seen in the role of a PT Teacher. "Badhaai Ho!", the original movie, chronicled the story of a middle age couple, played by Neena Gupta and Ganesh Rao, facing unexpected pregnancy. The 2018 film, also featuring Ayushmann Khurrana, Surekha Sikri, and Sanya Malhotra, was directed by Amit Ravidernath Sharma. It won two National Awards for best popular film providing wholesome entertainment and best supporting actress for Sikri.

5 killed, 6 hurt in fireworks factory blast in Tamil Nadu

Five people were killed and six injured in an explosion at a fireworks factory near Sivakasi in the district on Thursday, police said. More than ten sheds where chemicals had been stored were razed to the ground in the mishap, the second such incident this month in a cracker manufacturing unit in this region, the country's fireworks hub. Fire and Rescue service teams battled the blaze in the unit at Kalayur Kurichi, police said, adding the injured were rushed to hospitals. The cause of the explosion was not known immediately. More than 20 people had died and around 30 injured in a major explosion in a fireworks unit at Achanakulam village near Sattur in this district on February 2.

Four killed in Chandrapur district after tempo overturns

Four persons were killed and 14 others were injured when a tempo carrying passengers overturned in Maharashtra's Chandrapur district on Thursday, police said. The victims were returning to Ekara from Ratnapur after a wedding. The tempo driver lost control of the vehicle near Kachepur village under Sindewahi police station limits and it turned turtle, said assistant police inspector Yogesh Ghare. Some 30 persons were traveling in the vehicle, he said, adding that four of them died on the spot. The deceased were identified as Raghunath Koram (41), Sahl Koram (14), both from Ekara; Kavita Borkar (30), resident of Sakoli and Rani Gan (27) from Chirnum tehsil. The injured were shifted to a hospital in Chandrapur while a case of rash and negligent driving was registered against the tempo driver who fled from the spot, the police official said.

Nadda visits Bankim's residence at Naihati

PNS ■ KOLKATA

BJP chief J P Nadda on Thursday visited the ancestral house of novelist and poet Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay at Naihati in North 24 Parganas district.

Accompanied by state BJP president Dilip Ghosh, national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya, and party MP Arjun Singh, Nadda went to the house, where Chattopadhyay was born and paid floral tributes to him.

Nadda said he was fortunate to visit the birthplace of the great novelist who inspired people through his works during India's quest for freedom.

"Vande Mataram", the national song of the country, was penned by Chattopadhyay.

"His work instilled self-esteem among the people of the country and also stirred the spirit of nationalism to take out India from the clutches of colonial rule," he said.

Later, he left for lunch at the residence of a jute mill worker.



The BJP president said that the novelist's creations will inspire the saffron party to usher in 'Sonar Bangla' (golden Bengal).

He also visited the museum adjacent to the house and saw the archival documents.

Nadda also said icons like Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, Chattopadhyay and Syama Prasad Mukherjee, had all given a sense of direction to the country.

Later, he left for lunch at the residence of a jute mill worker.

Sena questions Centre over thaw in trade ties with China

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Shiv Sena on Thursday slammed the Centre saying that on the one hand it called for a boycott of Chinese products and banned some apps of that country after the border standoff, on the other hand the neighbouring country emerged as India's top trading partner in 2020.

The party also said that while the government is once again laying a red carpet for Chinese firms, it should not forget that China is an "untrustworthy and unreliable" neighbour.

"The border tension between India and China de-escalated last week. The tension in trade ties between the two countries also looks set to reduce. There is a possibility that 45 Chinese companies will be given permission to work in India. In short, the tough stand taken by the Modi government after the COVID-19 outbreak towards the Chinese companies and their investment seems to be easing," the Sena said in an editorial in party mouthpiece 'Saamana'.

Politics and diplomatic relations with other countries keep changing as per the circum-

stances, it said.

"But is it just coincidence that the Centre has softened its stand towards the Chinese trade after the de-escalation of tension on the border?" it asked.

Over the last eight months, the border conflict had turned severe. After the Chinese aggression, fierce conflict in the Galwan Valley, India and China reached an agreement on disengagement in eastern Ladakh last week. But soon after that it emerged that the trade ties between the two countries are thawing, it said.

The Uddhav Thackeray party said that China is the most "unreliable and untrustworthy" neighbour and though it has laid for 45 Chinese firms now?

Another plea in HC on same sex marriages

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bansal sought response of the Centre on the joint plea by three men and a woman, who have urged the court to also declare that the SMA applies, regardless of sex, to any two persons who wish to marry by reading down any gender or sexuality-based restrictions contained in the Act.

In their plea, filed through advocates Meghna Mishra and Tahira from Karanawala and Co law firm, the petitioners have also sought that the provisions in the SMA which require a 'male' and a 'female' for solemnisation of a marriage be declared as unconstitutional.



tion raised by Leader of the Opposition Dharmal Kausik.

Sahu said. The minister also informed that 79 Naxals were killed in encounters and 315 surrendered in 2019, while 41 ultras were killed and 344 surrendered in 2020. He said out of Rs 28.88 crore (collective) com-

pensation which was supposed to be given to the kin of these deceased personnel, Rs 26.63 crore has been disbursed while Rs 2.25 crore is yet to be given.

Of the 36 deceased personnel belonging to the state police, compensatory money has been given in 29 cases, the minister said in his reply.

The above mentioned compensation includes the insurance money and ex-gratia given by the state government to the kin of the central security forces personnel killed in the state in Naxal violence," he said.

A bench of



Slip of the tongue?

Rahul's remarks in Kerala, if made off the cuff, should not lead to a 'divisive politics' slugfest

Whether it was the heat of the moment or well-considered action, only the Gandhi scion would know. But the bullet has been fired and now it is for Rahul and the Congress to bear the recoil. At a recent rally in Kerala, Rahul said: "For the first 15 years, I was a Member of Parliament from the North, so I had got used to a different type of politics. For me, coming to Kerala was very refreshing because suddenly I found that people (here) are interested in issues, and not just superficially but in detail." Whether it will reap dividends or prove counterproductive to the 'Grand Old Party' in the forthcoming Assembly elections is best left to the wisdom of voters but Rahul's latest statement has provided the BJP with fresh fodder to attack the Congress. To be fair, Rahul is not known for making statements that reek of divisive politics: He is straightforward, to the point and plain, and this is what makes him vulnerable. His statements often lend themselves to the creation of memes, courtesy Information Technology (IT) cells affiliated to other political parties who strive hard to prove that Rahul doesn't have the "potential" to be a leader, forget about becoming the Prime Minister in future. However, if the statement was made after due consideration, it's probably time for him to think about changing his advisors. What he said, could still have been conveyed without generating a controversy had he been a little more careful with his choice of words.



On the face of it, there is nothing inappropriate in the statement unless implied meanings are derived from it. But such derivations are common in politics and if Rahul is ignorant of it, it's his fault. Going by the adage that "politics is all about opportunity", senior BJP leaders jumped at the chance and accused the Congress leader of indulging in divisive politics for gains in the Kerala elections. In a country where leaders regularly stoop to new lows and then get away by claiming that they didn't actually mean what they said, Rahul's comment is nothing to make such a hullabaloo about. Our heads still drop in shame when we are reminded of remarks like "khaki underwear" by Azam Khan or when Mulayam Singh Yadav justified rape, saying "Boys err at times, wrong to hang rapists", or even Lalu Prasad's boastful remark that "Bihar's roads would be made like the cheeks of Hema Malini". Now, Rahul has cancelled his Left-Congress joint rally in Bengal, apparently to focus more on Kerala. It could be that the southern State seems more promising to him since the Congress' prospects are rather bleak in West Bengal where the fight is directly between the TMC and the BJP. Well, while Rahul is caught in a storm, the Congress old guard have come up with some sound advice, with Kapil Sibal saying the "wisdom of the electors" should be respected for they know "who to vote for and why". With leaders of such acumen, balance and maturity still serving the party, one wonders why Rahul doesn't seek their advice before making such foot-in-the-mouth remarks. Could it be something to do with the internal fault lines? Let's leave it for the Congress to decide.

PIC TALK



A gun store owner holds a rifle in Americana, Brazil

AP

Blood on hands

Over 6,500 migrants, including 2,711 Indians, have died working on Qatar's World Cup-related projects

It's called "The beautiful game". The loftiest event of the sport, known as the World Cup, garners the maximum number of viewers in any discipline of any sporting contest across the globe. The "greatest spectacle on Earth" involves glamour, charisma, passion, super-human athleticism, national pride and, certainly not the least, zillions of dollars for the host country as well as for the Zurich-headquartered Federation of International Football Association (FIFA) in television broadcast and other rights. The FIFA World Cup taxes the host nation a lot in terms of manpower, infrastructure and other facilities, but the monetary returns far outweigh the cost input and the moolah raked in is a purse bigger than what you'd see from any other event, even the Olympics. And Qatar is the proud host of the next edition of the World Cup in November 2022. But behind all the glitz and razzmatazz of the shiny stadia and the spruced setup in the Persian Gulf nation, is a sordid tale of hardships, torture and human rights abuse, ending in death. According to *The Guardian*, thousands of migrant workers have died in Qatar since it was unexpectedly chosen as the host for the extravaganza in December 2010.

More than 6,500 migrant labourers from five South Asian countries — India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have died, on an average of 12 deaths each week, according to the British daily. While 2,711 of those who died hailed from India, Nepali workers accounted for 1,641 deaths, followed by Bangladesh at more than 1,000 and Pakistan 824. With inconsistent and imprecise records, it is difficult to assess the exact causes for the deaths but official records range from "blunt trauma" to "asphyxia" and "hanging", though the most common is "natural death". The actual toll is likely to be significantly higher given that the analysis did not include deaths from other countries known to send large numbers of workers to Qatar, such as Kenya and the Philippines. It is likely that a significant number of the total deaths occurred on projects related to the World Cup as Qatar has undertaken a massive construction programme to prepare for the tournament, including building seven stadiums, a new airport as well as broad additions to its public transportation network. It's time for the Indian Government, as well as the United Nations Human Rights Council, to finally take cognisance of the pitiable working and dwelling conditions of migrant workers in Qatar and censure it severely.

PROTECT COVID VACCINES FROM MAFIA

Sir — It is indeed great that the Government has decided to involve private hospitals in the vaccination drive. The step was much needed as it is almost impossible to vaccinate such a large population as ours through the Government machinery only.

The Government cares for the elderly population, that's why it took the decision that everyone above 60 years of age and those over 45 years with comorbidities will be able to get COVID-19 vaccines from March 1 for free in 10,000 Government medical facilities and for a charge at over 20,000 private hospitals. However, how much this charge will be is yet to be seen. The Government must ensure that private hospitals do not charge "too much" for the jabs.

It is often seen that corrupt employees of Government hospitals, often in collusion with private entities, create such a scenario that medicines are not available in hospital pharmacies or run out of stock while these are sold at exorbitant prices by private ones. If the COVID vaccine meets the same fate, it will be unfortunate and the ambitious programme will fall flat. Meanwhile, we must not be ready to dole out whatever cost the private hospitals quote for the jab. The private hospitals often take undue advantage as we want to avoid long queues in Government hospitals just to save time. We must remember that they charge extra only because we are ready to pay it.

M Pradyu | Kannur

IT'S DO-OR-DIE SITUATION FOR INDIANS

Sir — It refers to the editorial 'Continuing travails' (February 25). With several States reporting a surge in COVID-19 cases, it is high time that the RT-PCR test should be made mandatory for entry into all States. There should also be reasonable restrictions over interstate movement while unnecessary movement should not be allowed at all.

The increase in Coronavirus cases is because many people have stopped following

Beat the stress but not on driver's seat



It's unfortunate that world-renowned golfer Tiger Woods got injured in a dramatic rollover crash involving his SUV. The American golfer was lucky to get immediate help from the authorities present nearby. Accidents can be avoided if necessary precautions are taken. In any accident, first aid and timely help matters a lot.

In India, we see that people are largely indifferent towards road accident victims. This is because they don't want to land in any sort of trouble or unnecessary questioning by the police. They are not completely wrong, for the police often misbehaves with those who help road accident victims. Instead of commanding or boasting their morale, the cops usually look upon them as suspects.

Many personalities from the fields of sports and films must be used to driving at high speeds to cope with the tension and stress they face in their daily lives. But rather than driving madly and crazily, there are several other ways to chill out and beat stress. Playing indoor games, spending time with children, taking water therapy like a deep plunge into water bodies, visiting natural vistas and watering a garden are some of these ways. People from all walks of life must visit natural places like pristine forests for getting rejuvenated. We wish good health and recovery to Tiger Woods!

P Senthil | Mumbai

Letters to the Editor

SOUND BITE

Since the last three months, the price of domestic LPG has increased by ₹200 while petrol and diesel are inching towards ₹100. The Modi Government is batting for its billionaire friends from both ends while the common man is suffering.

Congress leader
— Priyanka Gandhi

Law enforcement forces have prevented 72 terrorist crimes in the country in 2020, up from 57 a year earlier.

Russian President
—Vladimir Putin

Bollywood producers neither have the money nor talent to cater to audiences who want something beyond the popular and the mainstream.

Actor
—Abhay Deol

The IOC Future Host Commission recommended that the executive committee initiate a targeted dialogue with Brisbane and the Australian Olympic Committee for the organisation of the 2032 Olympics.

IOC president
—Thomas Bach

The Assembly proceedings will not be conducted on notified Government holidays during the upcoming Budget session of the Assembly.

Goa Chief Minister
—Pramod Sawant

West Bengal and Bangladesh



PRAFULL GORADIA

There has been a major change in people's thinking ahead of State poll; even the most secular of them fear that Bengal might become another Bangladesh

As lucidly brought out by Timur Kurhan, a Turkish American economist who teaches at the Duke University, the practice of Islam inhibits business growth and, therefore, does not enable economic progress or development. The prohibition of usury is an example. This explains why Islamic societies have not been economically productive. Therefore, they had to become adept at the conquest of other lands in search of resources.

Bangladesh has an added handicap. For centuries, the Bengali elite was more landowning than business-running. The Bangladeshi culture took its cue from the Bengali elite. Islam is a comprehensive prescription for living, including politics, with the *Quran* as the ultimate reference point. No Muslim ruler could deviate from that path. Ideally, *jamhuriyat* (consensus) was the solution. Monarchy, autocracy and oligarchy were the only alternatives which left democracy no space.

Sheikh Hasina Wazed somehow fights elections. She has won four terms in all, is relatively secular and grateful to India for the freedom of Bangladesh. Her predecessor, Begum Khaleda Zia, was not. Khaleda's husband Ziaur Rahman was almost pro-Pakistani, being a Muslim *ashraf* (a descendant of Prophet Muhammad). But what after Hasina Wazed retires or relinquishes power? Would not there be a change in the country's foreign policy, especially *vis-à-vis* India?

It is uncanny that the Bengali Hindu elite founded a Hindu political ideology. Raj Narain Bose is reputed to have coined the term "Hindutva", or at least used it for the first time in 1863. He was the grandfather of Yogi Aurobindo Ghosh. The Hindu Anushilan Samiti was founded and functioned only in Bengal, with even the great poet Rabindranath Tagore being its leading light. The movement against the partition of Bengal in 1905 was largely led by Yogi Aurobindo and actively supported by Tagore. The Bengal Renaissance was a Hindu phenomenon.

After Independence, the Nehruvian ethos and the appeasement of Muslims for their votes inflated this trend. The Partition, which displaced many Hindus, did not lead to any real antagonism against Muslims in Bengal in its immediate aftermath as well as later. So much so that being associ-



ated with the RSS, the Hindu Mahasabha or the Jana Sangh became infra dig. The Hindu political movement could not throw up a popular leader after Syama Prasad Mookerjee died mysteriously in Kashmir. Jana Sangh leader Haripada Bharati was respected but without mass appeal. The secular show persisted and infiltrators from Bangladesh were encouraged for their votes.

Yet, the Islamist penny dropped at last in the Bengali Hindu mind. Clearly a revolutionary change is taking place that may well have a reaction across the border in Bangladesh. There has been a cataclysmic change in the thinking of people in West Bengal with the approaching Assembly elections. It is truly a metamorphosis because, for decades, West Bengal has both resisted the domination of what the *bhadralok* would call a "Hindu heartland party" and has prided itself on its avowedly secular outlook; the Bengali identity has been preponderant over the religious one.

However, the incessant mollycoddling of the religious minority and even the most radical jihadist elements has slowly but surely brought on an about-turn in the Bengali mind. So much so that being associ-

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FIRST COLUMN

COVID LESSONS FOR ENTREPRENEURS

It's vital to be calm, think rationally and make decisions that affect your work environment positively



PRITIKA SINGH

The year 2020, and the Coronavirus outbreak that dominated it, set everyone back, whether it was work or life. However, the contagion's economic impact was felt more than the social one. The financial implications of the pandemic had everyone in a tizzy, confused and thinking, will I make it? Will I survive? It took a toll on the global economy, businesses, work, personal affairs at home and made everyone question and rethink their priorities and then put them in survival mode. One of the key takeaways from the outbreak, especially for entrepreneurs leading organisations was: Invest in your mental health. That is and should be a priority. If you have peace of mind, in spite of everything else falling, crumbling around you, half the battle is won. It's important to be calm, think rationally and make decisions that affect your health and your work environment in a positive way.

The healthcare sector was overwhelmed when the pandemic hit the country. Doctors and nurses were overworked as was the other hospital staff. People were in a state of panic. However, there is no overcoming something if you are in a constant state of flux. This is especially true of leaders tasked with guiding an organisation. They have to come to grips with the reality that the pandemic will stay for a long time and the only way to work and move forward is to be transparent with staff, hear them out, value their inputs and look after them.



The biggest change that the outbreak brought to our lives was the need to maintain social distancing, which gave birth to the culture of work from home (WFH). Hospitals were overflowing with Coronavirus patients and medical professionals were in constant contact with people, other than patients. It was important for most medical facilities to cut down on administrative staff and allow WFH in order to curb the spread of the contagion. This move gave doctors and nurses free movement, enabled quick decisions and resulted in quicker turnarounds.

As the CEO of a hospital, it was amazing to see people adapt to two roles and the extra workload more efficiently and quickly. It made one realise that the biggest learning from the pandemic was WFH. It changed the way we function as human beings and value the time and effort that someone else puts in. It also increased efficiency and kept employees and their families safe.

There was a lesson for leaders as well. If you take tough but benevolent decisions when you are the head of an organisation, people value you more, respect you and put in that extra bit to make sure that the company succeeds. Cutting down on manpower and cost-cutting is never the solution. The mental health of staff is very important, not just good salaries and, employees run a company based on the top leadership's vision.

Another lesson that the contagion taught us was the fact that women, who have always been a stabilising and calming factor in society, are equally adept at dealing with an emergency. During this pandemic, women COVID warriors, frontline workers, office-goers, homemakers and Government employees rose to the occasion and in some cases were leading from the front.

Lastly, technology has come to the rescue of mankind as we have been forced to change the way we work, handle documents, process information, hold meetings, seminars and even deliver healthcare. One also has to realise that even though we are in this situation right now, it will change and things will go back to normal. But for now, we need to learn and adapt to this so-called new normal. Entrepreneurs, especially women leaders, have to learn and grow from this.

(The writer is CEO, Prayag Hospital. The views expressed are personal.)



AMIT KUMAR

India needs a standard metric for the social cost of GHG

We must also develop a metric for quantifying the social cost of other components so that the impact of local air pollution, too, can be monetised for policy formulation

Actions on the climate change front are again in the news in the US after President Joe Biden took charge. One of his first executive orders pertained to reassembling a federal, cross-Government team to figure out the "social cost of carbon."

So, what is the social cost of carbon (SCC) or of Green House Gases (GHG)? SCC is the present value of future harm caused by an incremental ton of carbon dioxide emissions.

It is difficult to estimate SCC because carbon emissions, climate change, and economic harm are related through complex processes that are not fully understood. Additionally, the rate at which to discount future harm is contentious and critical to the magnitude of the present value.

The writer is Senior Director, Social Transformation, TERI. The views expressed are personal.

As per the Interagency Working Group on Social Cost of Carbon, the US Government's technical support document 2010: "The SCC is an estimate of the monetised damages associated with an incremental increase in carbon emissions in a given year. It is intended to include (but is not limited to) changes in net agricultural productivity, human health, property damages from increased flood risk and the value of ecosystem services due to climate change."

It is a well-established fact that consequent to climate change, countries face a slew of adverse impacts; damages that are not adequately quantified while assessing these impacts. Developing economies like India are going to bear an unduly larger share of such

impacts. An analysis of the Climate Risk Index (CRI), 2021, shows India to be among the top 10 most affected countries in 2019 on account of climate change-induced extreme weather events.

India's annual monsoon season continued for a month longer than usual. From June to the end of September 2019, 110 per cent of the normal rainfall occurred, a record since 1994.

According to the CRI, the floods caused by the heavy rains were responsible for 1,800 deaths across 14 States and led to the displacement of 1.8 million people. Overall, 11.8 million people were affected by the intense monsoon season with the economic damage estimated to be \$10 billion.



Furthermore, with a total of eight tropical cyclones, 2019 was one of the most active Northern Indian Ocean cyclone seasons on record. Six of the eight cyclones intensified to become "very severe."

The worst was Cyclone Fani that occurred in May 2019 and impacted a total of 28 million people, killing nearly 90 people in India and

Bangladesh and causing economic losses of \$8.1 billion. Then, there are other consequences in terms of impacts on human health and on food security, to name a few.

The relation between fossil fuels and climate change, too, is now accepted beyond any doubt. However, while carrying out the cost-benefit analysis of different options to replace fossil fuels, these damages — also known as "externalities" — are either not taken into account or remain fuzzy. And that is where a tool like the SCC may help.

As per the Institute for Policy Integrity, the SCC is "a metric designed to quantify and monetise climate damages, representing the net economic cost of carbon dioxide emissions."

In a country like ours that is trying to transition to

clean energy through its ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in terms of emission-intensity reductions and quantum increase in non-fossil electricity; it is imperative that policymaking and regulatory frameworks are informed by scientific evidence.

This, in turn, demands a methodology to quantify the impacts that are based on verifiable numbers and are standardised across sectors.

But even more importantly, it is developed in an academically rigorous, transparent and peer-reviewed process so as to have universal acceptability.

And that is where an inter-agency or an inter-ministerial approach helps in forging a joint ownership. Given that this is not a one-time exercise, a formal mech-

anism needs to be put in place.

The Apex Committee for Implementation of Paris Agreement (AIPA) constituted by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MoEFCC) may very well provide such a unified platform. The mechanism must also provide for engaging with the public and other stakeholders in an ongoing fashion.

Going forward, we should aim at not only developing a metric for quantifying the social cost of GHG but also of other components so that the impact of local air pollution, too, can be holistically monetised from a policy formulation perspective. It is time that such complex matters attract a more science-based approach, thereby obviating any kind of biases.

Should the global debt pandemic worry us?



GOVIND BHATTACHARJEE

As long as primary Budget deficits are not too large, the main problem is to stabilise public debt, independent of the size of the economy so that it may not go beyond control

The previous decade saw the fastest increase in debt in emerging economies in the last 50 years. The IMF estimated that global public debt at the end of 2020 would touch 98 per cent of the GDP, and India's gross Government debt would be at 90 per cent of the GDP. According to the IMF's *Fiscal Monitor*, the debt-to-GDP ratio exceeds 100 per cent in most OECD countries and close to 100 per cent in emerging ones. Among the major economies, only China (66.5 per cent), Australia (70 per cent) and Germany (72 per cent) have fared better. The problem economies of Italy and Greece have seen debt levels rising to 158 per cent and 200 per cent of the GDP, respectively, while Japan's debt is 264 per cent. From 2021 onwards, global debt will rise higher than in the pre-COVID times. A credible medium-term fiscal framework is essential to combat rising debt, but with the pandemic still out of control, additional revenue mobilisation necessary for public spending on health and infrastructure is now more difficult than ever before in most developing countries. The saving grace is that borrowing is now cheap, thanks to the interest rates falling to exceptionally low levels and is expected to remain lower than the growth rates in most countries. According to S&P Global, in 2023, growth will outpace interest rates not only in all rich countries, but also in 53 out of 60 emerging economies. The "growth-corrected interest rate", the differential between interest and nominal growth rates, will be -3.6 per cent in India, -6.5 per cent in China and -33.8 per cent in Argentina.

This legitimately raises the question, should emerging economies also rethink their fiscal limits? *The Economist* quoted India's budgeted fiscal deficit of 9.5 per cent of the GDP this fiscal year with no road map to bring it below the three per cent limit prescribed by the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act, while it noted that the latest *Economic Survey* had also highlighted that India's interest rate has been below its growth rate "by norm, not by exception", and its assertion that higher debt and fiscal spending during an economic crisis should not cause unnecessary worries. But Fitch Ratings, noted that in the last decade, the average interest rate had fallen from four per cent to two per cent in developed economies, while across emerging markets, it had increased from 4.3-5.1 per cent. Thus the benefits of lower rates are mostly available to rich nations.

The classical Domar Model lays down two conditions for sustainability of Government debt: First, the nominal growth rate should exceed the interest rate on public debt and, second, the primary account of the Government, which means taking out the interest payment, should not have any deficit. If both conditions are satisfied, the debt stock in GDP will decrease fast, and even if the primary account has a deficit, it will ultimately converge to a sustainable level. But if the growth rate lags behind the interest rate, then public debt will increase indefinitely to be unsustainable. Thus public debt can stabilise at a higher level but this would render a country vulnerable to economic shocks. However, since this model does not consider the interdependencies existing between the interest rate, the structure of public spending, the degree of public indebtedness and the growth rate which influence each other, economists Hamilton and Flavin suggested another model. According to it, the inter-temporal Budget constraint must be satisfied to make the debt



AS THE PANDEMIC NOW TESTS THE RESILIENCE OF ECONOMIES, A GLOBAL RECESSION WHICH WAS ALREADY RAGING, IS NOW PUSHING THE WORLD INTO A DEEP DEBT CRISIS, WHICH MARKED THE END OF EACH PREVIOUS WAVE. LIKE IN THE CASE OF PREVIOUS WAVES, NOW ALSO DEEPER STRUCTURAL REFORMS ARE CALLED FOR

The writer is a former Director-General of the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India and an academic. The views expressed are personal.



stock sustainable, which requires the present value of future primary surpluses to cover the size of the current public debt. The uncertainty of future values of projections, interest rates and inflation remains the weakness of this model, but whatever model is used, increasing public debt does not necessarily imply its unsustainability, especially when a country needs additional finance to carry out structural reforms or for making capital investments on infrastructure.

As long as primary Budget deficits are not too large, the main problem is to stabilise public debt, independent of the size of the economy so that it may not go beyond control. This is simple budgetary arithmetic: If the debt was stable at 60 per cent of the GDP with a primary deficit of three per cent, to stabilise it at 80 per cent would require the primary deficit to be limited to four per cent. The *Economic Survey* points out that GDP growth in India has always exceeded interest rates in the last 25 years, though the primary account has often been in deficit, but less than the maximum limit defined by the debt sustainability equations. The survey concludes that even in the worst case scenario, with real growth being only four per cent for the next 10 years and high primary deficits 6.8 per cent of the GDP (Centre plus States), five per cent inflation and a nominal interest rate of six per cent, public debt will still be sustainable. This scenario is not peculiar to India. The IMF says that emerging economies have experienced growth rates exceeding interest rates 75 per cent of the time. Of course, there is an element of risk in

case of high prevalence of external debt in the overall debt portfolio because if the exchange rate weakens, the debt-to-GDP ratio will rise sharply even if the interest rate remains modest. But for India, this risk is minimal as external debt constitutes only about six per cent of our total liabilities (₹5.85 lakh crore in 2019-20).

Government debt amounted to 73.8 per cent of the GDP in 2019-20, before the pandemic pushed it much higher. As per the road map prescribed by the 15th Finance Commission, India's debt should decline marginally from 89.8 per cent to 85.7 per cent of the GDP over 2020-26, but the decline will practically take place in the last three years. Thus we need to stabilise our debt around that level provided these projections hold. This may not be the case as additional spending will be required on health and infrastructure.

But the moot question is whether the high debt level is desirable even if it is sustainable, as public borrowing generally crowds out private investment and hurts the economy. Perhaps the answer lies in how the borrowed funds are used. If the Government spends on investment, like the 26 per cent increase in capital spending budgeted for the next fiscal, this risk would be less, especially when the economy is operating below capacity as is the case now; public spending can then bring in additional private investment by improving incomes and profitability.

However, this is not the first time a debt pandemic has hit the world and there were three earlier waves of debt

accumulation during 1970-89, 1990-2001 and 2002-09, all of which began during periods of low real interest rates and easy access to borrowing from the financial markets. Each caused global recessions in 1982, 1991 and 2009 and economic downturns in 1998 and 2001, and were followed by structural reforms designed to lower vulnerabilities, with greater reserve accumulation and strengthening of policy frameworks. Controls like inflation targeting, fiscal rules and more robust financial sector supervision became the norm.

We are now riding the crest of the fourth wave that began in 2010 but peaked during the pandemic with the slowing of economic growth in most countries. The conditions were remarkably similar to those after the 2008 meltdown, when interest rates were low and access to financial markets for capital was easy due to the banks having extended their outreach remarkably. As the pandemic now tests the resilience of economies, a global recession which was already raging, is now pushing the world into a deep debt crisis, which marked the end of each previous wave. Like in the case of previous waves, now also deeper structural reforms are called for. In the Indian context, this will mean many more reforms of the factor markets, along with reform of agriculture and financial sectors while strengthening the overall regulatory mechanisms. Appropriate policy choices are crucial because once recovery gets underway, only reforms and the accompanying institutional mechanisms can help restore our fiscal and debt sustainability.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

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



INSULTING INDIANS IS A FAVOURITE PASTIME OF RAHUL GANDHI. INDIANS ARE NOT SUPERFICIAL BUT YOU ARE, MR RAHUL GANDHI.
—UNION MINISTER PRAKASH JAVADEKAR

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POST-WORKOUT HYGIENE TIPS TO REFRESH YOUR BODY



On reaching home from your workout, I have found great benefit in using a Neti-Pot to do a nasal wash with warm water. It ensures that any allergens or viruses that you've picked up are cleaned out from the sinuses keeping you safe from colds.

While strong fragrance deodorants may make you smell good initially; it is post-workout body odour that will overpower everything. I'd suggest you look for deodorants or preferable roll-ons with a formula that provides long-lasting body odour control. Use them directly on your underarms because that's the actual source of body odour. What I personally recommend are roll-ons that contain specially formulated Silver-Ions Technology that is known to effectively reduce up to 99% odour-causing bacteria. Your best bet against odour after a thrilling workout session is having a wash with an anti-bacterial shower gel that would also give instant freshness post-shower.

Sweat is the body's physiological response to heightened metabolic activity and the accompanying increase in its core temperature.

You seem to have everything worked out well when it comes to exercising. You have a structured plan with the right exercises, progressions, and load listed for every day of the week. You are a stickler for pre and post-workout hydration and nutrition. You also get adequate sleep and are in the habit of monitoring your training status. But you seem to have skin problems and frequent colds?

It could be that you are unaware of some simple post-workout hygiene mistakes that you've been making. There are microscopic organisms lurking in workout areas that are potentially unhealthy. These germs and fungi cause painful skin conditions like athlete's foot, ringworm, jock itch etc. Besides, allergens and the cold virus have a larger presence in the closed quarters of workout spaces. Also, with sweat streaming down your body and drenching your clothes there are bacteria that feed on sweat, causing body odour. Here are five tips on how to safeguard against unhealthy environments in workout spaces:

Use a towel to wipe off sweat from your face and hands instead of using the back of your hand. This reduces the probability of germs entering your nose, mouth or eyes. Also, use this towel to lay out on benches or seats before you lie down or sit to exercise.

Your water bottle should be made from metal and not plastic since plastic holds on to bacteria. It should also have a screw-on lid so that the rim surface that touches your mouth is unexposed at all times. Don't forget to wash your water bottle with warm water and soap before you set it aside for the next day.

When taking a shower use an anti-bacterial gel to ensure any bacteria that you may have picked up, get killed.

The downside is that it can inevitably result in body odour. It is one factor that can alienate you from inclusion in workout camaraderie with friends. When you work out with gym mates or fellow athletes, smelling good is something that can add to the 'feel good' factor during exercise. Don't let body odour stop you from doing what you love, incorporate some these tips for a good post-workout experience.

(The writer, Daniel Vaz, is a marathon expert, NIVEA MEN)

Ushering in the 'beauty' of change

pressure to adhere to one definition of beauty. As owners of some of the largest beauty brands in the country, the onus to make beauty more positive and more inclusive is on us. Dove has always believed that beauty should be a source of confidence, not anxiety. With #StopTheBeautyTest, we want to go one step forward in that direction."

Dove and Shaadi.com have also come together to encourage users on

the platform to look beyond body type, complexion, scars on face or hair type and length, to see new sizes and shades of beauty. In an exclusive partnership with UNICEF, the self-esteem project aims to reach 6.25 million girls and boys in schools by 2024 to improve their knowledge and skills so that they enhance their body confidence and self-esteem through education materials to realise their full potential in India.



BRINGING AUTHENTIC FLAVOURS TO YOUR PLATE

Don't you just hate it when you burn a hole in your pocket after having an exotic cuisine? But here's an idea many have taken to, recently: taking help from some not-so-expensive sauces to add that authentic international flavour to your dish, right in your *desi* kitchen! *The Pioneer's* K RAMYA SREE writes about Habanero's ready-to-cook sauces, salsas, dips, and more

Since the Covid-induced lockdown, many have taken to cooking. With restaurants shutting shop, and the cravings to enjoy from all corners of the world only growing, many chose the 'ready-to-cook' path and the wide range of sauces available helped whip up restaurant-grade international food in their kitchens! Be it Mexican, American, Italian or Chinese — sauces, salsas, and dips play a key role in a flavoursome meal.

One such home-grown company that is leading the market in serving packaged food is Habanero, which is full of flavours, is vegan and gluten-free too.

"There's a misconception that packaged foods aren't healthy. While there is no substitute for fresh fruits, vegetables and foods, many a time, we need something that is quick, easy, convenient and healthy. That is where Habanero comes in. Our products are made from fresh and authentic ingredients. We source our ingredients locally, and manufacture the products in Bangalore," says Griffith David, founder of Habanero.

While the lockdown took a toll on many industries, David feels, it came as a blessing for them as it gave them an opportunity to explore the wide market. He says, "The lockdown was a tremendous opportunity for us. People started cooking more at home and craved authentic international flavoured food that wasn't available anywhere due to the lockdown. A lot of new customers discovered us during this time and have become loyal customers who kept returning. We saw a huge spike in countrywide

orders for our sauces, wraps, salsa on e-commerce and our website. It's only been an upward growth since then. Our customers have started appreciating our value proposition of 'Import-quality products at Indian prices' that are 40-50 per cent cheaper than international brands that deliver similar quality."

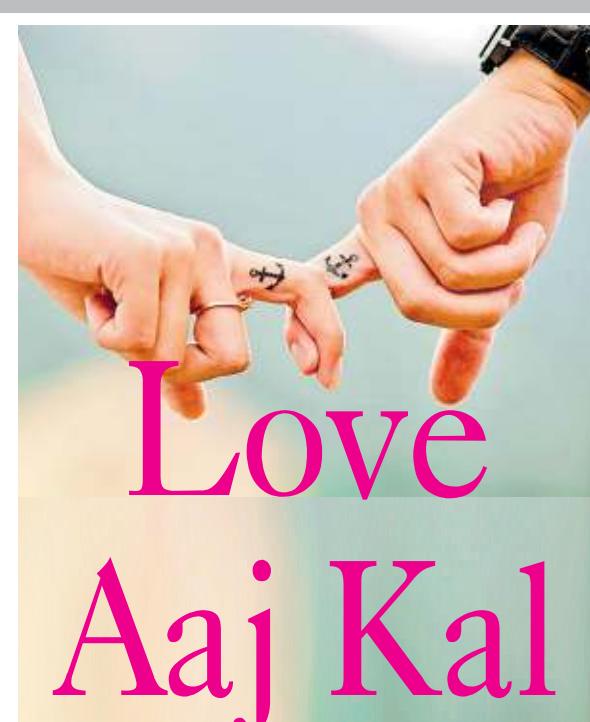
Habanero started as an authentic Mexican restaurant chain and has won several awards for great food and service. It first started in Bengaluru and expanded to Chennai and Hyderabad in the next few years. The restaurants soon became popular and the customers loved the salsas and dips that

were made in-house. What's the secret behind their salsas and dips? David explains, "When we started off, I noticed a big gap in the market. The retail shelves were full of either expensive high-quality imports or cheap low-quality brands. I wasn't happy with either proposition. I felt we could deliver an import quality product at reasonable prices if we source all ingredients locally. India has the best varieties of chillies, garlic, tomatoes, onions, jalapenos and other spices that rival anything from anywhere around the world. And that's how Habanero took birth. Our value proposition is also to help people 'Cook like a

Chef' at home and our USP is to create authentic tasting but full flavoured products for the Indian palate."

"For example, take a look at our Spicy Pasta Sauce — it has a distinct spice aspect to it that makes it different from anything else in the market. Our Sriracha Chilli Sauce, hot sauce, peri-peri, spicy barbecue — all of these have a unique flavour that the consumer is looking for but isn't finding elsewhere," he tells us.

So if you're one that loves to experiment in the kitchen and would enjoy adding authentic flavoured sauces and salsas to boost the taste of your dish, you know where to head!



Aaj Kal

per cent) were more cautious in this regard as against those from smaller cities (58 per cent) who are more enthusiastic about dating from far off cities as well.

But surprises don't stop just there. Known for their love for food, about 64 per cent of Indians feel that matching food taste matters as having similar food taste is a sign of great compatibility, with women (66 per cent) attaching higher importance to it compared to men (61 per cent). Dating is also a way to move on for many. More than 70 per cent of people from both top cities and smaller cities/towns would go ahead and meet new people to get over toxic relationships.

"Despite having spent the entire last year in gloom and doom, Indians are still keeping their hopes alive in the new year and haven't given up on the idea of finding love. It is heartening to see that people are open to traveling across cities and trying new experiences for the sake of companionship. Dating apps have been a blessing in disguise for many given the current circumstances," says Ravi Mittal, Founder, CEO, QuackQuack.

Dating apps have even proven to be a meaningful exercise for many. About 25 per cent of those aged 31 and above said that meeting new people online helped them overcome loneliness and 15 per cent got over depression in 2020. Looking at these trends, it can be said that the Indian dating scenario is definitely going to catch more steam in the times to come.

We may be living in times when dating is all about 'right swipes', 'right words', and 'being woke'. But old-fashioned love still hasn't lost its charm. Many still enjoy a nice film with their date while others wouldn't think twice before serenading their love with heartfelt sonnets, songs and flowers. QuackQuack, an online dating app, released insights into how Indians are looking at dating in the forthcoming year, after having been stricken by the global pandemic.

The year 2020 has been an unprecedented one. As the basic need to connect with other humans amplified during and after lockdown, more people flocked simultaneously, in the backdrop of the ongoing health crisis, Indian millennials aren't letting their guard down. 60 per cent of

people in the age bracket of 18-30 wear a mask when meeting their date. Amongst these, women are more cautious with 90 per cent stating that they never forget to wear a mask on a date.

Speaking about dating people from native city or a different city, nearly 68 per cent of people aged 31 and above prefer dating from their location to avoid the risk of travelling as against majority youngsters who did prefer dating people from their location but were open to the idea of dating from other cities as well.

Out of these, women were more curious to meet people from other cities as compared to men who would still prefer dating from their own location. People from big cities (66

The search for beauty can often be ugly and diminishing! A recently conducted India's Beauty Test Report reveals some unsettling statistics about the pressures and anxieties around conforming to a narrow ideal of beauty in the run-up to an arranged marriage. An alarming 9/10 single women in India feel they're judged, rejected based on their looks during the marriage process. 68% claimed that rejections based on beauty during the arranged marriage process impacted their self-esteem and confidence.

Dove's #StopTheBeautyTest, an advertisement film born out of conversations with women from across the country, captures some raw situations where women are judged during the matchmaking process for not being beautiful enough. It goes on to emphasise the unspoken impact of these judgements on their self-esteem and body confidence. Through real stories enacted by real women, Dove sends out a powerful message — 'We must stop putting women through this unjust beauty test.'

Wanting to start and sustain this important conversation now and acting upon this, Priya Nair, Executive Director, HUL and VP - Beauty and Personal Care South Asia, opined, 'In a country of 631 million women, it is unfortunate that there is such intense

pressure to adhere to one definition of beauty. As owners of some of the largest beauty brands in the country, the onus to make beauty more positive and more inclusive is on us. Dove has always believed that beauty should be a source of confidence, not anxiety. With #StopTheBeautyTest, we want to go one step forward in that direction."

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● Akshita



PARTY

LIVING THE 'HIGH LIFE'

Actresses Ananya Nagala, Jenny and Kamakshi Bhasaria graced the launch of one of Hyderabad's most-loved and awaited fashion extravaganzas - Hiflife. The exhibition opened with a bang on February 25 and will go on till 27. Calling the city 'fashion-loving', organiser Aby Dominic expressed joy over the number of stylists, fashionistas and bloggers that turned up at the event.

Photos by SV Chary



● Dominic



● Priya



● Aranya



● Madhuri



● Shiwangi



● Vaanya



● Nikita



● Sujata

● Vedika

FUN

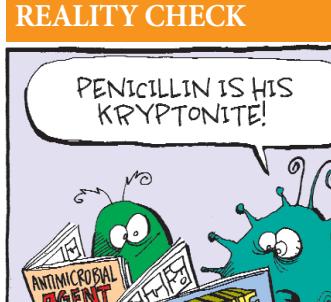
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CALVIN AND HOBBES

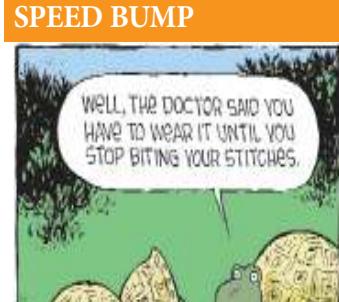
GO... TO... SCHOOL...
YAWWWNN... KEEP THE SHADE DOWN WHEN YOU GO, OK?

GARFIELD

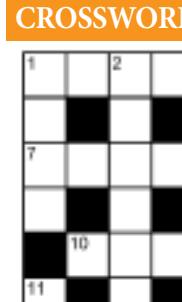
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PENICILLIN IS HIS KRYPTONITE!

WELL, THE DOCTOR SAID YOU HAVE TO WEAR IT UNTIL YOU STOP BITING YOUR STITCHES.

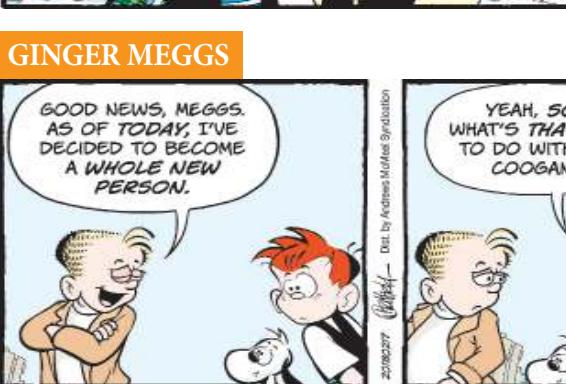


SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD

NANCY



SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

ACROSS

- The least dangerous
- Become larger
- A great river in Egypt
- A black symbol on playing cards
- Alters
- A bright red colour
- An archer fires at this
- Do a sketch
- The capital city of Italy
- Every twelve months

DOWN

- and daughters
- Extremely dirty
- Very impolite

CONTINUOUS	L	O	D	G
JUDGE	R	I	E	S
GERM	PASSIVE	S	N	Y
ANSWER	MINT	W	E	C
SAVED	CRAYON	A	L	AG
UNHEALTHY				

SOLUTION

WISH I COULD LAND A ROLE LIKE PROFESSOR FROM MONEY HEIST: NITHIIN

The actor speaks to us on green-lighting a film like *Check*, taking a week's time to get a pulse of the role, exploring OTT platforms and more...

After delivering three flops — *Lie*, *Chal Mohan Ranga* and *Sreenivasa Kalyanam* — in a row, it was a conscious decision from Nithiin to do a different film. "I wanted to balance a different film with that of a commercial film. *Bheeshma* falls in the latter category, while *Check* in the former. Two years ago doing a film like *Check* would've been a risky proposition but with the audience's taste evolving after consuming a lot of OTT content, I don't think it's risky anymore. Films like *Naandhi* and *Uppena* are different but they succeeded at the box-office. I believe films like *Check* will have an audience of their own now," the actor points out.

Check tells the story of a prisoner Aditya (played by Nithiin) who is serving capital punishment on terrorist charges. During his time in the prison, he learns chess from an old prisoner and becomes a grand master while making a case for his mercy petition to be accepted by the president. Initially, it wasn't the story that director Chandra Sekhar Yeleti narrated to the actor. "He worked on another idea but he wasn't completely convinced with it, so he dropped it. He took two more months to come up with *Check*. I instantly liked it. The last 15 minutes of the film will bear the stamp of Yeleti garu," the actor observes.

Yeleti is known to be a tough task master and Nithiin understood it in the first few days. "After *Jayam*, this is my first film where I gave over 10 takes for my

shots in the first one week. Yeleti's style of making is different. My previous films needed me to indulge in some over action in terms of body language and looks but Yeleti garu wanted me to be absolutely natural in *Check*. It took a week's time to get a pulse of the character, after which it was a smooth ride," the actor explains, stating that *Check* has an open ending, so there is a scope for sequel. "However, it hinges on how well *Check* performs."

The actor completed shooting for *Rang De* earlier this week and it looks like he had enough of love stories. "Hopefully, *Rang De* will be my last love story," he declares, adding that he wrapped up 50 percent shoot of *Andhadhun* remake, while he will commence Krishna Chaitanya's *Power Peta* from May. "My role in *Power Peta* is the most challenging one in my career as I would be seen in different age groups starting from 20 years. It will be made in two parts and we are looking at a December release for the first one. Chances are that it will be shot in Tamil too simultaneously."

Looking back at his career, he admits it's been a bumpy ride but credits god's blessings and the audience love for the comfortable position he is enjoying right now. "I don't want to repeat my past errors from now on," he maintains, adding that he is open to exploring long-format storytelling.

As far as his favourite character is concerned from a web series, he says it's Professor from *Money Heist*. "I wish I could get a role like it."



"TWO YEARS AGO DOING A FILM LIKE CHECK WOULD'VE BEEN A RISKY PROPOSITION BUT WITH THE AUDIENCE'S TASTE EVOLVING AFTER CONSUMING A LOT OF OTT CONTENT, I DON'T THINK IT'S RISKY ANYMORE"

Kriti Sanon: You can't be scared and cautious in career

Actress Kriti Sanon has a packed year ahead, with five films scheduled to release. Her projects are at different stages of production, boast of either big production houses or new genre or high expectation from fans owing to commercial value.

Over the next few months, she will be seen in *Bachchan Pandey*, *Mimi*, *Adipurush*, *Bhediya* and *Ganpath*. The varied assortment, you would think, would weigh her down with pressure. The actress has no time for pressure, or be scared.

"I don't think you can be scared and cautious and still move ahead in your career. Fear pulls you back. Once I know why I am doing a project, there is no fear. You like the film, the storyline, the scene. You know you are doing something slightly different. Ok, it can be experimental but that's your reason for doing it then," said Kriti.

"I believe in all the films I am doing right now. Beyond that, my job is to do my part really well and work hard for it. The rest is not really in my hands. I don't want to take the pressure of 'oh what if this goes wrong?' I would rather think 'what if all of them go right!'" shared the actress, who had made her debut into films with the Telugu psychological thriller *1: Nenokkadine*.

"Would I love to do more such films as *Mimi*? Yes I would. But would I be looking for only this? No. I feel for me it's not only about what I am doing, it is about a project that really excites you. I feel like you have to really go beyond how many scenes I have and go more into how good the character is. Is it doing something to the film and I feel like as an actor, I want to explore more and do

all kinds of films. I want to do smaller roles, which are very impactful as characters," said the actress.

However, Kriti does specify that "if it's just two scenes and two songs and if those are cut out from the film and the story remains the same, then that's not exciting. Your character is pivotal. As an actor I am very greedy and I know that I would always balance it out. So, I want to do everything."



I don't differentiate between small and big roles: Nandita

Nandita Swetha believes it was a bold decision from her end to have agreed to spearhead Chinini Krishna's female-centric *Akshara*, taking into account that it's still early days for her in Telugu. "At the same time I was afraid to take it up because the character carried a lot of weight. I was worried if the audience would receive the underlying message the film had, with me playing the lead role. But overall I'm happy with the decision I've made," she says about the film which throws light on the errors in the education sector and the steps that need to be taken to address those issues.

For Nandita, who was seen in a supporting role in last week's release *Kapatadhaari*, the role's duration is of least importance. "I don't differentiate between a small and a big role. I always believe that the script is the hero. I'm a Kannada girl and I've watched the original *Kavuladaari*. It's a good script, so sometimes it would be a plus for you if you are a part of a good script even though the role is small," she observes.

Her roles after *Ekkadiki Pothavu Chinnavada* (EPC) failed to make a significant impact in Telugu. Does she feel that Telugu makers are not utilising her potential? "I don't think on those lines. After EPC, I've been busy in Telugu, featuring in seven-eight projects. Directors who think that Nandita is a performer are approaching me. As an actor I was satisfied with *Akshara*. The success is not in my hands. I only believe in giving my best," she points out, adding that her next is opposite Ashwin of *Raju Gari Gadhi* fame. "It's a thriller and I'm playing an IPS officer in it."



LAXMAN BAGS THEATRICAL RIGHTS OF KRISH'S NEXT



Former associate of Sri Venkateswara Creations, Laxman has snatched the Telugu states theatrical rights of Krish's *Kondapalam* (tentative title), featuring Rakul Preet Singh and Vaishnav Tej. According to reports doing the rounds, he bought the film for Rs 11 crore. The film's shooting has been wrapped up last year itself. With *Uppena* doing great

business at the box-office, there is obviously buzz around Vaishnav's next and with Krish directing it, the project will be a hot property once the promotions kick off.

Based on Sannapureddy Venkata Ramireddy's novel *Kondapalam*, the film will narrate the lifestyle of people of a hamlet who vacate their houses and reside on the hills along with their cattle and sheep when

famine hits them. Krish is believed to have given his own spin to the book and turned the story into a nail-biting adventure. It has been extensively shot in Vikarabad forests.

Made on a tight budget by First Frame Entertainments, Krish is likely to shift attention to the film's post-production after he wraps up his mega budget venture with Pawan Kalyan.

tollywood



Anand Sai stages a comeback with good friend Pawan's next

After dedicating the last five years of his life to Yadadri Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple as the architect, prominent art director Anand Sai has decided to stage a comeback to movies. With the temple in the final leg of its completion right now, Anand has taken up the art work of his dear friend Pawan

Kalyan's next with Harish Shankar. The art director in the past worked on Pawan's films like *Tholi Prema*, *Thammudu*, *Khushi*, *Gudumbi Shankar* and *Jalsa*. The art work on all these films received immense acclaim. Especially his *Taj Mahal* set in *Tholi Prema* made him a sought-after art director, after which there was no looking back.

"Magnificent Art Director Anand Sai garu is back to Cinema after dedicating his 5 years of craftsmanship for Yadadri Temple — The Pride of Telangana. Welcome on board Anand Sai garu for #PSPK28 (sic)," production house Mythri Movie Makers posted on Twitter on Thursday. The untitled film, a Devi Sri Prasad musical, will mostly roll from June-July.

Pitch was good, quality of batting wasn't: Kohli

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

India captain Virat Kohli on Thursday said poor batting and not the pitch was responsible for the day-night third Test against England winding up inside two days and described the performance of batsmen on both sides as "bizarre".

Kohli insisted there were no demons in the pitch, which has been called "not ideal" by several former players like Michael Vaughan and Harbhajan Singh. Kohli said the track was absolutely fine at least in the first innings and only the odd ball was turning in the game which India won by 10 wickets on Thursday.

"To be honest, I don't think the quality of batting was up to standards. We were 100 for 3 and bowled out for less than 150. It was just that the odd ball turning and it was a good wicket to bat in the first innings," the India skipper said in his defence of the pitch.

Kohli said batsmen of both the sides did not apply themselves enough. Only Rohit Sharma (66 and 25 not out) and from England Zak Crawley (53 in first innings) managed to bat with ease.

"It was bizarre that 21 of the 30 wickets fell to straight balls. Test cricket is about trusting your defence. Lack of application ensured it was a quick finish," Kohli said.

Left-arm spinner Axar Patel stole the limelight in only his second Test along side veteran Ravichandran Ashwin by returning with match figures of 11 for 70 to earn the player-of-the-match award as India decimated England by 10 wickets to take an unassailable 2-1 lead in the four-match series.

Off-spinner Ashwin (15-3-48-4) also became the fourth Indian bowler and second fastest in the world to complete a commendable milestone of 400 Test wickets on Thursday.

Kohli showered praise on his two spinners for their match-winning efforts.

"A bizarre game which got over in 2 days. A lot of people were relieved when Jaddu (Ravindra Jadeja) got injured. But then this guy (Axar) comes in. Bowls it quicker and from a bigger height as well. If the wick-



et has something in it, Axar is very lethal.

"I think we need to stand up and take notice of what Ashwin has done. In Tests, he's a modern day legend. As a captain, I am so pleased he is in my team," he said.

England skipper Joe Root was in no mood to give excuses for the heavy defeat, saying the tourists failed to capitalise on a decent start in the first innings after opting to bat.

"We were 70 for 2. But we didn't really capitalise on it. 250 on that wicket would have made it different. We will come back using this hurt and come back as a better team," he said.

Instead of blaming the pitch, Root said it was India's "high quality bowling" that made the difference.

"The plastic coating on the ball gathered

pace of the wicket. It was high quality bowling as well. Both sides struggled on that wicket. We don't define ourselves on a performance like this," he said.

"We shouldn't have any baggage from the previous games going into the last game. We have seen with the ball in hand, we can pick up wickets. I think it sums up the wicket, if I am getting a fitter."

He also congratulated Ishant Sharma for playing his landmark 100 Tests and Ashwin for his 400 Test wickets.

Man-of-the-match Axar said his focus would remain on bowling wicket-to-wicket, a plan which has reaped him rich dividends so far in his nascent Test career.

"When it happens, it feels so easy, not so much when it doesn't," he joked.

"I am not thinking much. I want to con-

Kohli eclipses Dhoni's record

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Virat Kohli on Thursday surpassed Mahendra Singh Dhoni's record of winning maximum number of Test matches as captain on home soil after leading the side to a 10-wicket victory over England in the day-night third Test.

Kohli now has 22 victories at home in 29 Tests as captain which is one better than Dhoni, who had 21 wins in 30 Tests. Kohli already is India's most successful Test captain with 35 wins.

Sourav Ganguly and Mohammed Azharuddin have 21 and 14 victories to their credit as captains.

inue this form. I am happy that if I am not contributing with the bat, I am doing it with the ball.

"My strength is to bowl wicket-to-wicket and not give any room... I just want to bowl as many dot balls as possible and make life difficult for batsmen," he said.

As players we are going to try and counter what is in front of us as best as we can," he added.

Root said his team missed the opportunity to get a big first innings total, which seemed possible when it was 70 odd for just two wickets.

"We are disappointed, I feel we have missed an opportunity, more so in the first innings than anything. The position we found ourselves in at 71/2, we had a real chance to (score big).

"In hindsight, if we would have got 200, that would have been a very good score on that wicket and the game would have looked completely different," Root said at the virtual post-match press conference.

Indian left-arm spinner Axar Patel (6/38 and 5/32) and Ravichandran Ashwin (3/26 and 4/48) wreaked havoc on the surface. "We have got to get better and we are going to keep looking to find a way to scoring runs on surfaces like this," Root said.

It's for ICC to decide whether Motera pitch is fit for purpose: Root

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

England skipper Joe Root on Thursday said it is up to the ICC, and not the players, to decide whether the "difficult" Motera pitch is suitable for Test cricket after his side was crushed inside two days by India in a low-scoring day-nighter here.

Root refused to blame the surface for England's batting woes after the team folded for 112 and 81 in its two innings. But he said it is the ICC that should consider the suitability of the pitch for Test cricket.

"I think that this surface, it's a very challenging one, is a very difficult one to play on. It is not for players to decide whether it is fit for purpose or not and that is upto the ICC," said Root, who took a career-best five-wicket haul during India's first innings.

"As players we are going to try and counter what is in front of us as best as we can," he added.

Root said his team missed the opportunity to get a big first innings total, which seemed possible when it was 70 odd for just two wickets.

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England out of WTC final race

Ahmedabad: India knocked England out of contention from the ICC World Test Championship (WTC) final in June with their 10-wicket triumph which propelled the hosts to the top of the standings.

India now have to either win or draw the final game here starting March 4 to claim the right to take on New Zealand at the Lord's. The Black Caps have already qualified and are placed second in the latest list.

England have dropped to 64.1 percentage points on the points table, which is now led by India with 71 percentage

points," the ICC stated.

"England are out of the race for a place in the final of the ICC World Test Championship after losing the third Test against India in Ahmedabad," it added.

England, who are now 2-1 down in the four-match series, needed to win the four-match series 3-1 to play the June 18-22 final.

New Zealand are assured of a place in the final with 70 percentage points.

If India lose the final Test then Australia, who are in third place with 69.2 percentage points, will sneak in to make the final.

PTI

Guptill finds form in run fest

AFP ■ DUNEDIN

Veteran batsman Martin Guptill returned to form with a blistering 97 as New Zealand held on for a nail-biting win over Australia in the second T20I in Dunedin on Thursday.

Guptill's Black Caps set Australia a challenging target of 220 after losing the toss but were made to sweat as Australia came within four runs of victory.

Both sides took advantage of University Oval's short boundaries in a thrilling match that featured 30 sixes and 434 runs at an average of 10.9 an over.

Marcus Stoinis starred for the Australians with 78 from 37 balls but Guptill's 97 from 50 laid the foundation for New Zealand's win.

Black Caps spinner Mitchell Santner also shone amid the batting fireworks, taking four for 31, while Australian paceman Kane Richardson managed three for 43.

New Zealand allrounder Jimmy Neesham was another exceptional performer, taking two wickets in the final over when a rampant Australia needed 15 runs for victory. Neesham also scored an undefeated 45, including six sixes.

The result puts New Zealand 2-0 up in the five-match series, on the brink of a win over the world's second-ranked T20 team.

Guptill's innings gave him the record for the most sixes in T20 Internationals with 132, taking him past India's Rohit Sharma on 127.

The 34-year-old clubbed the ball over the boundary eight times, bludgeoning all comers in the Australian attack. He fell just short of his third Twenty20 century after

being caught trying to hit a Daniel Sams delivery out of the ground.

Guptill averaged only 17 in the recent series against the West Indies and Pakistan, then managed just 11.5 in the domestic competition before picking up a hamstring injury.

Pressure on the opener intensified when he made a duck in the first match against Australia on Monday, with calls for uncapped Finn Allen to join the squad. But he answered his critics with a return to his big-hitting best, bringing up 50 off 27 balls, with

eight boundaries, including four sixes. Guptill insisted he had not changed his approach during the game.

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eight boundaries, including four sixes. Guptill insisted he had not changed his approach during the game.

This was the maiden List-A double hundred for Shaw, which he got in

Captain Shaw creates Vijay Hazare history

Prithvi slams unbeaten 227 as Mumbai make record 457-4 against Puducherry



Mumbai captain Prithvi Shaw on Thursday became the highest individual scorer in Vijay Hazare Trophy national 50-over championships as he smashed an unbeaten 227 off just 152 balls to help Mumbai beat Puducherry by 233 runs in their Elite Group D game here.

The 21-year-old Shaw, who has played in five Tests and five ODIs, broke the earlier record of the highest individual score held by Sanju Samson (212 not out) against Goa in 2019.

This was the maiden List-A double hundred for Shaw, which he got in

HIGHEST LIST-A TOTALS OF ALL TIME				
Team	Score	Opposition	Ground	Date
Surrey	496/4	Gloucestershire	The Oval	29 Apr 2007
England	481/6	Australia	Nottingham	19 Jun 2018
India A	458/4	Leicestershire	Leicester	19 Jun 2018
Mumbai	457/4	Pondicherry	Jaipur	25 Feb 2021

HIGHEST INDIVIDUAL LIST A SCORES OF ALL TIME (MEN'S)

Player	Runs	Team	Opposition	Ground	Date
Alistair Brown	268	Surrey	Glamorgan	The Oval	19 Jun 2002
Rohit Sharma	264	India	Sri Lanka	Kolkata	13 Nov 2014
D'Arcy Short	257	West Aust	Queensland	Sydney	28 Sep 2018
Shikhar Dhawan	248	India A	South Africa A	Pretoria	12 Aug 2013
Martin Guptill	237*	New Zealand	West Indies	Wellington	21 Mar 2015
Prithvi Shaw	227*	Mumbai	Pondicherry	Jaipur	25 Mar 2021

est individual List A score is 268 by Ali Brown.

Puducherry's decision to put Mumbai in at bat backfired badly as Shaw and Suryakumar Yadav (133 off 58 balls) toyed with their bowling attack at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium and posted a mammoth 457/4.

Leg-spinner Prashant Solanki (5/48) then picked a five-for as Mumbai bundled out Puducherry for 224 to register their third win on the trot.

The diminutive right-handed Shaw

and Yashasvi Jaiswal (10) added 58 runs for the first wicket to lay the foundation. After Jaiswal was dismissed, Shaw found an able partner in Aditya Tare (56, 7x4) as the duo stitched a 153-run stand for the second wicket. Tare played the perfect second fiddle to Shaw.

Suryakumar, who came in at No. 4, was in his elements, hitting 22 fours and four sixes. He and Shaw added 201 runs for the third wicket stand and helped Mumbai go past the 400-run mark.

Job done for Zizou

Late Mendy goal gives Madrid 1-0 win over 10-man Atalanta



AP ■ BERGAMO

Real Madrid struggled to break down 10-man Atalanta before Ferland Mendy netted an 86th-minute winner to give the Spanish giant a 1-0 win in the first leg of the round of 16.

Madrid entered the game as the big favorite despite a slew of injuries, and Atalanta's chances diminished further when midfielder Remo Freuler was sent off in the 17th minute after being adjudged to have denied a scoring opportunity.

Messi's return to top form comes as a huge boost too. This was his fifth and sixth goal in his last four games while no player from the top five European leagues has scored more than his 13 this year in all competitions. Bayern Munich's Robert Lewandowski is closest on 12. AFP

it would have been a much different and better match."

Madrid — playing without Karim Benzema, Eden Hazard and captain Sergio Ramos — still found it difficult to test Atalanta goalkeeper Pierluigi Gollini until the end of the first half, when he pulled off a great reaction save to keep out Casemiro's header from Toni Kroos' free kick.

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