

**AGENDA 7**  
LEADERSHIP LESSONS  
FROM TURBULENT TIMES**MONEY 06**  
AIR TRAFFIC MAY BE BACK TO  
PRE-COVID LEVEL BY SUMMER

HYDERABAD, SUNDAY FEBRUARY 28, 2021; PAGES 10+16 ₹5



## sunday pioneer

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09

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**Is Congress ceding even the Opposition space?**

2

**US passes, sends to Senate \$1.9T pandemic relief bill**

6

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month &amp; Paksham:

Magha &amp; Shukla Paksha

Panchangam

Tithi : Pralipada: 11:18 am

Nakshatram: Purva Phalguni: 03:35 am

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

Rahukalam: 04:51 pm - 06:18 pm

Yamagandam: 12:28 pm - 01:56 pm

Varjyam: 04:12 pm - 05:40 pm

Gulika: 03:23 pm - 04:51 pm

Good Time: (to start any important work)

Amritakalam: 01:00 am - 02:28 am

Abhijit Muhurtham: 12:05 pm - 12:52 pm

HYDERABAD

WEATHER

Forecast: Sunny

Temp: 34/18

Humidity: 29%

Sunrise: 06:35 am

Sunset: 06:22 pm

Current Weather Conditions

Updated February 27, 2021 5:00 PM

OBTUSE ANGLE

**MYANMAR POLICE LAUNCH MOST EXTENSIVE CRACKDOWN; WOMAN DEAD**

Police in Myanmar launched their most sweeping crackdown in three weeks of protests against military rule on Saturday in towns and cities across the country, with media reports of a woman shot dead and dozens of people detained. The violence came after Myanmar's U.N. envoy urged the United Nations to use "any means necessary" to stop the Feb. 1 coup. Myanmar has been in turmoil since the army seized power and detained elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi and much of her party leadership, alleging fraud in a November election her party won in a landslide.

**Centre, states anxious as Covid cases spike**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Saturday advised states and UTs reporting an increase in Coronavirus cases to enforce Covid-appropriate behaviour by dealing firmly with violations and ensure effective surveillance in case of potential super spreading events so as not to squander last year's gains.

Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba chaired a high-level review meeting with Chief Secretaries of states and UTs of Maharashtra, Punjab, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Telangana and Jammu and Kashmir.

These states and UTs have been reporting a high Covid-19 active caseload or an increasing trend in new cases in the last week.

"They were advised not to lower their guard, enforce Covid-appropriate behaviour and deal firmly with violations. It was strongly underlined that they need to follow effective surveillance strategies in respect of potential super spreading events," the Union Health Ministry said in a statement.

The need for effective testing, comprehensive tracking, prompt isolation of positive cases and quick quarantine of close contacts were also strongly emphasised.

During the review meeting, states were advised to undertake vaccination on priority in districts reporting higher cases and monitor mutant strain and clustering of cases for early hotspot identification and control, the statement.

They have also been asked to improve the overall testing in districts reporting a reduction in testing, and increase RT-PCR tests in districts having high antigen testing.

The states and UT were asked to refocus on surveillance and stringent containment in selected districts reporting reduced tests/high positivity and increased cases.

They have also been asked to focus on clinical management in districts reporting higher deaths and promote Covid-appropriate behaviour to ensure effective citizen

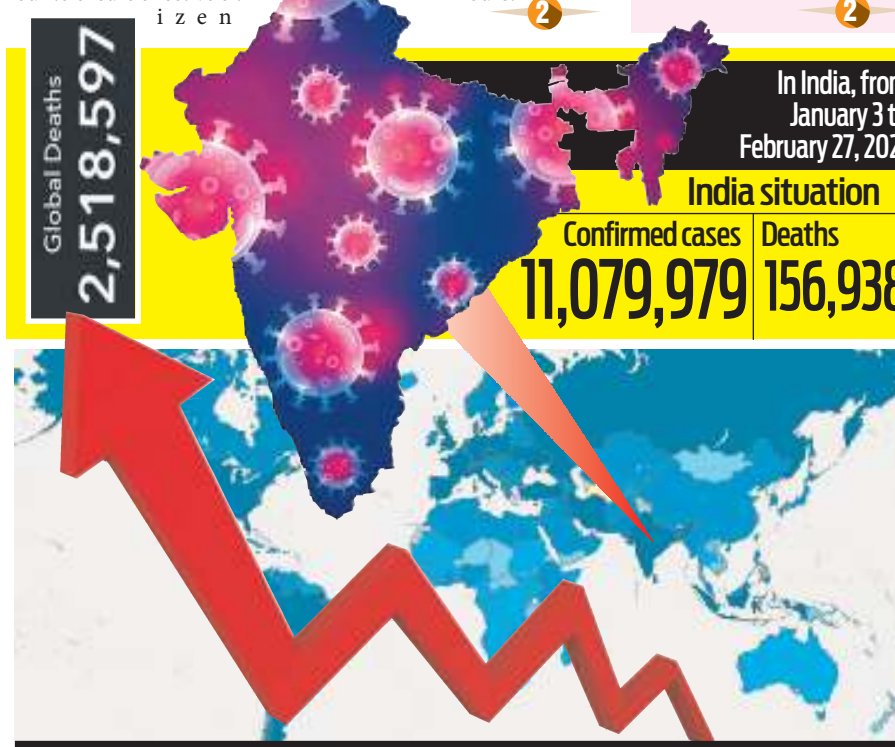
communication to not let complacency set in, especially in light of vaccination drive entering the next phase, and enforcing stringent social distancing measures.

Six states Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat have shown a surge in new cases in a span of 24 hours.

Maharashtra continues to report the highest daily new cases at 8,333. It is followed by Kerala with 3,671 while Punjab reported 622 new cases in the last 24 hours.

**Pvt hospitals can charge up to Rs 250 per dose of Covid vax**

Private hospitals can charge up to Rs 250 per dose of Covid-19 vaccine, the Health Ministry said on Saturday as India prepares to vaccinate people aged above 60 years and those over 45 with comorbidities from March 1. The ministry also specified 20 comorbidities among people aged between 45 and 59 years who will get the vaccine.

**Comments against judges a disturbing trend: Prasad**

PNS ■ PATNA

Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad on Saturday expressed strong disapproval of legal activists making objectionable comments about judges who do not pass favourable orders on their petitions, calling it a "disturbing new trend".

Prasad was addressing a function here organised to mark the inauguration of a new building of the Patna High Court by Chief Justice of India S A Bobde, in presence of Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, among others.

"We can surely criticise the reasoning of a judgement. But, I foresee a new trend



which I need to flag today", Prasad said referring to "grossly unfair" comments on social media against judges by those who file PILs and feel aggrieved when the judgement is not favourable.

**KTR tells TRS to 'fuel' ire at BJP**K VENKATESHWARLU  
■ HYDERABAD

TRS working president KT Rama Rao on Saturday made it clear that the TRS will target the spiralling prices of fuel and essential commodities while saying that he was in no mood to overlook lethargy or complacency of TRS leaders.

"We have to take the BJP's big lies to the people to expose it. The BJP does not have a single reason to seek votes in the state. We have to expose the six years of failures of the BJP government. We have to remember the price hike of petrol and diesel. At the same time, we have to take our government's developmental and welfare programmes to the voters,"



TRS working president KT Rama Rao addresses the party's graduate MLC election meeting at the Telangana Bhavan on Saturday.

KTR said at a Hyderabad-Rangareddy-Mahabubnagar graduate MLC election meeting at Telangana Bhavan.

Warning TRS leaders once again that he would not keep

quiet if they failed to take part in election campaigns or party meetings, KTR reportedly told them that he was aware of who works and who doesn't.

**TTD okays big Budget, to resume arjitha sevas**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The TTD Board that met in Tirumala on Saturday approved a Rs 2,937.82 crore budget for financial year 2021-22, while also announcing that arjitha sevas would resume in the Lord Balaji temple from April 14 onward.



TTD Board chairman YV Subba Reddy chairs the crucial meeting in Tirumala on Saturday.

The meeting, chaired by YV Subba Reddy, also decided to allow devotees to be physically present for arjitha sevas booked in advance, provided they observe all Covid guidelines and procure Covid test three days ahead of their visit to Tirumala.

**King of fruits to make a late entry this mango season**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The king of fruits - mango - will land at the Gaddiannaram fruit market here rather late this season - towards the end of March, as against its regular entry into the market in February.

Officials attribute it to the damage caused to the mango tree at the time of flowering phase. Whatever may be the reason, they expect mango production to nosedive during



the current season, compared to last year. The biggest fruit market in

the country - Gaddiannaram market - receives mango supplies from Telugu states and

also from Karnataka and exports it to North India.

Because of inclement weather and heavy rains, the mango crop was damaged at the flowering and budding stage.

Market committee special grade secretary Pravin Kumar Reddy said that the mangoes would start arriving at the market in the first week of March and supply would increase substantially by the end of March.

"Currently, the market

receives 100 crates of mangoes from Karnataka. Each crate - of 20 kg capacity - is being sold at Rs 300 to Rs 360," he said.

The Benishan variety of mango found in Kollapur of Mahabubnagar district of Telangana enjoys good demand in the market. As the rains caused damage to mango at the flowering stage, the arrival of the mangoes to the market would be rather late. The yield would also likely be less than what was the last year.

**Truth is party getting weak: 'G-23' in Jammu**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress is "getting weak" and needs to be strengthened, said members of the G-23 - a group of seniors who questioned the Gandhis' leadership style -, who converged to send a reminder to the leadership ahead of key elections.

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**FAKE E-MAILS CASE: HRITHIK ROSHAN RECORDS STATEMENT WITH POLICE**

Bollywood actor Hrithik Roshan on Saturday recorded his statement with the Crime Intelligence Unit of the Mumbai crime branch in connection with his 2016 complaint about fake e-mails in his name to Kangana Ranaut, an official said. Roshan, wearing a face mask and a black cap with a T shirt and blue jeans, reached the office of the Mumbai Police Commissioner around 11.45 am. He left after more than two-and-a-half hours, the official said. The office of the CIU is located in the main building of the police commissioner's office in Crawford market.



**'ALL AND SUNDRY'**

Frequent squabbles in public glare by Telangana Congress leaders are showing the party in poor light at a time when it's fighting for survival. Open challenges are being exchanged over leadership issues and differences over allotment of party tickets aired in the media's presence.

Over the past week, DCC president Kuna Srisailem Goud quit the beleaguered party and joined the BJP saying the leaders were busy targeting each other rather than the government while another filed his nomination for the Hyderabad Graduate MLC seat where the party has fielded its veteran G Chinna Reddy.

However small these instances are, they reveal the scourge of infighting and groupism that has been taking a toll on the party ever since

# Is Congress ceding even the Opposition space?

the race began to occupy the TPCC president's post in December 2018 when Uttam Kumar Reddy offered to step down.

A Revanth Reddy, Malkajgiri MP, is making a high decibel pitch for the post but is vehemently opposed by old timers on grounds like being an accused in the cash-for-vote scheme and a relative newcomer to the party and by some demanding appointment of a BC leader. But the high command is not cognisant of the urgency to identify a leader who can take on a powerful and wily KCR and an aggressive Bandi Sanjay of the BJP, a party that is on the cusp of replacing the Congress as the main opposition.

Congress can ill-afford this luxury when it needs to recover from its poor showing in the Dubbaka and GHMC polls. More so when elections to three seats in the Legislature, all prestigious, are in the offing. One of them is

**Where is the effort to pitch Congress as an entity with a distinct ideology, a hoary past and a party with a future? In contrast, the gears of BJP's well-oiled machinery and its "Jai Shri Ram" agenda are smoothly falling in place in tandem with the approaching elections.**

for the Nagarjunasagar Assembly seat where the party is fielding its heavyweight K Jana Reddy who stands a good chance of wresting the seat he represented seven times earlier. The ruling TRS and BJP are struggling to pick strong candidates.

Telangana Congress is following the pattern of bickering between rival factions in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. The Congress government in Madhya Pradesh collapsed while the one in Rajasthan survived the toppling attempt. The rot actually begins in Delhi where the leadership, stuck in the impe-

rial style of functioning of the 70s and the 80s, cannot even put up a credible fight in Gujarat municipal polls to retain the opposition space.

This raises the question whether the Congress is up to the task of regaining its past glory because of memories that are still fresh of how it failed to form the government in Goa and Manipur despite being the largest single party. In Puducherry too, no worthwhile campaign was mounted to save the sinking Narayanasamy government by plugging the trickle of defections.

For the first time since the



**S NAGESH KUMAR**  
Former Resident Editor, The Hindu

80s, the Congress does not hold power anywhere in the South. It has minimal presence in the North-East and large swathes of North. It rules in Rajasthan, Punjab and Chhattisgarh on its own strength and is a partner in the Aghadi coalition in Maharashtra and the Hemant Soren government in Jharkhand. Nationwide, it has around 780 MLAs against 1,380-plus of BJP, highest by

any party in the last 25 years.

With the first phase of polling for the Four States and Puducherry scheduled for March 27, a cogent pan-India strategy with subsets for States where it is pitted against regional parties is not discernible. The details will surely come later but where is the effort to pitch Congress as an entity with a distinct ideology, a hoary past and a party with a future.

In contrast, the gears of BJP's well-oiled machinery and its "Jai Shri Ram" agenda are smoothly falling in place in tandem with the approaching elections. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has toured all the States, West Bengal more than once, while Home Minister Amit Shah, BJP chief JP Nadda and other party brass have campaigned more than once in the poll-bound States.

Rahul Gandhi, Congress MP from Wayanad, is matching them mile for mile but

other leaders, but many other party leaders are not raising a finger to complement his efforts. Worse still, the G-23, a ginger group of leaders unhappy over the vacuum at the top, are reportedly planning public meetings to rally progressive forces against "BJP's majoritarianism". The only exception is Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel who is camping in Assam to replicate the "Chhattisgarh model of booth management".

Elections are a passing phase, whether a party wins or loses. What a party needs, besides an ideology, is the ability to convince people for reasons behind contradictions over past and present stands such as the farm laws besides a clear articulation of its line on emerging issues. In the coming elections the Congress must convince people why it is allying with CPM in West Bengal and Assam and opposing it in

Kerala.

Rahul Gandhi's articulation of critical issues is often shallow. Otherwise, it is diversionary. He resorts to name calling or one-liners like 'hum do, hamare do' where the message gets mixed - whether he is lampooning big industrialists or parodying crony capitalism. The BJP was quick to capitalise on his recent gaffe criticising the Centre for failure to create a Ministry of Fisheries when it already exists and his disparaging remark about politics in North India compared to the South.

His shortcomings, no matter how impressive swimming in the sea off the Kollam coast was, are only one facet of the Congress' decline. For now, it is a party obsessed with internal issues like finding the next president and tackling the G-23 leaders rather than discharging its responsibility of giving the BJP a stiff fight in 2024.

## Historian readies book on first Muslim teacher, feminist

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A book on Fatima Sheikh, the first Muslim female teacher in India would be released on March 10 in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana and would be distributed free of cost in 150 places in the two States. Historian and writer Syed Naseer Ahmed said Fatima Sheikh launched the Beti Padoo movement promoting education among girls and women 170 years ago with Mahatma Jyoti Rao Phule and Savitri Bai Phule.

Naseer Ahmad said that a lot of literature was available about Phule but sadly there was no proper information on Fatima Sheikh who provided shelter to the Phule couple



when Govind Rao Phule threw them out of their house. He recalled that Fatima Sheikh, along with her brother Usman Sheikh, provided shelter to the Phule couple in their house and Fatima, after getting



training as a teacher with Savitri Bai Phule, worked as a teacher and later headmistress. Naseer Ahmad said that Fatima Sheikh started Beti Padoo movement, much before it became a government

slogan, by asking everyone to send girls to the schools and worked relentlessly for education of girls. He described Fatima Sheikh not only the first Muslim teacher but the first Muslim feminist in India.

Naseer Ahmad said that the book on Fatima Sheikh would be distributed to all libraries free of cost and would be distributed in 150 centres in AP and Telangana on March 10 on the occasion of Savitri Bai Phule's 127 death anniversary.

He said that they are ready to provide Fatima Sheikh books for free distribution among masses to awaken them about Fatima Sheikh hence those interested can contact 9440241727.



## Truth is party getting weak: 'G-23' in Jammu

Continued from Page 1

Apart from Kapil Sibal, the group that took to the stage included former Rajya Sabha MP Ghulam Nabi Azad, former Union Minister Anand Sharma, Rajya Sabha MP Vivek Tankha, Lok Sabha MP Manish Tewari and former Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda.

"The truth is that we see the Congress getting weak. That is why we have gathered. We gathered earlier too and we have to strengthen the party together," Mr Sibal said.

"Our voice is for the betterment of the party. It should be strengthened everywhere once again. The new generation should connect (to party). We have seen the good days of Congress. We do not want to see it weakening as we become older," Mr Sharma said.

HYDERABAD BULLION RATES	
 GOLD	₹ 46,580 (10 gm) ↓
 SILVER	₹ 72,500 (1kg) ↓
	₹ 1500 ↓

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG	
Dressed/With Skin	₹161
Without Skin	₹183
Broiler at Farm	₹111

EGG RATES ₹/100	
HYDERABAD	405
VIJAYAWADA	393
VISAKHAPATNAM	505
RETAIL PRICE (IN HYDERABAD)	₹4.05

## Centre, states anxious as Covid...

Continued from Page 1

In the last two weeks, Maharashtra has shown the highest rise in active cases from 34,449 on February 14 to 68,810 currently, the Ministry said. A detailed presentation was made on the current status of Covid-19 in these states with a focus on districts reporting an increasing number of new cases or positivity.

This was followed by a comprehensive review with all the states and UTs.

The Chief Secretaries briefed about the current situation in the states and their preparedness to tackle the recent spike of Covid cases.

They informed about the enforcement of Covid-appropriate behaviour by levying heavy fines and challans, reviewing the surveillance and containment activities closely with the district collectors, and other steps being taken in line with the guidelines provided by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).

The Cabinet Secretary reiterated that states need to maintain a continued rigorous vigil in terms of containing the spread and not squander away the gains of the collective hard work of the last year.

## Pvt hospitals can charge up to Rs 250...

Continued from Page 1

These include people with heart failure with hospital admission in past year, moderate or severe valvular heart disease, coronary artery disease, CT/ MRI-documented stroke, diabetes of over 10 years or with complications, hypertension, end-stage kidney disease on haemodialysis, diagnosis of any solid cancer on or after 2000 or currently on any cancer therapy. The Covid-19 vaccine will be given free of cost at government hospitals, while people will need to pay for it at private facilities. To ramp up the vaccination capacity manifold, a significantly large number of private facilities are being involved, the ministry said.

"Rs 250 will be the ceiling - Rs 150 per dose of vaccine plus Rs 100 service charge. This arrangement will remain effective till further orders," an official source said.

## KK dares...

Continued from Page 1

Addressing the Sanathnagar Assembly constituency general body meeting at Zoroastrian Function Hall in support of party candidate S Vani Devi from Hyderabad-Rangareddy-Mahbubnagar graduate constituency, KK said that the leaders on the dais were ready to resign from their respective positions if the opposition could prove that the details released by the Government regarding jobs were inaccurate.

He said that 3 lakh graduate voters out of 5.05 lakh voters were identified by the TRS alone. KK advised party workers to concentrate on getting the voters reach the polling booth and this alone will help the TRS candidate win. He said that the opposition parties are making baseless criticism regarding jobs, PRC and promotions before the MLC elections.

Election in-charge Minister Gangula Kamalakara said that Vani Devi's father and former prime minister late PV Narasimha Rao spread the greatness of India to the world and played a key role in the development of the nation.

Animal Husbandry Minister Talasani Srinivas Yadav said that the State government gave promotions to employees waiting for the last 30 years.

## PK bets on Mamata; says 'on May 2, hold me to my tweet'

Continued from Page 1

Kishor then wrote that BJP would struggle to secure even double digits in the West Bengal assembly election.

His tweet was in response to Home Minister Amit Shah setting a target of winning more than 200 out of 294 seats in West Bengal assembly polls in 2021. The EC has announced eight-phase elections in West Bengal from March 27 to April 29. Results will be declared on May 2 along with the three other poll-bound states and the union territory of Puducherry.

## Corona situation under control in state: CS to Union Secretary

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Union Cabinet Secretary Dr Rajiv Gauba conducted a video conference with Chief Secretaries of the states on Saturday. He emphasised the need to act decisively in terms of containment, surveillance and large scale vaccination which would help in arresting the rising trend in the Covid cases.

Telangana Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar informed the Union cabinet Secretary that the situation in the state is fully under control. The positivity rate is 0.43 and less than 200 cases are being reported daily in the state. Occupancy in the hospitals, both private



and government, is also low. Rapid Antigen tests are being conducted in 1,100 locations across the state which has been the game changer in the state, Chief Secretary observed. If anyone found positive, immediately medicine kit is given.

Referring to the vaccination drive, the Chief Secretary said that more than 75 percent

health workers and frontline workers have been vaccinated and the state is fully prepared to roll out the third phase vaccination from March 1.

Secretary of HM&FW SAM Rizvi, Director of Public Health Srinivas Rao, Director of Medical Education Ramesh Reddy and other officials attended the conference.

## Comments against judges a disturbing trend: Prasad

Continued from Page 1

Asserting that the judges of India, be they of the Supreme Court, the High Courts or the district courts must be given the freedom to decide a case as per their knowledge of the law and that though people were free to come up with their own analyses that was critical of a verdict, "trolling" and "agenda setting" were not acceptable.

"I had been thinking of making my concerns public. I chose to do so here", said

Prasad who also made a mention of having practiced, as a lawyer, at the Patna High Court and his current tenure as the local MP.

The Union minister, who also holds the portfolios of Electronics and Telecommunications, also referred to the recently issued guidelines for using social media which was "long overdue". "We are supportive of freedom. We are supportive of criticism. We are supportive of dissent, too. But, the issue is the

misuse and abuse of social media. There should be a grievance redressal mechanism for someone who is abused on the social media", he added.

The Union Law Minister also spoke of the proposed establishment of All India Judicial Services, "a work in progress", as part of which "the best minds" would be appointed as judges after cracking competitive exams held by the UPSC "under the direction of the Supreme Court.

## Man from Dubai held for social media...

Continued from Page 1

Therefore, the police issued a look out notice on Abu Faisal.

On information that he is returning to the city from Dubai, the police searched for him and took him into custody.

The police discovered that he belongs to Chandrayanagutta area of the old city.

## KTR tells TRS to 'fuel' ire at BJP...

Continued from Page 1

Addressing the Sanathnagar Assembly constituency general body meeting at Zoroastrian Function Hall in support of party candidate S Vani Devi from Hyderabad-Rangareddy-Mahbubnagar graduate constituency, KK said that the leaders on the dais were ready to resign from their respective positions if the opposition could prove that the details released by the Government regarding jobs were inaccurate.

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Animal Husbandry Minister Talasani Srinivas Yadav said that the State government gave promotions to employees waiting for the last 30 years.

In another meeting held

with Khairatabad constituency leaders at Lake View Function Hall, KK asked them to ensure the victory of Vani Devi.

He said that Vani Devi is a great educationist and she has a good grasp of national and international issues and she would solve the problems of the graduates if elected. He asked the party leaders to meet graduate voters personally and remain in touch with them.

Khairatabad MLA Danam Nagender said that ensuring victory to Vani Devi was nothing but an honour to PV. He asked the voters not to believe the words of opposition leaders.

Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi said that the

Chief Minister gave Hyderabad-Rangareddy-Mahbubnagar graduate MLC ticket to a woman who helped 1.5 lakh student graduates through her educational institutions.

Vani Devi said that she is contesting the elections in response to the call given by Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Rao. She said that she will strive hard in the direction of solving the problems of the unemployed and employees if elected. She said that no MLC candidates contesting in these elections knows as much as she does the problems of the unemployed and employees. She urged the graduates to vote for her.

## TTD okays big Budget, to resume arjitha sevas

Continued from Page 1

The Board also approved a proposal of Sri Padmavati temple of Tiruchanoor to launch Tulabhara seva on the lines of Srivari temple, Tirumala.

The Board decided to provide financial assistance to taken over temples from Srivari Trust and frame uniform guidelines for leasing and construction of TTD kalyana mandapams besides

integrated system to reduce losses in operating Kalyana Mandapams.

The Board endorsed a proposal to name all the six Veda Pathashalas run by TTD henceforth as Sri Venkateswara Veda Vijnana Peetham and hike the remuneration of Vedic teachers at all Pathashalas from existing Rs 22,000 to Rs 35,150.

The Board sanctioned Rs 9 crore towards electrical and civil works to promote a Sri

Venkateswara paediatric hospital on the first floor of the old OPD Bhavan of the BIRRD hospital and approved tenders for Rs 3.75 crore towards extension of the 3rd floor.

The TTD also approved proposals for increasing the capacity storage of ghee used in preparation of TTD prasadam and Anna Prasadam from 82.4 metric tonnes to 180.4 metric tonnes. Besides, it gave the nod for installation of APSPLD meters at all rest

houses, cottages, choultries etc in Tirumala to enhance transparency in power consumption besides producing 50 Mega Watts of conventional energy in Tirumala.

The Board also decided to provide Covid vaccination to all TTD employees. The TTD will perform bhumi puja soon for construction of Srivari temples at Mumbai and Jammu.

The Board declared the cow as the National Animal and

will recommend the Centre to endorse this. The Board also decided to construct either Srivari temple or Bhajana Mandiram or amenities complex in Ayodhya, if the Ayodhya Ram Mandir Nirman Trust comes forward to allot land to the TTD. Ex-officio members TTD EO KS Jawahar Reddy, Endowments Principal Secretary Dr Vani Mohan, TUDA chairman Dr C Bhaskar Reddy were also present.

**GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION**

**'E' Procurement Notice**

NT No.: SAEE-30302/GHMC/2020-2021 Dt:26.02.2021. Name of Work: Improvements to be taken up at Ramgopet old police station Clock tower in ward 148 Ramgopet Corporation Division, Under circle 30 Ramgopet, GHMC. Section: Estimate Amount (in lakhs): Rs 8.50. Start Date/Last date & time for receipt of Bids From Dt: 26.02.2021 00:05:00 PM, Date: 01.03.2021 @ 05:00 PM. Officer Name, Address and Cell No: EE Circle-30, GHMC, Secbad. Ph No: 9999903076. Further details can be seen at e-procurement @ <https://mcd.telangana.gov.in>

R.O. No.: 5675-PPCL/ADVT/17/2020-21 EXECUTIVE ENGINEER CIRCLE-30, BEGUNPETA

**OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF AGRICULTURE MARKETING Government of Telangana, Hyderabad**

**'E' PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE**

E-procurement T. No. SE(AW)/TS/MPD/EP/11/2020-21, Dated: 26-02-2021

Online Tender are invited by supervising Engineer (AW), Hyderabad from the Registered Civil Contractors and Electrical Contractors with valid Grade License for the following: 12) Work on various locations in Hyderabad, Warangal, Suryapet, Nirmam, Kollur, etc. Javelur, etc. (Rural) and Subsidy Schemes, costing of Rs. 1.20 Crores. E-procurement site opening: Date for SL No. 01 to 03 on 27-02-2021 at 5:00 PM and site opening Date for SL No. 10 to 12 on 02-03-2021 at 5:00 PM. The Non-refundable Processing fee shall be paid through online and counterfoiled receipt signed by the bidders with receipt number /UTR number shall be scanned and uploaded along with bids. Any other information can be had from the <https://tender.tmgm.gov.in> or office of the Supervising Engineer (AW).

R.O. No.: 5544-PPCL/ADVT/17/2020-21 SE (AW) Officiating, Dy. Director of Agri. Marketing Govt. of TS

# Beware! Fake passport services may steal your money and data

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

If you are applying for a passport, chances are you will be filling up an online form to finalise an appointment date for the in-person verification of documents and the final checks before your passport application is processed. Mind you, the official website is [www.passportindia.gov.in](http://www.passportindia.gov.in).

However, there are a lot of fake websites that have cropped up, which promise to help applicants fill the online form, schedule the appointment at the Passport Seva Kendra nearest to you, help you with the required documents and also charge a fee for rendering these unauthorised services.

In an alert on fake websites related to passport services, citizens are being warned that



these fake websites are registered in the domain names that end with .org, .in and .com such as [www.indiapassport.org](http://www.indiapassport.org), [www.passportindiaportal.in](http://www.passportindiaportal.in), [www.passport-india.in](http://www.passport-india.in), [www.passport-seva.in](http://www.passport-seva.in),

[www.applypassport.org](http://www.applypassport.org).

In fact, most of these websites look very similar to the original website of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, for applying passport services.

The cybercrime police station receives at least one complaint daily from persons defrauded by using the fake passport services.

According to the latest complaint, a resident of Jubilee Hills area lost Rs 2,999 by using the fake website.

The people, instead of browsing the regional passport officer's official website are searching the Internet. The regional passport officer's website, under the Ministry of External Affairs, is linked to a server which is under the control of the Union government.

Instead of browsing the official website, people have been approaching the fake websites created by cyber criminals.

If people browse any of the fake websites, they actually get directed to other fake sites. The

people have been giving their full information and paying money to these sites. However, they find problems while booking the slot.

Then, they are approaching the police for help. The police said that only one person, out of 40 persons duped by cyber criminals had complained to the police about the fraud. Majority of them are not complaining as the loss of money is not so high. Besides losing money, the people have been giving their valuable information to the cyber criminals.

The police have been investigating the case to search the roots of these fake websites.

The police are cautioning the people and asking them to ascertain whether the website is genuine, before they fill information and pay money.

## Girl cricketers from rural schools overcomes all the odds, stand tall

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Once again proving that grit and determination could make anything possible, two students each from the Telangana Social Welfare Residential Institutions and Telangana Tribal Welfare Residential Institutions have made it to Hyderabad Women's Cricket team.

Four girls - B Anjali and Nikitha from social welfare residential institutions, and Parvathi and Anitha from tribal welfare residential educational institutions, all who are below 18 years, have been selected for the Hyderabad Senior Women's Cricket team (U-23).

The heart-warming stories of B Anjali, Nikitha, Parvathi and Anitha are similar and they all have stood tall overcoming the odds of poverty. Cricket academies launched by



social and tribal welfare residential educational institutions were the game changers for these girls. Parents of Parvathi, a 13-year-old tribal girl from Koudipalli mandal, Medak district, work as farm labourers to eke out a living.

"Whatever I am today is because of the intensive cricket coaching camps being run by social and tribal welfare residential educational institutions. I never imagined that I will get selected to the

Hyderabad Women's cricket team at a young age. I want to represent the Indian women's cricket team in international tournaments one day," says B Anjali from Mudigonda mandal, Khammam district.

"Cricket is my passion and thanks to the State government for launching cricket academies and encouraging poor children to shine in sports," says Anitha, a tribal girl of Hanumanpalli thanda of Mahabubnagar district.

## CITY LIGHTS

### TSPSC to hold interviews for principal posts on March 1

Telangana State Public Service Commission (TSPSC) will hold interviews for recruitment to posts of principal in schools for second list of candidates on March 1 from 9 am. The Commission has provisionally shortlisted 24 candidates (including eight court cases candidates) in 1:2 ratio for interviews on the basis of the main examination and subsequent certificate verification, the TSPSC said in a press release. Earlier, interviews were conducted for 288 candidates from September 4 to 7, 2019 against 303 vacancies for the same post, it said. A list of candidates who were removed from interviewed short list on the basis of High Court judgment is also available on the Commission's website, it added.



### TITA appoints Ch Vishnu as north zone in-charge

Telangana Information Technology Association (TITA) appointed Ch Vishnu as its north zone in-charge. The Association which initiated various initiatives in the field of education, health, agriculture and other sectors has appointed officer bearers after the State IT and Industries Department Principal Secretary Jayesh Ranjan directed District Collectors to provide working space to TITA in district headquarters. Ch Vishnu will supervise the work of TITA units of Adilabad, KB Asifabad, Nirmal, Nizamabad, Jagtial, Mancherla, Peddapalli, Karimnagar districts. He was earlier TITA Jagtial unit secretary. Thanking TITA Global President Sundeeep Kumar Makthala, Vishnu said that he will strive to attract investment and expand tech initiatives taken up by the Association in north Telangana.



### Cyb Commissioner assures support to pharma industry

The Society for Cyberabad Security Council (SCSC), which acts as a bridge between industry and police department, organised a meeting between the Cyberabad Police and representatives from the pharmaceutical industry in Hyderabad, on Saturday. While the IT industry has been collaborating with the police department for years through SCSC, the police department's crucial actions during the Covid-19 pandemic brought in a necessity for other avenues of industry to collaborate with the police and serve the public. Accordingly, this meeting was organised with heads of 132 pharmaceutical companies from Pashamylaram, Gaddapotharam, Turkapally, Genome Valley, etc. Cyberabad Police Commissioner VC Sajjanar, Sangareddy SP, Chandra Sekhar Reddy and other officials from the police department met the pharma representatives. While the representatives conveyed their concerns to the Sajjanar, he in turn, promised his support to the industry and also urged them to be a part of SCSC and do their part towards the society as well.



### JNTU-Hyderabad increases exam duration by one hour

In a move that could spell some relief for students, the Jawaharlar Nehru Technological University-Hyderabad (JNTU-H) has increased the duration for semester examinations by one hour. This means students will have to complete the examination in three hours instead of the earlier limit of two hours. The university has not however changed the question paper pattern. Students will have to write five out of eight questions and there will be no mandatory section in the question paper. This pattern of question paper was followed in the previous examinations due to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2019-2020. The enhanced time duration will be applicable for all semester examinations commencing from March 8. Like in the last semester examinations, students will be allotted exam centres as per their preferences and the nearest to their hometowns. Accordingly, the university has collected preferences from students to select a cluster of colleges.



## 178 fresh Covid cases in state; tally 2.9 lakh

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana on Saturday recorded 178 new Covid-19 cases, raising the state's tally to over 2.98 lakh, even as 148 more people recovered from the virus in the past 24 hours, officials said.

Hyderabad accounted for the highest number of cases at 30, followed by Medchal Malkajigiri (20), Rangareddy (15), Karimnagar (10) and Warangal Urban (9).

Among other places, Adilabad and Sangareddy (8 each), Nalgonda and Rajanna Siricilla (7 each), Mehboobnagar, Mancherla and Nizamabad (6 each) and Jagtial, Khammam and Yadadri Bhongir (5 each).

Although the total number of cases have crossed 2.98 lakh, the number of active cases in the state stood at 1,939, rising from 1,715 a week ago, more than the neighbouring Telugu state of Andhra Pradesh.

Surprisingly, both the Telugu states are reporting rising active cases after report-



ing drops in this category.

Meanwhile, one more Covid death occurred in the past 24 hours, raising the statewide death toll to 1,633.

Even after one week, the southern state's Covid fatality rate stands at the same 0.54 per cent rate, compared to the national average of 1.4 per cent.

Powered by 148 more recoveries, total number of recoveries in Telangana has crossed 2.95 lakh, narrowing the gap between total cases and recoveries.

The state's recovery rate dropped to 98.8 per cent, which is still higher than the national average of 97.1 per cent.

## Man dies after car crashes into road median at Hasthinapuram

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a freak mishap, one person was killed when a rashly driven car crashed into a road median at Hasthinapuram in Vanasthalipuram here on Saturday morning.

Sources said the driver Gautham, who was allegedly driving under the influence of alcohol, lost control of the car and first hit a traffic signal pole and then crashed into the road median. With the same speed the car jumped on to the other side.

They were proceeding from the Sagar Ring Road towards Vanasthalipuram when the



incident occurred at 4 am.

Due to the impact, one Sandeep who was seated on the back seat in the car suffered grievous injuries and died.

The Vanasthalipuram police are investigating. While Gautham was taken into custody, another person travelling in the car went absconding.

## Man kills his father after argument over marriage

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A Dubai returnee killed his father by smashing his head with a boulder as he refused to sell their agricultural field for performing his second marriage at Kuchanpalli village in Soan Mandal on Friday night. The incident came to light on Saturday.

Soan Sub-Inspector Asif said that the accused was Sanghvi Ravi, a divorcee who recently returned from Dubai. The deceased was his father Pedda Rajanna, 65, a farmer of Kuchanpalli.

Ravi picked up an argument with his father and in fit of

rage hit on Rajanna's head, resulting in his instantaneous death. He was earlier booked for assaulting his elder brother Ravi with a sickle for not showing interest in organising his second marriage in the afternoon on Friday.

He was forcing his father to sell their agricultural land to solemnise his wedding for quite a long time. He got angry when Rajanna was reluctant to fulfill his desire. He was married to a woman and was separated from her a few years back. He migrated to Dubai in search of livelihood, but came back in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic.

## Eight held for cow slaughter in Telangana

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Eight people were on Saturday arrested for allegedly slaughtering 16 cows in Siddipet district of Telangana, police said.

Acting on information that the cows were slaughtered on the outskirts of Siddipet on Friday, a police team reached the spot and arrested the eight.

The district Police Commissioner D Joel Davis said a case was registered under relevant sections of the IPC, Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act and Prohibition of Cows Slaughter Act.

Citing preliminary information, police said the arrested people used to purchase aged cows from farmers and took them to a poultry shed for allegedly slaughtering them to sell beef.

Meanwhile, members of BJP and VHP and other organisations held a rally on Friday, demanding the arrest of those responsible for the slaughter, the police said.

The situation is peaceful in Siddipet, they added.



### SUMMER SOLACE

The sale of earthen pots, which is traditionally used as a vessel to keep and drink chilled water has increased with the onset of summer months. "Place this pot on a sturdy near the window. The breeze will help keep the water cooler. During the hot months you can even wrap a clean moist cloth around this for quicker cooling," says Malleswari Annavarapu, a vendor looking for buyers for her earthen pots in city.

## 8,000 women enrol for exclusive job mela

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

More than 8,000 women enrolled for an exclusive job mela for women organised by the She Teams of Hyderabad City Police here on Saturday.

The job mela conducted with talent acquisition firm TMI Group, aims to provide 3,000 jobs in various skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled roles

to unemployed women. Hyderabad Police Commissioner, Anjani Kumar said, "This is the first-of-its-kind initiative taken up by a police department in the country and the Hyderabad police has gotten in touch with over 25 companies to provide 3,000 jobs for women. Based on the skill-set, applicants will get a job and hopefully, an opportunity to succeed in life."



## Gangs blackmailing rich women on the prowl

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A gang is on the prowl in the outskirts of Hyderabad targeting rich women, including teenagers, who frequent pubs, discos, resorts or other hang-outs looking for some fun.

The modus operandi of the gang is simple. They somehow manage to befriend their victims - rich women, including teenagers, whose parents are rich - lace their food or drinks with drugs, mostly some types of intoxicants to ensure they stay intoxicated for about three hours. In these three hours the gang members exploit their



victims sexually and video record the entire proceedings and then blackmail their victims for money. In most cases

the victims end up giving into the demands of the gang, afraid the criminals will make the video viral or hand it over

to the family members, thereby assassinating their characters.

The police have recently got the scent of such gangs and are trying to nab the culprits. In the meanwhile the police have warned the women to be extra cautious when they visit pubs or resorts, especially for dinners or other parties. Women, who have fallen prey to such criminal elements, are in absolute distress, more so because they are unable to share their misfortune with either their family or friends.

The police have stepped up vigil to nab such criminal ele-

ments. They have even cautioned the parents and have asked them to sensitise their children, who are regulars at pubs, resorts or other entertainment zones in the city. The police have asked the parents to look for perceptible changes in the behaviour of their children. They have also asked the parents to verify the social media accounts of their children and browse their mobile phones as frequently as possible, to ensure that they do not fall prey to such criminals, who are taking advantage of their victims and are playing with their lives.

# TRS strength is network of party workers: Harish Rao

PNS ■ IBRAHIMPATNAM

Minister for Finance T Harish Rao has asked the TRS cadre to ensure at least 70 to 80 per cent of the polling in the MLC elections to ensure the TRS victory in Graduate MLC polls.

Launching the party campaign from Ibrahimpatnam on Saturday, he said that the TRS strength is the network of party activists and leaders which neither the BJP nor the Congress have had.

The TRS victory is certain provided the workers work hard, he said. He asked the party rank and file to meet the voters directly and explain the voters why anyone should vote for the TRS. What is the use of exercising the franchise in favour of the BJP, or the Congress since they are not in power, he said.

Uttering the word Telangana was prohibited once, he said adding that the credit for bringing statehood to the region goes to the Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao. The Congress used to chant the word Telangana with an eye on elections, he reminded.

Did the BJP, in spite of in



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power at the Centre for so many years, supply drinking water at the doorstep of the people, he questioned.

The Centre copied the TRS government's Mission Bhagiratha programme, he pointed out. Did the Congress, or TDP provide drinking water to the people of the region in spite of ruling the undivided state for over 70 years, he questioned.

The Centre copied the state's Rytu Bandhu scheme and is extending an input subsidy of Rs 6,000 per acre, while the TRS government gives Rs 10,000 per acre towards the input subsidy, he compared.

The power position in Telangana improved to 16,000 MW as against the 7778 mw when statehood to the state was achieved, he compared.

Barring Telangana, did anywhere in the country the agriculture sector gets round the clock power supply, he questioned.

The BJP copied the TRS scheme and implementing Garib Kalyan Yojna. He said the TRS government gives Rs 1 lakh under Kalyana Lakshmi and Shadi Mubarak.

The BJP promised railway coach factory to Telangana, Rs 400 crore to the development of backward regions, steel fac-

tory at Bayyaram and a tribal university to the state, he said during the BJP to fulfil the promises.

The GDP growth rate plummeted to minus 8 per cent from the 8 per cent at the time of BJP coming to power in the state, he said adding that the GSDP rate in Telangana was put at more than 14 per cent. He promised Krishna water to Ibrahimpatnam. Besides being the daughter of PV Narasimha Rao, Vani Devi is an educationist and a service minded person. He therefore appealed to the people to elect the one and only female in the race with highest majority.

## 'TS ahead of others State in welfare schemes'

PNS ■ MAHBUBNAGAR

Minister for Roads and Buildings Vemula Prashanth Reddy has called upon the TRS rank and file to ensure the victory of the TRS nominee for Hyderabad-Rangareddy-Mahbubnagar districts graduates' constituency polls Vani Devi with the highest majority to enhance the image of Excise Minister V Srinivas Goud in the eyes of Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao.

He was the chief guest in the TRS MLC polls preparatory meeting held at the TRS headquarters here on Saturday, along with Excise Minister Srinivas Goud, he said that Vani Devi, in spite of her celebrity family origin, leads a simple life.

The CM has been developing the state raising the above narrow political considerations, he said condemning BJP state president Bandi Sanjay's remarks against a leader of the Telangana movement.

Out of the total pension that CM KCR gives - Rs 2,016 per month - the contribution of the Centre was only Rs 200, he said.

## NAGARJUNASAGAR BYPOLL

# Bandi Sanjay warns cadre not to cross party line

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJP state unit president Bandi Sanjay on Saturday warned the party cadres against crossing the party line and advised them to work for the BJP nominees' success in Nagarjunasagar bypoll whomever the party leadership picks up the candidate.

To wrest the Nagarjunasagar seat from the TRS, the BJP has been devising plans. Recently, Telangana in-charge of the BJP Tarun Chug toured the Nagarjunasagar constituency as a special emissary of the national leadership of the party. He was reported to have expressed his impatience over the party leaders campaigning for the party in their separate ways. He wound up his tour in the middle and returned to Delhi.

Irrated at the party leaders not working with team spirit, Bandi Sanjay said that he would not tolerate if anyone were to cross the party line.

The role of Vijayashanthi is going to be very crucial in the campaign for the Nagarjunasagar bypoll as she is preparing herself to launch a scathing attack on the TRS



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with her sharp criticism.

Vijayashanthi, who recently returned to the BJP, is understood to have been given a free hand in running the party campaign. The BJP is of the view that her campaign would benefit the party.

The BJP got a vote share of only 1.48 per cent in the Assembly elections in 2018 while the TRS romped home with a 46 per cent vote share and the Congress had trailed with a 42 per cent vote share.

The BJP candidate Nivedita Reddy secured 2,675 votes in

the Assembly polls and finished fourth in the race.

The BJP leaders said that the BJP had to make a tight rope walking in Nagarjunasagar is the constituency bordered by neighbouring Andhra Pradesh state and the party has no enough activists at the grass-roots.

The BJP leaders have focussed their attention on improving their tally from 2,675 to over 60,000. To achieve this, the BJP put several caste equations under a scanner.

# Provide jobs to youth, Sravan tells KTR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

AICC National Spokesperson Sravan Dasoj warned KT Rama Rao, Minister for Industries, IT and Municipal Administration, to stop playing the provocative and undemocratic politics in Telangana instead he asked him to focus on creating employment to over 40 lakh beleaguered unemployed youth in the state.

Sravan, along with TPCC and NSUI leaders, including Indra Shobhan, Anil Kumar Yadav, Shivasena Reddy, Mogulla Raji Reddy, Mettu Sai Kumar, Kalvala Sujatha, Rohith, addressed the media at Gandhi Bhavan in Hyderabad.

According to him, the



Congress party has created new employment by setting up of new universities across the state, including Telangana, Mahatma Gandhi University, IIT Basara, IIT-Hyderabad, Palamuru University, Shatavahana University among others were set up at that time.

Further criticising KCR and KTR who have been deliberate-

ly betraying not only the unemployed youth, but also the farmers and every section of Telangana, he said, "This is a careless government. KCR doesn't listen to anyone. Giving away old-age pensions and Rytu Bandhu is not only the duty of the government. You must appoint VCs and faculty to the universities, fill up existing vacancies and create new employment. Are your Cabinet colleagues Ch Malla Reddy and Palla Rajeshwar Reddy running their universities without VCs and half of the staff?"

At a time when the TSPSC itself is functioning without a head and half of the staff, how can this government ensure the good governance to the people

of Telangana, he slammed. He lamented KTR for his failures to retain ITIR, NIMZ while doing business with Pharma City lands grabbed from farmers at Rs 6-8 lakhs per acre and offering them for Rs 1 crore per acre.

He also suggested the minister not embarrass the daughter of PV Narasimha Rao for the sake of winning MLC elections. He said that graduates are ready to teach a lesson to the TRS, which is encouraging defectors. He further warned that they will fight on employment issues from 'gully to zilla', along with NSUI, Youth Congress and won't spare the arrogant politics being played by KCR and his family.

# Uttam promises relentless fight for justice to family of murdered lawyers

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) president N Uttam Kumar Reddy on Saturday said that the Congress would not keep quiet until all those involved in the murder of advocates Vaman Rao and his wife Nagamani were brought to justice.

The lawyer couple was brutally murdered in broad daylight at Peddapalli on February 17, 2021.

Accompanied with MLA D Sridhar Babu, DCC presidents Komaraiah, Laxman and



TPCC chief N Uttam Kumar Reddy consoles the father of slain advocate G Vaman Rao at his residence in Manthani on Saturday

Prakash Reddy, ex-MLA Vijaya Ramana Rao and other leaders,

Uttam Kumar Reddy met the parents and family members of

Vaman Rao and Nagamani at their residence in Manthani constituency on Saturday. He conveyed condolences and sympathies on behalf of the entire Congress party.

Kishan Rao, father of Vaman Rao, said he did not have any confidence in the investigation of the local police. Responding to this, Uttam Kumar Reddy informed that the Congress leaders have already met Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan demanding a court-monitored CBI investigation. He assured the family of all support of the Congress.

# Karimnagar Dairy increases milk procurement price

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR

In a boost for milk producers, the management of Karimnagar Milk Producer Company nee Karimnagar Dairy has decided to increase the milk procurement price by Rs 2 per litre plus it would also give Rs 1 per litre as an incentive in addition to the government incentive of Rs 4 per litre.

Besides, the dairy farms (bulk suppliers, who would supply more than 50 litres to the dairy) would also get an incentive ranging from Rs 1 to Rs 4 per litre depending upon the range of supplying milk to the Karimnagar Dairy.

A decision to this effect was taken at the Karimnagar Milk Producer Company Limited (KMPL) Board of Directors meeting held on the dairy premises here on Friday under the chairmanship of Ch Rajeshwara Rao.

With this decision of increasing the milk procurement price, the farmers would get Rs 640 per kg of fat for buffalo milk against the old rate of Rs 620 per kg fat for buffalo milk.

For the cow milk, farmers would get Rs 257 per kg (total solids) against the old rate of



Karimnagar Dairy chairman Ch Rajeshwara Rao

Rs 245 per kg total solids plus an incentive of Rs 1 per litre.

The Karimnagar Dairy would procure one litre of buffalo milk having 6 per cent fat content at Rs 39.40 paise against the old rate of Rs 37.20 per litre, seven per cent fat at Rs 45.80 paise per litre against the old rate of Rs 43.40 per litre and 10 per cent fat content at Rs 65 per litre against the old rate of Rs 62 per litre.

Similarly, the cow milk having four per cent fat would be procured at Rs 33.13 per litre against the old rate of Rs 30.63 per litre, the 4.5 per cent fat content cow milk would be procured at Rs 34.41 per litre against Rs 31.85 per litre and five per cent fat content at Rs 35.70 against the old rate of Rs 33.08 per litre.

# Row over Raja Singh's jibe at beef eaters

K VENKATESHWARLU ■ HYDERABAD

Representatives of several student unions have staged a protest on Saturday in front of Arts College at Osmania University against BJP MLA Raja Singh for using abusive language against the people who eat cow meat. They demanded that Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao arrest Raja Singh for making derogatory remarks against SC/ST and Minorities. They warned Raja Singh stating that they will attack the latter if not tendered apology to the beef eaters.

While eating beef, the protest-

ers threw a challenge at the BJP and RSS leaders asking the latter to catch them if they have guts. The protesters ate the beef while enacting feeding beef to the portrait of Raja Singh. Later, they burnt the effigy of Raja Singh raising slogans against him. They alleged that it is not proper of Raja Singh to say that not to take donations from the beef eaters for the Ram temple at Ayodhya. They said that Raja Singh has to give a call not to seek the votes from the SC/ST/Minorities, who eat beef. They said that it is not proper for Raja Singh to create communal differences while using abusive language against the cow meat-eaters. Taking serious

objection to the language used by Raja Singh against the beef eaters, the protesters warned Raja Singh that they will also use the same language against the legislator.

Representatives from AISE, SFI, MSF (TS), PDSU, SSU, TVV, MSF and DBS participated in the protest. It may be recalled that Raja Singh used abusive language against the cow meat-eaters in a programme, which went viral on Saturday, and called upon the people not to take donations for the Ram temple construction at Ayodhya from them. He also called upon the people not to purchase anything from the cow eaters.



# I&PR TNGO Union calendar released

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Department of Information and Public Relations TNGO Union calendar was released at the Samachar Bhavan in Masab Tank here on Saturday.

Additional Directors Nagayya Kamble, LL Kishore Babu, DS Jagan, N Venkateshwar Rao, D Srinivas, SA Hashmi, Radhakishan, Department of Information and Public Relations TNGO Union presidents Akula Vanaja,

general secretary Korudu Anil Kumar, vice-president Dargah Jitender, treasurer Umesh Bajpayee, joint secretary T Durga Prasad, Meenakshi, Swarnalatha, Nagraj, Nareish, Majeed and others were present on the occasion.

# Tirumala deities given celestial bath at Kaleshwaram

PNS ■ JAYASHANKAR BHUPALAPALLY

Chakrasnanam was performed to Sri Venkateshwara Swamy, along with Sridevi Bhudevi, by chanting of Vedic hymns at the sacred Triveni Sangamam in Kaleshwaram of Jayashankar Bhupalapally district on Saturday.

The Magha Maha Snana Puja was performed in the month of Magha. OSD Dollar Seshadri

said that TTD has decided to perform Chakrasnanam to the Lord and His consorts at Kaleshwaram in Triveni Sangamam.

The ceremony was performed here instead of Kashi for the first time due to the Covid. A large number of devotees attended the ceremony as the Srivari festival idols reached Kaleshwaram from the Tirumala Tirupati temple. After performing special pujas, the Lord's celestial

wedding was performed and tirtha prasadam was distributed to devotees.

Peddapalli Zilla Parishad chairperson Putta Madhukar and his wife Shailaja, Bhupalapally Zilla Parishad chairperson Jakku Sriharshini, Jayashankar Bhupalapally District Collector Krishna Aditya, Superintendent of Police Sangram Singh Patil couple participated in the Magha Purnima puja at Triveni Sangamam.



TTD priests perform Chakrasnanam to Lord Venkateshwara and His consorts Sridevi and Bhudevi at Triveni Sangamam in Jayashankar Bhupalapally district on Saturday

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**e-Bid Notice**  
e-Bids are invited for transportation work of Food Grain, wheat, Rice & Dal under ICDS in (14) Districts (Jhunjhuna, Sikar, Bharatpur, Bikaner, Bundi, Jalpur, Jhalawar, Sirohi, Udaipur, Barmer, Nagaur, Sawaimadhopur, Bhilwara & Chittorgarh) for one year from the date of agreement. If the tenders of those districts where they are in process, are finally cancelled by the date of uploading this tender, those districts should also upload the new tender. The Bid shall be submitted only through online tendering system at concerned districts on the website [www.spscrajasthan.gov.in](http://www.spscrajasthan.gov.in). As detailed below:  
URN No. :- PCS2021SLOB0053  
S. No. Name of the Service Online uploading date Online bid submission end date  
1. Transportation work for ICDS wheat, Rice & Dal 01/03/2021 22/03/2021  
For details visit our Website <https://www.spscrajasthan.gov.in> / <http://www.spscrajasthan.gov.in>  
Raj Sarma/IC/20/10820 General Manager (Adm.)

## Thieves dig tunnel into Jaipur house

PNS ■ JAIPUR

In a daring heist, thieves allegedly stole huge quantity of silver kept in a box buried in the basement of a Jaipur house by digging a 20-foot-long and 15-foot-deep tunnel, according to police.

The owner of the house, who is a doctor by profession, has not disclosed the exact quantity of silver. Police said the accused had purchased a house right behind the doctor's house for Rs 87 lakh in January and covered its wall with tin sheds to block the view and started the digging work.

The accused dug the tunnel from the newly purchased house and reached the exact location where the box was buried. They cut open the box and stole the silver.

Dr Sunit Soni, who runs a hair transplant clinic, came to know about the theft when he found the flooring of the basement uneven and dug it on Wednesday. Soni informed police on Wednesday evening. "Primary investigation indicates the involvement of Dr Soni's friend who knew about the silver. We have detained him and he is being interrogated."

## Left-Cong-ISF alliance to kick off Bengal campaign

PNS ■ KOLKATA

The Left-Congress-ISF alliance will kick-off its campaign for the upcoming assembly elections in West Bengal with a mega rally at the Brigade Parade Grounds in Kolkata on Sunday.

The CPI(M)-led Left Front and the Congress have already sealed a seat-sharing agreement, while the talks between the Left and Pirzada Abbas Siddiqui's ISF have also concluded with both agreeing on 30 seats for the newly-floated outfit.

The negotiations between Congress and the Indian Secular Front (ISF) are at present underway, and both sides are hopeful that the differences over a few seats would be resolved, sources said.

"The mega rally at Brigade will mark the beginning of our campaign for the assembly elections. We want to provide an alternative to the anti-people and

### CEASEFIRE ALONG LOC

## No bearing on counter-terrorism operations in J&K, says Army

PNS ■ UDHAMPUR (JK)

The Army's northern commander Lt Gen YK Joshi on Saturday said the agreement between India and Pakistan to strictly adhere to the ceasefire pact along the Line of Control (LoC) would have no bearing on the counter-terrorism operations in Jammu and Kashmir.

He said the northern command, which looks after the security of the twin union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, remained on the highest alert and made possible what was believed impossible by the bravery, grit and determination of its personnel in the face of challenging situations along the border.

"Recently, the Director General of Military Operations (DGMOS) of India and Pakistan have announced an agreement to uphold ceasefire along the



LoC from February 24 and 25 midnight. I want to assure that this ceasefire will have no bearing on the counter-terrorist operations and we will maintain our alertness," Lt Gen Joshi said at the northern command investiture ceremony here.

During the ceremony, the Army commander presented

two Bar to Sena medals (gallantry) and 50 Sena medals (gallantry) to the brave soldiers. He also presented three Sena medals (distinguished) and six Vishisht Seva medals for selfless service to the nation.

Lt Gen Joshi also awarded unit appreciation to 26 units for their overall outstanding

performance in the command theatre.

"The northern command has always stood like a shield against the attempts by our neighbouring countries to spread disturbance and it will continue to remain so in the future. Whenever anyone raises an evil eye on our country, Indian Army has

replied strongly," Lt Gen Joshi said.

Without naming China and Pakistan, he said Indian Army has maintained its domination on its borders with the neighbouring countries and helped in maintaining peace in the hinterland.

Referring to the eastern Ladakh standoff with the Chinese army, he said Indian Army stood up to the challenge on the snow-capped mountains of the Line of Actual Control during the challenging situation in 2020 and maintained the highest alert.

"Our action is a glaring example of our training, bravery and pledge (to safeguard the borders) and it will be written in history with golden words. The northern command made possible what seemed impossible. The success of the operation (in Ladakh) is the glaring example of the bravery of Indian Army," he said.

## Fishing hartal hits coastal belt in Kerala

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A day long hartal, called by various outfits over the ongoing controversy regarding an alleged deep sea fishing contract between the CPI(M)-led government and a US-based company, hit life in coastal areas of Kerala on Saturday.

Various pro-Congress outfits, under the banner of Matsya Mekhala Samraks hana Samithi, called for the hartal in the coastal belt.

Boats did not venture into seain the majority of places and hundreds of fishermen kept themselves away from their job, expressing solidarity with the agitation. Harbours and shops in coastal areas remained shut in various districts. Both boat owners and traditional fishermen were cooperating with the hartal, the Samithi sources said.

## DA case filed against BJP leader's husband

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) has registered a case of disproportionate assets against the husband of Maharashtra BJP leader Chitra Wagh, an official said on Saturday.

The case against Kishore Jagannath Wagh was filed on February 12 following an open inquiry in a bribery case, he said.

"It was found that 90.24 per cent of his assets were disproportionate. He has been booked under sections of the Prevention of Corruption Act," he said. Wagh was working as a medical records librarian at Mahatma Gandhi Memorial hospital at Parel in Central Mumbai, he said.

On July 5, 2016, a case had been registered against the medical superintendent of the hospital Gajanan Bhagat, its medical records librarian Wagh and a private person Sandeep Kamble for demanding and accepting bribe, he said. "A raid was conducted at Wagh's residence in connection with the investigation of the case and an open enquiry was initiated against him on February 11, 2017," he said.

Based on the inquiry report, a case of disproportionate assets was registered against Wagh, the official said.

Meanwhile, BJP leader Pravin Darekar alleged that the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government is indulging in revenge politics by implicating the husband of Maharashtra



BJP leader Pravin Darekar alleged that the Maha govt is indulging in revenge politics by implicating the husband of Maharashtra BJP vice president Chitra Wagh in a false case

BJP vice president Chitra Wagh in a false case.

Chitra Wagh has been vocal against state forest minister and Shiv Sena MLA Sanjay Rathod for the past some weeks. Invoking an old case against her husband and filing a fresh case against him is revenge politics. This is highly unfair," the Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Council said.

A 23-year-old woman died after falling from a building in Hadapsar area of Pune on February 8. Some social media posts and the opposition BJP have alleged that Maharashtra minister and Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Rathod was linked to her death.

## 'Centre's social media rules are dictatorial'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

A Maharashtra minister on Saturday opposed the central government's regulations for social media platforms and over-the-top (OTT) players, terming them as "dictatorial" and a "threat" to democracy.

The Minister of State for IT Satej Patil also said these regulations need to be opposed strongly as they infringe the privacy of individuals and free speech given by the Constitution.

"This move by the Centre needs to be fought tooth and nail. Such dictatorial regulations will not be accepted by the people of this democratic country," he said. Some bureaucrats deciding on what needs to be published and what not on any media platform is nothing but an attack on the freedom of press in India,

Patil added. "Such orders will not have any standing in the court of law," he said. Talking about the arrest of activist Disha Ravi for her alleged involvement in sharing a "toolkit" on social media related to the farmers' protest, the senior Congress leader from Kolhapur said the entire episode was an act to suppress the voice of those who are exercising their freedom to speech.

A Delhi court recently granted bail to the activist.

The Centre on February 25 announced sweeping regulations for social media firms, such as Facebook and Twitter as well as OTT players like Netflix, requiring them to remove any content flagged by authorities within 36 hours and setting up a complaint redressal mechanism with an officer being based in the country.



### INDIA CORNER

#### Army's Central Command honours soldiers with service awards

The Indian Army's Central Command on Saturday honoured its distinguished and gallant soldiers at an investiture ceremony held at its Madhya Bharat Area headquarters here. General Officer Commanding-in-Chief,



Central Command, Lieutenant General I S Ghuman felicitated officers and other ranks with gallantry and distinguished service awards, an official release stated. At least 20 Sena Medals (gallantry), two Sena Medals (distinguished), eight Vishist Seva Medals and a Yudh Seva Medal were bestowed, it was stated. According to the release, the Lieutenant General also bestowed "Central Command Unit Citation" to 15 units for their meritorious and outstanding performance. Addressing the ceremony, Lt Gen Ghuman congratulated the awardees and recipients of the unit citations.

#### BJP stages protests against Maha minister over woman's death

The women's wing of the Maharashtra BJP on Saturday held protests in parts of the state to demand resignation of forest minister Sanjay Rathod, whose name is being linked to the death of a woman in Pune. The protests were held at prominent locations in Mumbai, Navi Mumbai, Thane, Nashik, Sindhudurg, Aurangabad and other cities. As part of the protest, the agitators tried to block the main streets in these cities. The woman had died after falling from a building in Hadapsar area of Pune on February 8. Some social media posts and the opposition BJP have alleged that Rathod was linked to the death of the 23-year-old woman. Holding the minister responsible for the death, a protester in Mumbai said, "Such a person should not remain in the state cabinet. The Maharashtra government is delaying his removal. Which is why we had to hit the streets."



#### COVID: FIR against 3 marriage halls in Mumbai for violating rules

Mumbai Police has registered a case against three marriage halls for allowing more number of guests than the prescribed limit of 50 on the complaint of the city civic body, an official said on Saturday. At each of these three marriage halls, located



on CST Road in Kalina, at least 200 guests had assembled on Friday, the civic official said. He said many guests gathered at these halls were not wearing a face mask and social distancing norms were also not adhered to. "Officials of the BMC's (Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's) health department who were on supervision duty on Friday spotted the violations at the three halls," the official said. Accordingly, action was taken against these halls and an FIR was lodged at Vakola police station against officials concerned of each marriage hall for violating the COVID-19 rules, he added. Mumbai city is witnessing a surge in fresh coronavirus positive cases in the last few days.

#### 'RJD to contest Assam Assembly polls in alliance with like-minded parties'

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav on Saturday said his party will contest the upcoming Assam Assembly polls in alliance with "like-minded" parties. Yadav, during his first visit to Guwahati, said he has already spoken to Congress and will hold talks with the AIUDF later in the day to formalise the alliance. "We are talking to like-minded parties," he told a press conference here. Yadav said apart from the Congress and AIUDF, the RJD is in touch with other smaller parties. "There are around five per cent Hindi-speaking people from Bihar, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Odisha and Chhattisgarh. We have considerable number of such people in 11 seats, but we'll contest only where chances of winning are high," Yadav said. The senior RJD leader also said he would travel to other poll-bound states West Bengal, Kerala and Puducherry to campaign against the BJP and its allies.



## Mayawati pays tributes to poet Ravidas

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

BSP president Mayawati on Saturday paid tributes to saint-poet Ravidas on his birth anniversary and asked the BJP-led central and state governments to follow the path shown by him in serving the society and country. In tweets in Hindi, the BSP

president recalled the works done by the governments led by her to realise the dreams of Ravidas.

"(Under the BSP governments formed in the state four times, a lot of effort was made to realise the dreams of Santguru Ravidasji, and the work done in public interest and public welfare in his

honour is not hidden from anyone. It will be appropriate if the central and state governments do good for the society and country by following the path shown by him," she said. In a press release issued later, the BSP president said that the message given by Ravidas was not for fulfilling political motives but for serving the soci-

ety, which has been completely forgotten in the present times, leading to tension and violence.

Recalling the works done in his honour, she said that her government had named Bhadohi district after him but it was changed by the previous Samajwadi Party government due to "casteist mentality".

## Rahul attacks Modi over Sino-India standoff

PNS ■ TUTICORIN (TN)

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday launched a scathing attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the Sino-India border standoff, charging him with being 'scared' of the eastern neighbour.

Before the stand-off at eastern Ladakh, where the disengagement process has been completed with the

withdrawal of troops, weapons and other military hardware from the North and South banks of Pangong lake areas, the Chinese "tested the idea in Dokham (in 2017)," he said.

"Essentially the Chinese occupied certain strategic areas in our country. They first tested the idea in Dokham. They tested the idea to see how would India react and they noticed India



did not react. And then they carried out the idea again in Ladakh and also I believe in Arunachal Pradesh," he said.

## PM asks toy manufacturers to use less plastic

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday exhorted toy manufacturers to use less plastic and more eco-friendly and recyclable material in a bid to increase the share of the domestic industry in the global market.

Inaugurating the first India Toy Fair, the Prime Minister said, "We have to become Aatmanirbhar in the toy sector and also cater to the global market".

Observing that India's share in the USD 100 billion global toy market is very small, and 85 per cent of the toys in the country are sourced from abroad, Modi said there is a need to change this situation.



"In the field of toys, India has tradition and technology, India

has concepts and competence. We can take the world back

towards eco-friendly toys. Through our software engineers, computer games can bring the stories of India to the world," he said.

While referring to the traditional toy industry, the Prime Minister underlined the need for promoting Handmade in India.

If there is a demand for Made in India today, then the demand for Handmade in India is also increasing equally, he said, adding "today people do not only buy toys as a product, but also want to connect with the experience associated with that toy. So, we have to promote Handmade in India as well".

The Prime Minister appealed to the manufacturers

to make toys that are better for both ecology and psychology, using less plastic and more of such things that can be recycled. Referring to the initiatives of the government, Modi said the country has now graded the toy industry in 24 major sectors.

The National Toy Action Plan has also been prepared, he said, adding, "it has included 15 ministries and departments to make these industries competitive, the country to become self-reliant in toys, and India's toys also go into the world. Throughout this campaign, state governments have been made an equal partner in developing the toy clusters".

He said along with this, efforts are made to strengthen

the possibilities of toy tourism. Toyathon-2021 was also organised to promote Indian sports-based toys and more than 7,000 ideas were brainstormed.

The Prime Minister also used the occasion to interact with traditional toymakers from Chennaiapatnam, Varanasi and Jaipur and impress upon them the need to innovate and make toys more relevant keeping in view the changing taste of children.

More than 1,000 exhibitors participated in the Toy Fair 2021, which will continue till March 2. The first toy fair is not just a business or economic event, he said, adding that it seeks to strengthen the country's age-old culture of sports and cheer.

# US passes, sends to Senate \$1.9T pandemic relief bill

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

The House approved a USD 1.9 trillion pandemic relief bill early Saturday in a win for President Joe Biden, even as top Democrats tried assuring agitated progressives that they'd revive their derailed drive to boost the minimum wage.

The new president's vision for flushing cash to individuals, businesses, states and cities battered by COVID-19 passed on a near party-line 219-212 vote. That ships the massive measure to the Senate, where Democrats seem bent on resuscitating their minimum wage push and fights could erupt over state aid and other issues.

Democrats said the still-faltering economy and the half-million American lives lost demanded quick, decisive action. GOP lawmakers, they said, were out of step with a public that polling shows largely views the bill favourably.

"I am a happy camper tonight," Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Calif., said Friday. "This is what America needs. Republicans, you ought to be



"I am a happy camper tonight," Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Calif., said Friday. "This is what America needs. Republicans, you ought to be a part of this. But if you're not, we're going without you."

those who say it's popular, I say it is entirely partisan."

That divide is making the fight a showdown over which party voters will reward for heaping more federal spending to combat the coronavirus and revive the economy atop the USD 4 trillion approved last year.

The battle is also emerging as an early test of Biden's ability to hold together his party's fragile congressional majorities — just 10 votes in the House and an evenly divided 50-50 Senate. At the same time, Democrats were trying to figure out how to assuage progressives who lost their top priority in a jarring Senate setback Thursday.

a part of this. But if you're not, we're going without you."

Republicans said the bill was too expensive and said too few education dollars would be spent quickly to immediately reopen schools. They said it was laden with gifts to Democratic constituencies like labour unions and funnelled

money to Democratic-run states they suggested didn't need it because their budgets had bounced back.

"To my colleagues who say this bill is bold, I say it's bloated," said House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif. "To those who say it's urgent, I say it's unfocused. To

## Govt sets 50L users threshold to define 'SM intermediary'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government has fixed fifty lakh registered users as the threshold for defining 'significant social media intermediary', which will have to adhere to additional obligations and compliance under the new IT rules that seek to crack down on misuse of social media platforms.

The new rules, announced earlier this week, require 'significant social media intermediaries' to follow additional due diligence, including the appointment of a chief compliance officer, nodal contact person and resident grievance officer. All three officials will have to reside in India.

They will have to publish a monthly compliance report and details of the contents removed proactively.

At present, the country has 53 crore WhatsApp users, 44.8 crore YouTube users, 41 crore Facebook subscribers, 21 crore

Instagram clients, while 1.75 crore account holders are on microblogging platform Twitter. "...the Central Government hereby specifies fifty lakh registered users in India as the threshold for a social media intermediary to be considered a significant social media intermediary," the notification said. Earlier on Thursday, the government announced the tightening of the rules governing social media and streaming companies, requiring them to take down contentious content quicker, appoint grievance redressal officers and assist investigations. The move aims to make social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and Instagram - which have seen a phenomenal surge in usage over the past few years in India - more accountable and responsible for the content hosted on their platform.

## Maruti Suzuki crosses 20 lakh cumulative exports mark

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The country's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) on Saturday said it has achieved the milestone of 20 lakh cumulative exports. The auto



major achieved the milestone as a batch of products comprising S-Presso, Swift and Vitara Brezza left for South Africa from the Mundra Port in Gujarat. "The company has been exporting vehicles for past 34 years much before India became a prominent player in the global automobile business. This early global exposure helped the company enhance its quality and attain global benchmarks," MSI MD and CEO

Kenichi Ayukawa said in a statement. The automaker currently exports 14 models comprising nearly 150 variants, to over 100 countries, he noted. "Vehicles manufactured at our facilities in India have found high acceptance owing to global standards of quality, safety, design and technology," Ayukawa said. Going forward, the company has aligned itself with the evolving needs of customers in African and Latin American nations, he noted. "With a flurry of new models in pipeline, Maruti Suzuki will attract customers in new segments to enable the company to accomplish bigger milestones at a much faster pace," Ayukawa said. MSI commenced export of vehicles way back in 1986-87 and the first large consignment of 500 cars was shipped to Hungary in September 1987. In 2012-13, the company achieved the milestone of one-million exports with more than 50 per cent of the shipments going to the developed markets in Europe. The company achieved the subsequent million in over eight years with special focus on emerging markets in Latin America, Africa and Asia regions.

## Digital currency can transform payment transactions

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) has the potential to bring about a sea change in payment transactions and quicken transmission, says a report released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). However, the virtual currency poses a risk of disintermediation of the banking system, the Report on Currency and Finance (RCF) for the year 2020-21 released on Friday said.

The central bank said the findings of the report do not represent its view.

"CBDC, once introduced, can bring about a sea change in payment transactions, quickening transmission," it said, adding that this could be of greater relevance with the eventual decline in the usage of (physical) currency gaining traction. "CBDC is, however, not an unmixing blessing — it poses a risk of disintermediation of the banking system, more so if the commercial banking system is perceived to be fragile," as per the report. The public can convert their CASA deposits with banks into CBDC, thereby raising the cost of bank-based financial intermediation with implications for growth and financial stability, it said. Further, the report said in countries with significant credit markets, commercial banks may lose their primacy as the major conduit of monetary policy transmission.

## Large corporates changing supply-chain strategy, market access, security key points

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Companies are changing their supply-chain strategy from low-cost to the one based on de-risking on issues around security and market access post the pandemic, Senior Advisor to Mahindra Group in South Korea, Inbom Choi, said on Saturday.

Choi was speaking at a panel discussion on 'Building Reliable Global Supply Chains' during

the second day of the Asia Economic Dialogue 2021, jointly convened by the Ministry of External Affairs and the Pune International Centre.

Bajaj Auto MD Rajiv Bajaj, Nguyen Thanh Hung, Chairman — Sovico Group of Vietnam and Mamoru Yokoo, Director and Executive VP — Mitsubishi Corporation, also participated in the panel discussion chaired by Ganesh Natarajan, Chairman 5F World

and Trustee, Pune International Centre (PIC).

"For the last 10-20 years, the corporate strategy for the supply chains was based on low-cost. That is why most of the companies went to China. Many corporations are now changing this strategy," Choi said.

He said that today the large corporations are looking at their supply chains strategy from the security issue and market access point of view.

Therefore the priority is shifting and because of that probably companies are moving away from China for sourcing to countries like Vietnam, India and South Korea, Choi stated.

He said that a particular large US company, which is a Tech Mahindra customer, is asking it to change the sourcing from China to other countries, and such a trend is expected to pick further.

## Air traffic may be back to pre-Covid level by summer

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/MUMBAI



The domestic air traffic is expected to be back to the full pre-COVID-19 level by the summer schedule with the traffic seeing a sharp recovery from the July quarter onwards after the resumption of the services post Unlock 1.0, Minister of State for Civil Aviation Hardeep Singh Puri said on Friday.

Speaking at the India Aircraft Leasing Summit' at New Delhi's Vigyan Bhawan, Puri also said the government is not averse to tweaking the system to make India a centre for aircraft leasing for both domestic and international markets.

"Contrary to prophets of doom and gloom, we have not only been able to navigate the pandemic turbulence, (but) today in terms of domestic civil aviation, we are almost at the pre-COVID-19 level.

"If a mutation or variant of the

virus comes in, by the time we open our summer schedule by April we will have our full pre-COVID-19 level of domestic traffic or even higher," said Puri.

Stating that civil aviation is the critical driver of economic growth, he said that between 2013-14 and 2019-20, the country's domestic traffic growth has been 14 per cent.

"The best year we had with just 7 per cent penetration, we had a growth rate of 17 per cent

**"We are today the third-largest domestic civil aviation market and within a very short period of time, we will be the world's third-largest civil aviation market in overall terms"**

But, on average, it comes at 14 per cent," he said.

The minister said that barring the first quarter of 2020 (April-June), there has been a sharp recovery in passenger traffic from July onwards.

Commensurate with the growth potential of the Indian aviation sector in the next 20 years, India will need something like 1,700 to 2,100 aircraft, valued roughly at USD 290 billion with an estimated delivery of 100 aircraft each year or about USD 5 billion of financing each

year, he said.

"We are looking at operating 2,000 aircraft in domestic and international (going ahead)," Puri said.

The paradigmatic shift that is happening in the Indian aviation today is on account of a large number of factors. But, the two developments that resonated in the last 2-3 Budgets, those related to establishment of MROs and financial services particularly aircraft leasing, are going to provide the transformative change, said the minister.



## FM highlights India's policy response at G20 meet

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday highlighted India's policy response to COVID pandemic and the world's largest inoculation drive during a meeting with her G-20 counterparts.

Speaking at the virtual meeting of the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors, she said India's domestic policies have been based broadly on supporting citizens through measures such as credit guarantees, direct transfers, food guarantees, economic stimulus packages and accelerating structural reforms.

Sitharaman also spoke about India's vaccination programme, which is the world's largest and the most ambitious vaccination drive. The Finance Minister also mentioned that India has extended vaccine support to several countries, an official statement said.

## Airlines allowed to provide concession for no baggage

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Aviation regulator DGCA on Friday allowed airlines to provide concessions in air fares to customers travelling with no check-in baggage.

The move comes days after the Directorate General Civil Aviation (DGCA) provided greater flexibility to domestic carriers on fixing ticket prices by increasing the minimum fare band on domestic flights tickets.

"As part of airline baggage



policy, scheduled airlines will be allowed to offer free baggage allowance as well as zero baggage/ no check-in baggage fares," DGCA said in a circular on unbundling of services

issued on Friday.

This will be subject to the condition that the passenger booking ticket under such fare scheme is made aware of the charges that shall be applicable if the passenger turns up with the baggage for check-in at airline counter, it stated.

The circular further said on the basis of various feedback received, it is felt that many times these services provided by the airline may not be required by the passenger while travelling.

## Sebi slaps Rs 80L fine on 8 entities for fraudulent trading activities

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Sebi on Friday imposed a total fine of Rs 80 lakh on eight entities for indulging in fraudulent trading activities in the shares of PMC Fincorp Ltd.

A fine of Rs 10 lakh each has been imposed on the entities.

An investigation was conducted by the regulator into the scrip of PMC Fincorp Ltd (PMC) for the period from March 29, 2012 to March 31, 2015.

During the probe, it was found that the entities created



artificial demand in the PMC shares by continuously buying shares at increasing prices and then holding on to the shares purchased by them, thereby also reducing the shares held by the public.

Also, it was worth noting that

once the sustained buying by the entities reduced and then stopped, the price of the scrip started to fall after the middle of December 2014, Sebi said.

As per the shareholding pattern of March 2015, it is evident that the combined shareholding of the entities reduced, indicating net sales and price of the scrip fell significantly during this period from around Rs 81 in end of December 2014 to Rs 41.90 by end of March 2015, as per an order.

## MONEY MATTERS

### Forex reserves up by USD 169 mn to USD 583.865 bn



The country's foreign exchange reserves increased by USD 169 million to USD 583.865 billion in the week ended February 19, RBI data showed. In the previous week ended February 12, the reserves had declined by USD 249 million to USD 583.697 billion. It had touched a record high of USD 590.185 billion in the week ended January 29 this year. During the reporting week, the increase in reserves was due to a rise in the foreign currency

assets (FCAs), a major component of the overall reserves. FCA rose by USD 1.155 billion to USD 542.106 billion, the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) weekly data showed. Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves. The gold reserves declined by USD 977 million to USD 35.25 billion in the week, the RBI data showed. The special drawing rights (SDRs) with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) fell by USD 4 million to USD 1.508 billion in the reporting week. The country's reserve position with the IMF also declined by USD 4 million to USD 5.002 billion in the reporting week, the data showed.

## Govt extends deadline for filing declarations under VsV



The Income Tax Department on Friday extended the deadline for filing declarations and making payment under direct tax dispute resolution scheme Vivad Se Vishwas (VsV) till March 31 and April 30. "CBDT further extends the date for filing of declarations under the #VivadSeVishwas

Act, 2020 to 31st March, 2021. Date for payment without additional amount under VsV extended to 30th April, 2021," the I-T department tweeted. The last date for filing declaration under VsV scheme was February 28, while for paying the disputed tax the date is March 31. As many as 1,25,144 cases have so far opted for the Vivad se Vishwas (VsV) Scheme, which is 24.5 per cent of the 5,10,491 cases that were pending at different legal fora. About Rs 97,000 crore worth disputed tax has opted for resolution under the scheme. The Vivad Se Vishwas scheme provides for settlement of disputed tax, disputed interest, disputed penalty or disputed fees in relation to an assessment or reassessment order on payment of 100 per cent of the disputed tax and 25 per cent of the disputed penalty or interest or fee. The taxpayer is granted immunity from levy of interest, penalty and institution of any proceeding for prosecution for any offence under the Income-tax Act in respect of matters covered in the declaration. The Direct Tax Vivad se Vishwas Act, 2020 was enacted on March 17, 2020 to settle direct tax disputes locked up in various appellate forum.

## Auto iCare raises ₹2 cr seed funding from angel investors



Road assistance services provider RAuto iCare on Friday said it has raised a seed funding of Rs 2 crore from a consortium of angel investors. The Mumbai-based start-up plans to utilise the funds in hiring talent, expanding technology upgrades, and accelerate product

development and for deeper penetration in the Indian market, with one-stop roadside assistance solutions, according to a statement. The app-based platform has also integrated artificial intelligence (AI)-enabled mobile interface for seamless roadside assistance anywhere in the country, said the statement. Conceptualised in 2015, the start-up has brought over 50,000 local garages and mechanics under one umbrella to provide travellers with assistance within 20 minutes, said the statement. The firm claims to have two affiliated garages at every 10 km distance. Auto iCare founder Sagar Joshi said, "Since our inception, we have witnessed great traction in terms of garage partner acquisitions and we are already generating sizeable revenues. The funds raised will further help us scale rapidly." He added that the firm will initially focus on expansion in markets like Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan. "We also intend to start 100 standalone service centres by the end of first quarter of 2021."

# the pioneer agenda

FROM THE INSIDE



## The Magic of Mandu

Mandu's geographical location is what made it such an important city. It prospered greatly under the Sultans of Malwa for nearly 200 years

8



9

## colour me different

From a 15-year-old who has designed a model that uses photographs to identify children

It is so important for girls and boys to have a female, strong superhero to look up to  
— Gal Gadot



As the pandemic brought the world economies to a halt/slowdown, different industries are leading their way through the crisis and changing the core strategy. DISHA CHHABRA shares top 5 lessons from senior leaders across industries



# LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM TURBULENT TIMES

In the last one year, our lifestyles and habits have changed forever. The way we live, eat, play, work is all altered. The resulting lockdowns of countries has brought national economies to a standstill. Salary and job cuts are happening throughout the world. Lives versus livelihood is a constant debate. No one living in these times has experienced a crisis that can be remotely equated to this one. And things are still unfolding.

When we are not going out to eat out but cooking more at home; when we prefer services at home rather than going out; when we need high speed internet to work from home, when masks are the new fashion statement; all these changes in our behaviour shape the way different industries are leading their way through the crisis and changing the core strategy. Covid-19 has impacted every sphere of the corporate world.

The pandemic has had a varied impact on different industries. Across the globe, there have been industries where revenue has gone negative; for some it has even gone down to zero. Industries like travel which relied on people physically moving around even needed to refund future bookings. Entertainment like physical events, movie ticketing, are in the same category. It is not sure when revenue is going to return. Some of these industries fall in the bucket of 'putting off for the future'. For example, people are putting off the visit to the hairdresser and are likely to go back when the crisis eases. These industries are shifting their present revenues into the future. The immediate focus is on cash conservation.

During this crisis, we have all indulged in some kind of hoarding. Be it toilet paper in the western countries or Maggi noodles in India; industries selling products which are essentials and non-perishable are seeing their future revenues brought forward as people buy for the next quarter and at some point in future, the present day spends will impact the future spends.

On the other end, being stuck at home and having a lot of time at hand; people are finding time to take up new hobbies; cooking, gardening and other isolation friendly activities. Baking banana breads became a huge trend. Companies that help provide these virtual classes or sell the raw materials one needs for these activities are attracting a large share

of discretionary spends of customers. This is new revenue for the companies but not necessarily brought forward from the future. However, the growth that these industries are seeing may not sustain once people begin to step out for leisure and entertainment.

And then there are big winners in this crisis. Industries like video conferencing, online grocery delivery, digital payments have seen a huge spike in adoption and have reached levels they would have otherwise expected to reach in order of months to years. These are likely fundamental customer behaviour changes and expected to stay even when the crisis eases. These industries are not only making a lot of revenue during the crisis. And when the crisis is over, the new normal of these industries will be at a higher level. These are industries that are mostly constrained on their supply side to handle the exponential growth in demand.

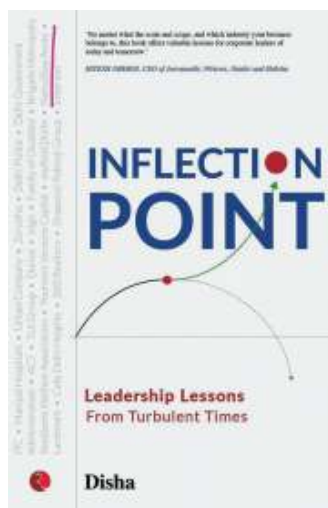
Few years down the line, leadership and business lessons from this crisis will be taught as crisis management case studies in B-schools. Which of these lessons will be permanent armours for future leaders for dealing with any crisis? And do the learnings differ depending on which side of the revenue curve a company finds itself. Does leadership need to be reactive? Here are the top 5 lessons coming directly from senior leaders across different industries and organisations.

### LESSON 1: NIMBLENESS

Ever since the world reported its first case, every day has been a roller coaster ride. Situations on the ground have evolved rapidly. Every day has been different from the previous one.

A week before, leaders were checking the sales numbers and reviewing their 2020 plans. A week later, supply chains were disrupted and businesses asked to temporarily shut until further notice. A day before, all our employees were safe. A day later, an entire department got infected. The time horizon of major events was severely shortened.

In a crisis situation, dealing with uncertainty needs less planning, more execution. This is not the time to draw a product roadmap, a 5-year vision or long-term strategies. Leaders are embracing speed, mitigating the short to mid-term consequences to stabilize the situation and stay afloat. COVID-19



THE PANDEMIC HAS HAD A VARIED IMPACT ON DIFFERENT INDUSTRIES. ACROSS THE GLOBE, THERE HAVE BEEN INDUSTRIES WHERE REVENUE HAS GONE NEGATIVE; FOR SOME IT HAS EVEN GONE DOWN TO ZERO. INDUSTRIES LIKE TRAVEL WHICH RELIED ON PEOPLE PHYSICALLY MOVING AROUND EVEN NEEDED TO REFUND FUTURE BOOKINGS. ENTERTAINMENT LIKE PHYSICAL EVENTS, MOVIE TICKETING, ARE IN THE SAME CATEGORY. IT IS NOT SURE WHEN REVENUE IS GOING TO RETURN



has delivered a crash course in agility for organisations of all stripes.

### LESSON 2 - INNOVATION

It is said that innovation and creativity love crises and constraints. Crisis brings out constraints and makes innovation almost a forcing function. Leaders often leverage consultants to get a fresh, outside perspective on their organisations to find opportunities to innovate. A crisis can have much the same effect, putting the spotlight on vulnerabilities, problem areas; great and small, that we've been ignoring or are just plain unaware of. When a crisis hits, we are forced to confront the truth about how our systems work (or don't). The places where things could be done better or more efficiently become glaringly obvious. All of a sudden, opportunities for innovation are staring us in the face.

The current crisis is bringing a whole new set of innovations. Services like medicine, education, industrial plant set ups are all going digital. Google and Apple are collaborating on contact tracing. Dunzo is working with brands to get the products delivered at one's doorstep. ITC's personal care team deserves recognition for introducing a range of new health and hygiene products for households. Its hospitality team curated a gourmet menu, which recreates the ITC dining experience for our customers in the comfort of their homes. While these are just a couple of examples, leaders across industries continue to strive to change and innovate to ensure that they deliver nothing short of excellence in their products and services to our customers, despite the pandemic.

### LESSON 3: EMPLOYEE WELL BEING

While it may sound obvious, crises are crises because people suffer. In a situation where emotions and anxieties run high, leaders connect with employees and other stakeholders and acknowledge the personal and professional challenges they are going through. Impactful leaders convey their vision in a manner that the employees feel aligned, motivated and rallied against.

Effective crisis management requires integrity, accountability, and moral courage. Thoughtful, frequent, and empathetic communication signals that the leaders share with their organization show they care and are together in the journey that employees go

through. These messages are delivered with "bounded optimism" — hope combined with realism.

### LESSON 4: RISING ABOVE SELF INTEREST

What makes a leader is not just thinking about self but for the larger community. Be it giving back to the community in cash or kind or even gestures where one takes care of people who are not directly on the organization's payroll but on the frontline; leaders showcase how it is not enough if the organization alone progresses. No true leader sees crisis as a time to carve out a competitive advantage; definitely not at the cost of a struggling competitor. Compassion is leadership, leadership is compassion — compassion not just for self but for everyone else, especially ones where one has no self-interest whatsoever. If anything, the crisis will make leadership more humane and above self-interest.

### LESSON 5: BEING OPEN TO FAILING

In times of crisis, the acceptance of failure and moving on from there to the next step and the next is a critical leadership trait. These are times when given the dynamism of the situation, decisions need to be made based on the limited information available and many times in decentralized manners. Fail fast is more important than learning and waiting to make the right decision. Different business models are prototyped and many of them may not work. It's ok. Leaders move on.

There are often external circumstances beyond one's control. Leaders are kind to yourself and to their teams. They pivot as many times as necessary. They collaborate with competitors. Leadership is not about the outcome — it is about the process. Even a decision of shutting down the business may look like a failure looking outwards. But the process of arriving at that decision, accepting, communicating and executing the failure can demonstrate leadership. Being open to failure is the biggest lesson from turbulent times.

The onus of leadership lies with each one of us. We all need to lead ourselves, our loved ones, our societies, organisations and countries out of this and every crisis.

The writer is a corporate professional and author of 4 books. Her latest book, Inflection Point – Leadership Lessons from Turbulent Times, has been published by Rupa Publications





From a 15-year-old who has designed a model that uses photographs to identify children afflicted with Down Syndrome to a 16-year-old who has been working with the transgender community to a 25-year-old IT professional who decided to work while on the move, the young are carving a niche for themselves and doing things differently. SHALINI SAKSENA tells you more

## Photo reveals lot of information

**SAANVI MEHRA (15)**  
**THE SHRIRAM MILLENNIUM SCHOOL, NOIDA**

One would hardly associate a 15-year-old to work on a model that can detect Down Syndrome (DS) and prevent deaths. At present, 20,000 die with it in India. But this is precisely what Saanvi Mehra of The Shriram Millennium School has done. The 15-year-old who submitted her model to Google India Code Learn Contest 2020 not only won it in the Class IX-X category, but the model will be a boon for those suffering with DS.

Mehra chose this project because the DS prevalence in the country is estimated at roughly one out of every thousand children leading to over 30,000 children being born every year with this genetic disorder with survival rate standing at 44 per cent.

There is a more personal reason why Mehra chose DS as a project. It was during her mother's second pregnancy. It was suspected that the baby was at a high risk of DS.

"Fortunately, we were living in a metro and were privileged to be able to afford the necessary tests but I know this is not the

case for everyone. Since it was so personal to me, it struck me as something worth raising my voice. In India the penetration of smartphones is more than the basic healthcare; early detection of DS and treatment can change the lives of many," Mehra says.

The Class X student has always been inclined towards technology. She tells you that she came to know about the Google India Code Learn Contest when she was in Class VI.

"I had won the contest when I was in Class VI as well. It was for a book donation app called Vidyadaan that facilitates book donation. The app connects donors with those who need books utilising the surplus of books created each year. This year, I saw it was in the AI & ML category. They provided us with Google Cloud AutoML engine. I had a lot of time in my hand during the lockdown. I had also done a course in AI for Everyone by Andrew Ng. I was confident I would be able to showcase my talent," the 15-year-old who loves to read and cook tells you.

She took photographs from a dataset and statistics from the Internet to train an AutoML model using API which is the

visual AutoML. Children afflicted with DS have certain distinctive features like slanting eyes and flat nose bridge. She set these parameters and adjusted the sensitivity of each feature to determine DS. She trained, tested and deployed the model by repeatedly adjusting the sensitivity of each parameter.

She tells you that at present, there is no app only a model but she is working towards creating an app that will make things easier in the future. For now, she wants to test the clinical validity of the model. "I plan to test the validity of the model. All one has to do is send a photograph of the child to me. I will feed it into the model and do the test," Mehra says who started working on the model in October 2020.

At present, she is looking to broaden the dataset in a real time environment and make the process, background and lighting more uniform in existing photos that she has. The idea of taking a photo under set conditions makes it possible to ease the process and perfect the model before using it in real time.

"Suppose the parent had to use the model, I would ask the parent to go out in the open to take the photo so that the camera can recognise the facial features better," Mehra says who is interested in pursuing AI, ML, technology and loves to study Computer and Biology. She plans to apply for a double major or a dual degree. She tells you that as of now, she is in talks with doctors who have been impressed.

"They are interested in the accuracy but would like her to make the process more uniform and come to the hospital and take photos of kids with DS and check for accuracy and then run tests to see if the child is really afflicted with DS and take it to the next level," Mehra says.

**SARANYA BHATTACHARJYA (16)**  
**THE SHRI RAM SCHOOL, MOULSARI, GURUGRAM**

For now, this 16-year-old has taken a break from what she loves doing — writing — something that she has been doing since she was nine years old. Saranya Bhattacharjya is busy preparing for her Class XI Boards. However, once she is done with her exams she will be back to writing poems.

What makes Bhattacharjya different from your average 16 year olds is that the proceeds from her poems titled *Clash With Reason* that got published recently will go towards raising funds for the transgender community via the Mitr Trust. The book is published by K2 Publishing and is available on Amazon and leading bookstores at ₹499.

The poems are a collection of everything that she has been writing in a Blog. "But when the present epidemic broke out in 2020, she understood that the condition of the transgenders was even worse. I had been interacting with the community for the past two-and-a-half-years through Mitr Trust run by Rudrani Chettri. I found out that these people didn't have access to basic necessities like food and medicine. That is when I decided to compile the poems that I had written in a book and get it published and raise funds for this community from the sale of the books. All the money that I will get from the sale will go towards bettering the lives of the transgender community," Bhattacharjya says who plans to pursue Humanities.



**THE REASON WHY TRANSGENDERS ARE VIEWED DIFFERENTLY IS DUE TO LACK OF KNOWLEDGE ON OUR PART. ANOTHER PROBLEM IS THAT SINCE THEY ARE NOT WELL-EDUCATED, OUR PERCEPTION OF THEM IS DIFFERENT**

In order to compile the book, she took the help of her friends with the art work to correspond with the poems that she has penned. However, this is not the first time that she has been published. Back in 2015, her poems

found their way into Global Citizen. She has also been published in her school magazine a few times and a text book in the North-east also finds a poem written by her. Her work with the transgen-

der community began at an event organised by the Angles Network that her mother started. This is where she met Chettri. Like most people, Bhattacharjya was also scared of the transgender due to the stigma attached to them. After her conversation with Chettri, Bhattacharjya's perception of the community changed.

"I admired the work that Chettri has been doing for this community. I wanted to know more — about their living conditions. I slowly understood that they are people like you and me and don't need the ridicule that they face daily. I found out that they are grossly misunderstood and treated as piranhas and outcasts when they shouldn't be," Bhattacharjya tells you.

A major part of her work entails spending time going to their homes and talking to them, finding out how their lives are different from ours and how one can better their lives. On her 15th birthday she collected all the money that she got and bought things that they needed.

"We have a lot to learn from them. They are far more empathetic. The most significant problem that they face is that they don't get jobs and opportunities to study," Bhattacharjya tells you.

Her friends are supportive of her since Gen Z is all about equal opportunity.

"There is still a long way to go. I have a few ideas on how I want to proceed further and will take it up once my exams are over. The reason why this community is viewed differently is lack of knowledge on our part. Another problem is that since they are not well-educated, our perception of them is different," Bhattacharjya says.

## WORKING FROM A CYCLE

**ANDREW MENEZES (25)**  
**IT PROFESSIONAL, MUMBAI**

What if someone were to tell you that it is possible to go on a long vacation, not tell your boss that you are missing by continuing to work? While this may have not been possible a couple of years back, but the present pandemic and the work from home made it possible for an IT professional working with Oracle in Mumbai to do just this. And it was no ordinary travel plans. Meet 25-year-old Andrew Menezes, who took on the challenge of a pan-India cyclo-thon while working on the move.

When working from home became the new norm, Menezes, who loves to cycle and ride

three-four days in a week, took it one step ahead. He attended zoom calls on the road at roadside *dhabas* always completing his work for the day. Between October-December, 2020, Menezes along with his companion — his trusted cycle traveled over 3,000 km stopping at 23 cities. "Before the lockdown last year, I used to play football but then group activities were banned so I took to cycling in the morning and evening. When October came, the weather changed for the better and I decided that instead of taking the same route why not just keep cycling and hit the highway. I was anyways working while on the move. Just went a step ahead, Menezes says.

This required him to have high speed data. He used his mobile hotspot. "The surprising part was that the reception on highways is

much better than any city. Once I found that I could attend meeting and do the work assigned for the day, all my fears were put to rest. This encourages me to cycle further. Some cities that I covered were Nashik, Indore, Ujjain, Chittorgarh, Ajmer and Agra.

Interestingly, he didn't tell anyone of his plans. Only his parents were on the know-how and that after he had reached Nashik who live in Mangalore. Once he told them, he had to keep in touch with them and let them know where he was and send daily updates of where he was and where he was staying. He told his bosses only in February that he had been missing from home and that he was on the move and working and that too because he was about to become news. They were shocked to hear his feat.

He tells you that it was not as tough as he



had imagined. "Most of the people I met on the way were extremely helpful. I expected them to be hostile due to COVID-19. All *dhaba* owners were helpful; they would carry my

backpack; offer me tea and water," Menezes says. The idea behind the ride was to see if he could travel and work at the same time. "I decided to make the road my home. To begin with, I just wanted to go to Rajasthan on a cycle and explore the State," Menezes says.

Of course, he had to budget himself. He set aside ₹800 as daily expenses including food and lodging. Where they were no hotels, he stayed in guest houses or even *dharamshala*. It took him 25 days to reach Delhi where he then spent a week before he cycled down to the South.

"It was not really a vacation. I only explore the city that I was in after I had completed my work for the day or during the weekends. Some of the things that I learnt during my work on the move was that one

doesn't have to necessarily be stuck to the chair to get the work done. Second, it is important to take small breaks. This is because the concept of work from home blurred the boundaries of work and home life destroying work-life balance. I had to achieve a balance which was a challenge. I had set a target and reach a village or a city, else I would be stuck on the highway at night. I would cycle 100 km a day. I also took the cycle for maintenance at every major city. The only time I had a major breakdown was near Chambal river and had to walk with the cycle till Morena," Menezes tells you. He is all set for another ride if work from home continues.

For him, the best food he ate was in Rajasthan. "It was tasty and spicy," Menezes says.

## Twins undergo gender confirmation surgery together, a first

PNS ■ SAO PAULO

Growing up as identical twins, Mayla and Sofia always did everything together, and their decision to undergo gender confirmation surgery is no exception.

The 19-year-old twins, who grew up in a small town in southeastern Brazil, both say they "never identified as boys."

Now, they have made the transition they long dreamed of together, in what their doctor calls a first.

"This is the only reported case in the world" of twins who were presumed to be male at birth undergoing

female gender confirmation surgery together, said Dr Jose Carlos Martins of the Transgender Center Brazil, a clinic in the southeastern city of Blumenau.

Martins performed the five-hour surgery on the twins one day apart.

A week later, the euphoric young women smiled, joked and shed tears as they talked about their shared journey in a video-conference interview with AFP.

"I always loved my body, but I didn't like my genitalia," said Mayla Rezende, a brunette who is studying medicine in Argentina.

"I would blow dan-

delion seeds into the air and wish for God to turn me into a girl," she said.

When she saw herself after her surgery, she wept, she said.

Her sister, Sofia Albuquerque, is more reserved.

But their camaraderie is clear. They finish each other's sentences while sharing stories of how they supported each other through the bullying, sexual harassment and violence they were subjected to in childhood and adolescence.

"We live in the most transphobic country in the world," said Albuquerque, a blonde studying civil engineering in

Sao Paulo.

There were 175 trans people murdered in Brazil last year, the most of any country, according to the National Association of Transvestites and Transsexuals (Antra). Latin America's largest country is known for a strong culture of machismo and overt homophobia, not least on the part of far-right President Jair Bolsonaro.

The twins were born in Tapira, a town of 4,000 people in the state of Minas Gerais.

They still bear the emotional scars of their difficult childhoods: to this day, they live in fear of abuse. But they always had the support of their family, they said.

## US Democrats reintroduce legislation to prevent future Muslim bans

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

As many as 140 Democratic lawmakers have reintroduced a legislation in the US Congress to prevent future Muslim bans and prohibit discrimination on the basis of religion.

The Muslim travel ban, introduced by former President Donald Trump, targeted several Muslim-majority nations and restricted the entry of people from Iran, North Korea, Syria, Libya, Yemen, Somalia and Venezuela. President Joe Biden ended the Muslim ban on his day one in the office last month.

In the House of Representatives, the National Origin-Based Antidiscrimination for Nonimmigrants (NO BAN) Act was reintroduced by House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler and Judy Chu, while in the Senate it was done by Senator Chris Coons.

Indian-American lawmakers Ami Bera, Ro Khanna, Pramila Jayapal and Raja Krishnamoorthi are among those who are supporting the bill.

The legislation strengthens the Immigration and Nationality Act, and restores the separation of powers by limiting overly broad executive authority to issue future travel bans.

## US OWES INDIA USD 216 BILLION

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

The US, the world's largest economy, owes India USD 216 billion in loan as the country's debt grows to a record USD 29 trillion, an American lawmaker has said, cautioning the leadership against galloping foreign debt, the largest of which comes from China and Japan.

In 2020, the US national debt was USD 23.4 trillion, that was USD 72,309 in debt per person.

We are going to grow our debt to USD 29 trillion. That is even more debt owed per citizen. There is a lot of misinformation about where the debt is going. The top two countries we owe the debt to are China and Japan, not actually our friends, Congressman Alex Mooney said.

We are at global competition with China all the time. They are holding a lot of the debt. We owe China over USD 1 trillion and we owe Japan over USD 1 trillion, the Republican Senator from West Virginia said on the floor of the

US House of Representatives as he and others opposed the latest stimulus package of USD 2 trillion.

In January, US President Joe Biden announced a USD 1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package to tackle the economic fallout from the pandemic, including direct financial aid to average Americans, support to businesses and to provide a boost to the national vaccination programme.

The people who are loaning us the money we have to pay back are not necessarily people who

have our best interest at heart. Brazil, we owe USD 258 billion. India, we owe USD 216 billion. And the list goes on the debt that is owed to foreign countries, Congressman Mooney said.

America's national debt was USD5.6 trillion in 2000.

During the Obama administration, it actually doubled.

Since the eight years Obama was President, we doubled our national debt. And we are adding another projected here a completely out of control debt-to-GDP ratio, he said

urg-

ing his Congressional colleagues to consider this national debt issue before approving the stimulus package.

So I urge my colleagues to consider the future. Don't buy into the government has no money it doesn't take from you that you are going to have to pay back. We need to be judicious with these dollars, and most of this is not going to coronavirus relief anyway, he said.

Congressmen Mooney said that things have gone completely out of control. The Congressional Budget Office estimates an additional USD 104 trillion will be added by 2050. The Congressional Budget Office forecasted debt would rise 200 per cent.

Today, as I stand here right now, we have USD 27.9 trillion in national debt... That is actually a little more than USD 84,000 of debt to every American citizen right here today, Mooney said.

We have actually borrowed USD 10,000 per person in one year. I mean, that is out of control, he said

## Jamal Khashoggi murder approved by Saudi crown prince, says intel

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman approved an operation to capture or kill journalist Jamal Khashoggi in Istanbul, according to a US intelligence report submitted to Congress.

Khashoggi, a dissident Saudi journalist who lived in the US as a legal permanent resident and wrote for the Washington Post, was critical of the prince's policies and was killed in the Saudi Arabian Consulate in Istanbul on October 2, 2018.

The Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) said in the report that at the time of the Khashoggi murder, the prince probably fostered an environment in which aides were afraid that failure to complete assigned tasks might result in him firing or arresting them. This suggests that the aides were unlikely to question the prince's orders or undertake sensitive actions without his consent, said the report dated February 11, a declassified portion of which was submitted to Congress on Friday.

"We assess that Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman approved an operation in Istanbul, Turkey, to capture or kill Saudi journalist Khashoggi," it said.

ODNI said it bases the assessment on the prince's control of decision making in the Saudi Kingdom, the direct involvement of a key adviser and members of Muhammad bin Salman's protective detail in the operation and his support for using violent measures to silence dis-

sidents abroad, including Khashoggi.

"Since 2017, the crown prince has had absolute control of the Kingdom's security and intelligence organisations, making it highly unlikely that Saudi officials would have carried out an operation of this nature without the prince's authorization," stated the report.

Soon after the report's submission, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced the "Khashoggi Ban" that imposes visa restrictions on 76 Saudi individuals.



**SEOUL:** A North Korean defector wore a diving suit and fins during a daring six-hour swim around one of the world's most fortified borders, a Seoul official said, and was caught only after apparently falling asleep. Bungling South Korean forces did not spot the man's audacious exploit despite him appearing several times on CCTV after he landed and triggering alarms, drawing heavy criticism from media and opposition MPs. Even after his presence was noticed, the man -- who used diving gear to make his way by sea around the Demilitarized Zone that divides the peninsula -- was not caught for another three hours. The man, reportedly in his 20s, landed north of the town of Goseong on the east coast. "He presumably had swum for about six hours, wearing a padded jacket inside a diving suit and fins. His clothing appeared to have kept him warm and allowed him to stay afloat," an unnamed official was quoted as saying. Tidal currents worked in his favour, the official said, and he abandoned most of his equipment before making his way through a drainage channel under the barbed-wire fences that run along the coast. Eventually a manhunt was launched, and troops found him three hours later, apparently asleep, his facemask hanging in a tree.

## North Korean defector undetected for hours after daring 6-hour swim to south

## Third US vaccine could raise question: WHICH SHOTS ARE BEST?

**WASHINGTON:** The nation is poised to get a third vaccine against COVID-19, but because at first glance the Johnson and Johnson shot may not be seen as equal to other options, health officials are girding for the question: Which one is best?

If cleared for emergency use, the J and J vaccine would offer a one-dose option that could help speed vaccinations, tamp down a pandemic that has killed more than 500,000 people in the US and stay ahead of a mutating virus.

I think it's going to be huge, said Dr. Virginia Caine, director of the public health department in Marion County,

Indiana, which includes Indianapolis. The challenge will be explaining how protective the J and J shot is after the astounding success of the first U.S. vaccines.

Two doses of the Pfizer and Moderna shots were found to be about 95 per cent effective against symptomatic COVID-19.

The numbers from J and J's study are not that high, but they are not an apples-to-apples comparison. One dose of the J and J vaccine was 85 per cent protective against the most severe COVID-19. After adding in moderate cases, the total effectiveness dropped to about 66 per cent.

The J and J shot was tested in the US, Latin America and South Africa at a time when more contagious mutated versions of the virus were spreading. That wasn't the case last fall, when Pfizer and Moderna were wrapping up

testing, and it's not clear if their numbers would hold against the most worrisome of those variants.

Importantly, the FDA reported that, just like its predecessors, the J and J shot offers strong protection against the worst outcomes.

By 28 days after the injection, there were no hospitalisations or deaths in study volunteers given the J and J shot, compared with 16 hospitalisations and seven deaths in those given a dummy shot.

Independent advisers will recommend if there's enough evidence to allow widespread use of J and J's vaccine.

## How much wealth you need to be in World's richest 1%?

**O**ining the ranks of the richest 1% is never easy, but it's especially hard in Monaco.

You need to be worth almost \$8 million to make the cut in the Mediterranean principality, where residents typically don't pay income taxes, according to research on more than two-dozen locations by Knight Frank.

Switzerland and the U.S. have the next highest entry points, requiring fortunes of \$5.1 million and \$4.4 million, respectively, according to the property broker's 2021



Wealth Report. In Singapore, \$2.9 million will get you over the threshold.

"You can clearly see the

influence of tax policy at the top," said Liam Bailey, Knight Frank's global head of research. "Then you have

the sheer breadth and depth of the U.S. market."

The findings underscore how the pandemic has widened the gap between rich and poor nations. The entry point for Monaco's richest 1% is almost 400-times greater than in Kenya, the lowest-ranked of 30 locations in Knight Frank's study. The World Bank estimates 2 million people in that African nation have fallen into poverty due to the Covid-19 crisis. Meanwhile, the world's 500 wealthiest people added \$1.8 trillion to

their fortunes last year, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index, with U.S.-based technology entrepreneurs Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos gaining the most.

The U.S. leads in the number of ultra-rich individuals even as wealth growth has surged recently in Asia-Pacific locations such as China and Hong Kong, according to the report. The richest Asia-Pacific billionaires are now worth a combined \$2.7 trillion, data compiled by Bloomberg show, or more than triple the amount at the end of 2016.