

ANALYSIS 7
TIME TO TACKLE ONLINE
GENDER VIOLENCE**MONEY 8**
SENSEX ZOOMS 1,030
PTS, NIFTY TOPS 14,950**SPORTS 11**
PATEL DOMINATES
AT MOTERA

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



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BASH PATRIARCHY:
SHRADDHA SRINATH

Page 12

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'People will give
fitting reply
to BJP'

5

Preparedness of the
local community is
the best way to man-
age disasters

2

RBI concerned over
impact of cryp-
tocurrency

8

Scheme for EBCs triggers demand for 10% job quota

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The announcement of a new freebie scheme for women from economically-backward upper castes has triggered a fresh demand that the Andhra Pradesh government implement 10 percent reservation for EBCs in jobs, in accordance with the Constitution 103rd Amendment Act.

The Government however said Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy would respond "at an appropriate time."

The YSR Congress Party Government on Tuesday approved another freebie scheme 'EBC Nestham' under which it would grant Rs 15,000 per annum each to economically-backward women among upper castes for three years.

The Chief Minister's Office put the number of beneficiaries

**Under 'EBC
Nestham', upper
caste economically-
backward women
will get Rs 15,000
per annum for 3 yrs.**

at about six lakh, but the approved Cabinet note listed it as 4,47,040.

The opposition parties, however, demanded that the Jagan government first implement the 10 percent reservation for EBCs.

They pointed out that the neighbouring Telangana government was implementing the EBC reservation and demanded to know what was stopping the Chief Minister from following the same.

**State Government releases
Welfare Calendar 2021-22**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Information and Public Relations Minister Perni Venkataramaiah (Nani) on Wednesday released the State Government's 'Welfare Calendar' for the financial year 2021-22. As per the calendar, the first phase of Jagananna Vasati Deevana and Jagananna Vidya Deevana along with zero-interest loans for farmers and women's self-help groups will be provided in April, 2021. Similarly, Phase-1 of YSR Rythu Bharosa, Matsyakara Bharosa, diesel subsidy for the

fishermen and crop insurance for kharif-2020 will be given in May. In June, YSR

Cheyutha and Jagananna Vidya Kanuka will be implemented. In July, the second phase of Jagananna Vidya Deevana, YSR Kapu Nestam and YSR Vahana Mitra will be taken up. In August, zero interest loans for farmers for kharif-2020, industrial incentives to MSME sector, Nethanna Nestham and compensation for Agri Gold victims will be paid.

2

YSRCP thumbs-up to Jagan's decision on Amaravati infra

MARTHI SUBRAHMANYAM
■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP cadres have welcomed the change of strategy by Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy who has announced his decision to continue stalled development works in Amaravati with an outlay of Rs 3,000 crore.

Buoyed by the decision, the cadres are happy that the YSRCP will have a weapon to counter the TDP with. They are welcoming the change of decision, whatever may be the political reasons behind it.

Stepping down from its firm earlier stand of not even laying one brick to develop Amaravati, the Jaganmohan Reddy government has decided to give bank guarantee for resumption of construction activity in Amaravati.

The YSRCP cadres dub the move as "seniors correcting mistakes immediately where-



as juniors take time to mend their ways."

The decision to give bank guarantee of Rs 3,000 crore to complete semi-complete buildings in Amaravati will help develop roads under Amaravati Trunk Infra and execute land pooling scheme layout works.

Completion of infrastructure development works, especially of structures under various stages of construction, has been a longstanding demand ever since the YSRCP stormed to power.

Soon after it won the elec-

tion, the YSRCP regime put on the backburner the development of Amaravati as it planned to relocate the executive capital to Visakhapatnam. To implement this plan, the ruling party appeared to be willing to take the risk of not winning even one Assembly seat in Krishna and Guntur districts.

However, defying all calculations and beating all odds - including the 'Save Amaravati' stir by farmers - the YSRCP won a majority of seats in recent gram panchayat polls in the two districts.

In fact, the YSRCP defeated TDP backed nominees in the gram panchayat polls in all constituencies, including TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu's home constituency and also other top leaders of the Opposition party, by over 80 per cent of the votes.

2

**Complete
Nadu Nedu
works by
March: CM**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Wednesday emphasised that the first phase works of Mana Badi-Nadu Nedu should be completed by the end of March 2021.

Chairing a review meeting at his camp office here, the Chief Minister said schools should be colourful with good designs and interiors. He studied the photographs of schools that have been revamped with new infrastructure facilities as part of the Nadu Nedu programme. Jagan also reviewed the works of the second phase of Nadu Nedu.

He said further changes should be made in the second phase. Seating should be comfortable and priority should be given to quality without any compromise, he said. Stringent action should be taken if works lack quality, Jagan said.

2

Pvt banks get entry to Govt-related biz

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

This step is expected to further enhance customer convenience, spur competition and higher efficiency in the standards of customer services, an official statement said.

"Embargo lifted on grant of Govt business to private banks. All banks can now participate. Private banks can now be equal partners in development of the Indian economy, furthering Govt's social sector



initiatives, and enhancing customer convenience," Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in a tweet.

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

2

**Fog envelops
Vijayawada
airport, 3
flights diverted**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

At least three flights could not make a landing at Vijayawada airport due to fog and low visibility here on Wednesday. These flights were diverted to other stations.

A SpiceJet flight coming from Bengaluru with about 50 passengers hovered above the airport for around 30 minutes by making at least eight rounds in the air as it could not land due to fog and low visibility.

Later, the flight was diverted to Hyderabad. An Indigo flight from Hyderabad to Vijayawada and another Indigo flight from Delhi too had to make rounds in the air due to fog. The situation remained the same till 10 am.

2

Varavara offers cash bonds for bail

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Counsel of poet-activist Varavara Rao, who has been granted interim bail for six months, on Wednesday sought permission from the Bombay High Court to deposit cash bonds instead of two sureties that the HC ordered as one of his bail conditions.



to furnish a personal bond of Rs 50,000 and two sureties of

the like amount.

Senior advocate Anand Grover told a bench of Justices S S Shinde and Manish Pitale on Wednesday that the process of obtaining sureties was slow.

Grover asked if he could submit cash bonds before the special NIA court now to secure Rao's release on bail, and complete the formalities for the sureties subsequently.

2

Shaken by poll debacle, Naidu to stir things up

SNV SUDHIR
■ VIJAYAWADA

After a disastrous showing in the recently-concluded gram panchayat polls, TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu is expected to burn the mid-night oil and sift through the claims, counter-claims, excuses and reasons behind the party's poor performance during his visit to his home constituency Kuppam from February 25 to February 27.

The former chief minister knows he is running out of options - that is, if he wants to win the ensuing polls for MPTCs, ZPTCs and Urban Local Bodies.

The humiliating defeat in his home constituency- Kuppam in Chittoor district has made sure of this.

While the notification for polls to urban local bodies has been issued, the State Election Commission (SEC) is expected to issue notification for



ZPTCS and MPTCs polls shortly, Naidu will be spending almost two-and-a-half days in

Kuppam, his longest stay in his home constituency, which, till the gram panchayat polls, was considered his fortress. Such was his confidence that the TDP supremo generally didn't even bother visiting Kuppam to file his nomination papers with the poll authorities to contest from the segment. Instead, he used to utilise the time to focus on poll strategy and tour other constituencies in the state.

His team managed the situ-

ation on the ground on his behalf in Kuppam. Voters too have been reposing faith in Naidu who has been emerging victorious consecutively from Kuppam since 1989.

However, things changed with the advent of the YSRCP.

In the 2019 polls, Naidu's majority dropped by at least 17,000. That should have set off alarm bells, but the TDP cadres remained unperturbed.

2

**'Love' costs
student her
life, CM
announces
ex gratia**

3

'YSRCP stained polls with blood'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP national president and former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday accused the Jaganmohan Reddy Government of reducing Andhra Pradesh to a hub of violence with the ruling party leaders unleashed a bloodbath in the panchayat elections.

Naidu condemned the brutal attack, allegedly by YSRCP activists, that led to the death of TDP activist Somaiah belonging to Gollamandal village of A Konduru mandal in Tiruvuru Assembly segment in Krishna district.

In a statement here, the TDP chief said that the YSRCP leaders attacked TDP ward member Palakollu Nagamalleswara Rao's father Somaiah during the counting process. They inflicted fatal and bleeding injuries on February 21. "As a result, Somaiah succumbed to injuries while receiving treatment," the TDP

supremo said. This was a Government murder and the Chief Minister should be held responsible for it, he said.

Naidu deplored that the TDP activist was attacked with sticks and such incidents marked the return of the 'murder politics' in the State because of YS Jaganmohan Reddy's short-sighted policies. "The police should take immediate action to arrest the culprits responsible for this murder. A case should be registered forthwith. The Government should also give an assurance to the family members of the deceased," he said.

2

**Attack on TDP
activist has marked
return of 'murder
politics' in the
State, alleged
Naidu****TODAY****ALMANAC**

Month & Paksham:
Magha & Shukla Paksha
Panchangam

Tithi : Trayodashi: 05:18 pm

Nakshatram: Pushya: 01:17 pm

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

Rahukalam: 01:56 pm - 03:23 pm

Yamagandam: 06:40 am - 08:07 am

Varjyam: 01:42 am - 03:16 am

Gulika: 09:34 am - 11:02 am

Good Time: (to start any important work)

Amritkalam: 06:53 am - 08:29 am

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

**VJAYAWADA
WEATHER**

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

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

The Himalayan mountains represent one of the most fragile ecosystems and frequently face vagaries of nature. In the long list of disasters, the flood in Rishiganga valley on February 07, 2021 is unique as it happened when the weather in the region was fair, except for the reports of high snowfall a few days prior to the event. There was also no seismic activity reported at that time. Analysis of images by the Indian Institute of Remote Sensing (IIRS), Dehradun has established that a mass wasting event triggered the flash flood in Rishiganga valley. Most probably, energy created by this fall on soft glacial material resulted in melting of snow. Amateur videos of the event shot by locals show a mighty flood wave approach-

ing the project barrage and swallowing it in no time. The occurrence had happened so fast that it hardly gave any reaction time to anybody to save lives and property. The popular public perception is that a disaster is required to wake up the system from slumber. Some noises are made after a major disaster, and after some time the system again falls back to deep sleep till the next disaster knocks it off. There may be an iota of truth in it, but such perception is not fully justified as we have learnt several lessons from major disasters in the past. Setting up of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and associated infrastructure at the state and district levels are the results of some of the lessons learnt.

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

However, much more efforts need to be made for preparing the local community; that being the first line of defence against such disasters. It is a fact that disasters, be it earthquakes, flash floods or something else, leave us with very little reaction time. Any worthwhile response can only be made by the local community in such a short time. Of course, long-term relief and rehabilitation measures can

always be supplemented by non-local efforts. How to prepare the local community for providing rapid response? What is the incentive for them to join hands in disaster preparedness? It is high time to revive the good old system of civil defence in the country. Apart from altruistic reasons, buy in of people may be secured by paying honorarium to the volunteers of the local com-



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

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

operating procedures. The important thing is to be prepared for various types of disasters encountered or likely to be faced by the local community in that area. It has to be a highly area-specific drill and needs to be planned in that manner. In order to prepare the community, it is also worthwhile to systematically consider all possible details of past disasters as per local institutional/individual memory. The disaster preparedness has to be done strictly as per the local requirements and conditions. This detailing of incident management is the fulcrum of the effective local disaster preparedness. Sometimes, sub-optimum planning and inappropriate locations of developmental projects also lead to natural disasters. Even if it is not so,

activists against development argue in that manner. In this connection, environmental appraisal norms need to be modified. Mandatory public hearings should not be merely a slanging match to have or not to have a project. Instead, project proponents should identify the local talent who can give inputs as far as various project design aspects are concerned and take them in consideration. Such consultations should be mandatory and invariably be part of the detailed project report. It is important that scientific and academic institutions in the Himalayan region are strengthened and properly networked. Accuracy of prediction of disasters could be enhanced by proper data collection, collation and analysis. Instead of confining

to monsoon months, hydro meteorological data, including monitoring of river flows, should be taken up in-situ as well as remotely all round the year. Monitoring lakes in high altitudes, changes in snow/glaciers should also be part of the decision support system. It is also necessary to have a good command and control centre to prevent valuable delay in communicating information to the functional/field levels. Responsible tourism and taking up other developmental activities should be allowed within the carrying capacity of the eco-system. To sum up, we cannot prevent every disaster despite our best efforts, but we can certainly minimise the adverse impacts of such disasters by building a well-prepared local community.

Too early for Covid curbs in AP, say health officials

Increased testing must to study the infection potential of the new strains

SUMIT ONKA
■ VISAKHAPATNAM

With new Covid-19 strains detected in the neighbouring Telangana state, special officials designated for Covid-19 in Andhra Pradesh are of the view that only an increase in the number of tests conducted and proper monitoring could help the state government decide if any restrictions need to be imposed on travel and other activities to check the spread of the virus. Despite the gram panchayat elections conducted in AP, there has not been any remarkable change in the number of daily infections. It may be mentioned here that Niti Aayog member (health) Dr VK Paul told the Union government that "Two mutant virus strains — N440K and E484Q — have been detected. But so far, there is not any direct relation between the recent surge in states and the two strains." Andhra Pradesh Principal Secretary for Covid-19 Management and Vaccination, M Ravi Chandra, speaking to

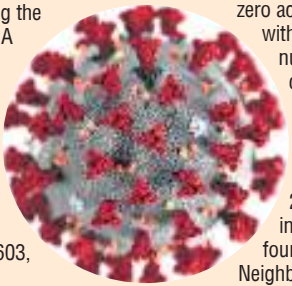
the media, stated that it was early to reach any conclusion on any fresh wave of the virus. He underscored that based on the number of cases and guidelines of the Centre, any decision on restrictions would be taken. However, guidelines such as wearing a mask, maintaining social distance and washing hands need to be followed by the people if they do not want to face a lockdown again. "Andhra Pradesh has the requisite health infrastructure to deal with any fresh wave. The government had curbed the spread of the virus by doing the highest number of tests," health officials said. However, Covid-19 special officer for Vizag PV Sudhakar stressed on increasing the number of tests and analysing the trend. "We could only confirm about the infection potential of the new virus with more testing. It is very early to speak about the probability of a surge in the number of cases in the state. Proper monitoring could help us to prepare for the fresh wave."

AP logs 94 new cases, no deaths

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh added 94 fresh cases of Coronavirus in the 24 hours ending 9 am on Wednesday, taking the tally to 8,89,503. A government bulletin said 66 patients got cured while no new deaths were reported in the state in a day. The active caseload is now 603, up from 575 the previous day, after a total of 8,81,732 recoveries and 7,168 fatalities, it said. A total of 32,494 Covid-19 tests were conducted during the period, taking the cumulative total to 1.38 crore. In 24 hours, Chittoor district reported 21 new coronavirus cases, Visakhapatnam 15 and

Anantapur 11. The remaining districts added less than 10 fresh cases each. Srikakulam district, which appeared to be heading for a zero active caseload with the least number of five cases on February 15, now has 31 active cases, having added 25 fresh infections in only four days. Neighbouring Vizianagaram too has added 10 new cases in a week due to which its active caseload again turned into double digits (11) from a low of six. Off and on, Visakhapatnam district too has been reporting new cases in good numbers even as its gross positives stopped just four short of the 60,000-mark.



'YSRCP stained polls with blood'

Continued from Page 1

Earlier, Naidu asserted that the YSRCP leaders committed murder of democracy in the gram panchayat elections. "With his Jungle Raj, Jagan has turned Andhra Pradesh into a State worse than Bihar. The attack on TDP former MLA Tangirala Sowmya's residence by the YSRCP rowdies was regrettable. Civil society should condemn unilaterally such brazen activities of the ruling party leaders," he added.

VIJAYAWADA BULLION RATES	
	GOLD
₹ 47,840 (10 gm)	
	SILVER
₹ 650	
₹ 75,700 (1kg)	
₹ 1300	
CHICKEN RATES ₹/kg	
Dressed/With Skin	₹162
Without Skin	₹185
Broiler at Farm	₹112
EGG RATES ₹/100	
VIJAYAWADA	405
HYDERABAD	405
VISAKHAPATNAM	472
RETAIL PRICE	₹4.05

Pvt banks get entry to Govt-related biz

Continued from Page 1

"With the lifting of the embargo, there is now no bar on RBI for authorization of private sector banks (in addition to public sector banks) for Government business, including Government agency business," it added. The government has already announced its intent to privatise two public sector lenders,

other than IDBI Bank, in the Budget 2021-22. Sitharaman, while presenting Budget 2021-22 earlier this month, had announced privatisation of Public Sector Banks as part of the disinvestment drive to garner Rs 1.75 lakh-crore. "Other than IDBI Bank, we propose to take up the privatisation of two Public Sector Banks and one General Insurance company in the year

2021-22," she had said. The government last year consolidated 10 public sector banks into four and as a result, the total number of PSBs came down to 12 from 27 in March 2017. As per the amalgamation plan, United Bank of India and Oriental Bank of Commerce were merged with Punjab National Bank, making the proposed entity the second-largest PSB.

Shaken by poll...

Continued from Page 1

However, recent Panchayat poll results where TDP supported candidates had put a disastrous show brought a major embarrassment to Naidu and was seen as a wake-up call. During his visit to Kuppam, Naidu will hold back-to-back meetings with TDP workers. He will participate in at least two meetings in a day before he returns to his Undavalli residence in the evening of February 27. Party sources indicated that boosting the morale of the party workers and also making them ready to face ensuing polls is on top of Naidu's agenda during his visit. On Thursday, immediately after reaching Kuppam, Naidu will hold a meeting with party workers belonging to Gudupalli mandal and review the reasons behind the debacle. Later in the day he will hold a meeting with the party workers belonging to Kuppam (rural) mandal. On Friday he

will hold meetings with party workers in Ramakuppam and Santhipuram mandals separately. Notably, Naidu will visit all the mandals to interact with the party workers. Before leaving for Vijayawada via Bengaluru on Saturday morning, the TDP supremo will hold a meeting with party workers from Kuppam municipality at the TDP office. Out of the total 89 panchayats that come under four mandals in Kuppam went to polls during the third phase, 75 have been bagged by the candidates backed by YSRCP. TDP supporters had bagged only 14 panchayats. Of the 93 panchayats that come under Kuppam, polls could not be held in four due to varied reasons. The ruling party candidates who won 21 panchayats in Kuppam mandal had secured 6,069 majority votes, in 20 panchayats under Santhipuram mandal, YSRCP backed candidates won with a majority of 7020 votes.

YSRCP thumbs-up to Jagan's decision

Continued from Page 1

Feeble arguments put forth by the TDP that the decision on Amaravati infrastructure was taken only with an eye on the forthcoming municipal and ZP elections have been shot down by YSRCP cadres and leaders. They pointed out that to win these many seats, the YSRCP government would have had to spend thousands of crores, and said that the people gave their votes to its candidates impressed by Jagan's administrative skills. Similarly, the resumption of work on the under-construction buildings in Amaravati was approved with an eye on development but not for votes, they said. "Unlike Chandrababu Naidu, Jagan is not a businessman who thinks in terms of political gains and losses," said MVS Nagireddy, YSRCP farmers' wing president.

Scheme for EBCs triggers demand for 10% job quota

Continued from Page 1

"The new freebie scheme is only to hoodwink the people, particularly the women, as they clearly rejected the YSRC rule, as evident in the recent gram panchayat elections. The government conveniently sidetracked the EBC reservation issue and hastily came out with another dole," Jana Sena Political Affairs Committee chairman Nadendla Manohar said. If the Jagan regime was sincere about the uplift of EBCs, it should immediately implement the 10 per cent reservation brought in by the Narendra Modi government, Manohar demanded. The BJP had for long been pressing for the implementation of EBC reservation. "Jagan should take a cue from his Telangana counterpart and enforce the reservation forthwith," BJP state general secretary Vishnuvardhan Reddy said.

State Congress working president N Thulasi Reddy too raised a similar demand. "EBC Nestham is fine, but what about the 10 per cent reservation? Does the Chief Minister not like EBC youth to benefit from the reservation and secure jobs," Thulasi Reddy asked. Questioned about the opposition demand, Information and Public Relations Minister Perni Venkataramaiah said the CM Minister would respond on the issue "at an appropriate time".



Government releases Welfare Calendar

Continued from Page 1

YSR Aasara for 2021 will be issued in September, followed by the second phase of YSR Rythu Bharosa, Jagananna Chedodu and Jagananna Thodu in October. The new scheme EBC Nestam for women of upper castes will be implemented in November. Second phase of Jagananna Vasati Deevana, third phase of Jagananna Vidya Deevana and YSR Law Nestham will take place in December 2021. In January 2022, the third phase of YSR Rythu Bharosa, Jagananna Amma Vodi and enhancement of Pension Kanuka will take place, where Rs 2,500 will be given every month instead of Rs 2,250. In February 2022, the final tranche of Jagananna Vidya Deevana will be released, he said.

Modi: Government has no business...

Continued from Page 1

"The government has no business to be in the business," he said. "Modernise and monetise is the motto we will follow." Modi also said to speed up the disinvestment process, an empowered group of secretaries has been set up to settle investor issues. The government has to focus on development and the public sector and whenever it engages in business, it leads to losses, he said, adding several loss-making PSUs are supported by taxpayers' money which otherwise should have gone into welfare schemes. As much as Rs 1.75 lakh-crore is being targeted from the sale of government stake in firms such as India's second-biggest oil firm BPCL, national carrier Air India, largest shipping line Shipping Corporation of India Ltd, helicopter services company Pawan Hans, IDBI Bank and Container Corporation of India in the next fiscal year beginning April 1. This, along with an initial

public offering of Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) and sale of two public sector banks and one general insurance company, will be the largest disinvestment drive ever. The government has already received "multiple expressions of interest" for privatisation of Air India, BPCL and Pawan Hans. The Prime Minister further said the current reforms seek to ensure that public funds are used efficiently. Stating that PSUs are valuable assets that have helped the country in the past and have huge potential in future, he said best global practices for proper price discovery and stakeholder mapping will be followed for the privatisation drive. "Implementation is also important. To ensure transparency and competition, our processes should be right. To ensure this, a clear roadmap for proper price discovery and stakeholder mapping has to be followed. We will have to learn from the best global practices. We will have

to see that the decision that is being taken helps in the growth of that sector along with public welfare," he said. Modi, who has in recent speeches underscored the importance of the private sector in building the economy, said the Budget for the fiscal year beginning April 1 has provided a clear roadmap for putting India on a high-growth trajectory again with a focus on private sector partnership. The private sector's role is crucial in not just privatisation but also the Rs 111 lakh-crore National Infrastructure Pipeline created to pull the economy out of the pandemic-induced slump, he emphasised. The Prime Minister said state-owned firms were founded decades back when the Indian economy's needs and national priorities were different. The policies that were right 50-60 years back, need improvement in today's changed circumstances, he said, adding the focus of the reforms has been to put public money to its best use. But there are public sector

enterprises that are loss making and survive only on support by taxpayers' money, he said. "The money which is the right of the poor, right of youth is spent on these enterprises and hence this is burdensome on the economy." "PSUs should not be run only because it is a legacy (enterprise) or because it is someone's pet project. If the public sector enterprise (PSE) is meeting the needs of any specific or important sector or has strategic importance, I can then understand it but not otherwise," he said. "Government focus should be on public welfare. When governments start to do business, it sometimes also leads to losses." Running companies not just drains financial resources but also diverts human resources which otherwise could have been utilised for the administration of the country, he said. Pitching India as an investment destination, he said the country is now one market with one tax rate, has easier entry-exit norms for companies, simplified tax system and compliances are being eased.

Varavara offers cash bonds for bail

Continued from Page 1

Grover told the bench that the process of obtaining sureties was taking longer owing to restricted work in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. The bench, however, said it could not grant the prayer without hearing the NIA. It directed Grover to file an application for the same and mention it for urgent hearing on Thursday morning.

On Monday, the bench led by Justice Shinde granted interim bail for six months to Rao on medical grounds. It imposed several conditions on his release, including a direction to him to remain in the city, within the jurisdiction of the NIA court here. Rao is currently admitted in the Nanavati Hospital here and will be discharged and released on bail if his health condition is stable and once the

bail formalities are completed. The case pertains to alleged inflammatory speeches made at the 'Elgar Parishad' conclave held in Pune on December 31, 2017, which, the police claimed, triggered violence the next day near the Koregaon-Bhima war memorial located on the outskirts of the western Maharashtra city. The police have claimed the conclave was organised by people with Maoist links.

Fog envelops airport, 3...

Continued from Page 1

Airport sources said that Indigo flight from Delhi to Vijayawada airport was diverted to Patna as it could not land. On January 13, two flights could not land at Gannavaram due to poor visibility. The airport was in news last week as a major accident was averted after an Air India Express flight hit an electricity pole at the airport.

NGT sets up panel for muck dumping plan on Polavaram

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal on Wednesday formed a six-member committee to prepare an action plan on dumping of muck near the Polavaram dam in Andhra Pradesh.

A bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel noted that there is adverse impact of cofferdams upstream and huge dumping of mucks has taken place without proper environmental management plan.

"We find that the issue needs to be addressed by preparing an appropriate action plan by a Committee with relevant Experts and headed by a former Judge," the bench said.

The NGT constituted a six-member committee to be headed by Justice B Seshasayana Reddy, former Judge of the AP High Court and with nominees of the Union Environment Ministry, Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), Central Soil and Water Conservation Research Institute, Dehradun, IIT, Hyderabad and IIT-Delhi.

The Committee will visit the site at least once and conduct public hearing, if necessary.

"Except for such visits, it will be free to conduct proceedings online. The Committee will be at liberty to take the assistance of any other Experts/Organisation," the bench, also comprising Justice S K Singh and expert member Nagin Nanda, said.

The tribunal directed that the committee will compile information about the extent of generation and disposal of muck at the designated dumping sites and safety measures being adopted for the stability of the dumping sites.

It will also assess the damage to the environment and consider the question whether compensation for acquisition



of land remains to be paid, the NGT said.

The Committee may commence its functioning as far as possible within two weeks. The nodal agency will be the CPCB and the State PCB for coordination and compliance.

The State PCB and the District Magistrate concerned will provide logistic support. The State PCB will bear the requisite expenses for functioning of the Committee, in the first instance, it said.

Honorarium of the Chairman of the Committee and non-official members may be determined by the Chairman, State PCB in con-

sultation with the Chairman of the Committee, the NGT said.

The Andhra state pollution control board will also pay a sum of Rs 1 lakh to petitioner Andhra Pradesh native, Pentapati Pulla Rao to meet the litigation cost, it ruled.

The Committee may give its report as far as possible within three months, it said.

Rao, in his plea, alleged that illegal dumping of muck was taking place during construction of Indira Sagar Polavaram Multipurpose Project which was damaging the environment.

The plea through advocate Sravan Kumar alleged environmental violations at the site and

claimed that a huge quantity of waste material was being dumped in agricultural lands near Polavaram project.

According to the applicant, the environmental clearance was granted in 2005 and revised in 2009 but the project was expanded in the year 2016 when further land was acquired, without taking additional precautions to mitigate the adverse impact of additional activities.

Polavaram, which the Andhra Pradesh government claims is the "lifeline of the state", was declared as a national project under the AP Reorganisation Act, 2014.

'Love' costs degree student her life, CM announces Rs 10 lakh ex gratia

PNS ■ GUNTUR

In a tragic incident said to be fallout of a relationship, a girl, studying second year degree, was strangled to death by her classmate in Narasaraopet of Guntur district on Wednesday.

The accused, said to be in love with the girl, killed her suspecting that she was cheating on her.

The deceased Anusha and accused Harshavardhan Reddy were studying in a private college in Narasaraopet town.

Harshavardhan Reddy took the victim on his bike in the afternoon to a secluded place in Palapadu road on the pretext of having a chat.

He reportedly had an argument with Anusha over her 'affair' with the imaginary person and in a fit of rage, strangled her to death and threw her body into a canal.

Later, he surrendered at the Narasaraopet Rural Police station.

Hearing about the ghastly murder, students and relatives of Anusha staged a protest with her body at the Palnadu road crossing, demanding stringent punishment to her killer. They refused to call off their protest for nearly three hours, resulting in a traffic jam.

Finally, after getting the assurance of the district Collector and the SP of justice, they called off the protest.

A case has been registered. Meanwhile, Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy has announced Rs 10 lakh ex gratia to the family of Anusha, who was murdered by her classmate in Narasaraopeta of Guntur district and assured that stern action will be taken against the culprit.

He directed the police to book the culprit under Disha Act.



VPT chairman K Rama Mohana Rao lights a lamp to mark the inauguration of the roadshow ahead of the Maritime India Summit 2021 that will commence on March 2.

Youngsters urged to grab jobs during Maritime Summit-21

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Visakhapatnam Port Trust conducted a road-show in Vizag on Wednesday ahead of the Maritime India Summit 2021 (MIS 2021) from March 2 to 4 in virtual mode.

The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways is organising the event.

Addressing the roadshow held at Port Kalavani Auditorium, organised in connection with Maritime India Summit-2021, VPT chairman K Rama Mohana Rao called upon the youth to make use of the abundant employment opportunities available during the upcoming Maritime India Summit-2021.

He said that due to Covid-19, the Summit is being conducted in virtual mode and urged the youth to register in large numbers and avail the facilities. Rama Mohana Rao asked port users and other stakeholders, and also the general public to register in large numbers to take note of the developments taking place



in the Indian Maritime Sector and availability of large scale employment opportunities including the roadshow.

Visitors can register without any cost.

The chairman added that the focal sectors such as state maritime boards, stakeholders of the maritime sector such as policy planners, Government agencies, domestic and international investors, sector experts, shipping lines, and representatives of ports across the globe, will be participating

in the summit. He said that it is a perfect platform to attract both domestic and international investments to position India at par with international ports in the Maritime sector.

Durgesh Dubey, IRTS, Deputy Chairman, J Pradeep Kumar, CVO, Krishna Kumar, president, Visakhapatnam Stevedores Association, Sudhir Mulagada, president, AP Chambers, and Srinivasa Raju, CII, Vizag spoke on this occasion.

Pastor exploits girl, actor helps victim complain

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A girl, sexually exploited by a pastor on the pretext of marriage, gathered courage to file a police complaint in Rajahmundry with the help of actress Karate Kalyani.

Karate Kalyani accompanied the girl to the police station and was present as she filed a complaint against the pastor. The Two Town police registered a case.

According to reports, the girl, hailing from Reddipalli village in Kadiyam mandal complained that she was cheated by Pastor Sharon Kumar of the Olivala Mandir-aram.

The complaint said that the pastor recorded their intimate moments and was threatening to make public those photos and videos if she disclosed the matter to anyone.

The victim has been a member of the congregation at the Olivala Mandir-aram Bible Church for seven years. There, Pastor Sharon Kumar encouraged her to conduct solitary prayers with him.

Sharon Kumar then slowly started getting close to the victim. He told her that he was on verge of getting a divorce from his wife and that he was in love with her. The pastor made her believe him and started having sexual relations with her, the complaint said.

DCI to construct India's first trailing suction hopper dredger

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

To equip and augment its capacity, Dredging Corporation of India (DCI) will construct a Trailing Suction Hopper Dredger (TSHD) under "Make in India" concept and "Atma Nirbhar Bharat".

This will be the first time India will be constructing the dredger in Indian Ship Building Yard with international standards.

Ahead of the Maritime Summit, the curtain raiser and pre exhibition hall was opened on Wednesday by Prof GYV Victor, MD and CEO - Designate. Other senior officials of the company were present. The exhibition shall remain open for the public till March 5, 2021.

DCI is among the top 10

This will be the first time India will be constructing the dredger in Indian Ship Building Yard

dredging companies in the world that own, operate and maintain dredgers to maintain major, non-major, minor, naval ports and harbours. DCI with 45 years of experience with 650 highly skilled professionals is striving to contribute positively to the development of the port sector to maintain a navigational channel of various ports. DCI with its capacity shall be able to dredge and address the requirement of all ports, and naval harbour.

DCI will sign the historical MoU to construct the Trailing Suction Hopper Dredger in Indian Shipyard in a signing ceremony to be witnessed by Mansukh Mandaviya, Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways,

This is a very significant move under the "Atma Nirbhar Bharat" to echo "Vocal for Local" and for self reliant India. This is the second time Indian Maritime Summit 2021 will be conducted from March 2 to 4.

DCI has signed 18 MoUs worth Rs 14,000 crore with ports, ship builders, ship repair complex, research organisation and maritime states under "Make in India" and "Atma Nirbhar Bharat" to achieve self-reliance to develop and to maintain our long coastline.

Narasaraopet MLA visits Tirumala with 70 sarpanches

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Narasaraopet MLA Gopi Reddy Srinivasa Reddy on Wednesday visited Tirumala along with 70 YSRCP-backed sarpanches. The group had lunch at the Anna Prasad kendram.

Later, the MLA called on TTD special officer Dharma Reddy and submitted a mem-

orandum to him for support in construction of steps atop Kotappakonda and development of Kotappakonda temple in Guntur district.

The sarpanches said that they felt fortunate to have darshan of Lord Venkateswara soon after being elected and expressed their joy and jubilation.



NEP has potential to transform Indian education system: Guv

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The New Education Policy-2020 could transform India's education system if implemented in letter and spirit, stated Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan on Wednesday.

Addressing the South Zone Vice-Chancellor's Conference was organised by the Association of Indian Universities (AIU), the Governor said that NEP-2020 was a policy to improve human abilities, sustainable development and truly global in nature.

The conference was organised virtually, considering the current pandemic situation.

In his speech, Harichandan referred to higher education as

the paramount source of skill development contributing to nation building.

He hoped the meet would address the issues in terms of employability skills, student engagement, quality teachers and infrastructure. The Governor said that he was also hopeful that India will derive the advantage of demographic dividend with the effective implementation of NEP-2020 policy in its long-term perspective.

Harichandan expressed the need for fostering excellence, collaborative research, digital pathways, innovation and incubation integrated curriculum professional and staff development activities and private



philanthropy. He lauded the efforts of AIU in making Indian higher education system better to best, seeking insights on various dimensions so as to contribute to building the

socio-economic strength of the nation and make the country a super knowledge power.

GITAM president M Sribharath said that using a blended learning model the

universities can reach all sections of people. He stated that the government must give equal priority to private educational institutions to bring excellence in higher education.

GITAM Vice-Chancellor Prof K Sivaramakrishna also shared his thoughts on NEP-2020.

AIU president Tej Partap delivered the presidential address and said that a modernised financial system is needed to Indian universities to implement NEP-2020. AIU secretary-general Pankaj Mittal said that Association of Indian Universities is actively engaged with online workshops, teacher training programmes and

online placement training activities.

She informed that AIU is preparing a document based on the Vice-Chancellor's suggestions, recommendations on NEP-2020 to submit the same to the Government.

GITAM Pro Vice-Chancellor Prof Jayasankar Warrior, GITAM registrar Prof D Gunasekharan and AIU coordinator S Rama Devi Pani participated in the inaugural session.

The meet was also attended by the Vice-Chancellors from Indian Universities and the discussions will continue on Thursday, according to conference nodal officer Prof K Narendra.

Sharp increase in fuel prices is a blessing in disguise for TSRTC

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Perturbed at the rising fuel prices, vehicle owners have been patronising city buses, increasing occupancy ratio, which took a beating because of the pandemic, of the RTC buses.

The vehicle owners set aside vehicles and are keen to travel by TSRTC buses, improving the cash-strapped Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC) revenue.

On March 21, the daily revenue earned by the RTC was put at Rs 13 crore. After a long gap, the RTC surpassed its top earning on February 15 and earned Rs 13.25 crore. In between, the RTC daily earning never crossed Rs 10 crore.

As vehicle owners have started patronising the RTC, the occupancy ratio has increased and its revenue has been on the increase during the past one week. Prior to March 15, the RTC daily income moved closer to Rs 13 crore. The RTC earned on last Tuesday (February 16) Rs



11.72 crore, as against Rs 11.53 crore earned on the corresponding last year in 2020. In fact, the daily earnings of RTC on Tuesdays will be not so good. Before the lockdown, the Tuesday income of the RTC ranged between Rs 11.50 and 12 crore. The RTC recorded 66 per cent occupancy ratio on February 16 as against 63 per cent registered on the corresponding day last year. The RTC operated its buses for a distance of 34.69 lakh km in the state on February 16 last year as against 33.80 lakh km operated on corresponding day this year. In fact, the RTC operated its fleet for less number of km but it earned higher revenue.

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

RAJESH JAIN NIDARKAR
■ HYDERABAD

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

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



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

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

it- oriented business units.

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

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

Dr Ashok Dalwai, CEO, National Rainfed Area

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

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



KCR pays rich tributes to Srinivas Goud's father

PNS ■ MAHBUBNAGAR

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

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

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

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



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

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



50K devotees take part in mini Medaram jatara

PNS ■ MULUG

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

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

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

The district administration has made elaborate arrangements and bandobast for



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

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

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

I am a pukka Telangana bidida, says Jagan's sister

K VENKATESHWARLU
■ HYDERABAD

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's sister YS Sharmila, who has declared her plans to bring back Rajanna Rajyam in Telangana, on Wednesday asserted that nobody had the right to pinpoint her birthplace (to suggest that she is not local') and questioned whether Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Rao and BJP senior leader Vijayashanthi are Telanganites? Sharmila said that she would make an announcement regarding the launch of her party 'very soon' and, in the context, asked scribes whether it would be good to launch her party on May 14 or July 9. She said that she would go to Delhi in support of farmers' issues.

Speaking to media persons at Lotus Pond, Sharmila mentioned that she had full support of her mother Vijayamma. "Party announcement will take place very soon. Have the problems of people been solved after the creation of a separate Telangana state? Telangana was created with God's grace. Don't



I have love for Telangana if I did not participate in the Telangana movement? I don't know whether I have differences or difference of opinions. Jagan has no interest in me floating a party. However, words, relations, rakhis will continue. I was born and brought up in Hyderabad and I became the mother of my children here only. We will continue our brother-sister relationship, though the regions are different. Jayalalitha was also not a Tamilian", she said.

Sharmila suggested that scribes should ask Jagan as to why he had failed to give a position to her. "I am not an arrow released by anyone... Have the aspirations of Telanganites been fulfilled? Arogyasri scheme has been weakened in the state. Nobody has sincerity in the development of Telangana State.

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

Man held for cyber stalking

PNS ■ MEDCHAL

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

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

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

108 staff held for stealing 2.3 kg gold from accident victim

PNS ■ PEDDAPALLI

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

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

Responding to the distress call made to the 108 helpline, a team of ambulance staff, technician



Chand and driver Rajender, shifted the body of Srinivas Reddy and a seriously injured driver Santosh to the hospital.

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

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

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

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

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

‘TRS, BJP dustbins to dump Cong waste’

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

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

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

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

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

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

Former IAS Ram Laxman passes away

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

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

Ram Laxman worked as an IAS officer in united Andhra Pradesh and extended his services to the newly-formed Telangana state as an advisor. Ram Laxman also worked actively in the TRS party as a politburo member.

Ram Laxman had participated in 1,000 days Deeksha celebrations during Telangana movement when the TRS Chief and Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Rao took up deeksha. Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Rao and several ministers expressed their deep condolences on the demise of Ram Laxman recalling his services.

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

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

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

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

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



Reddy, Kasireddy Narayan Reddy.

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

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

Nizampet civic body produces compost through bio-mining

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

‘People will give fitting reply to BJP’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

Lashing out at the BJP, the former Union minister said



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

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

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

President opens world’s biggest cricket stadium in Ahmedabad

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

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

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

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



filled for the pink ball Test.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



PM biggest rioter, says Mamata

PNS ■ SAHAGANJ

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

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

INDIA CORNER

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

A 70-year-old woman spent an entire night besides her son’s body and attended to his wounds, believing he is alive after he got injured fatally during a fall at home in Mumbai, police said on Wednesday. The incident took place in the wee hours of Monday when the 42-year-old victim, who was in an inebriated state, fell in the bathroom at their home in Kalina area. The man, who hailed from Meghalaya, received fatal head injuries, a police official said. After some time, when the woman saw him lying there motionless, she dragged him out of the bathroom and laid him next to her elder son, who is also bed-ridden, he said. Believing him to be alive, she applied turmeric powder on the victim’s injuries. Next morning, when he did not wake up, the woman informed her relatives who rushed to her house. The family members alerted the police who reached the spot and took the victim to a nearby hospital where he was declared dead, the official said. The victim had been out of work following the coronavirus-induced lockdown and the family was facing a monetary crunch, he added.



High Court shocked by murder of inmate in Tihar jail

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

Yediyurappa calls on public representatives to introspect

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



Will include fishermen’s demands in manifesto: Rahul

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



Punjab protecting gangster Mukhtar Ansari: UP to SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

“There is no specific provision for transfer of an under trial prisoner under Code of Criminal Procedure or Jail Manual still this Court can pass an order of Respondent No. 3 (Ansari) to District Jail Banda, Uttar Pradesh considering the facts situation of the present matter by exercising jurisdiction under Article 142 of the Constitution of India,” the UP government said.

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

Cabinet okays President’s Rule in Pondi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

MP Assembly: Congress stages walkout over rising fuel prices

PNS ■ BHOPAL

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

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

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

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

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



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

Earlier during the question hour, Congress MLA Sanjay Yadav accused the state government of being anti-tribal, during the discussion on tourism department. In his reply, Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, denied the charges and accused the previous Congress government of stopping the development works in the areas represented by the BJP MLAs.

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

being “targeted and attacked” in the country.

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

She is one of the 12 “courageous” individuals

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

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

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

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

who hold power to account.”

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





Trouble next door

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

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



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

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

PICTALK



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

PTI

Continuing travails

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

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



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

Time to look and act East

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

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

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

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

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



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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

The recent *exposé* — 'All the Prime Minister's Men' by Al Jazeera, revealing an alleged criminal nexus between the Bangladesh Army chief, his brothers and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina-led Bangladesh Nationalist Party — has caused an uproar. While the Bangladesh Government has backed the Army, the alleged claims in the *exposé* are of grave concerns. Therefore, the Act East policy needs to include emergency strategies of diplomatic, intelligence, security and political nature.

(The author is an ICSSR Doctoral Fellow at the JNU, New Delhi, and Senior Fellow at the AIDIA, Kathmandu. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DISHA RAVI VINDICATED

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

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

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

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

PROVIDE FREE JABS TO SENIORS

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

Congress needs a major shake-up



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

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

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

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

Nischai Vats | Sultanpur

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

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

A STADIUM STANDS TALL

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

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

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

CK Subramaniam | Navi Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUNDBITE

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

Bihar Chief Minister
— Nitish Kumar

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

Australia's Defence Minister
— Linda Reynolds

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

Actor
— Ayushmann Khurrana

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

Indian captain
— Virat Kohli


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

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister
— Yogi Adityanath

FIRST COLUMN


TEXAS MUST READ UP ON GLOBAL WARMING

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



GWYNNE DYER

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



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

Time to tackle online gender violence

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

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

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

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

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

“

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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Bumps in the way of adoption of EVs in India

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



KOTA SRIRAJ

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

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

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



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

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

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

POINT COUNTERPOINT

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



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

Trading halted for some time on NSE due to connectivity issues

PNS ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Investcorp on-boards Safari with Rs 75 cr investment

PNS ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

‘Dams, hydroelectric projects don’t harm environment’

PNS ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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



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

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

The new brand aims to build a Rs 500 crore business

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

The brand plans to launch retail stores by September 2021.

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

RBI concerned over impact of cryptocurrency

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



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

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

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

Rupee surges 11 paise to close at 72.35 against USD

PNS ■ MUMBAI

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

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



German economy grew 0.3% in Q4

PNS ■ BERLIN

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

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

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

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

Tata Power raises Rs 900 cr via debentures



PNS ■ BERLIN

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

Existing investors, Singapore-based Jungle



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

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

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

Professionals confident about career progress

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

This professional uncertainty comes right after the year-



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Daimler delivers largest 10 tonne staff bus post-Covid

PNS ■ CHENNAI

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

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

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



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

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

MONEY MATTERS

Airtel enters advertising tech industry with Airtel Ad



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

Sebi offers exemption to Pantone from takeover norms



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

Flipkart to deploy over 25,000 EVs in supply chain



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

Govt clears PLI scheme to boost manufacturing of PCs



The government on Wednesday approved a production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for laptops, tablets, all-in-one PCs and servers, as it looked to woo global players to tap India's manufacturing capabilities. The approval of PLI scheme for these hi-tech IT hardware gadgets comes after the Cabinet last week cleared a Rs 12,195 crore scheme for telecom equipment manufacturing.

Briefing reporters after a meeting of the Cabinet, Communications and IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said the Cabinet cleared the about Rs 7,350 crore PLI scheme for IT hardware that would cover laptops, tablets, all-in-one PCs and servers.

Kangana-starrer *Thalaivi* teaser out; film to hit theatres on April 23

Actress Kangana Ranaut's much awaited film *Thalaivi* is all set to release in theatres on April 23. The makers made the announcement on Wednesday, on the occasion of the 73rd birth anniversary of actress-turned-politician J Jayalithaa, whose life is depicted in the film.

Tweeting the news, Kangana Ranaut wrote: "To Jaya Amma, on her birthanniversary. Witness the story of the legend, #Thalaivi, in cinemas on 23rd April, 2021."

The trilingual film will release in Hindi, Tamil and Telugu. The film is directed by AL Vijay, and it also features Arvind Swami, Prakash Raj, Madhoo and Bhagyashree in key roles.

The film will showcase the life of late former chief minister of Tamil Nadu, from her rise in the world of films as an actress to becoming a powerful politician.

Kangana had earlier in the day, teased fans about the big announcement by posting on Twitter: "On



#Thalaivi's 73rd birth anniversary, stay tuned as we make an important announcement at 6:35 PM today!"

For the role, Kangana is said to have gained 20 kilos and undergone body transformation.

Interestingly, the release date has already been blocked by Aditya Chopra's production, *Bunty Aur Babli 2*, which features Rani Mukerji, Saif Ali Khan, Siddhant Chaturvedi and Sharvati Wagh in the lead. The announcement of *Thalaivi* later in the day on the occasion of Jayalalithaa's birthday will result in a clash with *Bunty Aur Babli 2* at the box-office. The release calendar is getting crowded with every passing day, and the industry is now seeing clashes like no other year before this.



Chrissy Teigen asks President Biden to unfollow her: It's not you, it's me

Model Chrissy Teigen requested the official Twitter account of the President Of United States Joe Biden to unfollow her. Teigen is known for her frequently raunchy tweets. She used to be one of 13 people followed by POTUS on Twitter, reports dailymail.co.uk.

However, she wrote on Twitter: "I have tweeted a handful of times since my treasured @POTUS following. In order for me to flourish as me, I must ask you to please lord unfollow me. I love you!!! It's not you it's me!!!!"



It seems she was concerned about him seeing her explicit language on the micro-blogging website. As soon as Biden unfollowed her, she posted a few curse words and added: "I am FREE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

Meghan, Prince Harry to tell it all on Oprah Winfrey's show

Meghan Markle and Prince Harry are going to open up about the "tension" within the royal family during their upcoming interview with Oprah Winfrey.

A source close to the couple told a news agency that the Duke and Duchess of Sussex will be "speaking their truth" during the highly anticipated CBS special on March 7, now that they have permanently stepped down as working members of the British monarchy.

"There is a lot of tension between them and the royal family," the source says. "The interview is going to shine a light on what they have been through. Meghan and Harry are relieved they are away from it all."

According to the insider, their sit-down will be "very candid" because they've "officially been released" from their royal duties. Generally speaking, Meghan and Harry have been more open and honest after they initially stepped down last year and subsequently moved to Santa Barbara, California.



Mandy Moore welcomes first baby with Taylor Goldsmith

Mandy Moore is a mom! The *This Is Us* actress announced on Instagram today that she and her husband, Taylor Goldsmith, welcomed their first child together, a baby boy. They've named him August, but they'll call him Gus for short.

"Gus is here," Mandy wrote on Instagram with heart emoji along with a cute snap of her son. "Our sweet boy, August Harrison Goldsmith. He was punctual and arrived right on his due date, much to the delight of his parents. We were prepared to fall in love in all sorts of brand-new ways, but it goes beyond anything we could have ever imagined. M + T"

Mandy has always been open about wanting kids someday, giving interviews where she talked candidly about trying to figure out the right timing with her successful career. "I'm not sure when," she said in a past interview with a news agency. "Right now, my main focus and priority is my career, but that won't always be the case."

When Mandy and Taylor did start trying for a baby, they ran into roadblocks. "Because of this issue with my uterus, I was very hesitant to believe it and put any stock in it," Mandy told *Romper* last month. "I sort of was holding my breath until 12 weeks."





Aankhen 2 starring Big B to go on floors in May

Aankhen that starred Amitabh Bachchan, Paresh Rawal, and Akshay Kumar back in 2002, was one-of-its-kind. The movie showed three blind men successfully robbing a bank and after almost 20 years, Abhinav Deo is ready to direct its sequel. *Aankhen 2* stars Amitabh Bachchan, Sidharth Malhotra, and Akshay Khanna. While


Sidharth and Amitabh have never worked together before, the former has worked with Akshay Khanna in *Ittefaq*.

This Abhinav Deo directorial is being said to go on floors in May with Sunil Grover being the latest addition to the cast. As per the reports, Amitabh Bachchan's character Vijay Singh Rajput will return from his jail term with a grander heist planned and will lead a new team of blind men —


Akshay Khanna, Sidharth Malhotra, and Sunil Grover to rob a gaming establishment. With the makers already finalising UK and Bulgaria as shoot locations, if things go well, the first schedule will begin on May 20 since the movie is set abroad.

While there has been no confirmation about Sunil Grover being the fourth actor, the speculations regarding the news are strong.


ARCHIE




GARFIELD




NANCY




GINGER MEGGS




CALVIN AND HOBBS



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5
6			7	8
9			10	
12	13		14	15
17			16	18
19				

ACROSS

- 1 Carried on
- 6 A person who decides who wins a competition
- 7 A large stream
- 9 A very small living thing that makes people ill
- 10 Overtakes
- 12 Reply
- 14 Short skirt
- 17 Rescued
- 18 A smelly vegetable
- 19 In poor health

DOWN

- 2 Of greater age
- 3 Things on your feet
- 4 Norwegians live here
- 5 Pixies
- 6 Puzzles with many pieces that make up a picture
- 8 From Russia
- 11 Sew with this
- 13 One third of twenty-one
- 15 From Ireland
- 16 A hard black fuel

SOLUTION

S	H	N	D	A	N
P	L	A	N	S	P
A	L	E	N	S	W
G	R	E	E	C	L
H	E	S	S	P	
E	Y	E	S	C	A
T	A	I	U	C	P
T	I	E	D	C	L
C	H	I	L	D	R

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



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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

'The future lies in digital processes'

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



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

Data-driven

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

Sustainability

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

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

Digitalisation

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

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

Simplified

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

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

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

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

Creative learning to ignite your child's mind

How wonderful it is to acquire knowledge from graphics! With multiple trends circulating on various social media platforms, one of them is the info series that is making some noise. With the sole aim to convey information quickly and easily to kids, Ilchi Pilchi is the first-of-its-kind info-series that not only talks about the animal kingdom but also about why they're important to planet earth through storytelling and scrapbooking!



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

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

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

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

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

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



Patel dominates at Motera

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

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

the hosts.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Padikkal's career-best 152 hands Karnataka big win

PTI ■ BENGALURU

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

for 6.

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

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

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

Baroda continue winning streak

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

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

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

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

PUNJAB BEAT ANDHRA

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

beat Andhra by seven wickets to register their first win.

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

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

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

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

President inaugurates Narendra Modi stadium

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

Woods seriously injured in roll-over car crash



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

AFP ■ LOS ANGELES

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

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

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

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

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

"It is my understanding that he had serious injuries to

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Advantage Chelsea

Giroud's bicycle kick gives Blues edge over Atletico

AFP ■ BUCHAREST

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

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

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



Olivier Giroud scores for Chelsea against Atletico Madrid in CL game

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bayern rout Lazio

AFP ■ ROME

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

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

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

While, Stuttgart-born Musiala, who

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

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

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

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

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

Humour is the best weapon to bash patriarchy: Shraddha Srinath

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



tollywood

RAASHI AND GOPI AGAIN

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

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

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



Hyderabad. Gopi will be seen as a criminal lawyer in the film, an action-drama laced with humour. Maruthi will be working with

Malayalam composer Jakes Bejoy for the first time, while Raveendar will head the art department.



Adith and Tanya Hope team up for a road movie



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

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



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

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

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



PRIYA PRAKASH VARRIER OPPOSITE SUNDEEP KISHAN

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

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

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

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

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



FIRST LOOK

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

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

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

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

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

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

