

ANALYSIS 7
PANDEMIC PUSH TO
MICRO-INSURANCE

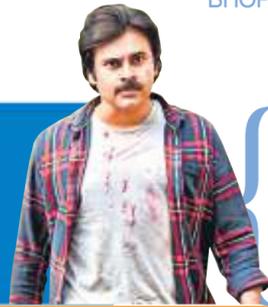
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CAREER-BEST EIGHTH

HYDERABAD, MONDAY MARCH 1, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer



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DELHI UNIVERSITY, SINGAPORE FINE ARTS SOCIETY SIGN MOU ON INDIAN MUSIC

The Delhi University's Faculty of Music and Fine Arts and the Singapore Fine Arts Society have signed a MoU for "cultural, academic and research collaboration agreement in Indian music" at a two-day international webinar. "Traditional Music in Different Cultures: Opportunities and Challenges in the Changing Global Scenario", hosted by the Delhi University. "The MoU will expand the cultural, institutional footprint of both the institutions with a rich background SIFAS commencing its glorious music journey in 1949, and the Department of Music taking its first step towards musical excellence in 1960," an official statement said.



AMITABH BACHCHAN HINTS AT UNDERGOING SURGERY

Megastar Amitabh Bachchan has shared that he has a "medical condition" for which he needs to undergo a surgery. It is unclear if the medical procedure is complete. In a one-line, cryptic message on his personal blog, the 78-year-old actor gave an update to his fans and followers. "medical condition .. surgery .. can't write (sic)" Amitabh Bachchan wrote on Saturday. The actor recently shared the details about the projects his family members -- wife Jaya Bachchan, son Abhishek Bachchan and daughter-in-law Aishwarya Rai Bachchan -- were currently working on.



US FDA GIVES EMERGENCY USE AUTHORISATION TO J&J VACCINE

The US Food and Drug Administration has authorised a single-dose Johnson and Johnson anti-coronavirus vaccine for emergency use, giving the nation its third jab against the deadly disease. President Joe Biden described the approval as an encouraging development in efforts to end the COVID-19 crisis and said this is exciting news for all US citizens. The Johnson and Johnson vaccine, which works with one dose instead of two, got approval on Saturday, days after emergency use authorisation (EUA) was given to two-dose shots from Pfizer and Moderna in December last year.



ADMIRAL R HARI KUMAR NEW CHIEF OF WESTERN NAVAL COMMAND

Vice Admiral R Hari Kumar on Sunday took over as Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief of Western Naval Command. He succeeded Vice Admiral Ajit Kumar, who served at the helm of this premier command since January 2019, and who retired after an illustrious career spanning 40 years, a Navy release said. Vice Admiral R Hari Kumar is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy and was commissioned in the Navy on January 1, 1983. The ceremonial handing over of the baton took place at a function here, it added.



Rahul dubs PM a 'formidable enemy'

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'Provide scheme/initiative in lieu of dropped ITR to Hyd'

IT exports from TS expected to touch Rs 1.4 lakh crore in 2020-21

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

IT exports from Telangana are expected to touch Rs 1.4 lakh crore for the financial year 2020-21, state IT and Industries Minister K T Rama Rao said on Sunday as he appealed the Centre to announce an initiative to further boost the IT sector in the state. KTR, as Rama Rao is also referred to, in a letter to Union Minister for Information Technology and Communications Ravi Shankar Prasad said the latest estimates indicate that the IT exports from Telangana are expected to grow over 7 per cent to touch Rs 1.4 lakh crore (about USD 19.1 billion) for the financial year 2020-21.

The national growth rate in the said period, according to NASSCOM, is estimated to be at about 1.9 per cent at USD 150 billion, he said. Hyderabad saw a healthy 8.7 million square feet of new

"We could attract several marquee companies such as Amazon Web Services, Goldman Sachs, and Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA) to Telangana during the past one year

— K TRAMA RAO
IT and Industries Minister



office space creation during the year, despite the severe impact of COVID-19 on the economy, Rama Rao said.

In terms of the share of sectoral occupiers, the information technology (IT/ITeS) sector including data centres dominated with a major share, followed by banking, financial services and insurance (BFSI) and manufacturing sectors,

while other services and co-working sectors also contributed.

"We could attract several marquee companies such as Amazon Web Services, Goldman Sachs, and Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA) to Telangana during the past one year," Rama Rao said.

Telangana's IT exports would've been higher: KTR

With the information technology exports from Telangana likely to grow at seven per cent to cross Rs 1.40 lakh crore during 2020-21, the state's IT minister KT Rama Rao on Sunday said the growth rate would have been much higher if the Centre had not scrapped the ITR project. The Minister told an agency that he was delighted that projected TS IT export numbers show terrific growth, at a much higher rate than national average. KT Rama Rao tweeted that had the NDA government not scrapped Information Technology and Investment Region (ITIR), much higher employment/growth would've been possible.

Uttam asks CM KCR to release unemployment data of State

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) President and MP Capt. N. Uttam Kumar Reddy has asked Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao to release the data of unemployed youth in the Telangana State.

Uttam Kumar Reddy was addressing a meeting with states heads of TPCC frontal, departments and cells at Gandhi Bhavan on Sunday in connection with MLC elections for two Graduates' constituencies of Warangal-Khammam-Nalgonda and Hyderabad-Rangareddy-Mahabubnagar.



Second phase of Covid vax drive for priority age groups from today

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The soft launch of the second phase of Covid-19 vaccination drive for priority age groups in Telangana will begin on Monday in 102 vaccine centers. The CoWIN app 2.0 will be live again by evening, said Telangana Director of Public Health Dr Srinivasa Rao.

Addressing media persons on Sunday at Director Public Health office, Dr Srinivasa Rao said that citizens could register for vaccine by visiting the website cwin.gov.in. The beneficiaries need to carry Aadhaar Card, Photo ID Card and mobile phone

using which he/she has registered.

The Covid Vaccination drive for the next priority group i.e. persons aged 60 years and above and those aged between 45 - 60 years with comorbidities, will be rolled out in 102 centres in the State. Over 1,000 centres would be functional in a week's time, Srinivasa Rao said.

The vaccine centers would be open between 9am to 3pm. Each vaccine center will have 200 slots. For the next one week, only online registration would be allowed on cwin.gov.in.

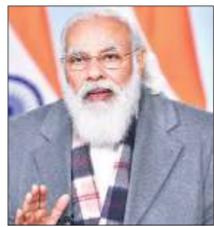


Citizens bid early adieu to winter

2

PM calls for 100-day campaign to clean up water bodies, harvest rain water

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Underlining the importance of collective responsibility towards water conservation, PM Narendra Modi on Sunday called for a 100-day campaign to clean up all water bodies and prepare them for rain water harvesting before the monsoon season starts. In his monthly 'Mann Ki Baat' broadcast, Modi said water has been crucial for the

development of humankind for centuries.

"We have to understand our collective responsibility towards water conservation," he said. The PM also said that when people feel proud of indigenous products then Aatmanirbhar Bharat does not just remain an economic programme but becomes a national spirit.



Companies 'feel betrayed' due to capping of vax price: Shaw

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Tikait coming to Telangana

To tour 5 states in March to drum up support for farmers' protest

PNS ■ GHAZIABAD

Farmer leader Rakesh Tikait will be touring five states in March to drum up support for the ongoing farmers' protest against Centre's new agriculture laws, a Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) office-bearer said on Saturday.

Tikait, the national spokesperson of the BKU and a prominent face of the farmers' protest, will begin the tour from March 1, the office-bearer said.

When Stalin's daughter defected from India!

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former American ambassador to India Richard Celeste has come out with his memoir in which he shares many interesting facts including the sensational defection of Joseph Stalin's daughter Svetlana from India on a US visa.

Celeste, who served as ambassador from 1997 to 2001 when Bill Clinton was president, first came to India in the 1960s as an assistant to the then envoy here Chester Bowles.

In "Life in American Politics & Diplomatic Years in India: An Unvarnished Account",



Celeste shares "as honestly as I can the influences that led me to devote my life to public service - both in and beyond the political arena".

Discoms' outstanding dues to power gencos rise 24pc

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Total dues owed by electricity distribution companies to power producers rose nearly 24 per cent to Rs 1,36,966 crore in December 2020 compared to the same month a year ago, reflecting stress in the sector.

The distribution companies (discoms) owed a total of Rs 1,10,660 crore to power generation firms in December 2019, according to portal PRAAPTI (Payment Ratification And Analysis in Power procurement for bringing Transparency in Invoicing of generators).

The portal was launched in May 2018 to bring in transparency in power purchase transactions between the generators and discoms.

In December 2020, the total overdue amount, which was not cleared even after 45 days of grace period offered by generators, stood at Rs 1,27,498 crore as against Rs 97,835 crore in the year-ago period.

TRS Dalit MLAs find fault with Bandi Sanjay's comments

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Dalit MLAs of the TRS party had written an open letter to the Telangana BJP Chief Bandi Sanjay Kumar alleging that he had insulted the Dalits by describing them as those who not only sew sandals but also stung. They alleged that Bandi Sanjay was speaking as he wished and was insulting his fellow people.

By using atrocious words against the Dalits, Bandi Sanjay once again proved that the policies of the Bharatiya Janata Party were a reflection of orthodox ideas, untouchability and oppression of the



Dalits, they alleged. In their letter the MLAs went on to say that it was becoming clear that Bandi Sanjay wanted the Dalits to stay backward even in "today's modern age".

Army cancels recruitment exam after paper leak

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Army has cancelled an examination for pan-India recruitment of general duty personnel after paper was found to have been leaked, officials said on Sunday.

They further said at least three persons have been arrested in Pune so far.

"The Indian Army has zero tolerance towards corrupt practices in the recruitment process for selection of suitable candidates," an official said.

PSLV-C51 launches Brazil's Amazonia-1, 18 other satellites

PNS ■ SRIHARIKOTA

India's Polar rocket on Sunday successfully launched Amazonia-1 of Brazil and 18 other satellites from the spaceport here, in the first mission of the year for space agency ISRO.

The Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle PSLV-C51 lifted off at around 10.24 am from the first launch pad of the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SHAR) and first injected into orbit primary payload Amazonia-1 about 17 minutes later.

After a gap of over one-and-a-half hours, the co-passenger satellites, including one from Chennai-based Space Kidz India (SKI), which is engraved with a picture of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, were launched subsequently one after another in the space of ten minutes in a textbook launch.



Five student-built satellites piggyback on PSLV-C51

BENGALURU: Five student-built satellites also rode into space on board ISRO's PSLV-C51 rocket from Sriharikota spaceport on Sunday, giving wings to dreams of young minds. The rocket lifted off with Brazil's Amazonia-1 as primary satellite and 18 co-passenger payloads. These small rideshare payloads included 'Satish Dhawan Satellite' (SDSAT) built by Chennai-based Space Kidz India, a combination of three satellites 'UNITYsat' and technology demonstration satellite 'SindhuNetra'. The three satellites (UNITYsat) were designed and built as a joint development by Jeppiaar Institute of Technology,

TODAY
ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Magha & Shukla Paksha Panchangam
Tithi : Dwititya: 08:35 am, Tritiya: 05:45 am (Next Day)
Nakshatram: Uttara Phalguni: 07:36 am, Hasta: 05:31 am (Next Day)
Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)
Rahukalam: 08:05 am - 09:33 am
Yamagandam: 11:00 am - 12:28 pm
Varjyam: 03:17 pm - 04:44 pm
Gulika: 01:56 pm - 03:23 pm
Good Time: (to start any important work)
Amritkalam: 12:03 am - 01:30 am
Abhijit Muhurtham: 12:05 pm - 12:51 pm

HYDERABAD WEATHER
Forecast: Partly cloudy
Temp: 34/19
Humidity: 31%
Sunrise: 06:34 am
Sunset: 06:22 pm
Current Weather Conditions Updated february 28, 2021 5:00 PM

Indian students discover 18 new asteroids

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The International Astronomical Union (IAU), an organisation which assigns official names and designations to celestial bodies, has recently confirmed the discovery of 18 new asteroids by Indian students as part of a global science programme.

The International Asteroid Discovery Project was conducted by STEM and Space, an organisation working towards the learning of astronomy and space science in India, along with the



International Astronomical Search Collaboration (IASC) as part of a NASA citizen science project.

Over the last two years, 150 students from all around India participated in this two month long campaign to find asteroids, making this the largest asteroid discovery project in India, Mila Mitra, Co-founder and Academic Head of STEM and Space, told PTI.

In the project, the students from India, and across the globe analysed the high quality astronomical data provided by IASC -- an online scientific program for kids to discover Asteroids and Near Earth Objects (NEO).

Monday Mirchi

When the past makes future tense ...

For babudom, the career graph seems to be set amidst the snake and ladder board. They may rise at state and central levels and win accolades even beyond that; yet, a peccadillo or an insignificant lapse during service may surface anytime, even post-retirement, to be a blot on their escutcheon.

The latest victim of this Moksha Patam seems to be former secretary of Union health ministry Preeti Sudan, who is now at the receiving end of 'harsh' treatment by the Andhra government post retirement. The State government has sought an explanation from the retired IAS officer of the AP state cadre for allegedly misusing her position. The government says she violated the provisions of the All India Service (Conduct) Rules, 1968 by converting the Extraordinary Leave (EOL) as Earned Leave/Half Pay Leave by influencing subordinates, without competence and without concurrence of the cadre controlling authority viz. Union Department of Personnel & Training and the AP govt. The 1983-batch IAS officer, while serving as Vice Chairman and MD of the AP State Civil Supplies Corporation Limited, was granted Extraordinary Leave (EOL) for one year (from March 1, 2005 to February 28, 2006) to enable her to go to the US to join her family.

A little bird told us that the present extreme action against her is the consequence of her conspicuous negative responses to the pleas forwarded by the Andhra government during the previous peak of Covid. She chose not to give a nod to the state government's requests on local polls when they were suspended citing the pandemic as the reason. The Jagan government's move, coupled with the threat of disciplinary action against her, has surprised bureaucratic circles, considering her accomplishments. They find the official 'charge' against her amusing, because her venial lapse is more than a decade old.

Among bureaucrats, she has been a star performer so much so that her service as Union health secretary was extended by the Narendra Modi government. She has been hailed as 'one who led India's fight against Covid pandemic' as Union health secretary. That apart, her work has been globally recognized, considering that the World Health Organization had appointed her as one of the 11 panelists of an independent global committee, surprising even the Union government. For, the Union government had recommended former foreign secretary Vijay Gokhale's name for the WHO slot. Another bird told us that New Zealand former prime minister Helen Clarke, WHO panel head, preferred Preeti to Gokhale. WHO's independent panel is expected to submit a report in May this year.

That is well before the State government's two-week notice to Preeti expires. It would be interesting to see what will happen in the months ahead as Covid takes another giant leap in AP.

Caught between devil and deep sea

Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board Managing Director Dana Kishore is a disturbed man these days. When the state government announced, in the run-up to GHMC polls, free water supply to citizens, Kishore never imagined that he would have to fish in troubled waters. Today, there is a huge flood of applications from those seeking to avail of the free water scheme. There are umpteen technical issues, including mandatory Aadhaar seeding, which are stretching the limits of the thin staff at the disposal of the board. Contrary to the water board's expectations, the Electricity Regulatory Commission has not done its part to provide relief at least proportional to the increased power charges. So, Kishore is now caught between the devil and the deep sea; he has to supply 20,000 liters of drinking water free to all citizens of Hyderabad without any cushion for the charges that would increase vastly for the board and, more importantly, upset the revenue position due to which the board is already in the red. With the summer fast approaching, and a spike in water consumption being certain, perhaps the most worried man in the city today is Kishore.

Lady boss again for AP babudom?

It looks like the AP administration may soon be headed by a lady once again. A little birdie from the Velagapudi Secretariat told us that chances are bright for MA & UD secretary Y Srilakshmi to get the most coveted job in the state administration. Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy is learnt to be keen on making Srilakshmi the next Chief Secretary, after Adityanath Das retires. To lay it on thick, the Jagan government has recommended her promotion to Special Chief Secretary. It is a different matter that the Centre is believed to have applied brakes, considering that her role in Jagan's quid pro quo case filed by the CBI is still under cloud. Srilakshmi, who too has spent a few months in jail after being booked by CBI in the Jagan's quid pro quo case, had opted for AP cadre, soon after Jagan came to power. Jagan did his part to bring her to Andhra Pradesh cadre. If everything goes fine for Jagan, who believes in 'no kusti, but dosti' with the Centre; Srilakshmi would easily become the second woman chief secretary. Neelam Sawhney, who retired on December 31 last year, was the first woman Chief Secretary of the state.

Your's truly

India's active virus cases reach 1.64 L

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's total number of active COVID-19 cases has reached 1,64,511, which comprises 1.48 per cent of the country's total infections, the Union Health Ministry said on Sunday highlighting six states that have shown a surge in new cases in a span of 24 hours.

It said 86.37 per cent of the new cases are from Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat. A total of 16,752 new COVID-19 cases were registered in a span of 24 hours. Maharashtra continues to report

Second phase of Covid vax drive...

Continued from page 1 Vaccine soft launch will be done in vaccine centres at Gandhi Hospital, OGH, Koti ENT, Fever hospital, Sarojini Devi Eye hospital, Area Hospital, ESI hospital from Monday. All district hospitals and major teaching hospitals will also have vaccine centers for soft launch. Telangana health authorities aim to conduct Covid-19 vaccination drive at 1,200 healthcare facilities, comprising 1,000 government hospitals and 200 private healthcare facilities. Dr Srinivas further added, "We are targeting about 15 lakh individuals in the State in the second phase of vaccination."

the highest daily new cases at 8,623, followed by Kerala with 3,792 cases while Punjab reported 593 fresh COVID-19 cases.

Eight states are displaying an upward trajectory in the daily new cases, the ministry said.

"The Centre has been engaging with states and union territories exhibiting higher active number of cases and those reporting a spike in the daily new COVID-19 cases," the ministry stated.

Army cancels...

Continued from page 1

Based on a proactive joint operation with local police at Pune, a case of possible leakage of question paper prepared for Common Entrance Examination for Recruitment of Soldiers (General Duty) was reported last night, the official added.

While further investigations are underway, it was decided to cancel the examination to ensure continuous transparency in the recruitment process.

When Stalin's daughter defected from India!

Continued from page 1

He says he has tried to 'illuminate some of the dark corners of political life' in his book, published by Har-Anand Publications.

On a March night in 1967, Celeste was suddenly called to the American embassy.

On reaching there, he came to know that a woman Svetlana Alliluyeva was at the embassy with a pair of suitcases asking for asylum. She had presented a Russian passport and claimed to be

Stalin's daughter. "It didn't take much imagination to suspect the Russians were up to something. A few weeks earlier the Soviets had sent a new number two to their embassy in New Delhi who, according to the agency, specialised in black propaganda," the author says.

"There were regular efforts to recruit young American officers by Soviet intelligence. The Stalin daughter ploy might be another effort to embarrass us," he claims. "Her story was hard to

Discoms' outstanding...

Continued from page 1

According to the latest data on the portal, total outstanding dues in December dipped on a month-on-month basis. In November 2020, the total outstanding dues of discoms stood at Rs 1,40,741 crore.

The overdue amount in December 2020 has decreased from Rs 1,27,539 crore in November 2020.

Power producers give 45 days to discoms to pay bills for electricity supply. After that, outstanding dues become overdue and generators charge penal interest on that in most cases.

To give relief to power generation companies (gencos), the Centre enforced a payment security mechanism from August 1, 2019. Under

this mechanism, discoms are required to open letters of credit for getting power supply. The government had also given some breachers to discoms for paying dues to power generating companies in view of the COVID-19-induced lockdown. The government had also waived penal charges for late payment of dues in the directive.

In May, the government announced Rs 90,000 crore liquidity infusion for discoms under which these utilities would get loans at economical rates from Power Finance Corporation (PFC) and REC Ltd. This was a government initiative to help gencos to remain afloat. Later, the liquidity infusion package was increased to Rs 1.2 lakh crore.

PM calls for...

Continued from page 1

Noting that monsoon will begin in many parts of the country by around May-June, the prime minister asked can there be a 100-day public campaign to clean up all nearby water bodies and prepare those for rain water conservation.

In this regard, the Union Jal Shakti Ministry is also launching "Catch the rain" campaign and its main theme is "catch the rain, where it falls, when it falls", he said.

Uttam asks CM KCR to release...

Continued from page 1

The meeting was attended by Balamuri Venkat (NSUI), Shivaseena Reddy (Youth Congress), Preetham (SC dept), Shaik Abdullah Sohail (Minorities dept), Vinod (NRI cell), Jagan Naik (ST dept), Mettu Sai (Fishermen cell) and other senior leaders. He urged them to activate the cadre at all levels in those six districts to ensure the victory of Congress candidates Ramulu Naik and G. Chinna Reddy.

Addressing the meeting, Uttam Kumar Reddy said

that the unemployment rate had more than doubled ever since TRS came to power in 2014. He said as per the latest figures, as many as 19,43,783 qualified educated youth had registered themselves with the Telangana State Public Service Commission (TSPSC) alone. Further, there were over 10 lakh skilled/unskilled youth, who were unemployed across the Telangana State, he said. This does not include lakhs of people, who lost their jobs during the lockdown period, he said.

Tikait coming...

Continued from page 1

"Farmers' meetings will be held in Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana, while two meetings will also be held in Uttar Pradesh in March," BKKU media in-charge Dharmendra Malik said.

Two meetings will be held in Rajasthan and three in Madhya Pradesh. The last three meetings will be held on March 20, 21 and 22 in Karnataka, Malik said.

TRS Dalit MLAs...

Continued from page 1

It would be wrong for the Dalits if they still wanted to sew sandals, they said.

TRS Dalit MLAs - Balka Suman, Guvvala Balaraju, MS Prabhakar Rao, Rasamai Balakishan, Gadari Kishor Kumar, Kale Yadaiah, Aroori Ramesh, Kranthi Kiran, Chirumarthi Lingaiah, Rajeshwar Rao, Sunke Ravi Shankar, and Durgam Chinniah - addressed this open letter to Bandi Sanjay on Sunday. They said in their let-

ter that Dr BR Ambedkar provided rights and opportunities in education through constitution. Dalits were competing with all, with the opportunities provided by Ambedkar, they said. However, Bandi Sanjay was not in a position to digest the fact that Dalits were developing in all sectors, they said. It would be better for Bandi Sanjay to recognize the fact and come out of his orthodox ideology or else people would sting both Bandi Sanjay and BJP, they said.

Prime varieties of Indian mangoes to reach Malaysia, Argentina for 1st time

DR. H.C UPADHYAY ■ HYDERABAD

Amidst rapidly changing geo-political equations where US diplomacy is seemingly scoring higher over other countries, particularly China and Russia, dollar gained further strength during the week ended Saturday. Consequently, New York gold declined and closed at US \$ 1734.60 (per ounce) while silver followed the suit and closed at \$ 26.70 (per ounce). Platinum and palladium too declined and closed at \$ 1,181 (per ounce) and \$ 2,229 (per ounce) respectively. Other economic parameters remained moderate. Brent closed at US \$ 64.42 (per barrel) while Crude

oil was quoted at Rs.4, 603 (per barrel). While Gold MCX stood at Rs.45, 767 (per 10 grams), MCX Silver closed at Rs.67,475 (per kg), Copper MCX closed at Rs.703.50 (per kg). Sensex and Nifty 50 closed at 49099.99 and 14529.15 points. Leading foreign currencies' exchange rates were, US \$: Rs.73.60, British Pound: Rs.102.48, Euro: Rs.88.85, Singapore \$: Rs.55.24, Swiss Franc: Rs.81.02, Australian \$: Rs.56.71, Saudi Riyal: Rs.19.62, New Zealand Dollar: Rs.53.24, Kuwaiti Dinar: Rs.243.03, Omani Rial: Rs.191.10 and UAE Dirham: Rs.20.04, Japanese Yen: Rs.0.69, Hong Kong Dollar: Rs.9.49. In local markets, standard

gold (24 carats) depreciated by Rs.600 and closed at Rs.46, 580 (per 10 gms). Ornamental gold too, followed the suit and was quoted in the range of Rs.42, 600 - Rs 42,700 on the closing day. Silver (0.999) declined by Rs.1300 and closed at Rs.72,500 (per kg).

WEEKLY MARKET REVIEW

COMMODITIES
The sentiment in principal wholesale commodity markets in twin cities remained moderate this week also. Rythu Bazaars and the various commodity markets located in Begum Bazaar,

Kishanganj, Mukthiyarjunj, Risala Abdullah, Mir Alam Mandi, Dilsukhnagar, Kukatpally, Bowenpally, General Bazaar continued to record moderate trading. During the week, common pulses such as tuar dal, masoor dal, moong dal and urad dal and commodities like chillies and garlic remained unchanged at their respective last week's closing levels, while staple food-grains and common edible oils recorded a marginal increase.

Common vegetables such as cabbage, cauliflower, ribbed guard, snake guard, lady fingers, cucumber, potatoes, onions, tomatoes and French beans along with other leafy vegetables further flared up still in the range of 10 per cent to 18

percent. The king of fruits, mango has already made its early entry in the market. The export business has been buzzing with higher demand, particularly for Alphonso variety of mangoes. India exports every year 50,000 tons of Alphonso and Keser varieties to Australia, USA, Europe, New Zealand, South Korea and Middle-East countries. This year Malaysia and Argentina will be the new markets for prime varieties of mangoes. The NECC wholesale egg-price in Hyderabad appreciated by Rs.10 and closed at Rs.405 (per 100). The highest price of Rs.465 was recorded at Surat and Pune, while Barwala recorded the lowest of Rs.380.

Indian students...

Continued from page 1

NEOs are rocky objects in an orbit between Mars and Jupiter, which pose a challenge to Earth as they may get perturbed out of their orbit and pose a threat of impact. According to Mitra, NASA has initiated programs like IASC to track such asteroids regularly, also open to citizen scientists and students to enable the discovery and tracking of more asteroids. She explained that in the project the students use advanced software analysis, "spending nearly two-three hours each day" to look for asteroids and report their findings.

Of the 372 preliminary asteroids flagged by the students, 18 were finally declared to be "provisional" or confirmed discoveries of asteroids, Mitra noted.

PSLV-C51 launches Brazil's...

Continued from page 1

SKI's Satish Dhawan Satellite (SD-SAT) also carried Bhagavad Gita in a Secured Digital card format.

According to SKI, the picture of Modi has been engraved on the top panel of the spacecraft to show solidarity and gratitude for his AtmaNirbhar initiative and space sector privatisation.

A beaming Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairman K Sivan announced the mission was successful and all 19 satellites were launched in precise orbits. "Today is a very great day for the entire ISRO team and the PSLV-C51 is a special mission for India. Let me congratulate and compliment the team ISRO for achieving the precise injection of AMAZONIA-1 and 18 other satellites," he said. PSLV-C51 is the first dedicated commercial mission of NewSpace India Limited (NSIL), ISRO's commercial arm, and the launch was watched among others by Brazilian govern-

Five student-built...

Continued from page 1

Sriperumpudur (JITSat), G. H. Raisoni College of Engineering, Nagpur (GHRCEsat) and Sri Shakti Institute of Engineering and Technology, Coimbatore (Sri Shakti Sat). "UNITYsat is intended for providing Radio relay services", an official of Bengaluru-headquartered ISRO said. SDSAT is a nano satellite intended to study the radiation levels/space weather and demonstrate long range communication technologies. SindhuNetra was developed by students of Bengaluru-based PES University, which was awarded the Rs 2.2 crore contract by the Research Centre Imarat, part of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). "This project by DRDO will help in identifying suspicious ships through satellite imaging", an official said.

ment officials at the mission control centre here, over 100 kms from Chennai.

At last, SC takes cudgel against vexatious litigation

HC UPADHYAY ■ HYDERABAD

Of late, there has been a significant spurt in frivolous and vexatious litigations, mostly filed by the politically motivated parties and others intending to avenge a perceived wrong against their opponents. Though happily most of such frivolous or vexatious litigations end up in dismissal or withdrawal, by the time they reach their pinnacle they already have left their adverse impact on the victims of such litigations besides having wasted precious time of the court.

In the Civil Procedure Code (C.P.C), the law has granted inherent power to the court to see that frivolous or vexatious litigations are not allowed under Order VII Rule 11. This particular rule states that the plaintiff 'shall be rejected' if it does not disclose a cause of action, the claim is undervalued and plaintiff does not correct the valuation within a time fixed by the

court, the plaintiff is written on paper insufficiently stamped, the suit is barred by any law, copies of the suit papers not filed in duplicate and the plaintiff fails to comply with the provisions of Rule 9 which deals with serving of copies on defendants.

In a recent judgment, a division bench of Justice Indira Banerjee and Justice Hemant Gupta had observed that the provisions of Order VII Rule 11 were not exhaustive and the Court had the inherent power to see that frivolous or vexatious litigations were not allowed to consume the time of the Court. "In any case, an application under Order VII Rule 11 of the C.P.C for rejection of the plaintiff requires a meaningful reading of the plaint as a whole," the Court held and added, "...clever drafting creating illusions of cause of action are not per-

mitted in law and a clear right to sue should be shown in the plaint".

Abuse of law to wreck the revenge - political, social, family, business or for any other reasons - has been rampant. Unfortunately, the Courts in our country are 'excessively liberal' in this regard. Most of them are allowing such frivolous and vexatious litigations in the name of right to seek 'justice' for the self-proclaimed victims. Such approach of Courts undoubtedly blocks the way for 'genuine' litigations and they have to take backseat and wait for years to get the justice.

The condemnation of the apex court comes at a time when it is most expected. However, the apex court would do better by not stopping at this point but also setting an example to the lower judiciary by way of imposing

exemplary costs or fine on the litigants filing frivolous and vexatious litigations. This measure will go a long way in inculcating judicial discipline and fear in the minds of cunning litigants.

Uber drivers are workers and not contractors

In a judgment of far reaching consequences which would benefit thousands of cab drivers working under the aggregator company Uber, the United Kingdom Supreme Court has held that the Uber drivers are 'workers' for the purposes of employment law, which grants them rights to be paid at least the minimum wage and other benefits such as annual paid leave etc. The verdict was delivered by the seven Judges bench of the apex court unanimously. The company had contended that the drivers working with it were independent contractors. This argument of the company was reject-

ed unanimously by the Court.

SC slams arbitration court

A division bench of Madras High Court comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthil Kumar Ram Murthy has observed that 'the exercise undertaken to rewrite the arbitration award by ascribing reasons in support of claims allowed and quantum awarded is not a business of the arbitration court' while dealing with a case under Section 34 of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996.

No strong-arm tactics, says Kerala HC

A single bench of Justice Raja Vijayaraghavan V of Kerala high court while upholding the right of workers to resort to strike or dharna to effectively bargain with the management and to ensure that unfair labour practices are avoided, held that under the guise of a strike, the union leaders as

well as the striking workers cannot indulge in strong arm tactics and violence to intimidate and force the management to succumb to their demands.

Madras HC fastens responsibility on hospital sans medical negligence

In a remarkable judgement the madras high court has directed the state of Tamil Nadu to provide a compensation of Rs. 5, 00,000/- to the petitioner whose daughter died as a result of complications that arose after administration of anaesthesia in government hospital.

Justice G.R Swami Nathan in his judgement in Tamil Selvi Vs The State Of Tamil Nadu held that, "when a patient is admitted to a hospital and suffers any injury or death, which is not anticipated to occur in the normal course of event, even in the absence of medical negligence, the government is obliged to disburse ex-gratia to the effected party."

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Citizens bid early adieu to winter

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

If the rising temperature is any indication, then Hyderabad is set to bid goodbye to winter this week. After a steep drop in maximum temperature, following a few spells of rain last week, it is back to 34 degree Celsius and is only set to increase as per the India Meteorological Department (IMD), Hyderabad, forecast.

At present, many parts of the city are experiencing dry and hot weather conditions. Figures from the Telangana State Development Planning Society show areas such as Gachibowli, Quthbullapur, Mailarddevally, Hafeezpet and Nagole, among others, are experiencing maximum temperature of 34 degree Celsius. Even night temperatures have gone up to between 19 degree Celsius and 20 degree Celsius, deviating from the normal average of 15.9 degree Celsius for winter.

On Thursday, the maximum day temperature recorded was



34.4 degrees Celsius, while Friday recorded the maximum temperature of 36.0 degrees Celsius. On Sunday, several parts of the city witnessed temperatures going over 36 degree Celsius with Nampally, Trimulgherry and Ameerpet recording 36.5 degrees, followed by Uppal, Khairatabad

and Saidabad (36.4 degrees). However, According to IMD, there is a possibility of temperatures going above 38 degree Celsius in the next one week and weather conditions would mostly be dry and humid. Apart from days, even nights are likely to get warmer with the temperatures going up.

With a difference of eight degrees over the last one week, summer seems to be coming early. According to the IMD, the 36 degree temperature recorded on Friday is a difference of 2 degree Celsius from the normal. Around the same time last year, that is in the last week of February 2020, the

maximum temperature recorded was 35 degree Celsius. The IMD also forecasts a maximum temperature of around 35 degree Celsius over the next one week, with the minimum temperatures also rising from high tens to low twenties.

As the day temperatures are on the rise in the GHMC limits, the power consumption is on the rise in the city. The use of power increased to 49 million units per day on Friday, registering an increase from 45-46 million units recorded four or five days ago.

The electricity department officials predict that the daily consumption of power is likely to increase to 60 million units per day in March.

Telangana State Southern Power Distribution Company Limited operations director Srinivas Reddy said that the company made all arrangements to meet the daily power demand of 70 million units, during the peak of the summer in May.

TS ramps up Covid testing

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In view of the rising number of Covid-19 cases and the Centre sounding an alert, the Telangana health authorities have ramped up testing across the state.

The authorities are now conducting 40,000 tests per day after 50 per cent drop since the roll out of the Covid vaccination drive on January 16.

The drop in the number of tests had come under flak from experts, who had cautioned against lowering the guard.

With the Union Health Ministry advising all the states to be on alert in the wake of the spike in coronavirus infections in some states over the last few days, the Telangana health department has restored the number of tests to the pre-vaccination level.

During the last 24 hours ending 8 pm on Saturday, 40,985 tests were conducted in the state. Of this 35,906 samples were tested in government laboratories.



According to the Director of Public Health and Family Welfare, cumulative number of tests have crossed the 87 lakh mark.

Samples tested per million population climbed to 2,33,762. The daily testing target for the state is 5,600 as per the WHO benchmark of 140 tests per million per day.

Meanwhile, Telangana reported 176 new Covid cases, pushing the tally to 2,98,807.

Greater Hyderabad saw maximum of 27 cases followed by Rangareddy and

Medchal Malkajgiri at 14 each. Sangareddy saw 11 new cases (12). Five districts reported no cases while in the remaining 24 districts the count was in single digit.

One more person succumbed to the virus during the last 24 hours, taking the toll to 1,634.

The fatality rate remained 0.54 per cent against the national average of 1.4 per cent. While 44.96 per cent of the deaths occurred due to Covid, 55.04 per cent had comorbidities.

CITY LIGHTS



Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi offers 'bonam' at Durga temple

As part of local bonalu festivities, Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi offered bonam at Kanaka Durga temple in Haridas Nagar here on Sunday. The Mayor participated in the celebrations in the temple along with other women and was later felicitated by TRS Karwan division leaders. She appealed public to vote for TRS MLC candidate Vani Devi for Hyderabad-Rangareddy-Mahabubnagar graduates' constituency election.

Over 600 enthusiasts from Hyd take part in Club Run

After a break of almost a year due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the amateur running season in Hyderabad started on Sunday with Hyderabad Runners holding its annual Club Run 2021 at Gaudium Sportopia, which attracted close to 600 enthusiasts from the city. Apart from the runners who physically took-part in the half marathon (21 km), about 200 runners participated in a virtual 10K and another 100 participated in a virtual 5K run. The annual club run, which was inaugurated by Secretary Agriculture B Janardhan Reddy along with Chairman of Gaudium Group Nityananda Reddy and founder and director of The Gaudium Group Kirithi Reddy, over the years has grown in its popularity and is a qualification event for health enthusiasts who aspire to take part in the Hyderabad Marathon. With a choice of distance suited to every class of runner, the Club Run was conducted following all Covid protocols and supported by volunteers from Hyderabad Runners and Gaudium Group, a press release said.

Thalassemic boy undergoes marrow transplant at KIMS

The surgeons at Krishna Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS) have saved the life of a five-year-old boy from Hyderabad, who was suffering from thalassemia by taking-up bone marrow transplantation. The youngster was suffering from a severe form of thalassemia and the hospital transfused 77 units of blood as part of blood transfusion. He also was suffering from abdomen distention with pain and severe constipation. The child's liver, heart, pancreas and other vital organs were getting impacted due to iron deposition, and further delay could have led to liver or heart failure, doctors said. "We could not get a 100 per cent matched donor. However, the boy's father was a 50 per cent match. Due to deteriorating medical condition, we conducted the bone marrow transplantation and after almost three months of observation, the boy is now completely healthy," said hospital's head Dr. Narender Kumar Thota. "Bone marrow transplantation is the only treatment for these types of problems. Timely detection and proper treatment will enable such patients to lead a normal and quality life," he added.

Trainee civil servants turn chefs, salespersons, bizmen for a day

The 121 trainee Civil Servants, belonging to 22 States and 9 Services, who are attending Special Foundation Course at Dr MCR HRD Institute, rolled out FETE-The Utsav, a day-long food-cum-recreation extravaganza, and thereby turned the Ramadasu Mandapam at the Institute into a sprawling kitchen. For a change, the academic ambience at the Institute gave way to fun and frolic. It was a pleasant surprise to see the trainee Civil Servants dishing out mouth-watering delicacies, selling them as hard-core salespersons, generating profits, and donating them to an NGO, for a socially-relevant cause. Even though the trainee Civil Servants are not regular chefs, they believed in their abilities, put heart and soul in their efforts, and thereby churned out lip-smacking dishes. Electrifying background music and hit Bollywood numbers brought out the true essence of the grand food and games festival. Right from the word go, the trainee Civil Servants sported a happy-go-lucky attitude apart from their colourful and ethnic wear.

CM KCR praises ISRO for launch of PSLV-C51

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao on Sunday congratulated the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) for successful launch of PSLV-C51. The Chief Minister said that with the launch of PSLV-C51, the first dedicated commercial satellite, ISRO has proved to be one of the world's leading space research organisations, KCR said.

He congratulated the scientists, engineers, other technical staff and employees of the ISRO for achieving success.

He also said that many countries have chosen ISRO for their technical needs and it has once again brought reputation to our country. India's Polar rocket on Sunday successfully launched Amazonia-1 of Brazil and 18 other satellites from the spaceport in Sriharikota, in the first mission of the year for space agency ISRO.



GREEN DRIVE

Continuing its efforts at increasing green cover in and around the city, HMDA has taken up avenue and valley plantations on the ORR. Sharing details through his twitter handle, MA&UD Principal Secretary, Arvind Kumar said that greening of ORR at Narsingi chainage is happening with avenue and valley plantations. The exercise has been on for more than five years, with lakhs of saplings being planted on 13 stretches of ORR. Maintenance and constant monitoring is being done by the HMDA's Urban Forestry wing. Meanwhile, efforts are on to revive and restore step wells in and around the city.

'Provide scheme in lieu of dropped ITIR...

Continued from Page 1

The Telangana government has been aggressively promoting emerging technologies like AI, Data Analytics, IOT, cyber security, Digital entertainment technologies (Animation, Gaming, VFX), Blockchain, he said.

The ongoing pandemic has had a severe impact on several sectors across the globe, but the technology industry in Hyderabad has faced minimum disruption in conducting its activities. This could be achieved by a proactive partnership between the state government and the industry, Rama Rao said. He said that on behalf of the Telangana government, numerous appeals were made during the past six years to sanction funds for the ITIR in Hyderabad. Unfortunately there was no response whatsoever from the Union government on this important initiative, Rama Rao said.

Telangana's IT exports...

Continued from Page 1

KTR said despite numerous personal requests to the Prime Minister and Union IT Minister, the ITIR has been scrapped for reasons unknown. He said the Telangana government had submitted DPRs and IT Cluster details but unfortunately neither ITIR has been taken forward nor has there been an alternate progressive policy. KTR was reacting to reports that IT from Telangana is expected to grow over 7 per cent in 2020-21. According to Nasscom, the national growth rate during the same period is estimated to be just 1.9 per cent. KTR recalled that in 2013-14, the IT exports from then undivided AP were only Rs.57,258 crore.

IT Minister appeals to BCCI to include Hyd as IPL venue

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana's Minister for Industry and Information Technology, KT Rama Rao, on Sunday appealed to the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and the Indian Premier League (IPL) office-bearers to include Hyderabad as one of the venues for the upcoming IPL season.

"Our effective Covid containment measures are reflected in our low number of cases among all metro cities in India and we assure you of all support from the government," the minister tweeted.

KTR's appeal comes in the wake of reports that Hyderabad is not in the list of cities shortlisted by the BCCI for the 14th edition of IPL. The BCCI has reportedly decided to limit IPL 2021 to only six cities. Hyderabad, the host city of Sunrisers Hyderabad, does not figure in the list. The BCCI has shortlisted Chennai, Kolkata, Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Delhi and Mumbai



to conduct IPL matches. The choice of Mum-bai was surprising as there has been a surge in Covid cases in Maharashtra during the last few days. Mumbai was added to the list on Saturday evening after the Maharashtra government gave permission to conduct the matches in the city without fans.

The reasons for dropping Hyderabad were not clear but there is a buzz in cricketing circles here that the infighting in Hyderabad Cricket Association (HCA) may have led to the BCCI ignoring the city.

HCA president and former India captain Mohammed Azharuddin was reportedly in Ahmedabad for the third India-England Test where the decision was taken regarding the IPL venues.

Six members of the HCA Apex Council last week raised a banner of revolt against Azharuddin by holding a meeting and deciding to organise the annual general meeting (AGM) on March 28. Azharuddin has termed the meeting illegal, saying that it had no approval.

3 arrested for misbehaving with a woman

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Three persons who had detained and assaulted a man for allegedly misbehaving with a woman were taken into custody by the Kushaiguda police on Sunday.

According to the police, the three persons who are residents of Cherlapally had allegedly caught one youngster who had allegedly inappropriately behaved with their woman relative. After taking the youngster to a room, the trio tied his legs and beat him using a stick.

Some person had shot the video of the man being thrashed and it soon got leaked on social media platforms. The police later identified the youngster and based on his complaint, a case was booked against the husband of the woman, his brother and another person.

A case was also filed against the youngster for allegedly misbehaving with the woman.

Modi praises Hyderabad farmer in 'Mann Ki Baat'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his radio talk 'Mann Ki Baat' on 28 February spoke about Padma Shri Awardee Chintala Venkat Reddy, a farmer from Hyderabad.

The Prime Minister said when we talk of science then many a time people restrict it to Physics-Chemistry or labs, but the spread of science is much more than that.

The power of science has made several contributions to the Atmanirbhar Bharat campaign. "We have to move science forward with the mantra of 'Lab to Land'," he added.

"Chintala Venkat Reddy ji from Hyderabad is an example. A doctor friend of Reddy ji once told him about the diseases caused by deficiency of



Vitamin D and the dangers thereof. Reddy ji is a farmer. He thought about what he

could do about solving this problem. He developed varieties of wheat and rice that

contained Vitamin D. This month he received a patent from the World Intellectual

Property Organization, Geneva. Our government is fortunate that Venkat Reddy was also honoured with the Padmashree last year," said the PM.

Venkat Reddy, who received the Padma Shri in February 2020 for his innovations in farming, won the patent for Vitamin D-enriched rice and wheat varieties from the World Intellectual Property Organisation on 11 February 2021.

The 70-year-old farmer who lives in Alwal, Secunderabad, started to work on a technique that would enrich rice and wheat with Vitamin D naturally. Also, his innovative technique of using the subsoil as a pest repellent has helped fellow farmers avert locust attacks in their fields.

'Letter war' heats up MLC poll campaign

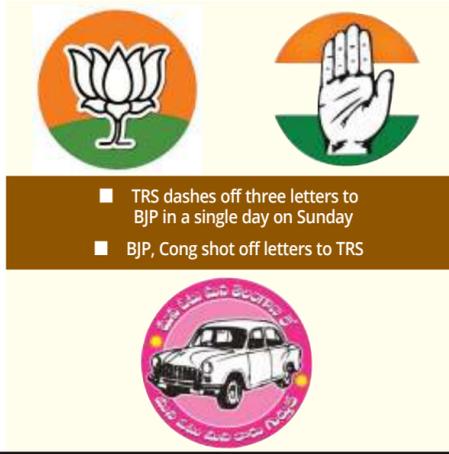
K VENKATESHWARLU
HYDERABAD

Politicians always wanted to grab the attention of voters during the elections in novel ways. If one party leader is resorting to a unique idea, the other, too, will follow suit feeling that he would lag. Now, the leaders belonging to various parties, which are contesting the Graduate MLC polls, are dashing off letters to their opponent party leaders. It may be recalled that Congress leaders are experts in addressing the letters to the government. However, the TRS and BJP leaders, too, used this technique of addressing letters to the rival party leaders.

The MLC elections had forced even the ruling TRS party to shoot off letters to its main rival BJP besides making tweets on Twitter. TRS leaders addressed three letters to the BJP, the BJP leader addressed a letter to TRS leaders and the Congress leader addressed a letter to the Chief Minister. Overall, five letters have been exchanged among the main parties on Sunday.

Intensifying the campaign heat further, the main political parties' leaders had used the weapon of addressing the letters to their rival party leaders. In general, Congress leaders used to address the letters to the State and Central governments on various issues. Even BJP leaders, particularly, BJP BC Morcha chief K Laxman, used to address letters to the government.

In a surprise twist, the ruling TRS and BJP leaders dashed off letters to each other



on Sunday. TRS Dalit MLAs addressed an open letter to Telangana BJP chief Bandi Sanjay Kumar finding fault with him for stating 'Dalits not only sew sandals, but also sting, on Saturday.

Dalit MLAs alleged that Bandi Sanjay once again proved through his remarks that the policies of the BJP are a reflection of orthodox ideas, untouchability and oppression of Dalits. With his comment, it is becoming clear that Sanjay wants the status quo of Dalits to remain the same even in this modern age.

Interestingly, the TRS released another letter addressed by its Working President and Minister for IT KT Rama Rao to Union Minister of Law & Justice, Communications and IT Ravi Shankar Prasad.

Government Whip Balka Suman shot a letter to BJP MLC candidate for Hyderabad-Rangareddy-Mahabubnagar graduate MLC constituency N Ramchander Rao countering his letter to IT Minister KT Rama Rao. Earlier, in his letter, Ramchander Rao challenged KTR to attend an open debate on 'KTR announcement of Employment and Education Issues' on March 1 at Arts College in Osmania University.

On the other hand, TPCC working president and Malkajgiri MP A Revanth Reddy addressed an open letter to Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao demanding that the latter set up procurement centers to procure groundnuts by providing supporting price to it.



Narayana finds fault with Vani Devi for likening KCR to PV

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

CPI national secretary Narayana found fault with the TRS nominee for the Hyderabad-Rangareddy-Mahabubnagar districts graduates' MLC polls Vani Devi for likening Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao to her father.

Speaking to a section of the media here on Sunday, he said that there was a huge difference between PV Narasimha Rao and K Chandrasekhar Rao.

Had PV been alive, he would have committed suicide on hearing Vani Devi comparing KCR to him. The TRS hired party candidate in the form of PV's daughter, he said belittling the TRS.

He accused KCR of cheating the public by not celebrating the PV's centenary celebrations. As the people would not vote for the TRS, KCR has been seeking votes in the name of PV Narasimha Rao. KCR is firing the gun on Congress by placing it on the shoulder of PV Narasimha Rao.

Narayana predicted that left parties supported candidates Vijaya Saradhi and Prof Nageshwar were sure to be elected to the Legislative Council.

Boy wins hearts of BJP bigwigs

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A boy, who created a flutter at a meeting of the BJP in Banswada recently, has become the cynosure of all eyes upon his arrival at the BJP state office here on Sunday. Telangana BJP state unit chief Bandi Sanjay invited the boy to his office and gave new clothes and had lunch with him.

Sanjay got emotional while learning about the boy's plight. He promised the boy that the BJP will allot the first double bedroom house to the boy's family immediately after coming to power.

He said that the party will pay the rent of the boy's house in Banswada and added that BJP MP Arvind from Nizamabad will take responsibility for Narasimha's education. He pointed out that Narasimha's plight is the best example to say as to how Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao was deceiving the people.

It may be recalled that a video of Narasimha taking the government to task for not allotting the double bedroom house to his family at a meeting addressed by Bandi Sanjay and Dharmapuri Arvind in Banswada recently went viral on social media.

On the other hand, Bandi Sanjay questioned the Chief Minister to tell the reason for his silence on corporate educational institutions harassment. He warned corporate colleges stating that the BJP will not keep mum if they harass the parents of the students in the name of fees. He asked the corporate colleges to stop collecting fees for the entire year for three months classes. He said that the students are not in a position to concentrate on their studies with the harassment regarding fees.

He warned the corporate colleges saying that the BJYM



BJP state unit chief Bandi Sanjay having lunch with Narsimha, a boy from Banswada in Nizamabad district, at the party office in Hyderabad on Sunday



BJP state unit chief Bandi Sanjay taking a selfie with the boy

will take up a direct action plan if the corporate colleges did not stop harassing the students' parents. He asked the Yuva Morcha leaders to stand by the parents of the students, who were being subjected to harassment from the corporate colleges.

He alleged that the corporate colleges are harassing the parents besides not paying salaries to teachers, lecturers and other staff working with their colleges.

He alleged that the TRS leaders are extending their support to corporate colleges by taking donations from the

colleges. Moreover, several TRS leaders have shares in corporate colleges, he said. What is the reason behind the silence of the TRS leaders, who warned the same corporate colleges during the Telangana movement, he questioned.

He said that the corporate colleges didn't respond though he asked the colleges to conduct meetings with their staff on salaries. He also demanded that the government give Rs 78,000 unemployment allowance to unemployed youth. He said that BJYM is ready to render justice to the parents and lecturers.



Revanth Reddy, Bhatti to be campaigners for MLC polls

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Congress has appointed campaigners and coordinators for the Graduate MLC elections for two constituencies - Hyderabad-Rangareddy-Mahabubnagar and Nalgonda-Khammam-Warangal - slated for March 14.

TPCC chief N Uttam Kumar Reddy has appointed TPCC working president and Malkajgiri MP A Revanth Reddy as the campaigner of the Hyderabad-Mahabubnagar-Rangareddy constituency from which G Chinnna Reddy is contesting as the party candidate. Uttam also appointed AICC secretary SA Sampath Kumar as the coordinator for the same constituency.

While Uttam appointed CLP leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka as the campaigner of the Nalgonda-Khammam-Warangal constituency and Congress Adivasi Committee national vice-chairman Bellaiah Naik as the coordinator for this constituency from which Ramulu Naik is contesting the election as the Congress candidate.

2nd phase vaccination in Mulugu

PNS ■ MULUGU

The second phase of the Covid vaccine will be administered from Monday, disclosed Collector Krishna Aditya. The vaccine will be administered to those in the age group of 45 to 59 and 60. Covaxin vaccines were being kept ready for inoculation as per the guidelines issued by the ICMR norms, he said.

TEA demands parties to clarify their stand on employees' problems

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Employees Association (TEA) has demanded all political parties on Sunday to clear their stand on the problems of the employees, teachers and pensioners in the context of graduate MLC elections. The TEA demanded that the government pay 1.45 per cent PRC fitment from July 2018 till date. The TEA also demanded

that the government abolish the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS) immediately as the issue comes under the state. Speaking to the media after its meeting on Sunday, the TEA representatives also demanded that the government bring the Telangana employees working in Andhra Pradesh to Telangana state unconditionally. They also demanded that the government approve the unified ser-

vices to teachers and implement them. They also demanded that the government give promotions and take up transfers of teachers and give equal salary to equal work to contract and outsourcing employees following the Supreme Court's directions.

The TEA also demanded that the government give 15 per cent quantum pension to the retired employees, who crossed 70 years.

'TRS trying to weaken advocates' murder case'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana BJP state unit chief Bandi Sanjay Kumar alleged that the TRS government is trying to weaken the advocate couple Gattu Vamana Rao and PV Nagamani murder case, who were hacked to death in broad daylight recently. He asked the BJP Legal Cell to be alert in this regard as the ruling party is trying to sidetrack the murder case.

Addressing the BJP Legal Cell meeting held at the State BJP office here on Sunday, Bandi Sanjay alleged that the government is trying to protect the TRS big leaders, who are behind the murder, while arresting a few TRS activists.

He said that the people could understand the reason behind Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao and TRS working president KT Rama Rao not responding to the murder.

State BJP general secretary Dugyala Pradeep Kumar, secretary Prakash Reddy, senior advocates Antony Reddy, Rama Rao, Bhaskar Reddy, Pradeep, Vijay Kumar, Karuna Sagar and others were present at the meeting.



Congress leaders stage a protest against the government in Medak on Sunday for neglecting completion of railway works in the district

RAILWAY PROJECTS

CM meting out step-motherly treatment towards Medak

PNS ■ MEDAK

Medak DCC president Kanthareddy Tirupati Reddy on Sunday expressed concern over the State and Central governments neglecting railway projects in the region.

Taking part in a Chalo Medak Railway Station protest here on Sunday, he said that the Medak-Akkannapet railway works were sanctioned in 2013 at a cost of Rs 118 crore, but the progress achieved so far was not up to the mark as the

contractor has executed the works with low quality. The Manoharabad, Gajwel, Siddipet railway works, started in 2015, are through and progressed to conduct a trial run, he said charging Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao with extending step-motherly treatment to Medak district.

The CM is not showing the same interest to railway projects of Medak district he had shown to the railway projects in Siddipet district.

He demanded that CM

give the state share of Rs 80 crore to execute the railway project works.

Medak MLA Padma Devender Reddy and MP K Prabhakar Reddy are not paying proper attention to develop railway project works.

PCC general secretary Nagesh Mudiraj spoke. PCC secretary Sommannagari Lakshmi, DCC official spokesperson Mamilla Anjaneyulu and others took part in the protest programme.

GRADUATE MLC POLLS

Election observer inspects polling stations

PNS ■ MEDCHAL

Elaborate arrangements are being made for the smooth conduct of Mahabubnagar, Rangareddy, Hyderabad Graduate MLC elections, said election observer Harpreet Singh.

He paid a visit to several polling stations in the Medchal-Malkajgiri district and inspected the election arrangements at Bhavan's Ramakrishna Vidyalaya, Abdul Kalam Auditorium and Dronacharya Sports Complex located in Sainikpuri.

Later, along with the election observer, Medchal-Malkajgiri District Collector Shweta Mohanty, conducted a training programme at



Election observer Harpreet Singh inspects election arrangements in Medchal-Malkajgiri district on Sunday

Ramakrishna Vidyalaya for the presiding and assistant presiding officers participating in the MLC election

duties.

He explained that it was the responsibility of presiding and assistant presiding offi-

cers as well as the staff to ensure to follow the government guidelines during the elections to clear them and perform their duties properly during polling.

Medical-Malkajgiri District Collector said that Covid protocols should be strictly followed at the polling stations and wheelchairs should be made available for the physically challenged.

The Collector further stated that micro-observers and route officers have been appointed and arrangements were made for webcasting at every polling station. She directed the officers to deploy special police force and teams to conduct the MLC elections in a peaceful atmosphere.

All set for Covid vaccination in Nagar Kurnool from today

PNS ■ NAGAR KURNOOL

The vaccination drive for the prevention of Corona epidemic is in full swing and vaccine will be distributed to those above 60 years from March 1 in Nagar Kurnool district, disclosed District Collector L. Sharman.

He said the vaccine would be given to those over 45 years also, who have chronic diseases. He said the vaccine would be given to frontline warriors at the Nagar Kurnool District Government Hospital from tomorrow, along with the second phase vaccination.

If the beneficiaries cannot register online for vaccination, they should visit the



Covid Vaccination Centre and can get vaccinated after showing Aadhaar card or voter identity or driving licence or doctor's certificate stating that they are not suffering from any illness

However, depending on the

day's rush, one would be allotted time for vaccination. However, the Collector suggested that it is better to book a slot.

According to the Central government guidelines, it is advisable to register for the slot through the Covid software, or healthcare app and go for vaccination on the same day.

"Those who go with an identity card are more likely to have problems getting vaccinated on the same day, so everyone should book a slot and go on their scheduled date, and the online booked ID must be taken to the hospital," he said. Everyone should take the Corona vaccine without fail, he said.

Trial run at Ramagundam fertilizer plant



Jubilant officials display urea produced during the trial at Ramagundam Fertilizer Factory on Sunday

PNS ■ RAMAGUNDAM

The trial run at the Ramagundam fertilizer plant was successfully completed here on Sunday. Authorities concerned are making arrangements and seeking the appointment of Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the opening of the factory in March.

The factory, which was closed two decades ago, was being revived by the Central and State governments at a cost of Rs 6,160 crore. CEO of Ramagundam Fertilizers and Chemicals Limited (RFCL) Nirlep Singh Rai was present during the trial run. Urea would be supplied to all the southern states from this factory and commercial production would begin in March, Rai disclosed.



The trial has begun to inspect the functioning of the plant, he said. The aim is to produce 13 lakh tonnes of urea while 300 lakh tonnes urea is being used by farmers only 240 lakh tonnes were being manufactured, he pointed out. The remaining 60 lakh tonnes was imported from abroad. Hence, the Centre has decided to revive five defunct urea plants across the country and first among them is the Ramagundam plant in Telangana, he said.



Atmanirbhar Bharat a national spirit: Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday underlined that Atmanirbhar Bharat is not just a government policy but also a national spirit, and said the mantra of self-reliant India is reaching villages of the country. In his monthly Mann Ki Baat radio programme, Modi also called for a 100-day campaign to clean up all water bodies and prepare them for rain water harvesting before monsoon starts. Stressing the importance of collective responsibility towards water conservation, he said the Union Jal Shakti Ministry will soon initiate a "Catch the rain" campaign with its main theme being "catch the rain, where it falls, when it falls". Conveying greetings on the National Science Day, Modi pointed out that this day is dedicated to the discovery of Raman Effect by the great sci-

entist of India, Dr C V Raman. Asserting that there is a lot of contribution of the power of science in the Atmanirbhar Bharat campaign, Modi said there is a need to make science more popular and that science cannot be limited to physics-chemistry and labs. He called for expanding science with a mantra of 'lab to land'. Modi said water has been crucial for the development of humankind for centuries and people should understand their collective responsibility towards its conservation. He said that in most parts of India, rainfall begins in May-June and asked "can we right away start a 100-day campaign for the sake of cleaning up water sources around us and conserving rainwater". With this very thought in mind, in a few days from now, 'Jal Shakti Abhiyan Catch the rain' is being initiated by the Jal

Shakti Ministry, he said. "We shall commit ourselves to the task right now we shall get existing rainwater harvesting systems repaired, clean up lakes and ponds in villages, remove impediments in the way of water flowing into water sources; thus we shall be able to conserve rainwater to the maximum," he said. Modi highlighted an assertion made by a person who had written to him from Kolkata that the Atmanirbhar Bharat campaign is not just a government policy but also a national spirit, and said this was hundred per cent correct. When every person in the country takes pride in indigenous products and connects with the idea of self-reliance, Atmanirbhar Bharat doesn't just remain an economic campaign but becomes a national spirit, he asserted.

Prime Minister pays tribute to Morarji Desai

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday paid tributes to former prime minister Morarji Desai on his birth anniversary, saying he was known for his impeccable integrity and unwavering commitment to democracy. Desai, who was the prime minister of the country from March 1977 to July 1979, was born on February 29, 1896. "Remembering our former PM Shri Morarjibhai Desai. In his long years of public service, he worked tirelessly for India's development," Modi tweeted.

Mamata may rejoin NDA in case of hung Assembly: Yechury

PNS ■ KOLKATA



CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury on Sunday said that the Trinamool Congress has to be defeated first to stop the communal bandwagon of the RSS-BJP, and claimed that the TMC might rejoin the NDA to form the government in West Bengal in case of a hung Assembly.

Terming the ongoing political tussle between the TMC and the BJP as a "mock fight", Yechury alleged that the saffron party is using money from the PM CARES fund, set up to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, to "buy" leaders during the time of elections. "The farmers at the Singhu border in Delhi are fighting against the (Narendra) Modi government's anti-people policies. If farmers who provide us with food can put up such a gallant fight, we too can

do it here," he said. "This grand alliance of the Left and the secular forces will fight to defeat the corrupt TMC government and the BJP in the state, will fight for a better Bengal," Yechury said while addressing a joint rally at the Brigade Parade Ground in Kolkata ahead of the assembly election in West Bengal. The CPI(M) leader alleged that the Mamata Banerjee administration is doing the same to youths what the Narendra Modi government is doing against the farmers.

INDIA CORNER

Mentally unwell woman killed by an inmate in Pune facility

A 33-year-old woman housed in a facility for those with mental ailments was killed after she was pushed off the second floor by another inmate, Pune police said on Sunday. The incident took place in the facility for mentally challenged women and girls in Kothrud at around 5pm on Friday and the sequence of events was revealed after CCTV footage of the facility was checked, an official said. "The 33-year-old woman was pushed off the second floor by a 14-year-old teen girl who had been admitted to the centre recently. The deceased was walking on the ramp when the teen came from behind and pushed her. The woman was declared dead on arrival by doctors at a nearby hospital," he said. While a murder case has been registered, no arrest has been made since the accused is also mentally unwell, he added.



My dream is to see India, Pak become 'good friends': Malala

The old philosophy of having borders and divisions doesn't work anymore and the people in India and Pakistan want to live in peace, Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai said on Sunday, stressing that it is her dream to see the two countries become "good friends". She also said that minorities need protection in every country, be it Pakistan or India, adding that the issue is not related to religion but to the "exploitation of power" and must be taken seriously. Yousafzai, a Pakistani activist for girls education who miraculously survived a bullet to the head from the militant Taliban in October 2012, said the news of internet shutdown and arrests of activists "protesting peacefully" in India is "worrying" and expressed the hope that the government will make sure that people are heard. "It is my dream to see India and Pakistan become true good friends and that we can visit each other's countries. You can continue to watch Pakistani dramas, we can continue to watch Bollywood movies and enjoy cricket matches," the youngest Nobel Peace Prize winner said.



Man killed by wild elephant during bid to click selfie

A 21-year-old man was trampled to death by a wild elephant at a village in Chhattisgarh's Raigarh district on Sunday when he was trying to take a selfie with the animal, a forest official said. The incident took place in the morning in Gudhyari village under Sarangarh forest range when the deceased, identified as Manohar Patel, and his three friends were trying to click a selfie with the elephant, said Pranay Mishra, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) of Raigarh forest division. A huge crowd of local residents had gathered in the village when the forest officials were trying to chase away the elephant into the jungle area, he said. Meanwhile, Patel and his three friends went close to the pachyderm while taking pictures with the animal on their phones.



CBI identifies 10 more victims of child sexual abuse

The CBI has identified 10 more victims of alleged child sexual abuse by now-suspended Uttar Pradesh Irrigation department junior engineer Ram Bhuwan, the alleged paedophile also accused of selling the illicit acts with kids on the dark web, officials said. Further expanding its exhaustive probe, the central probe agency recorded the statement of these 10 male victims to buttress its charges against Bhuwan who was arrested along with his wife and a suspected accomplice, they said. The person arrested from the national capital, whose identity is being kept secret by the CBI, is understood to be an important link in unravelling the mystery of the 50-year-old junior engineer using the dark web to sell child sexual abuse material and making money from it, they said. The agency team has so far identified around 35 victims and is in the process of identifying others, they said. The CBI is also working on deciphering digital evidence from recoveries made during searches at the premises of Bhuwan and his suspected accomplice, they said. The agency had recently filed its charge sheet before a special court in Banda in which the CBI had presented statements of about 25 victims, all males between the age of 4-22 years, and the reports of digital evidence collected during searches at the residence of Bhuwan.



Rahul dubs PM a 'formidable enemy'

PNS ■ TIRUNELVELI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday described Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a "formidable enemy" who "crushed" his opponents and vowed to send him to political oblivion by following the path of love and non-violence. During an interaction titled 'Educators Meet' at the St Xavier College here, Gandhi, touring southern Tamil Nadu for the second day as part of his second leg of campaign for the April 6 assembly polls, also said he counted on the people's support to defeat the BJP. When a participant wanted to know if Gandhi felt it was possible to nudge the Modi government to implement his 'good ideas' rather than waiting to assume power which seemed 'Utopian', he said it could be done with the 'powerful' and 'valuable' support of



the people. It was important to dream big, though some of it may not come true, he said in an obvious reference to snatching the reins of power from the BJP at the Centre. Continuing, he said, "yes we are fighting a formidable enemy (Modi). We are fighting an enemy that is dominating the money in this country. We are fighting an enemy that is crushing its opponents. But we have done this before. We have defeated a much bigger enemy (British) than this new enemy that has come."



Maha Minister linked to woman's death resigns

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra minister Sanjay Rathod, facing flak from the opposition BJP after being linked to a woman's death, on Sunday resigned from the state cabinet. Rathod made the announcement after submitting his resignation to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, who is also the president of his Shiv Sena party. "There has been a lot of dirty politics over the issue of the woman's death," Rathod told reporters, adding he has quit the ministry so that the truth can come out.

2 VCs resign in Maha, ABVP alleges govt interference

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Two vice chancellors of universities in Maharashtra have abruptly quit their posts before the end of their tenure and submitted their resignations to Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari. While sources said the two VCs cited personal reasons for their decision, the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), which is the students' wing of the BJP, alleged that they quit due to "political interference" by the state government. When asked about the resignation of the two VCs, Leader of Opposition in the state Assembly Devendra Fadnis said this is a serious issue and the governor should take cognisance of it. According to sources, Governor Koshyari, who is the chancellor of universities in the state, has accepted the resignations of Pradip Patil, who was the VC of Jalgaon-based Kavyatri Bahinabai Chaudhari North



Maharashtra University, and Vedala Rama Sastry, the VC of the Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Technological University at Lonere in Raigad district. The ABVP alleged that they had quit due to "political interference by government". "The ABVP believes this is due to frequent political overreach which undermined the authority and autonomy of vice chancellors," it said in a statement. Of late, the education sector has been complaining about increasing "government overreach and interference" in universities in Maharashtra, the ABVP claimed. Tales of "instruc-

tions" regarding a university's tenders from ministries have been doing the rounds, it said. "This overreach and constant interference has compelled the two vice chancellors to resign, and this is a worrisome state for the education sector in Maharashtra," the statement said. Courts have repeatedly reprimanded the government on issues such as conducting examinations and interfering in appointments of registrar of the Rashtrasant Tukadoji Maharaj Nagpur University and the Mumbai University, it said. ABVP's Konkan state secretary Prerna Pawar said, "The resignation of the two vice chancellors because of political interference by the government even after repeated lashing by courts indicates the sorry state of affairs in the education sector under the MVA (Maha Vikas Aghadi-comprising the Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress) government."

BJP fears Gandhi-Nehru family, scared of Rahul: Bhupesh Baghel

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

The BJP "fears" the Gandhi-Nehru family the most in Indian politics, feels Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, who also insisted that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is the "only choice" for the party's national president post. Baghel said the saffron party is also very scared of Gandhi as he constantly raises pertinent issues affecting the people. "If BJP fears someone or something the most, it is the Gandhi-Nehru family. When Indira Gandhi came to power, then the same Jan Sangh people used to call her 'gungi gudiya' (dumb doll). They made fun of her using that phrase. "But, Indira Gandhi proved that she was an iron lady through her work. When she got a chance, she divided Pakistan and created



Bangladesh. The world has not seen anything like what she did," Baghel told PTI in an interview. The Chhattisgarh CM, a close confidante of Rahul Gandhi, said the Lok Sabha MP is the only pan-India leader fighting against the BJP and RSS across the country. "Why is the BJP so scared of Rahul Gandhi? He is just an MP. Because, Rahul is down to earth. He listens to the voice of common people and raises their issues," Baghel said. Gandhi speaks about every segment - youths, the

unemployed, women, farmers, adivasis and scheduled tribes - he added. "That is why BJP is scared of him... because he speaks the truth. Rahul lives in the heart of people and that pinches BJP's heart," Baghel said. Baghel said Rahul Gandhi is the only choice for Congress national president, the election for which will take place by June after the completion of assembly polls in five states. Asked about the reason behind such confidence in the Congress leader despite a dismal performance by the party in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls under his leadership, the CM said, "That is why he resigned. He had the moral courage to accept that." The 2019 defeat was the worst for the Congress along with that of 2014, but nobody raised a finger at leadership, he said.

Woman elated as PM lauds her for reviving dried lake in MP

PNS ■ BHOPAL/CHHATARPUR

Babita Rajput, hailing from a village in Madhya Pradesh, has been delighted after Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his 'Mann Ki Baat' broadcast on Sunday lauded her for reviving a dried lake near her place by channelising rain water into it. Talking to PTI, the 19-year-old woman from Agroutha village in Chhatarpur district said she never dreamt of such recognition and that she would work now work harder towards water conservation. In his monthly radio show, Modi said water has been crucial for the devel-

opment of humankind for centuries, and underlined the importance of collective responsibility towards its conservation. "You all will draw inspiration from what Babita Rajput of Agroutha village in Madhya Pradesh is doing," he said. Modi said the woman's village is in Bundelkhand area and there was a big lake near it which had dried up. "She along with other women folk dug up a canal and routed rain water into the lake, which now has ample water," the prime minister said. Elated at the recognition, Rajput said she feels privileged that the prime minister mentioned her name and spoke about her work.

Puducherry Speaker quits

PNS ■ PUDUCHERRY

Puducherry Assembly Speaker V P Siva kolundhu quit on Sunday citing health reasons even as his brother joined the BJP just over a month ahead of the elections in the union territory. In the resignation letter to Lt Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan, a copy of which was made available to mediapersons here, Sivakolundhu, a Congress leader, said he quit as Speaker only on health grounds. Later, he told P T I that he handed over the letter of resignation addressed to the Lt Governor to the Assembly Secretary. Sivakolundhu won from the Lawspet constituency in the 2016 Assembly elections on a Congress ticket. M e a n w h i l e, Sivakolundhu's brother V P Ramalingam joined the BJP in Karaikal in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who is on a campaign visit. Also, former DMK legislator K Venkatesan and former Congress legislator K Lakshminarayanan who had quit their MLA posts on February 21 joined the BJP in Karaikal in the presence of Shah who was in Karaikal to address a public meeting. The Puducherry government headed by V Narayanasamy fell on February 22 after the coalition ministry was reduced to a minority following a spate of resignation of Congress MLAs and a DMK legislator. President's rule has since been imposed in the union territory while assembly polls are slated for April 6.

'Beware of online pitfalls'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The cyber wing of Mumbai police on Sunday issued a social media advisory asking people not to share personal information with strangers online and to ensure the internet activities of their children is monitored. Accounts being operated by minors must be checked by their parents or guardians to ensure nothing is amiss in their conduct that could make them prey to online predators, an official said.

POLLUTION IN YAMUNA

Seers vow not to take a holy dip

PNS ■ MATHURA

Underlining the Yamuna's acute water pollution, three prominent Hindu seers of the country on Saturday vowed not to take another bath on other shahi snan days during the ongoing Vrindavan Kumbh near here unless the river water is clean. The declaration to boycott the shahi snan in the river on three remaining auspicious days -- March 9, 13 and 25 -- and thereafter during subsequent Kumbh fairs was made by the chief of the Ayodhya-based Maha Nirvani Akhara, Mahant Dharm Das. Mahant Dharm Das made the declaration in presence of the



chiefs of two other Vaishnavi akharas Maha Nirmohi and Maha Digambar akharas. In the next 'shahi snan', we would take the holy dip in the Yamuna, only if the water is clean, Mahant Dharm Das said, with the chiefs of two other prominent akharas nodding in agreement. The Mathura district administration

had promised to arrange for clean water in the river at its Devraha Ghat during the Vrindavan Kumbh by discharging additional water from the Ganga but nothing appears to have been done, he said. Mahant Dharm Das made the critical remark on the pollution in the Yamuna after taking a

holy dip along with the two other seers at the Devraha Ghat of the river. The three seers earlier led a procession of saints to the river bank for 'shahi snan' during which they were showered with flower petals all along the route of the procession, said Nagendra Pratap, a government official deputed to supervise arrangements for the Vrindavan Kumbh fair. The three other shahi snan days of March 9, 13 and 25 coincide with ekadashi (month's 11th days), amawasya (moonless day) and another pious day as per the Hindu calendar, said Pratap.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Bengal conundrum

Meticulous planning and a balanced application of calculus is needed to harvest votes

Winning elections is not an easy business, certainly not in a State like West Bengal. It needs meticulous planning and a balanced application of differential and integral calculus for harvesting votes. Every political party in the fray knows this formula but who is in a position to apply it and to what extent, are the factors that can make the difference. No sooner had the Election Commission (EC) announced an unprecedented eight-phase poll for the State than TMC chief Mamata Banerjee accused it of playing a prejudiced role to the advantage of the BJP. According to some poll experts, often in phase-wise elections, the voting trends in the initial stages have an impact on the polling pattern in the subsequent phases. Generally, people exercising their franchise in the later phases have an inclination towards the party or coalition that leads in the initial stages. It is also seen that oftentimes, voters in the last and the penultimate phases lose enthusiasm and this proves helpful to a party in segments that are traditionally not its strongholds. That said, there are various other intricacies and angles to the micro-management of elections. However, if we go by what Mamata says, the question that crosses one's mind is: Is this the multiplier effect that the BJP is trying to bank upon?



Now, Mamata is a seasoned politician who knows that the BJP is no more riding the "Modi wave" or is in the saddle of "nationalism". Moreover, the reduction in the tax per litre on petrol and diesel by a meagre rupee shows that she is aware that the recent surge in fuel and LPG prices will have a bearing on the BJP's votes and that she herself ought to counter anti-incumbency. Still, Mamata is apprehensive that the surging BJP might unseat the ruling TMC by changing the "numerators and denominators with the EC's help". Meanwhile, the saffron party — which is banking on the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), Hindu mobilisation, the Centre's welfare schemes floated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and corruption charges against the TMC leaders — seems to have played its cards carefully. Mamata has alleged that the EC is working on the orders of the Prime Minister and the Home Minister, and claimed she is in the know of reports that a list of phase-wise elections found in the BJP's office completely matches with the EC's announcement. On the other hand, the EC's argument seems to be more justifiable: It said that it has to consider the movement of forces as well as the current spell of charges and counter-charges. Well, Bengal is a fragile State and elections here are synonymous with violence. Conducting polls in the State is not quite similar to other States. To be fair to it, the EC explanation does have a point. Even the elections to the State Assembly in 2016 were held in seven phases and the Lok Sabha polls in 2019 also saw the same number of voting rounds in the State. Well, if Mamata has any concrete evidence of her claims, it's time for her to move the court rather than levelling allegations based on assumptions. Merely crying foul without any solid evidence to back her claims is futile. Isn't it?

PICTALK



Police stand in formation, blocking a main road in Mandalay, Myanmar

Freedom of speech is a joke

The jokes made by stand-ups are rarely personal; they are about the hypocrisy in the system, religion and society, and that offends religious gurus and *netas*



GYANESHWAR DAYAL

Now that the intolerance debate is over and it has been established beyond reasonable doubt that we are a tolerant nation, we can safely discuss the limits of freedom of speech. Back in the bad old days when there was presumed intolerance, people had to be silenced by mob lynching or guns. Not such uncivilised behaviour anymore. We can take revenge in a non-violent civilised way by filing FIRs and slapping defamation cases. That is a massive upgrade.

Had it not been for those in the bad habit of speaking out about anything, including their elected Government, it wouldn't be required. Earlier it was journalists, writers, authors and thespians. Now, another breed of the so-called champions of free speech, comedians, have joined the gang, especially the stand-up comedians.

The freedom to speak, laugh or breathe has to be balanced with the other person's right to get offended. Sure thing. If you are breathing air reserved for someone else, you are choking him. If your deafening laughter hurts and jokes make me throw up, you had better watch out. Now that is a joke but no laughing matter.

Indeed, offending anyone is not a good idea, especially when you laugh at someone's looks or body size. The person has indeed the right to get offended. Ironically, that is often tolerated by the society. Kapil Sharma's blatant humour at the expense of his co-stars is ignored. No one files an FIR against him. The problem starts when the jokes, laced with truth, blast the hypocrisy of those in power. The jokes cracked by the stand-up are rarely personal. Her/his jokes are about the hypocrisy in the system, religion and society, and that offends the people. In fact, the two most offended sets of people are religious gurus and politicians.

To say you belong to a religion is one thing but to presume that the religion belongs to you, quite another. In 2015, the self-appointed defenders of Islam shot *Charlie Hebdo* employees in Paris. For what? For a few lines they had used to depict the



Prophet! But the *Quran* does not explicitly forbid images of the Prophet. Back home, Munawar Faruqi spent a few nights in the Indore Jail for allegedly cracking anti-Hindu jokes. Now, who gave these people — Hindus and Muslims — the proprietary of the religion they were accidentally born into? When did the gods ask you to defend them?

Be offended if a priest of your shrine rapes. Be outraged when your co-religionist kills in the name of your religion. But that doesn't happen. You prove your bravado by heckling and harassing a comic whose words were too offending for you. Religion is not someone's personal turf that he ought to defend. A person has the right to get offended if he is body shamed. A guy may take offence to being called fat but it would be rather absurd that he becomes the spokesperson for all fat people on the planet. A self-appointed policeman to protect all people overweight!

The other group of most offended types is the politicians. These are the people who make a joke of the system but, when ridiculed, act sacrosanct. They must not be laughed at. That is the exaggerated sense of entitlement. Napoleon



COMIC RELIEF IS WHAT THE PEOPLE IN POWER NEED. IT IS A FEEDBACK MECHANISM YOU CANNOT GET FROM INVESTIGATIVE AGENCIES. LEADERS MUST LISTEN TO THE LAUGHTER OF PEOPLE WHEN A JOKE IS CRACKED ON THEM. IT GIVES THEM A WAKE-UP CALL AND SHOWS THEM THE MIRROR ON THE WALL

Bonaparte once said: "In politics, absurdity is not a handicap." Exactly, they are kind of necessary evil but don't risk telling them that. You could end up in jail.

Indian politicians are known for many things but humour isn't one of them, though we have had a few exceptions. Mahatma Gandhi was never offended when Sarojini Naidu called him "Mickey Mouse". Piloos Mody often took jibes at Indira Gandhi. Lalo's humour is infectious. The incumbent Prime Minister, too, has a good sense of humour. He pokes fun at his opponents with élan, though how much he enjoys jokes on himself is not clear. We have had the tradition of court jesters, or *vidushaks*. *Haasya kavis* kept the joke alive and roasted the politicians to their face. Today, the mantle has passed on to stand-up comics.

Political humour and satire are well established in the US. At the President's dinner, people roast the very President who hosts them. The fearless stand-up, George Carlin, never compromised his right to free speech. Today's comedians in the US owe much to Carlin. In India, stand-up comedy started rather late, but the comedians have caught up with the

rest. Their fearless rendering has made many people uncomfortable but, at the same time, won them the respect and following they well deserve.

In the US, comics can get away with a lot. It's different here. Cases of sedition have been filed against cartoonists, satirists and artists. That is the price for calling the Government's bluff. We live in a country where the political system itself is a big joke. In the House, you have a Speaker who won't let you speak. We have lawbreakers making laws for us. The judiciary judges everything except itself. It is a system in which the Treasury benches become rich and the Opposition gives walkovers to the opponent by walking out. Is this not a joke worth laughing at?

Comic relief is what the people in power need. It is a safety valve. So here is my unsolicited advice to those politicians who don't laugh at jokes. Join a laughter yoga club in your vicinity. It is good for your health. It lowers blood pressure and increases your longevity. It might also increase the longevity of your political career.

(The writer is a columnist and documentary film-maker. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

INTERESTING BATTLE AHEAD IN BENGAL

Sir — It was natural for Mamata Banerjee to cry foul after election dates were announced for four States and a Union Territory as the Election Commission (EC), in an unprecedented manner, announced an eight-phase election in West Bengal.

If Mamata sees a conspiracy in this, the EC has given her an opportunity and a reason to do so. Bengal will begin voting on March 27 but, unlike Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Assam and Puducherry, it will have eight phases spread over a record 33 days before the May 2 results. Interestingly, the West Bengal Assembly polls have become a prestige issue for both the ruling Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress Government and the BJP as neither is leaving any stone unturned to retain or capture power, respectively, in the State.

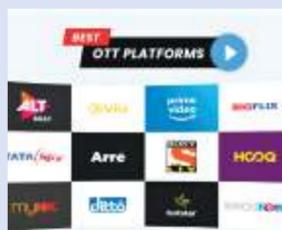
Mamata's objection is not without a reason, given that in Tamil Nadu and Kerala — with 234 and 140 Assembly seats respectively — the election gets over in a single phase while West Bengal having 294 seats has to go through a protracted poll schedule spanning eight phases even as Assam depends on three phases for 126 seats. But it is a matter of shame that she has accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah of colluding with the EC for getting favourable dates. With this, the political battle in West Bengal is going to be even more interesting and we have to just wait and watch to see what the voters have on their minds.

Azhar A Khan | Rampur

THE METRO MAN HAS DISAPPOINTED US

Sir — Metro Man E Sreedharan is 88 years old and he wants to be projected as the chief ministerial face of the BJP in Kerala. In his initial comments, he dutifully chanted the party's mantra on "love jihad" and a few other issues. It sounded strange coming from a man widely admired for his integrity and apolitical approach throughout his legendary career. Indians of all ages

Good to regulate OTT platforms



It refers to the editorial 'Censorship?' (February 27). It is essential to regulate the OTT platforms as nobody has the right to hurt the sentiments of a particular community or a section of society by touching upon a controversial topic just for the sake of publicity.

It's true that when people were locked inside their homes during lockdown, the platforms provided them an opportunity to break the boredom of their lives. In this way, Over-The-Top (OTT) plat-

forms have played a crucial role and fast gained popularity among viewers. However, it doesn't mean that the producers and directors of OTT series exercise no caution and continue serving the material that depicts violence, abuse, sexual misconduct and so on.

Such scenes in a movie or series erode our moral values and have the ability to dominate young minds. We certainly don't want our children to be like 'Munna Bhaiya' of *Mirzapur* series who is a gangster and a trigger-happy person. Also, there was no morality to be seen in the series as it promoted infidelity and immorality. Rather, we want a peaceful society which is not bereft of its values. It is obvious that when something that goes against our ethics or values is shown, there will be an outcry. It is essential as it keeps reminding us that we as a society cannot allow anyone to take undue advantage by distorting facts just for financial gains and popularity.

Yugal Kishore Sharma | Faridabad

and backgrounds used to look up to him. He had shown the world and our own countrymen that big projects could be delivered on time and without the concomitant hanky-panky.

He set a world record for bridge-building in his earliest years (in the 1960s) for the Indian Railways and then went on to notch successes with the Konkan Railway project and subsequently with various Metro projects across the country. Most of them were post his "official" superannuation date. The scale of activity at his age has few parallels anywhere. Age is not a number as far as Metro Man Sreedharan is concerned. But even though the BJP is concerned about the polls, the act of Metro man making a move into politics is rather disappointing.

CK Subramaniam | Mumbai

SECURITY BREAKDOWN IN NIGERIA

Sir — The latest incident of kidnapping of schoolchildren in Nigeria has sent shockwaves across the region and the

world. Haunted by a series of such kidnappings enacted by certain flourishing armed groups there, Nigeria has once again been left to fend for itself in the matters of security, thereby exposing a severe security breakdown.

Speaking of incidents like kidnapping and hijacking, our society has travelled a long way in the fight against such evils. Therefore, it is time for all of us to grow stronger and to build our society back from the scratch. Agricultural and industrial activities across the board, education, technology, food security, employment, natural resources and, above all, good governance can be part of the plan to build back the society. India must help Nigeria in all possible ways. The Governments need to cooperate with each other to stop such crimes which are haunting the world.

P Senthil | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

Yediyurappa ji has devoted his life towards the welfare of farmers and to empower the poor. Praying for his long and healthy life.



Prime Minister

— Narendra Modi

Despite all the statements about the solidarity and combined efforts against Coronavirus, in practice, we see that the picture is completely contrary.

Azerbaijan President

— Ilham Aliyev

Some of the songs which really put me to test were performances like *Choli ke piche kya hai*, *Chane ke khet mein*, *Ke sera sera*, *Ek do teen* and *Tamma tamma*.



Actor

— Madhuri Dixit

The entire team is very excited and eager to get on with the first match. It's been more than a year since we played a competitive match, and we are prepared for the challenge.

Indian men's hockey team captain

— PR Sreejesh

By not arresting Sidhana and by not transferring Mukhtar Ansari to UP, it is evident that the CM is selective in his action against gangsters.



Senior Punjab BJP leader

— Vineet Joshi



FIRST COLUMN

TIME TO MAKE A FRESH START

One needs to look at new approaches to create a world order for the future of the planet and its inhabitants



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

There is often talk of history of the planet and history as a discipline. The bald truth is that most histories are actually recalls of experiences of a limited part of the planet over some limited geography with a given vantage point of perception. There is nothing wrong with that. The problem is when it gets mistaken as something which applies globally or has significance beyond its boundaries of focus. This is a common error. It is akin to a half-educated person who begins believing that his/her experience and perception has universal validity. It can never be the case. This is matched by another cardinal error namely, that of expecting others to respond to our expectations. An index of fair relationships requires recognising varying expectations. But varying expectations cause conflict, confusion and heartbreak. The attempts at resolution of varying perceptions and outcomes are often half-baked, if not irrelevant. The fundamental laws of life require an understanding of the aggregate power of human civilisation and the Earth's ecosystem. As distances shrink and time expands because of technology, the fundamental constructs of "how to think" need serious thought. This is apparently yet to be tabled as a major global agenda for reflection and action. The proposition would be clearer if what is said in the above paragraphs is focused on "energy studies."



That life itself needs energy is fairly well-recognised. Where that energy comes from has many schools of thought. Those who find the cartoon character of Mandrake interesting, obviously, will believe in the power of the brain. There are claims in ancient texts of interplanetary travel of mental visualisation through brain power. Hence the ability to recognise inner power and experience wholeness of external energy should be a legitimate goal of a person claiming to be educated. At a personal level entropy is a formidable reality. Expression of entropy is in the form of aging. Organisation of self is a major challenge and a realistic hierarchy of personal values is essential to make relationships work. This is again one of those areas where a lot more attention needs to be paid than has been possible so far. At the global and the external level, like in the case of the inner world, it is important to realise more evolved postulates. That energy flows from the Earth back into the universe surrounding it as heat energy in the form of infrared radiation needs to be seen as one of the basics of all energy studies.

Putting it all together, the COVID-19 experience should be helping the planet to revisit its assumptions of learning, be it internal or external. If that were one of the outcomes of the shake-up the planet is going through it would be a civilisational gain. As of now, individuals have suffered, groups have been shaken and assumptions of productivity and progress look greatly challenged. Whether it has caused any new constructs to emerge remains to be seen. This is totally understandable because the COVID experience is still an unfolding reality. Perhaps one of the biggest results of this extended experience is the general fatigue the whole experience has caused. Being alert in one's own defence requires a general environment of good sense, and as any thinking person knows, good sense is rare. People risk suffering and even death when their balance of energy has been exhausted in taking extended precautions. Time not only heals, it also exhausts.

The important question remains, are there limits to human response to feelings of agony and testing times? As attempts to restore past lives gain strength, the approach seems to be to bring it back to where it was to pre-pandemic experiences. That is understandable, but there should be an attempt to create something different, incorporating the learning of underlying behaviour of the human species. It is time to hold up the process of regression. It's time to make a fresh start. One needs to look at new assumptions and approaches to create a world order for the future of the planet and its inhabitants.

(The writer is an internationally acclaimed management consultant. The views expressed are personal.)

Pandemic push to micro-insurance

What was a luxury for the poor has now become a reality due to several innovative models by various institutions. India is now a major centre for rapidly growing microinsurance



MOÏN QAZI

The pandemic has been a game changer for microinsurance and people now understand its importance in their lives. This should spur a greater demand for it. In the developed world, insurance is a part of life but its coverage has been patchy and woefully inadequate in the developing world. However, what was a luxury for the poor has now become a reality on account of several innovative models developed by various institutions. India is now a major centre for rapidly-growing microinsurance.

In India, low-income communities live on the edge; just a tiny misfortune away from disaster — an injury, illness, or natural calamity can push them deeper into poverty as their meagre resources get depleted. These events often have very grave financial consequences. Many get drawn into debt traps as they borrow beyond their means, sell productive assets, take children out of school or put them to work, compromise on food, or leave sickness untreated.

Although poor households often have informal means to manage risks, such strategies provide inadequate protection, while insurance is a major safeguard for low-income groups. They need it more than well-heeled people because the poor have no financial cushion and are more vulnerable to risks. One of their biggest challenges is health-related expenditure — a burden that often triggers poverty.

Poor families have suffered for long, the triple curse of sudden illness: The trauma associated with sickness, loss of wages and the financial burden of intensive healthcare. It is a fertile hunting ground for loan sharks and illnesses become a financial sinkhole for villagers.

The poor usually face two types of risks — idiosyncratic (specific to household) and covariate (in which the entire community suffers loss; the most common, for instance, are drought and epidemics). Insurance contracts are most easily offered if risks within the relevant population are not covariate — so that only some put in a claim at the same time. Furthermore, insurance for rare and infrequent events is also typically more difficult to offer.

Low-income communities aren't considered as "insurable" at reasonable levels of premium. This makes a case for insurance schemes designed specifically for the poor, particularly in sectors of health and life. Microinsurance has emerged in response to the inadequacy of regular insurance to provide protection to the bottom tier of the population. Such insurance can improve healthcare outcomes and raise school attendance rates. Several health insurance programmes cover wage loss on account of illness or other health related issues. Health insurance policies typically don't cover outpatients or domiciliary treatment where the major expense is on account of pharmacy bills, diagnostic tests, and so on.

By managing risks and avoiding debt, those who have microinsurance policies are in a position to protect the assets they accumulate, generate more income, and can even get a fair chance to rescue themselves and their families from poverty. The cost of insuring against an unforeseen development is considerably lower than self-insuring through savings.



ALTHOUGH POOR HOUSEHOLDS OFTEN HAVE INFORMAL MEANS TO MANAGE RISKS, SUCH STRATEGIES PROVIDE INADEQUATE PROTECTION WHILE INSURANCE IS A MAJOR SAFEGUARD FOR LOW-INCOME GROUPS. THEY NEED IT MORE THAN WELL-HEELED PEOPLE BECAUSE THE POOR HAVE NO FINANCIAL CUSHION AND ARE MORE VULNERABLE TO RISKS. ONE OF THE MOST CHALLENGING IS HEALTH-RELATED EXPENDITURE — A BURDEN THAT OFTEN TRIGGERS POVERTY

The writer is a well-known development professional. The views expressed are personal.



The Governments, donors and other players engaged in combating poverty and designing social protection measures should keep insurance as a key component of their toolbox. They can reach the poor and thus reduce the cost of servicing remote clients. For the poor to reap the real benefits of microinsurance, our insurance companies need to function with a sense of responsibility. Because of the lack of proper awareness and failure of institutions to properly guide them, people buy insurance policies without proper planning and give up midway because they don't have the money to pay the premium.

Aggressive selling prevents the agents from properly assessing the consistency in income streams of the buyers for servicing their policies. The customers end up losing heavily as penalties are very harsh.

The outreach of the insurance companies has been very limited. Microinsurance accounted for less than 1.80 per cent for life and 1.16 per cent for general insurance in 2019-20. The key challenge is the high cost of administering it. Microinsurance is a low ticket business, requiring huge volumes to become sustainable. The poor live off the banking grid. Further, the transaction costs of issuing millions of small policies through service agents are high.

Despite the potential of insurance products to provide a "risk

floor" for farmers and to encourage higher-productivity investments and behaviour, uptake of microinsurance at market prices is extremely low and it has not been found to be easily scalable except when heavily subsidised by the Government.

India also lacks the distribution channels appropriate for lower-income groups. Rapid advances in digital payment systems are creating opportunities to connect poor households to affordable and reliable financial tools, through mobile phones and other digital interfaces.

Insurance coverage can be widened by coupling services with existing mobile financial products or creating new solutions that bring insurance services straight to a consumer's phone.

There are also problems with product design. Typically, rural insurance products are clones of products introduced in urban areas and are not suited to the local context. Risk mitigation mechanisms are weak and complexity of people and problems make underwriting, claim processing and resolution a challenge.

An Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDAI) committee has suggested reduction in entry-level capital requirement for standalone microinsurance companies to ₹20 crore from the current ₹100 crore with a view to accelerate expansion of this segment.

Microinsurance companies as well as cooperatives should be allowed to act as composite insurers to transact both life and non-life business through a single entity.

There are countries which have witnessed a large improvement in product design and availability of a range of insurance products. Microinsurance products tailored for the farmers' community — such as crop insurance, health insurance, rural, personal, accident, irrigation, animal cart, aqua-culture, agri-allied and cattle insurance — are now available in the market. Even niche products such as insurance covers for snake bites, livestock welfare, failed wells, damage caused by thunderstorms, health issues, funerals and even covering the birth of twins are available.

Microinsurance is now acknowledged as a highly effective tool to end the cycle of poverty by providing a robust safety net that families need. If the poor know that they are covered, they are more likely to plan their future better, invest in expanding businesses, diversify crops or send their children to school without the fear of losing their savings if something were to happen.

The whole capacity to take risks, changes. Thus, apart from just being a safety net, microinsurance promises something that earlier generations could never imagine: Hope for the future.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

GUJARAT VOTERS' MANDATE IS LOUD AND CLEAR. THE AAP CANDIDATES LOST THEIR DEPOSIT. NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE COMMON MAN'S POWER.
—BJP'S GUJARAT UNIT PRESIDENT
CR PAATIL



PEOPLE WANT TO KNOW WHY YOU TWEETED IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT? WISH YOU HAD SHOWN THE SAME EAGERNESS TO SOLVE PEOPLE'S WOES.
—DELHI CHIEF MINISTER
ARVIND KEJRIWAL

Tracing the evolution of secularism over the ages

The 'crisis of secularism' bemoaned by some scholars fails to acknowledge that secularism itself has evolved in a highly complex manner

Analysis emerging from various academic platforms in Europe, the US, Turkey and India in the last five years or so, suggests that the world has entered a "post-secular age." But critics of this thesis fear that it is conceiving secularism in its most simplistic form. Secularism has evolved in a highly complex manner, as demonstrated by anthropologist Talal Asad and philosopher Charles Taylor.

Both saw secularism emerging from a process of reform during the Middle Ages, so that a society free of superstition, could be formed. Asad's overall position is that secularism's origins cannot be pinned entirely to a single occurrence, while Taylor says that the demystification of Christianity aided the once superstitious layman to access a disenchanting understanding of the scriptures. Christian



NADEEM PARACHA

Courtesy: Dawn. The views expressed are personal.

sects such as the Protestant and Calvinist saw having an enterprising disposition as a virtue, as long as it benefited humanity. This not only seeded the idea of "humanism", it also gave birth to ideas that formulated the mechanisms of modernity.

According to Asad, Christianity's spiritual promise that "Christ died to save all humanity" was folded into a political promise "the world must be changed for Christ." Therefore, both Taylor and Asad see the emergence of the idea of secularism springing not from an aversive reaction to religion but from an urge to reform it in a rapidly evolving milieu. To Asad, even though the disenchantment process within Christianity saw it accepting reformist ideas, the traditional notions of Christian morality, for example, did not really wither away. Asad writes that religion was never entire-

ly expelled from the public sphere. Indeed, it was relegated to the private sphere, but religions that were willing to take part in rational debate and accept the new secular paradigm, were welcome to operate in the public sphere.

With the expansion of modernity, the idea of secularism spread from Europe to other regions. But it mutated to accommodate non-Western realities. For example, although it arrived as an inclusive idea that advocated the privatisation of the sacred and the institutionalisation of the profane as a way to construct a rational nationalistic whole, in communist set-ups it radically hardened by completely expunging religion. But this hardness was also present in France.

According to Taylor, whereas secularism elsewhere in Europe had largely emerged from reformed Christianity, in



France it had appeared as a revolt against religion (during the 18th century French Revolution), known as 'Laïcité' it barely tolerates any display of religion in the public sphere. Unlike inclusive secularism in the US and European countries, where the State remains impersonal towards religion as long as it does not threaten the liberal-democratic order, 'Laïcité' sanctions it to aggressively intervene to discourage religion in the public sphere. Interestingly, this is also the form of secularism that Turkey adopted after it became a republic in 1922.

Most anti-colonial movements also adopted secularism by modifying it to suit their nationalisms. For example, 'Arab Nationalism' adopted secularism because it saw its anti-colonial religious contemporaries as competition. It adopted the inclusive secular version, even though Arab nationalist regimes were dictatorial and often jailed leaders of religious groups who challenged the Arab nationalist narrative. According to the French political scientist Christophe Jaffrelot, a unique mutation of secularism emerged in colonial India. Jaffrelot says that followers of the 19th century Indian Muslim scholar Syed Ahmad Khan, politicised his reformist Islamist narrative by forming the Muslim League. Eventually, the party moved towards demanding a separate Muslim-majority State. Syed,

and then the early 20th century philosopher and poet Muhammad Iqbal and, eventually, the barrister Muhammad Ali Jinnah formulated what Talal Asad calls "cultural secularism." Instead of separating religion from politics, they separated the cultural dynamics of Islam from the faith's theological and ritualistic dimensions, to create a political ideology of cultural separatism.

According to Jaffrelot, they placed Islam as a cultural identity-marker in the public arena, whereas the faith's theological and ritual aspects were pushed to the private sphere. This is why the founders of Pakistan were never really demonstrative about their religiosity (or lack thereof). They understood Muslim nationalism as a cultural and political idea of a modern Muslim-majority State, but one that would remain impersonal towards

Islam's theological/ ritualistic facets.

Jaffrelot writes that, in 1974, the passage of the Second Amendment constitutionally rolled back the project by making Islam in Pakistan exclusive. Then, various ordinances between 1979 and 1991 almost entirely expunged the inclusive idea of Islam. This aided various far-Right religious groups to assert themselves in the public sphere, without being challenged by the State.

Secularism is in crisis, but mostly in developing countries. This has been the case for quite some time now. India is the exception, where this crisis is relatively recent. Ironically, the crisis in this context in India is being compounded by the act of treating secularism as it was treated in Pakistan from 1974 onwards. The results were disastrous, as they will be in India too.



Inflection Point Ventures to invest \$20 mn in start-ups in India this year

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Inflection Point Ventures (IPV) aims to double its investment to USD 20 million (about Rs 155 crore) in start-ups this year as it looks to play a larger role in mentoring and growing the start-up ecosystem in the country.

IPV, which comprises about 4,000 investors, is also looking at expanding its network to 5,000 members by the end of the year. "We, as a network of CXOs, came together to help start-ups grow and succeed, and the belief is that everyone can grow along with start-ups, it creates jobs, creates experience and propels innovation in the country."

New social media rules may raise compliance costs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The new social media intermediary rules could raise compliance costs for players, making it difficult for smaller companies to compete against bigger giants like Facebook, according to industry watchers.

The new rules, announced last week, distinguish between 'social media intermediaries' and 'significant social media intermediaries' with 50 lakh registered users as the threshold for the categorisation.

Significant social media intermediaries will have to follow additional due diligence, including the appointment of a chief compliance officer, nodal contact person and resident grievance officer - with all three officials residing in India.

Large players like Facebook have said they are studying the rules.

While many in the sector have lauded the new regulations, saying these aim to

address concerns like grievance redressal, fake news and online safety of users, a section of the industry has aired concerns around increased compliance cost that could be challenging for smaller players.

Software Freedom Law Centre (SFLC) founder Mishi Choudhary said the rules call for an undue burden and compliance and "ensure only larger players with funds and wherewithal of big legal teams are the only ones who will be left to offer services".

"(This could result in) increasing the barrier for entry and raising compliance costs for everyone," she added. India has 53 crore WhatsApp users, 44.8 crore

YouTube users, 41 crore Facebook users, 21 crore

re-use Instagram, while 1.75 crore users are on microblogging platform Twitter, as per government data.

While players like Telegram and Signal do not disclose country-specific user numbers, these platforms have seen a spike in downloads in the last few weeks around

WhatsApp's privacy policy update that seeks to allow sharing limited user data with Facebook and its group firms.

Telegram did not respond to queries on the impact of the new rules on the platform.

Industry observers noted that players like Telegram and others may not have senior officials based in India and that they will now have to take a series of steps to ensure compliance with the new norms as their business scales up and user base grows in India.

According to the amended IT rules, social media and streaming companies will be required to take down contentious content quicker, appoint grievance redressal officers and assist in investigations.

The "Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code" designed to curb misuse of social media platforms require players like WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter as well as streaming services.



Bond yields to mainly set tone for stock mkt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

From long term bond yield trends to crude oil price movements to macroeconomic data takeaways, a slew of factors will drive domestic equities this week, according to analysts as investors look for a breather after days of bloodbath in the market.

Besides, investments by FPIs (Foreign Portfolio Investors) as well as domestic investors, February auto numbers and readings of services and manufacturing sectors' performance last month will be keenly watched by investors. The coronavirus situation in various states, some of which are seeing a spike in infections, will also be a factor.

"Going ahead the market

may continue with its consolidation given weak global cues. Investors would closely track bond yields, geopolitical tensions and inflation data for further market direction and would monitor developments around new US stimulus announcements," Siddhartha Khemka, Head of Retail Research at Motilal Oswal Financial Services, said.

After multiple rallies since the Union Budget presentation on February 1, the stock market closed in the red in the week gone by. The benchmark indices -- Nifty-50 & BSE Sensex -- slumped over 3 per cent during the week, and on Friday, the 30-share BSE Sensex crashed about 1,940 points to post its biggest single-day fall in nearly ten months.

Companies 'feel betrayed' due to capping of vax price: Shaw

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Biocon Chairperson Kiran Mazumdar Shaw on Sunday hit out at the government capping COVID-19 vaccine price at Rs 250 at private hospitals, saying vaccine companies "feel betrayed" as it is too low to sustain.

Reacting to a report that the health ministry has fixed Rs 250 per shot at private hospitals and health centres, she tweeted, "We r (sic) crushing instead of incentivising vaccine industry."

She further said, "Covid



Vaccine Jab Capped At Rs 250 At Private Hospitals: Government - understand vaccine cos (sic) feel betrayed as price is too low to sustain."

Mazumdar-Shaw asked, "If WHO has agreed to USD 3 per

dose, why beat them down to USD 2?"

The government's capping of the vaccine price at private hospitals comes at a time when India is preparing to vaccinate people aged above 60 years and those over 45 with co-morbidities from March 1.

The COVID-19 vaccine will be given free of cost at government hospitals, while people will need to pay for it at private facilities.

It is understood that the Rs 250 ceiling per dose includes Rs 150 per dose of vaccine plus Rs 100 service charge.



India's coal import drops 12% to 181 MT in Apr-Jan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's coal import registered a drop of 11.59 per cent to 180.84 million tonnes (MT) in the first 10 months of the ongoing fiscal.

The company had imported 204.55 MT of coal in April-January period of the previous fiscal year, according to provisional data compiled by mjunction services. mjunction is a B2B e-commerce company and also publishes research reports on coal and steel verticals.

Commenting on the coal import trend, mjunction MD and CEO Vinaya Varma said, "There was a drop in January volumes as compared to the previous month (December). This was mainly due to the firmness in seaborne prices."

Pvt insurers offering 80-100 pc discounts



PNS ■ MUMBAI

Private health insurers are encouraging their customers to lead healthy and active lives by offering steep discounts on the renewal premia between 80 and 100 per cent, along with a host of other rewards and benefits.

Most health insurance provides no-claim bonus for claim-free years but that usually ranges from 25 per cent to 50 per cent.

While Aditya Birla Health Insurance is offering up to 100 per cent return of the premium if the customer has accrued adequate number of 'ActivDayz' (one Activ Day means 10,000 steps a day, or any fitness activity specified by the insurer), another firm Future Generali earlier this month launched a policy offering a flat 80 per cent discount on renewal if the customer did

not make any claim in the previous policy year.

Aditya Birla Health will give a customer up to 100 per cent health returns if the insured earned enough health returns by looking after his/her health by being physically active on a regular basis.

The insurer will monitor the active lives of its customers through the Activ Health app.

The company said the new product is an enhanced version of its existing Activ Health policy offering extensive wellness benefits for those customers who lead a healthier lives.

Last week, Aditya Birla Health Insurance claimed that it is the only insurance company offering up to 100 per cent discount on the premium and up to 100 per cent reload of the sum insured through this enhanced version of the Activ Health policy.

Birla Precision to ramp up capacity in India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With a shift in the global supply chain amid the pandemic and companies looking beyond China for sourcing, auto component firm Birla Precision Technologies Ltd is ramping up its capacity to tap emerging opportunities in India, according to a top company official.

To start with, the company plans to invest up to Rs 30 crore in the next one year to ramp up its drill manufacturing capacity under its cutting tools division. "India is going to become quite a big player in the automotive supply chain globally. People are wanting to switch their supply chain more and more to India as time progresses, immediately coming out of COVID scenario," Birla Precision Chairman Vedant Birla said. The anti-China sentiment in the wake of the pandemic, supply constraints faced during the peak of the health crisis and trade tension between China and the US have contributed to a shift in the global supply chain.



Puravankara Ltd enters plotted development biz; to launch 6 projects

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Realty firm Puravankara Ltd has entered into plotted development segment and will start six projects over the next 6-7 months with an investment of about Rs 825 crore, as it seeks to tap the rising demand of plots.

In an interview with PTI, Bengaluru-based Puravankara Ltd Managing Director Ashish R Puravankara said the company has created a separate brand and team 'Purva Land' to enter into plotted development segment.

To begin with, the company, a leading real estate firm in South and West India, will launch around 5.5 million sq ft area across six projects in Bengaluru, Chennai and Coimbatore where it will offer plots.

"We have created a new brand called 'Purva Land', which will focus on plotted development in the micro-markets where we have a presence," Ashish said.

The company will be launching six projects over the next six-seven months, he said.

Land parcels have already been tied up, while the design and approval process is on, Ashish added. Out of six projects, three would be launched in Bengaluru, two in Chennai and one in Coimbatore. Land parcels for four projects are fully owned by the company, while two projects are in the joint venture.

Ashish mentioned that branded players, somehow, never looked at plotted development as an asset class but the situation has changed.

IKEA to increase sourcing of toys from India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Swedish furniture major IKEA, which has a range of over 1,000 products as part of its children's range, is looking to scale up sourcing of toys from India for its operations here, said a top company official.

Besides, IKEA India is also aiming to have around 12 per cent of sales from kids' range of products in the coming years. The company, which currently sources only cotton-based soft toys from India, is



also exploring to expand in some other categories such as wooden toys, said IKEA India Country Commercial Manager Kavitha Rao.

IKEA, which has participated in the India Toy Fair, said it is exploring opportunities to partner with several players in the toy segment, which is a big

focus area of the company.

When being asked as to whether IKEA is going to increase sourcing of toys from India, Rao told PTI, "Of course, yes. That is one of the main reasons why we are part of the toys fair."

"Because we could be a large buyer and of course, it is contingent on meeting standards and design thoughts but we feel that there is a great opportunity for us to come together with some potential suppliers as part of the player as well," she added.

Bringing petroleum products under GST will be good move

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Chief Economic Advisor K VSubramanian has backed a proposal to bring petroleum products under the ambit of the Goods and Services Tax (GST). He, however, said the decision will have to be taken by the GST council.

"It will be a good move, but the decision rests with the GST Council," Subramanian said during a recent interaction with FICCI FLO members.



Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan had also urged Union Finance Minister Nirmalya Sitharaman to bring petroleum products under the ambit of the GST.

India's crude steel output grows 7.6%

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India registered a growth of 7.6 per cent in crude steel production at 10 million tonne (MT) in January 2021, according to World Steel Association (worldsteel).

The country had produced 9.3 MT crude steel during the same month last year.

"The production for the 64 countries reporting to the worldsteel was 162.9 MT in January 2021, registering a 4.8 per cent increase compared to January 2020," the global industry body said in its latest report.

China remained the global leader in production of steel in January, registering 6.8 per cent year-on-year growth in



output at 90.2 MT during the month.

According to worldsteel data, China had produced 84.3 MT steel in the same month last year. Last month, Japan's output slipped 3.9 per cent to

7.9 MT year-on-year.

The US produced 6.9 MT steel in the month under review. Its output was at 7.7 MT in January 2020.

Russia's output last month was at 6.7 MT compared to 6

MT in January 2020.

South Korea's steel production in the month was at 6 MT, as compared to 5.8 MT in the year-ago period.

Turkey produced 3.4 MT of crude steel last month. It had produced 3 MT in January 2020.

According to the report, while Germany produced 3.3 MT steel in January 2021, Brazil and Iran produced 3 MT and 2.6 MT, respectively. With members in every major steel-producing country, Brussels-based worldsteel represents steel producers, national and regional steel industry associations, and steel research institutes. Its members represent around 85 per cent of the global steel production.

9 of top 10 firms lose nearly Rs 2.2 lakh cr in valuation



Nine of the 10 most-valued companies lost a whopping Rs 2,19,920.71 lakh crore in their total market valuation last week with the barometer Sensex tanking more than 3 per cent. Reliance Industries (RIL) was the only script to post gains in its market valuation among the top 10 valued companies. Among losers, Tata Consultancy Services' market valuation tanked Rs 81,506.34 crore to Rs 10,71,263.77 crore. The valuation of HDFC Bank declined by Rs 2,202.12 crore to reach Rs 8,45,552.53 crore. The market capitalisation (m-cap) of ICICI Bank dropped by Rs 18,098.57 crore to Rs 4,13,078.87 crore and that of Hindustan Unilever by Rs 11,536.32 crore to Rs 5,00,937.14 crore. HDFC's valuation declined by Rs 35,389.88 crore to reach Rs 4,57,518.73 crore and that of Infosys by Rs 16,613.57 crore to Rs 5,33,487.07 crore. The market capitalisation of Bajaj Finance fell by Rs 15,712.46 crore to Rs 3,15,653.33 crore and that of Kotak Mahindra Bank dipped Rs 30,695.43 crore to Rs 3,53,081.63 crore. The valuation of SBI went down by Rs 8,166.02 crore to reach Rs 3,48,238.34 crore. Lone gainer RIL, on the other hand, added Rs 2,092.01 crore to its valuation which stood at Rs 13,21,044.35 crore at close on Friday. Key benchmark index Sensex dropped by 1,786 points or 3.46 per cent last week amid weak global cues.

Historically, art, especially music, has always been a medium to educate and teach the world to empathise with troubled souls. *The Pioneer's* SHIKHA DUGGAL writes about the band The Room In The Corner that brings to light the 'DDPR' disorder. Read on...



CAUGHT BETWEEN

'NOW' & 'THEN'

Depersonalisation-derealisation is a disorder that brings back recurrent feelings of self-detachment and an alternative perception of the external world and there's a girl in the real world as well who is the potential sufferer of this disorder. But how many of us actually know what's DPDR? Very few of us. Hence, bringing lime-light to the feelings of being disconnected, the band by name *The Room in the Corner* has released its debut single track called *Heart Awakes*.

Standing right at a distant corner while visualising thoughts, the new track will hit the right notions of love but with the help of two-way perspectives! As the music video begins, it shows a woman who often cannot recognise people and places despite knowing them for so long and a man that she is in a relationship with, while he goes through emotions of coping with her sense of unreality and is immensely loving. Love indeed has its own ways of making it stronger, in more meaningful and deeper ways! What do you do when you lose

control over your thoughts, when you really are unable to recollect what has happened recently yet it keeps taking you through flash-backs? The song deals with the same multilateral feelings of an individual. "Imagine you are at home, that one abode where you have lived all those memories, be it happiness or sorrows and all of a sudden, you have no idea where you belong — these emotions mixed with fear, unrealistic tangents, wisps of smoke in the air, blurry visuals and everything feel like a dream and make you lose sight of what's happening at the

moment. It's scary! Having said that, when my band was researching the intricate details of the song *Heart Awakes*, we came across the journey of one of our peers who had traces of DPDR in her life. As our band also brings forth the melodies with meaningful-cum-heart-wrenching plots, we thought there's nothing better than this! Certainly, this disorder makes you feel as if you're losing the very vital moments of your life, exactly like how sand begins to sift through your hands," shares Abhinav Sharma, one of the band members.

"We felt her narrative and her emphasis on experiencing the key phases of detachment was a perfect fit for the lyrics and the story we are trying to tell. We wanted the track to reach large demographics and spread the message of being there for someone even in the smallest capacity which usually tends to make such drastic differences in their lives! It's very pivotal for people to know how real this is. Adding to that, we are additionally trying to be true to her *kahani* too in terms of the visual treatment and emotions," he adds.

MC Altaf unleashes *Soch*



Recognised as one of the strong contenders in the rap fraternity, Altaf Shaikh aka MC Altaf is gearing up for his solo release of 2021 titled *Soch!*

Produced by Gully Gang Entertainment, the new release serves as a clarion call for millennials to pursue their dreams relentlessly. Embracing a deeper meaning beyond the flawless bars' delivery, the track musters up an in-depth portrayal of his journey as a rapper and how things have panned out with regards to his artistry over the years.

The track highlighting the chain of thoughts surfacing through his headspace relating to his daily life experiences as a rapper, he intertwines soul-searching lyrics that showcase his stout level of artistic devotion that has enabled him to achieve the stature he enjoys today. Imbibing an inimitable style as opposed to his recent commercial drops, track opens a dialogue of how the talented young rapper has experimented with modern day trap elements to cater to the younger

crop of music enthusiasts who've been looking earnestly and waiting for a signature MC Altaf track that reignites his former style.

With hard hitting verses like "judge kar liya jabhi bola humne pincode, touch kar liya mene baat ussi din ko, tabhi mene bola jaldi hit karna billboard, mehnat hee bana mera cheatcode beast mode", it's hard to miss the wit intended! Speaking about the new drop, MC Altaf states, "The concept behind *Soch* was to bring forth my personal outlook to life and my experiences throughout my career. Sonically, I've experimented on the beats and steered away from rapping on old school beats but this time I wanted to lend a fresh trap vibe. I have enjoyed working on trap beats and seen its popularity amongst the younger generation so this one is a dedication to my fans who've been asking me for this. We retained the simplicity of the video as we wanted to focus on the intensity of the lyrics which our creative team enhanced further by way of using the elements of scribbling art and me spitting bars."



TOLLYWOOD PARTAKES OF THE FOOTBALL FERVOUR

Hyderabad FC is surely making headlines and for all the right reasons. ISL has captured the hearts of millions and fans are cheering hard for their favourite teams all over. Our own Hyderabad Football club is making waves this season with its superb game plan, passionate players, and terrific matches. The club has seen a great revival from the last season and is holding its ground on the ranking charts. The team has put up a great fight on the field and is surely setting the mark. Fans are delighted to see the yellow flag flying high on the charts! And not just us, even celebs are fast catching up with this fever.

Tollywood actors have taken it to social media to extend their support and love for the Rana Daggubati co-owned Hyderabad FC. They have come together along with the fans wishing the team all the luck to win the season this year. Popular actors like Kajal Aggarwal, Samantha, Niddhi Agarwal, Navdeep, Sumanth, Sudhir babu, Shushanth and others put up stories on their Instagram handles supporting the team by donning HFC jerseys. Naga Chaitanya posted a pic with his favourite pet donning similar jerseys and extended his support to the team.

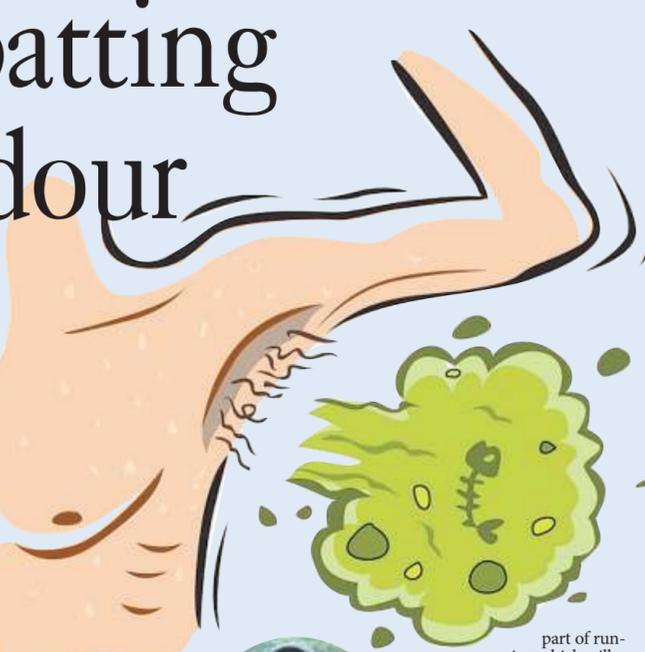
Speaking about the love Tollywood has been extending, Rana Daggubati, co-owner of Hyderabad FC said, "Football has a massive history when it comes to the city of Hyderabad. Our city has produced some of the best footballers India has ever seen, and through Hyderabad FC, we want to try and bring those glorious days back to Hyderabad. Tollywood actors have always come forward to extend their love for sport which brought Hyderabad a global recognition. This year too, HFC has been playing extraordinary football with so many youngsters taking the team close to the finals. Receiving such overwhelming support from our actors and football fans pumps up our team to go that extra mile and play the best football possible."

Combatting bad odour

In the current times our awareness about hygiene has been heightened and we've made washing our hands and/or sanitising them a part of our everyday existence. However, when you run alone or in a group, have you thought about what happens when you sweat? While there is cool stuff like, 'I don't sweat, I glow' emblazoned on many tees, it would be embarrassing to have that same tee get malodorous. While sweating is your body's natural way of regulating temperature, it is the body odour that accompanies it which can be embarrassing when interacting with fellow runners. It is bacteria that are present on sweaty skin that react with sweat and cause body odour.

USE THESE HYGIENE TIPS WHENEVER YOU STEP OUT FOR A RUN:

Take a pre-run warm shower. It not only warms up the muscles, but it will also clean your skin off sweat. Applying soap between your toes will ensure that those areas that are potential sites for fungal infections such as Athlete's foot, are cleansed. Wear clean running apparel that is preferably made of fabric that wicks away sweat, breathes and keeps you dry. Maximum odour comes out from the underarms when bacteria mixes with the sweat. Use a deodorant or preferably a roll-on directly on underarm skin, so as to control body odour right at its source. Use face wash on your face and neck



post run and follow that up with splashing an alcohol based sanitizer (preferably carried in your belt bag) on your hands, armpits and neck. Instead of looking for strong fragrance deodorants, look out for deodorants with long lasting body odour control. What I personally recommend is, using deodorants or roll-ons that contain specially formulated Silver-Ions Technology that would effectively reduce odour-causing bacteria up to 99%. It's your best bet against odour, especially during long runs. In conclusion, sweating is an inevitable



part of running which will result in bad body odour. Whether you are a distance runner or a casual jogger, smelling good is something that can add a boost to your exercise. After all, no one wants to worry about body odour after the high that accompanies a great feeling run. Also, in case you thought you could only sweat in summer that is not true. With the onset of winter come the heavy layers of clothing which results in even more body odour. Don't let body odour stop you from doing what you love, instead incorporate some of the tips listed above for a good running experience. (The writer, Daniel Vaz, is a Marathon Expert, NIVEA MEN)



● Faria



● Anika Khara



● Alia



● Deepika Maheshwari



● Komal



● Riya



● Hazra



● Silpa Singh



● Apurva



● Mamisha

PARTY

BUSINESS AS USUAL
 Home Minister Mahmood Ali, Dr Nawab Mir Nasir Ali Khan, Srileela Tesla and many other big names were guests for the one year anniversary celebrations of Women business cult over the weekend. Anika Khara and Deepika Maheshwari hosted this fantastic event that aimed to empower more female business magnates to reach their potential and do great work.

Photos by SV Chary

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



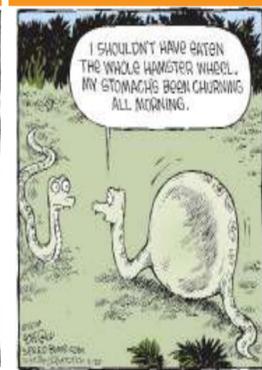
GARFIELD



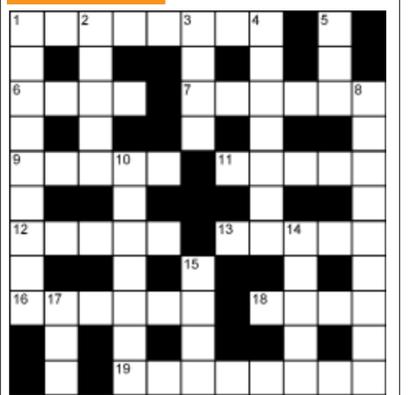
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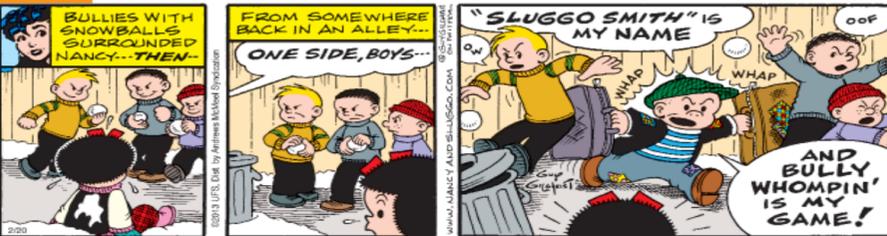
SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution
 3 2 7 1 9 5 4 6 8
 9 1 4 8 3 6 2 7 5
 6 5 8 7 4 2 9 1 3
 7 3 5 2 6 8 1 4 9
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 1 4 2 9 7 3 8 5 6
 5 7 1 6 8 9 3 2 4
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Rules
 • Each row and column can contain each number (1 to 9) exactly once.
 • The sum of all numbers in any row or column must equal 45.

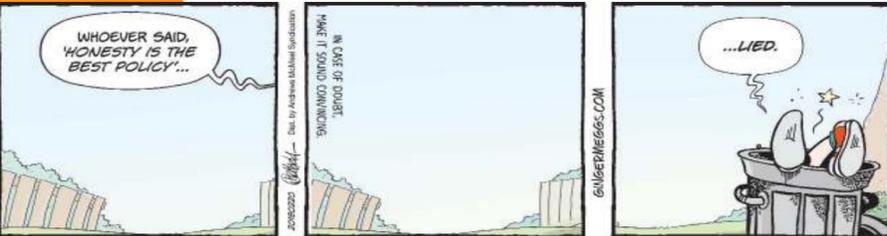
ACROSS
 1 Blew up with a bang
 6 Part of the foot
 7 Baby cows
 9 Beneath
 11 Wool-covered animals
 12 Melodies
 13 A garden ornament like a small person
 16 Leave
 18 Wound someone with a pointed weapon
 19 A person who controls the making of a film

DOWN
 1 Completely tired out
 2 Beg
 3 The floor on a ship
 4 A type of sea mammal
 5 Tell a fib
 8 A month
 10 A green gemstone
 14 Group of eight
 15 Film celebrity
 17 A long slippery fish

SOLUTION

C	L	G	V	K	P			
C	A	L	I	F	O	R	N	I
D	E	F	E	R				
E	X	A	C	T	O	P	E	R
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GINGER MEGGS



PAWAN VERSUS MAHESH NEXT SANKRANTI



HOURS AFTER PAWAN KALYAN'S NEXT WITH AM RATNAM WAS ANNOUNCED FOR SANKRANTI NEXT YEAR, HOMBAL FILMS ANNOUNCED APRIL 14, 2022 AS THE RELEASE DATE FOR PRABHAS-FRONTED SALAAR



In an expected announcement on Sunday, producer AM Ratnam announced that his next with Power star Pawan Kalyan will have a theatrical bow next Sankranti. As the actor's fans await the first look and title reveal this Maha Shivarathri, this piece of news has sent them into a state of euphoria.

In fact, the untitled film is the first one that Pawan began shooting after staging a comeback to films in 2019 but its large scale meant that films like *Vakeel Saab* and *Ayyappanum Koshiyum* remake took precedence shoot-wise and release-wise. However, in the last one month or so, the actor has been shooting for it in specially erected sets at Aluminum Factory alongside *Ayyappanum Koshiyum* remake.

Sankranti release date meant that Pawan will be locking horns with Mahesh Babu at the turnstile. The latter's film *Sarkaru Vaari Paata* was announced for a Sankranti release last month.

Sunday also saw a massive announcement from the team of Prabhas-starrer *Salaar*, an under-world action saga. Produced by Hombale Films, the film will grace the big screen on April 14, 2022. "Worldwide #Salaar On April 14, 2022. We can't wait to celebrate with you all (sic)," film's director Prashanth Neel wrote on Twitter. The film will have a long four-day weekend at the box-office as it opens on a Thursday.

SUNIL IS MARYADA KRISHNAYYA NOW



The filming of Sunil's next with VN Aditya has been wrapped up. As the actor celebrated his birthday on Sunday, the makers — TG Viswa Prasad, Kishore Garikipati and Archana Agarwal — disclosed the film's title as *Maryada Krishnayya* and also revealed his first look. "A thief whom you all want to invite home and steal your smiles (sic)," read a tweet from ATV Originals which Kishore is representing.

Speaking to us, Aditya dubbed the film as a full-length comic entertainer. "Sunil will be seen as opportunistic, selfish, cowardly and courageous in the film, changing according to the situations around him without losing his ethics. It's a different film from the comedies he had done in the past, in that he sticks to his characterization and evokes fun," the director, who worked with Sunil in his previous films like *Manasantha Nuvve*, *Aata* and *Boss*, said.

The director added that the film is a Hyderabad-set drama and presently composer Sai Kartheek is working on the background score. He added that Saloni will be seen as Sunil's wife.



LAKSHMI MANCHU completes 100 km of cycling for a cause



Actress Lakshmi Manchu on Sunday completed 100 km of cycling here for a cause. She had pledged this initiative to support the differently abled for sports.

Sharing her experience, Lakshmi said, "I have always been moved by the Philosopher Marcellus Aurelius. He says, 'To be tolerant to others and strict with yourself'. This is what drove me every day for the last 60 days — waking up at 5 am, drawing my boundaries, setting a structure, and toiling hard every day."

The actress participated in the cause for Aditya Mehra's foundation and says that her inspiration came from various people in need.

Lakshmi, who was recently seen in Netflix's *Pitta Kathalu* said, "Inspired by the many who have less than me and inspiring my community who have more than me. I'm grateful to Aditya for putting this ride together."

The actress had earlier shared her reasons for taking up the cause. She said, "My heart again went out to these people, who have a limb or something missing from their lives because of they weren't born like this, they had an accident or they were in the front lines saving our country and they willingly gave up a part of their body for the betterment of us or an accident took it away."

IT Secretary Jayesh Ranjan was also among many others who took part in the event.



SANTOSH SOBHAN ON A ROLL

Already a part of UV Creations multiple projects and Swapna Cinema's next with Nandini Reddy, Santosh Sobhan has now bagged Sushmita Konidela's second project as a producer replacing original choice Adith Arun in the lead role.

We were the first (Dec 15) to inform you that mega daughter Sushmita Konidela has roped in Adith Arun for her second production venture to be made under Goldbox Entertainments. However, we've now learnt that Adith is no longer part of the project.

Santosh Sobhan has stepped into his shoes. Prasanth Kumar Dimmala, who wrote and directed the adult comedy series *Shit Happens*, is making his feature directorial debut with the untitled project, a feel-good drama set in a tier-two city.

The source points out, "After the script was developed completely, Adith and the makers felt he wasn't fitting in it. It was agreed upon mutually that it's best if he doesn't spearhead it. All these developments unfolded just before the makers wanted to take the project off the ground. Santosh Sobhan was immediately con-

tacted and impressed by the script and the big names behind the scenes, he immediately allocated dates. He has even started shooting for the project."

The source adds that Adith and Goldbox are discussing the possibility of doing another project in the future, while for Santosh this is a jackpot, as he is already a part of UV Creations two projects. Not to mention he will start Nandini Reddy's next with Swapna Cinema later this month.

— NG

ALANTI SITRALU focuses on internal conflicts: Director Supreeth



Debutant director Supreeth C Krishna reveals that *Alanti Sitrulu* is a social drama, which focuses on the basic emotions four characters go through in their lives. "It's a simple film where internal conflicts take centre stage rather than external conflicts. The first character is about an aspiring boxer Yash (played by Ajay Kathurvar) who is yet to take his first step. He is going through psychological and personal issues. His story discusses what he lacks in taking

the first step. The second is about Raag (Yash Puri), a wannabe musician who wanders around without any destination for inspiration. He has pain within himself. He gets inspired by an escort lady Pallavi (Swetha Parashar) who is a decade older to him.

"The third is about Pallavi who operates at Hyderabad metro. She isn't a typical escort; she is classy. She dreams of leading a family life but due to unavoidable circumstances ends up being an escort. She hates her work but cannot find a way to break out of it. She builds expectations on Dilip (Prawin Yandamuri) who is the fourth character. He belongs to a crime world and carries out the dirty work of his boss. He is widowed and has a 10-year-old daughter. Pallavi feels she can fill the void in his life and falls in love with him. How the four roles get interlinked at a crucial juncture and what would be the end forms the story," the director tells us.

Supreeth, who is an alumnus of Annapurna College of Film and Media, where he studied masters in filmmaking, wrapped up the film's shooting in December 2019. He completed editing it last March but the lockdown delayed other post-production formalities. Having produced the film along with his friends L Sri Varun, D Rahul Reddy and Cosmic Ray Productions, he is looking at releasing it in the second half of this month. K Raghavendra Reddy is presenting it. — NG

LYON SLAMS CRITICS OF MOTERA WICKET

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Nathan Lyon would love India's chief curator to be put in charge of the SCG, declaring the much-maligned pitch in Ahmedabad was brilliant and he is perplexed by those "crying" about spin-friendly surfaces.

India crushed England by 10 wickets in a pink-ball match that spanned just 842 balls, making it the shortest completed Test since 1934.

The result has reignited debate about home-ground advantage.

Former England captains Andrew Strauss, Alastair Cook and Michael Vaughan criticised the pitch prepared by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI)'s chief groundsman Ashish Bhowmik, while the tourists are considering whether to lodge a formal complaint to the International Cricket Council.

Lyon pointed to the fact that Jack Leach was the visitors' sole frontline spinner when asked about the reaction to the pitch.

"The best thing about this Test match that just passed is that England went in with four seamers," Lyon said.

"That will do me, I don't need to say any more."

Lyon, who worked as a curator before starting his 100-Test career, was captivated by the carnage created by fellow offspinner Ravichandran Ashwin and left-



arm twerker Axar Patel. "I was up all night watching it," he said.

"It was absolutely brilliant. I'm thinking about bringing that curator out to the SCG."

"We play on seaming wickets around the world and get

bowled out for 47, 60. Nobody ever says a thing (about the pitch)."

"But as soon as it starts spinning, everyone in the world seems to start crying about it."

"I don't get it. I'm all for it, it was entertaining."

The result was a major blow to Australia's hopes of sneaking into the Test championship final.

Tim Paine's team will contest the mid-year final at Lord's if England win their fourth Test against India, which starts at the same venue on Thursday.

Last 2 tracks were hardest to keep: Foakes

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

The square turner at the Chepauk for the second Test and the Ahmedabad dust bowl provided for the 'pink ball' game are hardest surfaces that Ben Foakes has kept on in his nascent international career.

India have put England on the mat with a couple of tracks which aided the home spinners as Ravichandran Ashwin and Axar Patel ran riot, giving India 2-1 lead in the four-match series.

"Last two games are the hardest pitches I have kept on. In the last game the pink ball was skidding, I haven't seen a wicket like that and keeping on it was a good challenge," Foakes, who has replaced Jos Buttler as per England's rotation policy, said during a virtual media conference.

By his own admission, Foakes hasn't seen a cricket ball turn so much.

"The two pitches that I have played, I have never seen ball turn like that. It's certainly very challenging. It's like having day five pitch from ball one."

But for one of world's best glovesman, the last two games were learning experience and real fun.

"When the ball spins, it's fun



to keep and in Sri Lanka, it was easy because it was consistent and you knew the ball is going to turn. What I found during pink ball Test was it could spin square past batter or it could skid."

He admitted that no keeper can take every catch on these sort of tracks.

"On these sort of pitches, you can't catch every ball."

"The way I have approached is three matches for England and try and play as well as I can. Not look too far ahead and enjoy the moment I guess," he said.

Rohit reaches career-best eighth

PTI ■ DUBAI

Opener Rohit Sharma touched his career-best eighth position in the ICC Test Batsmen's Rankings on Sunday with a six-place jump after his impressive show in India's 10-wicket win over England in the low-scoring third Test in Ahmedabad.

His rating points aggregate is 742, 20 more than his best of 722 in October 2019 when he was ranked 10th.

Player of the match Axar Patel and Ravichandran Ashwin have also made solid gains after playing a crucial role in India's win on a spin-friendly track.

Left-arm spinner Patel's 11-wicket match haul has helped him gain 30 slots to reach 38th position while off-spinner Ashwin's seven wickets have lifted him four places to third position.

England spinner Jack Leach has entered the top 30 for the first time, moving up three places to 28th after taking four wickets. Captain Joe Root's maiden five-wicket haul has lifted him 16 places to 72nd among bowlers while he is now joint-13th among all-rounders.

Opener Zak Crawley's knock of 53 in the first innings has helped him advance 15 places to 46th in what was the only notable gain for any of their batsmen.



Padikkal makes hat-trick of hundreds

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Young Karnataka sensation Devdutt Padikkal continued his terrific form ahead of the IPL with a third successive century as the defending champions stormed into the Vijay Hazare Trophy quarterfinals with a lopsided 10-wicket win over Railways in a group C here on Sunday.

The Royal Challengers Bangalore opener, who scored a careerbest 152 against Odisha and followed it up with 126 not out versus Kerala in their last outing, smacked nine sixes and as many boundaries in his 145 not out from 125 balls.

The 20-year-old left-hander had the company of his skipper Ravikumar Samarth who also slammed an unbeaten century (130 not out from 118 balls; 17x4) as the opening duo raced to the 285-run target win with 57 balls to spare at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium here.

The big win ensured that they finished on top of group C to qualify for the last-eight while Uttar Pradesh finished second following their six-wicket win over Odisha at the Just Cricket Academy here.

The Railways bowlers did very little to trouble the Karnataka opening duo who raced past 200 in 29.5 overs as the seemingly challenging total proved just to be a cakewalk.



GUJARAT BEAT BARODA

Hosts Gujarat defeated Baroda by 40 runs in their last Group A match to remain unbeaten. Opting to bat, Gujarat posted 277 for 7, riding on opener Dhruv Raval's 102 off 129 balls and then restricted the opposition to 237 for 9.

Experienced leg-spinner Piyush Chawla (3/52) shone bright with the ball for Gujarat.

Left-handed batsman

Raval took charge and anchored the innings with responsibility en route to his century knock which was laced with nine boundaries and a six.

Gujarat pegged back Baroda by taking three wickets in quick succession as they slipped to 135 for 4.

Pacer Chintan Gaja struck twice, first removing Solanki, who was caught by Raval, and then sent back inform rival skipper Krunal Pandya (2).

Ninad Rathwa (3) also fell cheaply.

Then Chawla trapped Patel in front of the wicket as Baroda lost half of their side for 154. From there on, it was an uphill task for Baroda, who eventually ended at 237 for 9.

ANDHRA BEAT JHARKHAND

Andhra outplayed Jharkhand by seven wickets to emerge on top of Group B. Andhra, Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh finished on 12 points each from five matches but Andhra emerged on top, thanks to their higher net run-rate and secured a place in the knockout phase.

Sent in to bat, Jharkhand struggled with only four batsmen managing double figures. Skipper Ishan Kishan made 38 (68 balls, 3 fours), the highest score while medium-pacer M Harishankar Reddy was impressive with a four-wicket haul for Andhra.

Ashwin Hebbar (44, 18 balls, 4X4s, 4X6s) and Ricky Bhui (57 not out, 27 balls, 5X4s, 4X6s) went on the attack with the Jharkhand bowlers having no respite.

The duo added 82 in 5.5 overs before Hebbar fell to Shahbaz Nadeem (1/26). Bhui continued with his aggressive ways and despite losing captain Hanuma Vihari (4), he saw the team home in the company of Naren Reddy (16 not out, 7 balls, 1X4, 2X6s).

Sune Luus to lead SA Eves

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Sune Luus will lead South Africa women's team against India in the upcoming limited over series as regular skipper Dane Van Niekerk and Chloe Tryon will again miss the assignment due to injuries, the country's cricket board CSA said on Sunday.

South Africa retained most of the players in the 18-member squad which had won the ODI and T20 series against Pakistan last month. Van Niekerk and Chloe Tryon were not part of that series.

Pacer Masabata Klaas is the only one to miss out after picking up an injury at the last moment.

Sune Luus had captained the side in the last series and will continue to do so with Van Niekerk and Tryon yet to recover from lower-back injuries.

"It is really exciting to finally have this tour confirmed and announce our squad that will do duty here in India, and we are looking forward to getting out there to see our ladies prove themselves under different playing conditions," Hilton Moreeng was quoted as saying in a statement by *Cricbuzz*.

"India is always a wonderful place to tour and we are looking forward to the challenge that lies ahead." The series comprises five ODIs, followed by three T20 internationals — all to be held at the Ekana Stadium in Lucknow.

SQUAD

Sune Luus (c), Ayabonga Khaka, Shabnim Ismail, Laura Wolvaardt, Trisha Chetty, Sinalo Jafta, Tasmin Britz, Marizanne Kapp, Nondumiso Shangase, Lizelle Lee, Anneke Bosch, Faye Tunnicliffe, Nonkululeko Mlaba, Mignon du Preez, Nadine de Klerk, Lara Goodall and Tumi Sekhukhune.



Ind calculated Eng's ineptitude against spin: Chappell



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India figured out England's general "ineptitude against spin" during the second Test in Chennai and used it to their advantage in the 'Pink Ball' game by unleashing a spin-heavy attack on a helpful track, says former Australia captain Ian Chappell.

"India's decision to select three spinners for the Test was prompted by England's batting on a tricky Chennai pitch, where their batsmen - Joe Root excepted - displayed a distinct ineptitude against spin," Chappell wrote in a column in *ESPNCricinfo*.

"India correctly calculated that would result in mental scarring and used it to their advantage."

Chappell said it was poor defence which led to England's collapse in the third Test.

"When faced with a serious spin challenge, the England batsmen

didn't trust their defence, which eventually resulted in panicked attempts to attack the Indian spinners," he wrote.

"Their choice to reverse-sweep rather than to leave their crease to change the bowler's length is a classic example."

"How can a risky premeditated shot be less dangerous than what was previously a trusted technique to unsettle good spinners?" he questioned.

Chappell said "Shrewd use of footwork not only helps negate the spin but also puts a batsman in a position to direct the ball where he wants."

"To be fair, this is a skill to be learned at a young age. Which prompts the question: why is it not widely taught in England, where sweeping is misguidedly touted as the secret to playing spin bowling successfully?"



Mary will lead 14-member team

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Six-time world champion MC Mary Kom will spearhead a 14-member Indian boxing team in the Boxam International tournament in Castellon, Spain from March 1 to 7.

According to a release issued by the Boxing Federation of India (BFI), the Indian contingent left for Spain in early hours on Sunday.

Besides Mary Kom, the team also has Commonwealth Games Silver medalist Manish Kaushik (63kg).

The duo are key highlights of the Indian team as they are set to make a return to the ring for the first time since the Asian Olympic Qualifiers held in Jordan in March last year.

The highly-competitive tournament will feature 19 nations with their Tokyo-bound boxers.

The Indian team will consist of eight men and six women pugilists, including nine Olympic qualified boxers.

Gunners come back to hunt Foxes

AP ■ LEICESTER

Arsenal turn around its recent poor form to beat Leicester 3-1 on Sunday as the home side was left to deal with an injury to on-form midfielder Harvey Barnes.

Arsenal started the day in 11th and returned to the top half with the win, while Leicester missed a chance to challenge Manchester United for second.

Youri Tielemans gave Leicester the lead in the sixth minute when the Belgian midfielder surged down the right



flank as Arsenal failed to close him down, and then shot low past Bernd Leno.

David Luiz leveled for Arsenal with his first league goal since October 2019, heading in Willian's free kick when he was left unmarked.

Pepe had earlier been denied a penalty when a video review showed he was tripped just outside the area by Wilfred Ndidi, but was key to winning a spot-kick just before half time when he struck a shot that hit Ndidi's arm as the Nigerian midfielder tried to block with

his leg. Alexandre Lacazette stepped up to power the penalty in.

Pepe made it 3-1 in the 52nd when he started a move down the right flank and then ran through the Leicester defense to apply a simple finish off Willian's low cross.

Barnes was carried off early in the second half with an apparent knee injury, and defender Jonny Evans was also hurt later in the game. Leicester was already without attacking midfielder James Maddison, who has a hip injury.

Vinesh returns to mat with Gold



PTI ■ UKRAINE

Star Indian wrestler Vinesh Phogat on Sunday swept 2017 world champion V Kaladzinsky to grab a Gold medal at the Outstanding Ukrainian Wrestlers and Coaches Memorial tournament here, and returned to the mat in style after a long coronavirus-forced break.

Up against the world number seven Belarusian, it was not an easy bout for the world number three Indian as the two grapplers kept testing each other with consistent attacks in the sea-saw battle in which Vinesh prevailed.

Vinesh opened up a 4-0 lead in the 53kg final with a throw which she initiated with a left-leg attack but Kaladzinsky made it 4-4 with her brilliant move.

Vinesh took the break leading 6-4, adding to her score with a take down, 10 seconds before the break.

The Belarusian put pressure on the Indian with another four-point throw but with 25 seconds to go, Vinesh's move fetched her four more points for a 10-8 lead. She got into a position from where she pinned Kaladzinsky to ensure herself a Gold.

AP ■ MILAN

Romelu Lukaku scored after just 32 seconds and helped to set up two goals as league leader Inter Milan beat Genoa 3-0 in Serie A on Sunday.

Inter dominated but took until the 69th minute to double its lead, through Matteo Darmian. Substitute Alexis Sanchez sealed the win to ensure Antonio Conte's side moved seven points above second-place AC Milan, which visits Roma in the late game.

Inter on track for Scudetto

Napoli was also playing later, against Benevento.

It was Genoa's first league defeat since early January and left it 13th, eight points above the drop zone.

Inter was bidding for a fifth straight league win and it got off to the perfect start when Nicolò Barella sent a ball through to Lukaku, who played a quick one-two with Lautaro Martinez before drilling



into the bottom left corner.

The Nerazzurri wasted a number of chances and Barella also hit a long-range stunner off the crossbar in the 17th.

Inter finally doubled its lead when Lukaku drew defenders toward him before setting up an unmarked Darmian.

Sánchez was brought on in the 76th and the Inter forward immedi-

ately scored as he turned in the rebound after Genoa goalkeeper Mattia Perin parried Lukaku's effort. The goal was originally ruled off for offside but was awarded on video review.

Injury-hit Juventus was held at Hellas Verona to 1-1 as its hopes of a record-extending 10th successive Serie A title took a blow.