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A COMRADE
MOMENT FOR
CHARAN

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Bailable warrant
against Kangana
on Javed Akhtar's
complaint

PNS ■ MUMBAI

A Mumbai court on Monday issued a bailable warrant against actor Kangana Ranaut after she failed to appear before it in connection with a defamation complaint filed against her by lyricist Javed Akhtar.

The Andheri metropolitan magistrate's court issued a summons to Ranaut on February 1, directing her to appear before it on March 1. However, Ranaut failed to appear on Monday following which Magistrate R R Khan issued a bailable warrant against her and posted the matter for further hearing on March 26. A lawyer in the case had earlier informed March 22 as the next date of hearing.

Ranaut's advocate Rizwan Siddiquee argued in the court that the summons and process were issued against Ranaut without following the procedure laid down in law and hence, were "bad in law".

2

Second phase vax drive
at 93 centres in state

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana's Health Minister Eatala Rajender on Monday launched the second phase of Covid vaccination by receiving the first dose at government-run Area Hospital at Huzurabad.

The vaccination for those above 60 years of age and 45-59 year old with comorbidities was underway at 93 centres across the state. The vaccine is being given at 48 government and 45 private hospitals spread across 33 districts including Hyderabad.

The programme began at 10.30 am but few beneficiaries were seen at the vaccination centres. The officials attributed this to lack of awareness about online registration on Cowin app. A maximum of 200 people will be vaccinated at each centre on the first day. The health department plans to ramp up the numbers in the coming days.

The authorities had initially planned to set up 1,500 centres to give the dose but limited this number to 93 on the first day to avoid any confusion.

Director of public health and family Dr G Srinivasa Rao said on the first day the vaccination centres were set up only in district headquarters, cities and major town.

For the first week only those



Health Minister Eatala Rajender receiving the first dose at government-run Area Hospital at Huzurabad on Monday

who register via Cowin app will be given the vaccine. Walk-in registration at the centres will be allowed from next week. The official explained that this is being done to avoid overcrowding and chaos.

There are an estimated 55 lakh people in the state who come under two categories. The official said since the programme is likely to continue for 5-6 months, there was no need to rush for the jab.

After taking the vaccine, health minister told reporters that all beneficiaries will be covered. He said people should not have any apprehensions or

doubts about the vaccine.

For those reporting to centres with prior registration, the entire process was taking about one hour. This includes 30 minutes of observation, document verification and wait time. "I have long been waiting for this day. I am happy that I received the dose," said a senior citizen at the vaccination centre at government-run Osmania General Hospital (OGH) in Hyderabad.

Referring to the low turnout, OGH superintendent B Nagender said this may be because of low awareness among senior citizens about online registration.

VAX HESITANCY?
NO WAY!Centenarian gets a
jab in Telangana

HYDERABAD: Countering all talk of vaccine hesitancy by action, Jaidev Chowdhary, a 100-year-old Hyderabad, got vaccinated in Telangana. He was among the first one to take the jab at Medicovert Hospitals in Hyderabad on Monday. Visibly happy, Jaidev said that he had been eagerly waiting for the day to be vaccinated so as to enhance the quality of his socially active life. Referring to hesitation on the part of some people to take the jab in view of the misinformation being spread about the vaccine in some quarters, he said that people should come forward to take the vaccination; not just for their own benefit, but for their family and society.

Centre all charged
up as spectrum
fetches Rs 77,146
cr bids on Day-1

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's first auction of spectrum in five years attracted Rs 77,146 crore of bids on the opening day on Monday with Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel, and Vodafone Idea participating in the bidding process - a response that the government said was better than expected. There were, however, no takers for spectrum in 700 MHz and 2500 MHz bands on the first day, and the auctions will continue and conclude on Tuesday.

About 2,308.80 MHz of spectrum, that carry telecom signals, in seven bands worth nearly Rs 4 lakh crore at the reserve or start price, was offered for bidding in the auction that began on Monday.

2

Tobacco vendors'
bodies up in arms
against licensing moveANUSHA PUPPALA
■ HYDERABAD

Tobacco vendors' associations are up in arms against the National Law School's recommendation that all retailers and wholesalers of tobacco products should have licence to do business. The NLS has also come up with a model legal framework for licensing of vendors selling beedis, cigarettes and chewing tobacco products.

The report released by the Chair on Consumer Law and Practice, National Law School of India University, has come up with this plan ostensibly to "promote health and fulfil a core government function of advancing public health, safety and well-being of people. The report also says shops selling tobacco products cannot



sell other products.

The Pan Shop Owners Association of India and the Federation of Retailer Association of India are against the move got licensing of retailers and wholesalers for selling tobacco product.

2

Stopped at Tirupati airport,
Naidu basks in the spotlight

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

With his back against the wall, TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu on Monday showed that he may have aged, but he has lost none of the killer instincts that had helped him remain at the head of the political table for decades.

The former chief minister seized his detention at the Renigunta airport, while he was on his way to Tirupati and Chittoor towns to turn the attention on to himself for six long hours, by squatting on the floor of the airport and refusing to budge.



2

HC allows Varavara to furnish cash for bail

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Monday allowed ailing poet-activist Varavara Rao, accused in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case, to furnish a temporary cash surety for release on bail until the process of submitting solvent sureties is

completed.

Rao (82) was last week granted interim bail on medical grounds for six months by the HC which had asked him to furnish a personal bond of Rs 50,000 and two solvent sureties of the like amount.

Later, the activist, who is currently admitted in the

Nanavati Hospital here since November last year, filed an application in the HC to allow him to furnish cash surety to seek urgent release as the process of submitting solvent sureties was taking time.

A division bench of Justices S S Shinde and Manish Pitale on Monday allowed Rao to

furnish a cash surety of Rs 50,000 and gave him time till April 5 to submit the two solvent sureties of the same amount.

The case is being probed by the National Investigation Agency (NIA).

2

'Mumbai outage
may have been
China 'cyber
sabotage'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The massive power outage in Mumbai on October 12 last year may have been the result of a cyber sabotage, Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh said on Monday, citing a probe report of the state's Cyber Cell.

2

Chinese hackers
targeted India's
power through
malware: US firm

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TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:

Magha & Shukla Paksha

Panchangam

Tithi : Chaturthi: 02:58 am (Next Day)

Nakshatram: 03:29 am (Next Day)

Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start

any important work)

Rahukalam: 03:23 pm - 04:51 pm

Yamagandam: 09:32 am - 11:00 am

Varjyam: 12:50 pm - 02:18 pm

Gulika: 12:28 pm - 01:56 pm

Good Time: (to start any important work)

Amritakalam: 09:37 pm - 11:05 pm

Abhijit Muhurtham: 12:04 pm - 12:51 pm

HYDERABAD
WEATHER

Forecast: Partly cloudy

Temp: 34/19

Humidity: 30%

Sunrise: 06:33 am

Sunset: 06:22 pm

Current Weather Conditions

Updated march 1, 2021 5:00 PM

Left-Congress-ISF
can well turn tablesPRANAB GHOSH
■ KOLKATA

Blame it on media or the recent analyses of political pundits, the fight in West Bengal, scheduled to go for an eight-phase Assembly election beginning March 27, had till Sunday morning been projected as a two-pronged contest between the ruling Trinamool Congress Party (TMC) and the challenger Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which, buoyed by its 'good' performance in the 2019 Lok

Sabha polls, is now seeking to wrest the state from TMC. That narrative has changed.

That the new alliance, comprising Left parties, the Indian National Congress (INC) and other 'secular' forces, including the Abbas Siddiqui-led Indian Secular Front (ISF), which had been termed by many pundits with disdain as a fledgling combination, could well upset the applecart of both the BJP and the TMC.

2

I-T unearths
Rs 400 cr tax
evasion by
pharma firm

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Income Tax Department has detected "unaccounted" income of about Rs 400 crore after raids on a major pharmaceutical group based in Hyderabad, the CBDT said.

The searches were carried out on February 24 at 20 locations spread across 5 states. The CBDT said the pharmaceutical group is engaged in the business of manufacturing of intermediates, APIs and formulations, and majority of its products are exported to European countries and the USA.

"The search has led to unearthing of evidence relating to unaccounted income of around Rs 400 cr, out of which the assessee group has admitted an additional income of Rs 350 crore," the CBDT claimed in a statement.

2

Summer to be relatively less
harsh in south-central India

TS to experience max temperatures that will be below normal

PNS ■ HYDERABAD/NEW DELHI

The saving grace in the hot summer ahead is the distinct probability that it would be relatively less harsh in Telangana and in the rest of south-central region of the country. Curiously, coastal Andhra Pradesh would still experience 'above normal' maximum temperatures.

It is considered heat wave if the maximum temperature of a station reaches at least



40°C or more for plains and at least 30°C or more for hilly regions.

2

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Opposition bid to fuel fire against Modi will fizzle out

Forgetting that its own government hiked VAT on petrol from 28% to 30% and on diesel from 22% to 28% in Rajasthan, the Congress is protesting against the high fuel prices.

Critics of the Modi government never try to understand that the central tax on petroleum products is only 21.59% as against the 41.66% levied by states.

As chief minister, Chandrababu Naidu hiked taxes on petrol and diesel and on coming to power, Jagan levied 31% tax on petrol and 22.5% on diesel and also an additional Rs 4 per litre.

To clear a burden of lakhs of crores borrowed by previous regimes and accruing interest, Modi was compelled to hike petrol or diesel prices.

In April 2020, a barrel of crude oil in the international market was \$18.38; it increased to \$59.30 in

February this year, a 222.63% hike. Brent crude oil prices have shot up by 18% in just a month. In this backdrop, the Centre wants to bring petroleum products under the GST regime, but states are not willing to let go an opportunity to levy taxes on these products.

Some dailies accused Modi of developing Gujarat at the cost of states like Andhra Pradesh and claim that no development had taken place in his rule at all. In fact, Modi, under Bharat Mala project, is developing 51,000-km roads at a cost of Rs 9 lakh-crore, including in AP at a cost of Rs 65,000 crore.

The recent budget sanctioned 2,389 km road projects worth Rs 29,137 crore; 3,787 km railway projects worth Rs 40,064 crore to Andhra Pradesh. Also, the Centre allocated Rs 9,772 crore for the health sector of

The recent budget sanctioned 2,389 km road projects worth Rs 29,137 crore; 3,787 km railway projects worth Rs 40,064 crore to Andhra Pradesh. Also, the Centre allocated Rs 9,772 crore for the health sector of the state.

the state.

Development projects worth lakhs of crores are being implemented in AP, but not in Gujarat.

Because of the Modi government, IIT, IIM, IISER, AIIMS, IIIT, NIT, Central University, Agricultural University, Tribal University are coming up in AP.

Does any other state have these many institutions? Does any other state have an Electronic Manufacturing Zone and over 20 central organisations and a prestigious body like MedTech?

Towards development of infrastructure in AP, the

Indian Institute of Petroleum has been set up in Visakhapatnam and also a petro-chemical complex besides expanding the capacity of the HPCL. The Centre invested thousands of crores in this regard.

The Bengaluru-Chennai Expressway, Amaravati-Anantapur Expressway will play a crucial role in AP's development. Up-gradation of Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam, Tirupati airports as international airports took place only during the Modi regime. The first phase of the Visakha-Chennai industrial corridor



Y SATYA KUMAR
BJP National Secretary

is under implementation and will create thousands of jobs.

Of the 14 NEMZ in the country, two have been allotted to AP alone. While the NEMZ in Gujarat resumed its activities, the AP government is yet to complete land acquisition for the NEMZs. Who should be blamed for soft peddling of the NEMZ which seeks to provide employment to 2 lakh persons directly and another 2

lakh indirectly?

AP was allotted 20,28,868 houses under the PMAY, while only 7,65,868 houses were allotted to Gujarat. Where is the discrimination? While AP could build only 3,59,068 houses, Gujarat built 5,21,311.

Modi took a series of measures to develop residuary AP constructively keeping in mind the financial problems the new state could face.

The 14th Finance Commission during 2015-20 sanctioned Rs 22,113 crore to overcome the revenue deficit. The 14th Finance Commission, compared to 13th Finance Commission, transferred Rs 29,374 crore additionally to AP. The 15th Finance Commission decided to transfer Rs 30,497 crore towards revenue deficit. Since

TRULY
SPEAKING

2014, lakhs of crores have been transferred to AP in various ways. Why is AP making a fuss?

Successive governments failed to implement Polavaram project, but soon after coming to power in 2014, the Modi government cleared all hurdles. Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Shekawat has told Parliament that there was no dearth of funds for the project.

Honouring the state government's decision on locating capital at Amaravati, the Centre sanctioned Rs 1,000 crore to the CRDA by March 2015 and another Rs 2,500 crore to build Assembly, Secretariat, High Court and Raj Bhavan and recognised Amaravati as a heritage city. Rs 1,927 crore was allocated for the Amaravati Outer Ring Road. The Nandyal-Yerraguntla railway line project, sanctioned during PV

Narasimha Rao regime, was completed within two years of Modi coming to power.

Objections to the renaming of Motera stadium after Modi are ridiculous. The entire sports complex is named after Sardar Patel while only the stadium is named after Modi.

As Gujarat Cricket Association president, he was instrumental in setting up the Motera stadium. How can states name Central government schemes after Chandranna or Jagananna? Is any scheme either in Gujarat or in the country named after Modi?

Did anyone ask the rationale behind naming government schemes, educational institutions, airports, roads, parks, stadia, streets, narrow alleys after Nehru, Indira or Rajiv Gandhi?

The people will see through the Opposition's petty politicking.

Bailable warrant against Kangana on Javed...

Continued from page 1

Siddiquee said a petition would be filed in the Bombay High Court challenging the process issued by the magistrate. Akhtar's advocate Vrinda Grover, however, argued that even if the process is being challenged, Ranaut has to appear before the court as directed, in the absence of any stay on the summons by a higher court.

"It is the accused's right to appeal against the order, or even challenge the proceedings, that no one can deny and no one can stop, not even this court. However, she

(Ranaut) has failed to comply with the order of this court and there is also no stay obtained from a higher court," the lawyer argued.

Grover then filed an application seeking a non-bailable warrant to be issued against the actor. This was opposed by Siddiquee.

I-T unearths...

Continued from page 1

It added that Rs 1.66 crore cash was also seized during the operation.

"Incriminating evidence in the form of digital media, pen drives, documents, etc. have been found and seized," the CBDT said. The statement said digital evidence was gathered from SAP-ERP software.

"Issues relating to purchases made from bogus and non-existent entities, artificial inflation of certain heads of expenditure, along with suppression of receipts relating to by-product sale were detected. Evidence of on-money payment for purchase of lands was also found," it alleged. Multiple other legal issues were also identified such as personal expenses being booked in the company's books and land purchased by related concerns or individuals below government value, the CBDT said.

Over seven lakh devotees attend Peddagattu Jatara

PNS ■ SURYAPET

Over seven lakh devotees attended Sri Lingamanthula Swamy jatara on Monday, an important day of the four-day biennial fete. The devotees not only from across Telangana but also from Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu arrived at the jatara, also popular as Peddagattu jatara. This led to a traffic jam on the National Highway-65, forcing police to divert vehicles going towards Vijayawada on alternative routes.

Devotees camped in the area around the Peddagattu hillock up to a radius of 2.5 km. The Sri Lingamanthula Swamy temple started witnessing a huge rush of devotees right from 9 am and the rush peaked by noon.

Peddagattau reverberated with the beats of traditional drums "Bheeris" and the chanting of "Oo Linga... Oo Linga". They made circumambulations (Pradakshinas) around the temple along with the sheep, which later were sacrificed at the jatara. Plays of the devotees in traditional dresses become a main attraction at the jatara.

Lakhs of women prepared bonams using special ingredients, kept them in specially decorated baskets, made



'pradikshinas' at the temple as part of the ritual 'Gampala Pradikshina', and offered them to Goddess Chowdamma at the temple on Monday. Devotees wearing traditional dresses and holding 'Trishulas' (tridents), a weapon carried by Lord Lingamanthula Swamy, were a special attraction at the jatara.

After the arrival of the divine box 'Deverapette' at the temple on Sunday midnight, hundreds of sheep were sacrificed to the presiding deity by the devotees. As thousands of sheep were sacrificed, the municipal authorities took special care to clean the place every hour.

The issueless women tied 'mudupulu' and candles to a tree beside the temple and prayed Sri Lingamanthula Swamy to bless them with children.

Energy Minister G Jagadish Reddy, Animal Husbandry Minister Talasani Srinivas Yadav and Rajya Sabha member Badugula Lingaiah Yadav participated in the special pooja at the temple.

Srinivas Yadav said Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao had released required funds for the temple's development. He had also revived the past glory of the jatara by allocating crores of rupees for its arrangements. The

Kaleshwaram project had changed the face of rural economy in Suryapet district, which, Srinivas Yadav felt, could be seen in the eyes of the devotees from various districts.

Traffic was jammed for three kilometres on the National Highway 65 following a huge rush of the devotees. Though heavy vehicles were diverted to alternative routes, a sudden spurt in the incoming vehicles resulted in a massive jam around noon. It took three hours for police to clear the traffic. Earlier, police diverted all vehicles moving between Hyderabad and Vijayawada to alternative routes.

HC allows Varavara to furnish...

Continued from page 1

On February 24, Rao filed the application seeking modification of the bail order and permission to deposit temporary cash bonds before the NIA court here, instead of the solvent sureties. Rao's counsel Anand Grover had said the procedure for obtaining sureties was time-taking. He had sought permission to deposit the cash bonds for a period of two months and complete the sol-

vent sureties formalities in such period. Rao will be released from the hospital once the bail formalities are completed.

The high court while granting him bail imposed several conditions on his release, including a direction to him to remain in the city, within the jurisdiction of the NIA court in Mumbai. After the six-month period, Rao will have to either surrender before the trial court or approach the HC for extension of the bail period.

'Mumbai outage may have been...

Continued from page 1

Addressing media persons jointly here with Energy Minister Nitin Raut, Deshmukh said the Maharashtra Cyber Cell has also mentioned in its preliminary report that unaccounted data may have been transferred to the MSEBs (state electricity board) server from a foreign server.

He, however, did not name the country from where the

data may have been transferred. Deshmukh's comments came in the wake of a US company's report claiming that amidst the border tension in Ladakh last year, a Chinese government-linked group of hackers targeted India's critical power grid system through a malware.

The report raised suspicion whether the massive power outage in the financial capital was a result of the online intrusion.

Summer to be relatively less harsh...

Continued from page 1

However, 'below normal' seasonal maximum temperatures are likely over most of the subdivisions of south peninsula and adjoining central India. Hence, Telangana State is likely to witness 'below normal' maximum and minimum temperatures from March to May 2021.

Telangana State, which is in the core heat wave zone of India, is likely to witness 'below normal' maximum and minimum temperatures during March to May, Indian Metrological Department authorities said on Monday.

According to IMD, season averaged maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to be below normal within -

0.14°C of climatological normals.

The probability forecast for maximum temperatures indicates most parts of Telangana are very likely to experience 'below normal' maximum temperatures. Likewise, the probability forecast for minimum temperatures indicates that most parts of Telangana are very likely to experience below normal minimum temperatures.

K Nagrathna, Director-Indian Metrological Department Hyderabad, said, "During March to May, below normal seasonal maximum temperatures (-0.140C with probability of below normal by 40% to 60%) are very likely to occur over most parts of Telangana. Below normal seasonal minimum temperatures

(-0.060C with probability of below normal, 40% to 60%) are very likely to occur over most parts of Telangana".

During March to May, above normal seasonal maximum temperatures are likely over most of the subdivisions of north, north-west and north-east India, a few subdivisions from eastern and western parts of central India and a few coastal subdivisions of north peninsula India. However, below normal seasonal maximum temperatures are likely over most of the subdivisions of south peninsula and adjoining central India.

Seasonal minimum temperatures are likely over most of the subdivisions of north India along the foot hills of Himalayas, north-east India,

western part of central India and southern part of peninsular India. However, below normal season minimum temperatures are likely over most of the subdivisions of eastern part of the central India and a few subdivisions of extreme northern part of the country.

The probability forecast for maximum temperatures indicates above normal maximum temperatures over most of the subdivisions of north, north-west and north-east India, a few subdivisions of eastern (Chhattisgarh and Odisha) and western (Gujarat region and Saurashtra & Kutch) parts of central India, and a few coastal subdivisions (Konkan & Goa and coastal Andhra Pradesh) of north peninsula India.

Tobacco vendors'...

Continued from page 1

The association has approached the authorities and submitted representations against the amendment of the proposed Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA) Amendment Bill, 2020 as it says that tobacco vendors should have license for selling tobacco. The association claimed that it would be a huge loss for tobacco vendors.

However, petty retailers have requested exemption for any such licencing requirement under the proposed amendment. A poor and uneducated small shopkeeper, who barely manages two square meals a day, will have to struggle to get a license, and not only that, he will also have to struggle to go around offices to renew it every year.

Mohammad Sallauddin Deccani, Vice President Federation of Retailers Association of India (FRIA), told The Pioneer, "We should be exempted from having a licence as it will become a big struggle for us to get a licence and will have to renew it every year. Perpetual harassment will increase under the guise of administrative control. This will not only increase the cost of doing business, but at the same time it will lead to corrup-

tion and harassment of the millions of small shopkeepers in the country".

He further added, "FRIA believes that few NGOs who work for foreign companies are constantly pressurizing the government to enforce unfair and unimplementable laws against small shopkeepers. These policies are helping big foreign and ecommerce companies at the cost of business of petty retailers. FRIA and its member organizations from all over the country are already disturbed by the undemocratic amendment of CoTPA Bill 2020 proposed by the Ministry of Health, which disallows retail sale of loose sticks of cigarettes, prohibits sale of tobacco products to persons below 21 years, put controls on in-shop advertising and promotion, amongst others, as they seemed to be aimed at destroying the business for the smaller retailers without impacting large retailers".

Ram Asre Mishra, president of the Federation of Retailers Association of India (FRIA) said, "The Coronavirus-triggered lockdowns and economic destruction have further damaged the economic condition of small retailers and any further adverse policy which destabilizes their business activity will be devastating.

Stopped at Tirupati airport, Naidu

Continued from page 1

It was obvious that the TDP chief was well aware that his planned protests in Tirupati and Chittoor wouldn't have had such wide coverage as his squatting on the airport floor. Television cameras whirled, flashbulbs popped and a buzz was created that soon spread across the State, and beyond.

On Naidu's agenda were the alleged excesses by the ruling YSRCP leaders on the TDP cadre - coercion to withdraw their candidatures from the ensuing elections to Urban Local Bodies in AP. Naidu allowed these allegations of excess on TDP cadre to give way to allegations of excessive police action against himself, adamant that he be allowed to speak to top police officers and administrators.

During these 6 hours, the TDP supremo refused to take food and water; efforts by Tirupati Urban SP Venkata Appala Naidu to cajole, mollify and convince him remained unsuccessful. The TDP supremo even refused biscuits offered by the Urban SP as also a chair.

On their part, the police officers had cited the model code of conduct, in place for the ULB elections, and the Covid-19 restrictions to deny Naidu permission for his planned protests. The TDP chief literally showed them that once he makes up his mind, he would never allow trivial matters like election code or Covid to snatch away the spotlight from him.

Left-Congress-ISF...

Continued from page 1

They became evident on Sunday afternoon as over a million people poured into the Brigade Parade Ground to attend a meeting called by the alliance, which can usher in, in the words of West Bengal Pradesh Congress President Adhir Ranjan Choudhary, "rainbow for a new change".

The clarion call given by Mamata Banerjee when her TMC swept to power way back in 2011 was 'poribartan' - change and people of West Bengal, answering that call threw the 34-year-old Left Front government to the wastepaper bin. The INC was in alliance with the TMC then. The scenario has changed in the intervening 10 years. The INC has an alliance with the Left Front now and its West Bengal chief has given a clarion call for a 'natun poribartan' - new change. In these 10 years, the image of Mamata as a fire-brand lady who knows how to die for the cause of the oppressed has faded, in spite of her several welfare schemes like Kanyashree, Sabuj Sathi, Puspashree and the like. Over the years, her party has become tainted not

just by the Sharada and Narada scandals, but also the alleged misappropriation of Amphan relief funds. In the words of Md Salim, CPI(M) politburo member, her government has indulged in "corruption and extortion". Moreover, there has been widespread defection of the TMC leaders to the BJP and that has considerably weakened the mass base of the party. A considerably weaker Mamata Banerjee is now defending her citadel in Bengal.

As for BJP, their policies have been simple. Like elsewhere in the country, they are banking on a consolidation of the Hindu votes in their favour. In the words of Md Salim, the politics of BJP is one of 'division'. "They are a divisive force," he continued, "trying to drive a wedge between the communities". This apart, the policy that has, till date, got most of the success for BJP is turning the TMC into BJP. Several TMC strongmen, including Subhendhu Adhikari, have joined the saffron party. Therefore, the saffron party is upbeat, more so because their vote share in Bengal has increased almost 10 fold in the last 12 years.

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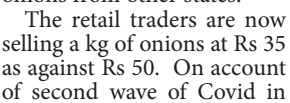
Sealed Tenders are invited from registered contractors for Maintenance of various 33/11KV Sub Stations in Nagaram Section of Keesara Sub Division in Keesara Division-req. Tender specification no 33/2020-21. The last date of sale of above tenders is 10.03.2021 upto 17:00 Hrs. Further information can be obtained from the Chief Divisional Engineer Elec./OP/Keesara. Contact Person: Sri G.V.Madhusudhan, AAE/tech/Keesara: 7901644733. Email ID: de_o_keesara@tssouthpower.com R.O. No. : 1932-PPCL-AGENCY/ADVT/2020-21 Sd/- DEE / OP / KEESARA

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Following a complaint from the victim, who lost Rs 50,000 to the gang, the cyber crime wing registered a case and traced the fraudsters to Delhi. A special team then reached Delhi and took them into custody.

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Normally, in rabi, the area under onion crop would be 21,000 acres. This year, the crop was not raised even in just one acre. Lack of subsidy on onion seeds, lack of MSP for onions, lack of proper marketing facilities led to farmers showing no interest in cultivating the crop. In this backdrop, the onion prices will



On week days, daily 6000 to 7000 quintals of onions reach the city and on Sundays the supply has increases to 8000 quintals.

In spite of 'Bharat Bandh' observed on Friday, 9600 quintals of onions reached the city. Maharashtra alone exports over 5000 quintals of onions to the city. As hotels are not functional completely in Maharashtra, onions are being diverted in to the city markets.

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Cyberabad Commissioner VC Sajjanar said Tarun Kumar collected the database of customers of different e-commerce websites and prepared fake envelopes on the name of these companies and sent



"Once any of the customers believed them, they would start extracting money under the pretext of registration fee, document charges, Goods and Service Tax (GST) and Income Tax (IT) to claim gifts," Sajjanar said, adding that the police had seized 42 mobile phones, laptops, rubber stamps and 30 debit cards from the gang.

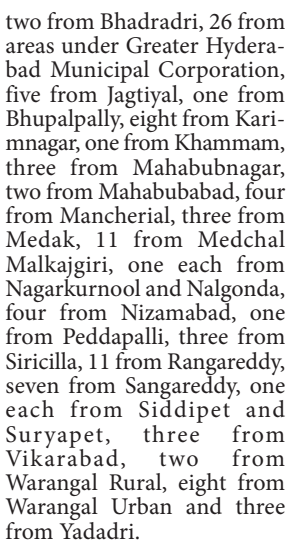
PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Exchange of barbs on Twitter with biting sarcasm seems to be the order of the day for top political leaders, while various parties' lesser functionaries stick to the 'war of letters'. On Monday, there was another 'Twitter' war between TRS and BJP brass on the subject of 'jobs', which has of late become hypersensitive. Already allegations and counter-allegations have been made on the job front on social media platforms.

In his tweet, Ramchander Rao threw a challenge at KTR, asking the latter to come for a debate on 'jobs'. Asking KTR to tell where he was, Rao said that he had been "waiting at Arts College, Osmania University" for

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Covid-19 positive cases reported from the districts included four from Adilabad,

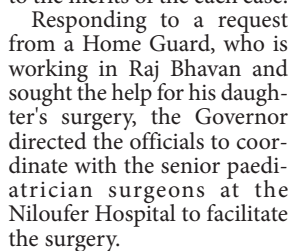


PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The women, who were residing in a shelter home and started seeking alms to return home in Ahmedabad

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

She has also directed the Raj Bhavan officials to guide and motivate all those identified people among the Raj Bhavan pariwar to get vaccinated at the earliest. "Raj Bhavan should be a role model to others by getting all the eligible people vaccinated," she directed.



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

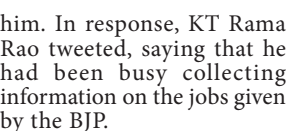
He supported an appeal made by Minister K T Rama Rao to BCCI and IPL to include Hyderabad as one of the venues. "I strongly support the appeal by @ktrtrs. Hyderabad is absolutely capable in handling and conducting @IPL as per @BCCI's directives and preparing a bio-secure bubble," Azharuddin tweeted. The BCCI is looking at four to five venues for holding the next edition of the IPL with Mumbai as the single host not looking feasible anymore following a surge in Covid cases in and around the city. The 14th edition of the league is scheduled to start in second week of April.




Close to four years after 'floating islands' were introduced into Hyderabad's historic Nerkampur Lake, the water body has seen considerable results. Once a sewage and dumping ground, activist Madhulika Choudhary and her NGO Dhruvansh have been working on the revival of the lake since 2016. A 'floating island' unit is essentially a plant which is introduced on the floating surface of the water. The plant's job is to absorb the high content of phosphorous and nitrogen found in the sewage water entering the lake, so that the lake remains considerably cleaner and can support aquatic life. The base of the 'island' is made out of thermocol and plastic bottles - light, buoyant material that does not react with water. Some soil is added on top to enable the plants to grow. Floating island plantation drive was organised at Nerkampur lake

KTR: 'NDA -- No Data Available' on 12 crore jobs

PNS ■ HYDERABAD



 **KT Rama Rao**
(@KTRTRS)

I am busy gathering information on the 12 crore jobs & ?15 lakhs in all Jandhan accounts promised by Hon'ble PM Shri Modi Ji NDA is the answer so far **N - No, D - Data, A - Available**
Please share if you have any answers

Mentioning that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had

He said that he was not getting information about the assurances of BJP and the Rs.15 lakh help. "I am busy gathering information on the 12 crore jobs (2Cr per year) & Rs.15 lakhs in all Jan Dhan accounts promised by PM Modi Ji. NDA is the answer

so far. N-No, D-Data, A-Available. Please share if you have any answers http://s://t.co/NQ2tFFFY74z- KTR (@KTRTRS) March 1, 2017

Reacting to KT Rama Rao's acerbic tweet, Ramchander Rao commented that KTR would have "collected the information already" and asked him not to fabricate information to mislead people. He said he was ready to clear KTR's doubts and suggested that the TRS working president should not try to "hide under Twitter".

GREATER WARANGAL MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

REQUEST FOR COMPETITIVE OFFER NO. SE/01/2021, Dt: 27/02/2021

Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation is going to implement daily water supply in GWMC as a part of this exercise, competitive Quotations are invite from experienced reputed firms / contractors for the work of Repairs and replacement in electrical equipment, 10 Nos. 1/3 Wdipole, KUC and Deshpai Filter beds and annual maintenance of three filter bed motors & pump sets for the period of One Year within (7) days. The Technical specifications of the proposed Repairs and replacements to Motors and Pump sets and Annual Maintenance can be seen and downloaded from our website <https://gwmc.gov.in>. Quotation can be sent by post or Email to the following address and **GWMC** is payable at this juncture. Download Starting Date: 02/03/2021, Last date for submission of bid Date: 16/03/2021 at 4:00 PM. For further details contact: 9106901402, 9106901422. Mail to: segmw@gwmc.in

R.O. No.: 1533/PCL/AGM/CIADT/2020-21 Sd/- Commissioner, GWMC

Rajasthan Co-operative Dairy Federation Limited

SARAS SAMUEL, J.L.N. RAJ, WP/PR-302071 Ph. No. 2702501-03
Direct: 0141-2712329; Website: www.sarasmitel.net; registration in e-mail: puc-rd@rnf.in
In No. RD/CP/PR/19/29/CP/M/Trade Mineral Industries (2021)42858-40 Date: 25/02/2021

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDERS

Single Stage Two Parts unconditional online e-Tenders/E- bids are invited by Rajasthan Co-Operative Dairy Federation Ltd., Jaipur for the procurement of "United Caster for 12mm Castings" (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1155), Linad Caster for 50 type Live Gage Packing (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1156), Polyethylene Liner for filling 25 kg. SMP in two different sizes as mentioned in quality specifications of the tender documents. (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1157), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1158), Black Plastic HDPE Crates of 50 type minimum 1.5 kg. weight and of 100 mm height each crate without bay back/ without replacement against broken and old crates (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1159), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1160), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1161), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1162), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1163), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1164), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1165), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1166), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1167), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1168), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1169), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1170), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1171), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1172), Linad Plastic Steam Cook Gage 18" (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1173), HDPE Laminated Kraft Paper Bag HDPE Laminated Gussated Bag for packing 25 kg. SMP in two different sizes as mentioned in quality specifications of the tender documents. (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1174), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1175), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1176), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1177), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1178), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1179), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1180), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1181), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1182), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1183), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1184), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1185), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1186), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1187), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1188), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1189), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1190), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1191), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1192), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1193), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1194), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1195), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1196), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1197), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1198), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1199), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1200), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1201), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1202), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1203), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1204), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1205), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1206), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1207), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1208), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1209), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1210), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1211), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1212), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1213), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1214), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1215), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1216), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1217), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1218), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1219), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1220), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1221), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1222), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1223), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1224), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1225), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1226), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1227), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1228), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1229), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1230), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1231), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1232), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1233), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1234), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1235), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1236), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1237), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1238), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1239), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1240), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1241), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1242), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1243), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1244), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1245), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1246), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1247), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1248), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1249), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1250), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1251), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1252), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1253), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1254), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1255), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1256), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1257), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1258), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1259), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1260), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1261), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1262), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1263), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1264), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1265), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1266), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1267), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1268), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1269), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1270), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1271), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1272), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1273), 100mm Castings (USN No. CF02321GJLR0C1274), 100

CM GREETHS HC CJ



Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao giving a bouquet to Chief Justice Hima Kohli in Hyderabad on Monday

TRS pushed state into debt trap, alleges Uttam

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The TRS pushed the state into a debt trap and left youth in the lurch, alleged Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) President and MP N Uttam Kumar Reddy.

Addressing a meeting of leaders of all frontal, departments and cells of TPCC at Gandhi Bhavan on Monday in connection with MLC elections, Uttam Kumar Reddy said that the TRS in the State and BJP at the Centre have rendered injustice to Telangana ever since they came to power in 2014. He said the wrong policies of TRS and BJP governments have pushed Telangana into a debt trap while eroding lakhs of jobs and future opportunities. Both the parties have turned Telangana into a 'crisis State' so as to gain political mileage.

Uttam Kumar Reddy said that non-judicious spending of public money has left the state with debts of nearly Rs 3.5 lakh crore. "On an average, the TRS government borrowed Rs 50,000 crore loan every year at very high-interest rates. This money was spent on projects that could fetch commission/kickbacks for TRS leaders," he alleged adding that the future generations of Telangana would be forced to repay these loans and high interest for the next two decades.

He said that the TRS government has misused the resources of Telangana to benefit the family of Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao. Similarly, the BJP government at the Centre has aggravated the situation by not releasing adequate funds for Telangana. The neglect of the BJP government and the

financial recklessness of the TRS government has turned Telangana into a bankrupt state.

The TPCC chief asked the party leaders and workers to sensitise and enlighten the people about the damage caused by the TRS and BJP to Telangana. He said that the situation could be changed only if Congress regains power in Telangana. He said the victory of Congress in both the MLC Graduates constituencies and Nagarjunasagar by-elections would force the TRS and BJP to mend their approach towards the people of Telangana.

Uttam Kumar Reddy said that Telangana became a reality due to the struggle and sacrifices made by the students and youth. Therefore, the TRS and BJP governments specifically targeted students and youth by slashing funds for the education sector and by not taking steps to tackle rising unemployment.

The TPCC Chief said that the TRS and BJP governments also conspired to deprive Telangana youth of job opportunities. They stopped every project that could generate a large number of jobs. Consequently, the unemployment rate has doubled in Telangana state since 2014. Citing instances, he said that the Information Technology Investment Region (ITIR), sanctioned by previous Congress-led UPA government, could've created over 50 lakh jobs in Hyderabad and neighbouring districts, but neither the TRS government pursued it with the Centre nor the BJP government ever reviewed it to grant necessary funds.

Membership drive: Minister, MLAs face wrath of KTR

K VENKATESHWARLU ■ HYDERABAD

TRS working president and Minister for IT KT Rama Rao vented his ire at some MLAs where the membership is very less. He questioned them to tell as to what they are doing in their constituencies. KTR reportedly summoned Manakondur MLA Rasamayi Balakrishnan and also made phone calls to Ramagundam MLA Korukanti Chander, Kodangal MLA Narendra Reddy and a Minister. KTR reportedly asked the Minister that how the party will ask others if the Minister fails to complete the membership drive.

He directed the MLAs to complete the targeted membership taking one more week as already the membership drive time was over. It is learnt that KTR prepared a list of MLAs with less membership and informed party general secretaries that the party chief and Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao would speak to them.

He said that the party has been getting tremendous response from the people on the membership drive and it has been going on successfully since February 12.

On the other hand, the party general secretaries informed KTR that the target



■ KTR directed the MLAs to complete the targeted membership taking one more week as already the membership drive time was over

■ It is learnt that KTR prepared a list of MLAs with less membership and informed party general secretaries that the party chief and Chief Minister KCR would speak to them

of 50,000 members' enrolment has been completed in almost all constituencies. They informed KTR that there is a chance that membership will cross 1 lakh in many constituencies. However, the party general secretaries asked KTR

to give three to four days additionally to the party cadre to complete the membership drive as the leaders are busy in the constituencies, which come under Graduate MLC elections.

KTR had a meeting with the

party general secretaries on Monday at Telangana Bhavan and reviewed the party membership drive. On the occasion, KTR enquired about the health of the MLAs of Bhupalapally, Narayanapet, Janagaon, who were tested positive for corona and suffering from other ailments. KTR congratulated the MLAs, who enrolled more than the target membership by making a phone call on the occasion.

The general secretaries informed that the party leaders are depositing the membership amounts from time to time. They also informed KTR that some MLAs urged the party to extend the time as the response to the membership drive is tremendous. Reacting to their request, KTR said that he will inform party Chief K Chandrasekhar Rao.

He said that the party will give clarity on it following the directions of the party chief. KTR said that the digitisation process is also going simultaneously with the membership drive. Already, the staff computerised the 50 per cent membership details, he said.

He asked the party general secretaries to concentrate on appointing committees as the membership drive comes to an end. He directed them to complete the appointment of all committees by the end of March.

Legislative Houses lost sheen in TRS' tenure, says Kishan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Union Minister of State for Home Affairs G Kishan Reddy lamented that the Chief Minister family is misusing its power and spending money even in Graduate MLC elections like general elections.

He alleged that the Assembly and Council have lost their sheen after TRS came to power. He said that the TRS government is working to suppress the voices of the opposition parties. He called upon the graduates to see the end of family politics.

Addressing the media in Gadwal on Monday, Kishan Reddy said that people are wishing for a change and it proved in the GHMC and Dubbak elections. He urged the intellectuals to cast their vote by assuming that TRS has been hatching a conspiracy to see that BJP did not win the elections.

He called upon the graduates to ensure the victory of BJP candidates to protect Telangana's self-respect and to see the end of family rule in the state. Stating that the BJP will retain the Hyderabad-Rangareddy-Mahbubnagar Graduate MLC seat, Kishan Reddy said that the BJP would have won many MP seats if it identified the pulse of the people in 2019 elections.

He questioned the govern-



ment to tell whether it filled teacher, lecturer, professor and Vice-Chancellor posts in the last seven years. He said that the BJP linked 32 districts out of 33 with national highways giving Rs 17,000 crore. He alleged that the state government is not extending cooperation with the Centre regarding railway projects and highway construction.

He alleged that Darussalam is deciding, which officer and where to work. He pointed out that anti-Telanganaites are enjoying the power of being in Minister posts. KCR destroyed the Secretariat when people questioned him as to why he was not visiting it. However, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been working without taking leave for a single day whereas KCR is confined to his farmhouse.

'Family role vital in curbing addiction'

PNS ■ PEDDAPALLI

NTPC-Ramagundam's department for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in association with the Deepthi Mahila Samithi and Dhanwanthari Hospital on Monday organised a rehabilitation programme for 40 local youth suffering from various levels of addiction.

Inaugurating the awareness programme, Usha Kumar, president, Deepthi Mahila Samithi, advised the youth to give up bad habits and motivated them to contribute to the progress of their family as well as society. She said, "Youth have energy, if that is channelised properly, they can create wonders."

Jyothi Nagar police station sub-inspector Swarup Raj while echoing a similar view informed the youth about the danger to the maintenance of law and order issues arising out of addiction.

Dr Kamaraju Vijaya from NTPC-Ramagundam hospital counselled the youth in detail on dealing with the addiction and the subsequent adverse impact on mental health. She also emphasised the role of family and society in curbing the addiction menace. Office bearers of Deepthi Mahila Samithi and officials from the CSR department were present on the occasion.

Mobile towers in Telangana safe: DoT

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

"Following a growing public concern about possible health hazards from Electro Magnetic Field (EMF) exposures from mobile phones or their base stations, DoT of Hyderabad has tested the mobile towers of various telecom service providers (TSPs). Concerns have also been raised that continuous exposure to EMF radiation emanating from telecom towers causes harmful thermal and non-thermal health effects," said Arvind Kumar, Director, Department of Telecom, Hyderabad.

DoT Hyderabad has tested 4,245 Base Transceiver Units (BTS)/ mobile towers of various TSPs between June 2020 and February 2021 based on the number of towers available under each TSP and 4,244 BTSs. So far the authority has come across only one mobile tower slightly beyond the norms, which also subsequently complied within the norms.

The DoT has taken strict measures for regulating EMF emission from a mobile tower within the safe exposure limits. It is very important to highlight that emission stan-

■ "Our Telecom towers are also far better than the standards adopted by some of the developed countries like the US, Canada, Japan and Australia," said Arvind Kumar, Director, Department of Telecom

■ In addition, the radiation limits [Specific Absorption Rate] prescribed in the country for mobile handsets, are similar to that of other developed countries like the US, Canada, Japan and Australia.



dards of DoT are 10 times more stringent than that of the existing limits prescribed by the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP), said Arvind Kumar.

"Our Telecom towers are also far better than the standards adopted by some of the developed countries like the US, Canada, Japan and Australia. In addition, the radiation limits [Specific Absorption Rate] prescribed in the country for mobile handsets, are similar to that of

other developed countries like the US, Canada, Japan and Australia. This reiterates the fact that mobile towers are safe in the state," he said.

The DoT has launched Tarang Sanchar www.tarang-sanchar.gov.in, a web portal for information sharing on mobile towers and EMF emission compliances, to generate confidence and conviction with regard to safety and harmlessness of mobile towers, clear many myths and misconceptions. This portal provides a public interface where an easy

map-based search feature has been provided for viewing the mobile towers in the vicinity of any locality.

With a click of a mouse information on the EMF compliance status of mobile towers can be accessed. Detailed information about any tower site, if requested, will be sent by email to the users, the director said.

Additionally, any person can request EMF emission measurement at a location by paying a nominal fee.

Furthermore, during the lockdown period and ongoing pandemic, several organisations shifted to work from home, virtual meetings and video calls. The uptake of e-Services, OTT platforms, e-Commerce and e-Governance has increased significantly. Therefore, the importance of mobile broadband/internet telecom services has grown manifold, which necessitated proper care, upgrading and expanding the mobile tower infrastructure within safe prescribed EMF norms, Arvind Kumar said. DoT Hyderabad is also conducting an online EMF awareness programme on March 3.

Sharmila likely to announce party name on April 9

PNS ■ HYDERABAD



A n d h r a Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy's sister YS Sharmila decided to announce her party name on April 9, it is learnt. She decided to conduct a public meeting with one lakh people at Khammam on April 9 to announce her party name. She discussed this with the Khammam leaders in this regard already. She examined the YSRPT and YSRPT and Rajanna Rajyam's names for her party's name.

Sharmila will start her party activities on May 14 from Lotus Pond. According to sources, Sharmila has decided to announce her party only on April 9 instead of May 14 as the scorching temperature may trouble the people attending the meeting if conducted a public meeting on May 14.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA									
REVENUE (LAND ACQUISITION) DEPARTMENT									
FORM-VII									
PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION									
(See Sub-rule (1) of rule-23 and Section-19(1) of the Act-30/2013)									
Sub-Collector, Bhadrachalam, Land Acquisition Officer, Sattampalle Nagar, Multi Purpose Project No. No.1/2013/2013-14 dated: 15/02/2021									
Dist. Collector, Bhadrachalam, Bhadrachalam, Multi Purpose Project No. No.2/2013/2013-14 dated: 22/02/2021									
Whereas it appears to the District Collector, Bhadrachalam that a total extent of Ac. 13.07 Gs. land is required in the Narayanapet Village, Dummugudem Mandal of Bhadrachalam District for public purpose, namely for the construction of Sattampalle Nagar Multi Purpose Project. Therefore, declaration is made that a plan of land measuring more or less Ac. 13.07 gts of standard measurement under Land Acquisition for the above said project in the Narayanapet Village, Dummugudem Mandal of Bhadrachalam District of reserved land is as follows:									
SCHEDULE									
Sl. No.	Area	Area	Area	Area	Area	Area	Area	Area	Area
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	22	2/8	2/1			0.39	Govt. Land (Goyallu)	Adala Lakshmi Devi Who is a widow of late Adala Lakshmi	-
2	1					0.37	Govt. Land (Goyallu)	Adala Sushama S/o Adala Sushama	-
3	2					0.26	Govt. Land (Goyallu)	Adala Sushama S/o Adala Sushama	-
4	3					0.14	Govt. Land (Goyallu)	Adala Sushama S/o Adala Sushama	-
5	4	2/8	2			0.11	Govt. Land (Goyallu)	Adala Sushama S/o Adala Sushama	-
6	5					0.28	Govt. Land (Goyallu)	Adala Sushama S/o Adala Sushama	-
7	6					0.18	Govt. Land (Goyallu)	Adala Sushama S/o Adala Sushama	-
8	7					0.17	Govt. Land (Goyallu)	Adala Sushama S/o Adala Sushama	-
9	8					0.33	Govt. Land (Goyallu)	Adala Sushama S/o Adala Sushama	-
10	9					0.33	Govt. Land (Goyallu)	Adala Sushama S/o Adala Sushama	-
11	10					0.34	Govt. Land (Goyallu)	Adala Sushama S/o Adala Sushama	-
12	11					0.16	Govt. Land (Goyallu)	Adala Sushama S/o Adala Sushama	-

Cong to fight till last job vacancy is filled

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

AICC National Spokesperson Sravan Dasoju on Monday pulled up KT Rama Rao, Minister for Industries, IT and Municipal Administration, for enacting drama on the prestigious Information Technology and Investment Region (ITIR) project ahead of the Graduate MLC Elections in Telangana. He criticised KTR, who is trying to woo the Telangana Graduates' support for the TRS party's candidates through colourful Twitter gimmicks.

According to him, the Graduates are intelligent enough to identify the chameleon-like

characteristics of the minister, who always lies on employment numbers and depends on fabricated figures. The Senior Congress party leader declared that KTR, who was resorting to Goebbalian propaganda on employment issues in Telangana had no moral right to seek Graduates' votes in the state and reiterated that the Congress party would fight until the last number of job vacancy - 1.91 lakh government jobs are currently vacant as per Biswal Commission - was filled up by the government and all the 1.20 lakh contract employees in Telangana regularised. He slammed the government for not taking up a proper employment policy and not com-

ing up with DSC, Group -I, Group -II job notifications, which would help the BC, SC and ST communities.

Addressing the media on Monday, Sravan Dasoju disclosed the facts about the ITIR project, NIMZ and slammed KCR and KTR for lacking sincerity in retaining those prestigious projects once considered to be the game changers for the Telangana State. "Many times, including in Assembly, KCR himself said that the ITIR, NIMZ and Pharma were the dream projects, and that would change the landscape of Telangana industries while ensuring millions of employment opportunities for Telangana youth.

Owaisi urges people to take Covid jab

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi has given a call to people to take the Covid vaccine. He asked the people to take the vaccine to protect themselves. He said that it was a good example set by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who took the vaccine. He stated that Modi had to ensure that the price of the vaccine is less and it is available to all the people. He said that he too would take the vaccine.

Owaisi demanded that the state government gave priority to every journalist in terms of

vaccination as they worked hard as a frontline warrior during serious Covid times. He stated that the state and central governments had to examine the issue of giving vaccines to the journalists.

Owaisi said that the people had some doubts about the vaccines. Some were stating that nothing would happen to the people between 18 years and 64 years if they took the Covid vaccine. He asked the Centre to provide clarity on whether taking the vaccine by a person, who had crossed 64 years was good or not.

Keesara temple decked up for Shivaratri Brahmotsavams

■ Over six to seven lakh devotees are likely to visit the shrine

PNS ■ MEDCHAL

Sri Ramalingeswara Swamy temple at Keesaragutta in Medchal district is decked up for the Mahashivaratri Brahmotsavams. The district officials are making elaborate arrangements for the six-day celebrations beginning on March 9. Around six to seven lakh devotees are expected to visit the temple during the Brahmotsavams.

A large number of devotees not only from Medchal, but also from across the State and Hyderabad will flock to the temple to have darshan of the Lord.

District Collector Swetha

Mohanty is holding review meetings with various departments to make foolproof arrangements following the Corona protocols. Officials installing the CCTV cameras in addition to existing, which will be connected to the police headquarters. The district medical health department will be arranging a thermal screening, provide masks and proper sanitation will be maintained as per the Covid rules.

Fogging will be done to prevent the outbreak of diseases and temporary toilets will be constructed and drinking water will be provided to the devotees, who are standing in queues.

Special queue lines, including providing wheelchairs for physically challenged and elderly devotees, will be made available for them. Parking lots will be arranged for bikes, four-wheelers, autos, mini-buses through barricading to avoid traffic congestion.

Temple Executive Officer Katta Sudhakar Reddy told The Pioneer that the annadhanam facility will be provided by the Arya Vysya, Munnuru Kapu, Brahmin Sangham and Marwari community to the devotees. Two special queue lines with ticket prices of Rs 200 Sriga darshanam, Rs 400 VIP and Rs 800 for abhisekham are being arranged.



(Top) Medchal-Malkajgiri District Collector Swetha Mohanty reviewing arrangements with officials at Keesara on Monday



(Bottom) A view of Sri Ramalingeswara Swamy temple at Keesaragutta in Medchal district

Taming the virus

The second phase of the vaccination drive began with the PM and his ministerial colleagues taking the jab

With Prime Minister Narendra Modi leading the way, a battery of eminent political leaders on Monday took the anti-COVID shot as the country saw the launch of the second phase of vaccination drive and reports of a successful start to the campaign coming in from across India. Prominent among those who took the first dose on the first day of the second phase were Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu, Union Ministers Amit Shah, Jitendra Singh, S Jaishankar, Som Prakash, Rajasthan Governor Kalraj Mishra, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and NCP president Sharad Pawar. Kickstarting the second phase of the immunisation programme, the Prime Minister received his first dose of Covaxin at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi. In a light vein and seeking to put them at ease, the Prime Minister asked the nurses administering him the vaccine whether they planned to use “some special thick needle” as politicians are known to be “very thick-skinned”. People above 60 years of age and those above 45 with comorbidities are eligible to get the jabs in this phase. The second phase of the vaccination drive will cover 10 crore people across the country. So far, 1.45 crore people in two priority groups, healthcare and frontline workers, have received the shots of Covishield and Covaxin in the first phase.

The second phase of vaccination comes at a time when India's active COVID cases are largely under control, but eight States — Kerala, Maharashtra, Punjab, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Jammu & Kashmir and Madhya Pradesh — have been a cause of concern, reporting an upswing in daily cases in the last two weeks. India's COVID-19 tally rose above the 11 million-mark on Monday as the country logged in 15,510 new cases in a span of 24 hours. A total of 106 fatalities were reported on Sunday, taking the death toll to over 1.57 lakh. The number of active cases currently stands at 1,68,627, a level last seen at the end of January and pointing to the re-emergence of the virus after a period of containment of the COVID outbreak. After months of staying indoors and strictly practising social distancing and hygiene norms, the number of cases had finally come under control but suddenly the pandemic outbreak has spiralled out of hand. Perhaps, the eagerness to get back into action or the reports of a declining caseload are offering a false sense of security and pushing an increasing number of Indians into vulnerability, which shouldn't be the case. If we let down our guard now, India with its population may find it nigh impossible to break free from the clutches of this virus.



A mural depicting Pope Francis in Baghdad, Iraq

Beware of Pak's softening stand

It is a temporary move to tide over the crises Pakistan is facing. The moment its rulers find some relief, the agreement will turn into a mere piece of paper

One mistake Indians must not make is to read Pakistan through Indian eyes. Normally, anything that leads to peace should be welcome. Similarly, we should welcome the fact that Pakistan has agreed to cessation of the ongoing hostilities with us and honour the ceasefire pact of 2003.

Yet, one must interject a note of caution here. This is because quite a few Indians, including expert observers, have interpreted the venom from Islamabad on Kashmir for years as revenge for India dismembering their country in 1971. In actual fact, as soon as the anger of the defeat was forgotten, the Pakistanis were relieved that the “dark short people” — as the Bengalis are contemptuously referred to by Pakistanis — who were a majority of their population, were finally gotten rid of.

Poet Mohammad Iqbal, who was also a leading light of the Muslim League, as its president had in 1930 at Prayagraj (then Allahabad) proposed a separate Muslim homeland which comprised only the north western provinces. He made no mention of Bengal or any part thereof. The larger Pakistan was for MA Jinnah's glorification; he began by dreaming of six provinces, four in the west and two in the east, including Assam. Through his League colleague who was the Premier of Assam for several years after 1939, Mohd Saad Ali, he had nearly succeeded in recording that the *adivasis* were not Hindu but animists. This was to bring down the Hindu percentage of population and draw Assam into Pakistan when the moment of decision came. When Jinnah could not get Assam, except the district of Sylhet, Bengal and Punjab were divided by Sir Cyril Radcliffe, the lawyer dispatched by London. Jinnah was sorely disappointed at getting what he called “a moth-eaten Pakistan”.

Here, it has to be iterated that Jinnah did not represent the ultimate choice of any Pakistani except the Gujarati-speaking businessmen like the Khojas and Memons who wanted to get



rich quickly by avoiding competition against Indian business communities and crossing over to the new State, where they would have to compete only against the Punjabi and Sindhi farmers. For the rest, Jinnah pleaded brilliantly for those Muslims who wanted or half-wished a separate homeland. This was Jinnah's role in actuality; his fee was his place in history's hall of fame. Fortunately for him, he died within 13 months of Independence. The word *mohajir*, a term for Muslims from Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Bihar migrating to Pakistan, came into circulation soon thereafter. But *mohajirs* soon found themselves not only unwelcome but also the target of ethnic hostility in the newly carved out Muslim homeland. Jinnah's deputy Liaquat Ali Khan, from UP, was assassinated a mere four years after Pakistan had been carved out.

What prevails in Pakistan now is the will of the West Punjabis who are two-thirds of the country's population. Their need for Kashmir has been to keep the country together and paper over their dominance of everything, which is now a bone of contention. Plus, they portray India as a great threat to the



WHAT PREVAILS IN PAKISTAN NOW IS THE WILL OF THE WEST PUNJABIS WHO ARE TWO-THIRDS OF THE COUNTRY'S POPULATION. THEIR NEED FOR KASHMIR HAS BEEN TO KEEP THE COUNTRY TOGETHER AND PAPER OVER THEIR DOMINANCE OF EVERYTHING

survival of Pakistan and thus justify the indispensability of the Army as the country's guardian.

If one looks at the latest ceasefire agreement, one would conclude that for Islamabad, it is a temporary move to hopefully tide over the crises the country is facing. The moment Pakistan's rulers are able to find some way of relief for these crises, the current agreement will turn into a mere piece of paper. One reason for Pakistan's softening could be that its rulers realise that China has overplayed its hand, whether with India, Taiwan or the South China Sea, and that the US has reacted strongly, though so far only in words. Otherwise, there is no explanation for Beijing to kick off a confrontation in Ladakh during the winter. It could have waited until after the spring to exercise its options which were three: To try and grab some strategically useful land points, to ease off by extracting some other concessions or by continuing to harass the Indian forces by creating local points that would pose a threat. Similarly, Islamabad wants to cool off *vis-à-vis* New Delhi until China warms up again after, say, arriving at

some settlement with the US. If not, the rulers would wait for circumstances to change; for a true *momin*, his faith in Allah the Merciful is infinite. We must not compare it with the mind of a thinking or reticent Hindu.

Another possibility might be that Pakistan's real ruler, General Bajwa, wants to ease India's pressure on his eastern Indian front and use it to settle his scores with Baluchistan, like General Tikka had tried to do in East Pakistan in 1971. Bajwa may have been advised that the Baloch province is so rich in resources that it could greatly help in solving Pakistan's economic problems. But to exploit these resources would take time, peace and complete control. I concede that this possibility may sound too farfetched, but unless Islamabad takes some drastic steps, how can it keep the economic wheels of Pakistan rolling? If it depends on Chinese loans, Pakistan could become a Beijing protectorate inch by inch, as one has already begun to see with the China Pakistan Economic Corridor coming into play.

(The writer is a well-known columnist and an author. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

HAIL INDIA'S VACCINATION DRIVE

Sir — The second phase of India's vaccination drive has been rolled out and Prime Minister Narendra Modi got the first shot of COVAXIN, the India-researched and produced COVID-19 vaccine (produced by Bharat Biotech) at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Delhi. The drive aims to cover 10 crore people across the country. So far, more than 1.5 crore people have received the jabs.

Mostly the elderly would benefit in the second phase. This phase is a nationwide drive to inoculate people above 60 years of age and those above 45 years with co-morbidities. Several old people were seen at the centres to get themselves inoculated. The self-registration process in Co-WIN module has allowed people to get as many as four people registered, pick slots at their nearby vaccination centre and reschedule the appointment. Thus, the vaccination pace is expected to increase in the coming days.

A lot of hard work has gone into reaching this phase wherein the Government has started to vaccinate general population. We must rely on our vaccines as they are absolutely safe and are being used all over the world. In the coming days, we hope that the process will pick up pace and get completed in record time. On the other hand, there is also the need to worry as the country reported a single-day rise of 16,752 cases in the last 24 hours, the highest in the last 30 days, taking the overall tally to 1,10,96,731 on Sunday.

CK Ramani | Mumbai

PINK-BALL TEST MATCH MAGIC

Sir — When cricket matches like T-20s and ODIs are making life hell for the bowlers with batting-friendly surfaces, Test matches of late, especially pink-ball day-night Test matches, have come like a whiff of fresh air for the bowlers. The pink-ball Test cricket is still evolving and teams are still getting to grips with the ball that was tough to handle for a spinner due to the extra

Win-win situation for India, Pak



The ceasefire between India and Pakistan is a win-win situation for both the nations and for the border population in the two countries. A renewed pledge last week by both the neighbours to adhere to a ceasefire pact along the Line of Control (LoC) and international border in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) is working on the ground.

We must hope that both the nations will stick to the agreed terms to address each other's core

issues and concerns which have the potential to disturb peace in the region and lead to violence. However, the peace agreement would face its biggest test over the next few months when the snow will melt. It is because terrorists' ranks might infiltrate through the routes which are inaccessible in winter as they are clogged due to heavy snowfall.

The adherence to the ceasefire agreement is a welcome proposition, as it will prevent the unnecessary loss of lives of soldiers and civilians residing in border areas. It will also bring some normalcy to the India-Pakistan bilateral ties. The easing of military tensions could also have a positive impact on the situation in J&K and all political parties there have welcomed the ceasefire agreement. If Indian and Pakistan are able to resolve their issues, it will send a message that bilateral issues could be resolved through talks and democratic means rather than through violence and terrorism.

P Senthil | Mumbai



party's interests. Azad is sending a clear message to the party high command that if tall leaders like former Union Ministers Kapil Sibal, Anand Sharma, Manish Tewari, former Haryana CM Bhupinder Singh Hooda and others can stand by his side even if he heaps praises on Modi, they can also go the extra mile and stand in complete defiance of the leadership. He is increasing his bargaining power within the Congress.

By praising Modi, Azad is basically consolidating his position within the dissenter group. Modi, being an astute politician, must be aware of what Azad is up to. With the Congress old guard speaking out against the leadership, it is clear that all is not well within the “Grand Old Party”. Moreover, the G23 leaders are trying to stay relevant by upping the ante against the party leadership. They don't want to loosen their hold on the party. The BJP has already parted ways with many of its tall leaders by creating a “Margdarshak Mandal” and these seniors are now just in an advisory role. The Congress old guard must be apprehensive of meeting the same fate. At least the restlessness shown by these Congress leaders points to this line of thought. On the other hand, it would not suffice to blame the Gandhis alone for the electoral losses that the Congress has suffered in the past few years. It was a failure on the part of these veteran leaders also. However, whether these veterans would be successful in bringing about reforms in the party, saving their positions, influencing party decisions, increasing their bargaining power or will Rahul Gandhi give an opportunity to the youngsters to lead the party and gradually do away with the “rusty bolts”, only time will tell. Well, as we eagerly wait for what Modi or Azad say next on their bonhomie, we shall continue watching the high-voltage Congress drama.

SOUND BITE

Overall, 192 hospitals have been prepared in Delhi, of which 136 are private hospitals and 56 are Government-run hospitals.

Delhi Health Minister — Satyendar Jain

Workers across America are voting on whether to organise a union in their workplace. It's an important choice that should be made without intimidation by employers.

American President — Joe Biden

I am very specific about the roles that I come on board with. It takes a lot of courage to say no but I am glad I have the privilege to do that.

Actor — Vijayendra Kumeria

Landing in Bombay or Mumbai, as it is called now, was a total culture shock, there were just people everywhere, there were cars, bikes and animals and rats and cats running along the footpath.

Former Australia captain — Steve Waugh

The Uttar Pradesh Government has accorded top priority to the development of the Jewar International Airport in Noida.

UP Chief Minister — Yogi Adityanath

FIRST COLUMN


MANY FORTUNES AT STAKE



KALYANI SHANKAR

The forthcoming Assembly polls to five States will go a long way in shaping regional and national parties' future

The forthcoming Assembly elections to five States, three of which are in the South, will go a long way in shaping most regional and national parties' political future. The polls are crucial for the three national parties, the Congress, the BJP and the Left and for regional parties, too. The Congress lost its only foothold in the South, the Union Territory of Puducherry, last week. By citing Puducherry's example, the Congress' opponents want to show ahead of the polls that the party would not be able to hold its MLAs together even if they were voted for. The southern States have gone into the hands of regional parties because the people lost faith in the Congress which controlled almost all the States in the South at one point in time. An alliance with the JD(S) in Karnataka, the TDP in Andhra Pradesh and the AIADMK in Tamil Nadu (TN) had helped the BJP extend its influence in the South. The Congress has found allies in the DMK, the JD(S) and the UDF's coalition partners in Kerala like the Muslim League.



The regional parties have strong leaders who can attract voters with their personality. There is JD(S) in Karnataka, the TDP and YSRCP in Andhra, TRS in Telangana, the AIADMK and DMK in TN which are shining examples of this. Except for the AIADMK, all these parties are essentially family fiefdoms of the Gowdas, Naidus and Raos. Some parties like the DMK, JD(S), TRS and the TDP have already transferred power to the second generation. Neither the BJP nor the Congress has cultivated leaders to match these regional satraps' aura. As for the Left, its ideology has no relevance for the present generation. The BJP's core agenda has no attraction for the South and the Congress is vague about its ideology. Nonetheless, the BJP is trying to spread its wings in the Southern States in the forthcoming elections. The latest topping game in Puducherry shows that the defectors from the Congress and the DMK have joined the BJP, including two Ministers. The BJP could only capture Karnataka in the South. This is because of many reasons, including an absence of strong local leaders. Plus, the BJP is also perceived as a non-Indian party and then there is also the fact that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal in the South is relatively limited and his charm may not necessarily beat that of regional satraps. The BJP considers each election, even a panchayat poll, as crucial as the Lok Sabha polls. Hence, they have adopted several steps to seal their win in an increasing number of States. They include expanding the BJP's base, projecting Modi as a doer and wooing leaders from other parties. The Dravidian parties had held sway since 1967 when the DMK wrested TN from the Congress in 1967. Since then, the Congress has aligned with one Dravidian party or the other. The BJP has been accused of ruling the State by proxy after AIADMK chief J Jayalithaa's demise in 2016. TN alternates between the DMK and the AIADMK, and now it is the turn of the DMK.

Kerala is the only State under the control of the Left parties and it, too, alternates between the CPI(M)-led LDF and the Congress-led UDF, and this time it is the turn of the UDF. The RSS has done a lot of work in Kerala and though the BJP has doubled its vote share since 1998, it has a long way to go. After getting its first-ever MLA elected on a BJP ticket in Kerala in 2016, the party is trying to become a reasonable force by cobbling together a coalition. But it's still some distance away from breaking the hold of the two other national parties and failed to open an account in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. To conquer the South, the three national parties must face the might of 15 regional parties or join them. For parties like the Trinamool Congress in West Bengal, AGP in Assam, the AIADMK, and the DMK in TN and NR Congress in Puducherry, these polls will be a "do or die battle." A win in Assam, Kerala, Puducherry, and TN will restore the Congress' fortunes. The CPI(M) has to protect its turf in Kerala. The BJP will shine with an improvement in all the five States.

(The writer is a senior journalist. The views expressed are personal.)

CPSU privatisation an uphill task

The Centre should de-bureaucratise the process of running PSUs. This should be done even before privatisation is taken up

Under a big bang approach to privatisation announced in the Union Budget, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has divided the Central Public Sector Undertakings (CPSUs) in two broad categories i.e. strategic and non-strategic. Whereas the former is broken up into four subgroups: Atomic energy, space and defence; transport and telecommunications; power, petroleum, coal and other minerals; banking, insurance and financial services, the latter includes all other sectors such as hotel and tourist services, industrial and consumer goods, trading, marketing and so on. As per the plan, all PSUs in non-strategic sectors will be privatised and all loss-making enterprises in this category will be closed. In the strategic sector, too, the Government will be open to privatisation with the caveat that at least one undertaking (and a maximum of four) will be retained in the public sector.

When seen in the backdrop of the Union Government having made an indiscriminate entry in almost every conceivable business activity, including areas such as hotel and tourist services where it had no business to be present in the first place, any initiative aimed at exiting from all of these is welcome. This has the potential to unlock value and generate huge revenue because of the high valuation that the real estate and properties under these PSUs command. As regards the strategic sector, though the Government does not rule out privatisation, the caveat of retaining a maximum of four undertakings in the public sector can defeat the purpose. For instance, currently there are around 12 oil PSUs ranging from upstream oil producers like the ONGC and OIL to downstream oil refining and fuel marketing firms IOC, BPCL and HPCL to gas transporter GAIL India Limited and engineering firm Engineers India Limited. These 12 could be consolidated into four behemoths through a process of merger and amalgamation, leaving no space for privatisation whatsoever.

Why does the Government want to put this caveat? What does it fear? Sans this, will it compromise national interest? In the above example, consider an extreme scenario, in which there is not even one PSU and the entire oil and gas space is occupied by private enterprises. Are we to infer that this will compromise India's energy security? If this were to be the case, then why not reserve this sector exclusively for PSUs? Why allow even one private company? This line of argument is bizarre. For ensuring security in strategic items, the critical requirement is to have a minimum number of companies to ensure there is adequate competition and supply in the market. Who those firms are —whether owned by private promoters or the Government — should not matter.

In the 1970s-80s, when India needed to develop these sectors and private players were unwilling to invest, it made sense for the Government to take the lead. Since then, lot of water has flown down the Ganga. Currently, there is considerable interest among private investors and the Government itself is inviting them. Therefore, any arbitrary restriction should be avoided. Any decision to privatise a PSU



THE GOVERNMENT MAY SET UP A HOLDING COMPANY — ON THE LINES OF A BANK INVESTMENT COMPANY RECOMMENDED BY AN RBI COMMITTEE UNDER P NAYAK — WHERE ALL ITS SHARES IN PSUs WILL BE VESTED. IT SHOULD AUTHORISE THE HOLDING COMPANY TO TAKE ALL DECISIONS, INCLUDING SHARE SALE TO PRIVATE INVESTORS, IN CONSULTATION WITH THE MANAGEMENT

The writer is a New Delhi-based policy analyst. The views expressed are personal.



should be taken on the merit of each case, irrespective of whether it is in a strategic or non-strategic area. Likewise, the mandatory closure of any loss-making enterprise should apply to all such entities without any distinction. National security concerns are always best addressed through strong, resilient and responsive regulatory and surveillance mechanisms.

Implementation is far more important than the policy. In this regard, the score of the Modi Government during the last seven years or so (it was pursued under a sophisticated nomenclature 'strategic disinvestment') has been disappointing. Except for two big ticket sales like the divestment of its 51.11 per cent shareholding in HPCL in 2017-18 and 52.63 per cent stake in the REC in 2018-19, there is nothing much to show. Even these sales can't be termed as privatisation as the buyers were ONGC and PFC respectively — both PSUs.

As per the original plan, 51.11 per cent shares of the Union Government in HPCL were to be sold to a private investor. But things did not pan out as planned and in January 2018, the Government had to ask ONGC to pick up the entire stake, as it desperately needed money to meet the fiscal deficit (FD) target. In the case of REC too, it asked the PFC to buy. During 2018-19, Air India was also put on the block but failed.

During 2019-20, besides resur-recting that offer, the Government also took up sale of all of its share-holding in BPCL (53.29 per cent); CONCOR (30 per cent); SCI (63.75) per cent; NEEPCO (100 per cent) and THDC India Limited (75 per cent). Sans NEEPCO and THDC which were sold to NTPC — a CPSU in the power sector — others made no progress. During 2020-21, COVID-19 spoilt the party. For 2021-22, there is not much hope either. The target for proceeds for disinvestment speaks for itself. At ₹1,75,000 crore, this is substantially lower than the target for 2020-21 (₹2,10,000 crore). This is despite adding two Public Sector Banks (PSBs) and one general insurance company to the list of those (Air India, BPCL, SCI, CONCOR, LIC) already under the hammer. The mandarins in the Finance Ministry have sensed that some disinvestments may not go through, others would fetch lower valuation.

There are four major bottle-necks in the way like policy flip-flops (it stymied Air India's sale in 2018-19/2019-20); bureaucratic red tape (but for this, HPCL could have got a private suitor and BPCL's sale could have happened in 2019/20); thrusting decisions on PSU Boards under a typical top-down approach; linking share sale to meeting the FD target. The last two reasons have the inevitable effect of delaying and reducing

realisation from every sale.

The Budget offers nothing to address any of these bottlenecks. Under a business as usual approach, it will take several years, if not decades, for the sale process to get completed. The decision to set up an empowered group of secretaries to address the concerns of potential investors won't be of much help as even under this arrangement, bureaucrats will continue to rule the roost.

The Centre should de-bureaucratise the process of running PSUs. This should be done even before privatisation is taken up. The Government may set up a holding company — on the lines of a bank investment company recommended by an RBI committee under P Nayak — where all its shares in PSUs will be vested. It should authorise the holding company to take all decisions, including share sale to private investors, in consultation with the management. To be manned by eminent professionals drawn from respective fields, the company should be given full autonomy in its working.

This mechanism will also help in de-linking divestment from the Budget exercise and give much-needed flexibility to the holding company to decide the contours and timing of sale, taking into account the market conditions so as to maximise the proceeds from sales.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

YOU SHAMELESSLY BETRAYED 40 LAKH BELEAGUERED UNEMPLOYED YOUTH OF TELANGANA WITH YOUR FAKE AND FABRICATED STATEMENT. —CONGRESS SPOKESPERSON DASOJU SRAVAN



1.32 LAKH JOBS WERE GIVEN IN GOVT SECTOR IN THE LAST SIX YEARS. CONGRESS COULD FILL JUST 10,000 POSTS IN TELANGANA FROM 2004-2014. —TRS LEADER KT RAMA RAO



AI making a place for itself in modern healthcare

AI-guided machines are capable of performing minute surgeries with accuracy and help in transporting substances which are unsafe for humans

In today's world we are surrounded by Artificial Intelligence (AI) which finds its application everywhere, from science fiction to local hospitals. AI helps medical professionals by relieving them of routine tasks and also makes medical procedures safer and pocket-friendly for patients.

Further, AI-guided machines are also capable of performing minute surgeries with accuracy and help in transporting substances, which are unsafe for humans to handle. In medical systems, call centre staff for websites has increasingly been replaced by chatbots that use Natural Language Processing (NLP) to provide callers with information and manage queries.

In various hospitals and other health institutes, AI technologies such as fuzzy



KM CHERIAN

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systems, Bayesian networks, artificial neural networks and smart hybrid systems are being used.

AI in medicine can be differentiated into two subtypes — virtual and real. The physical segment deals with robotics that helps in procedures, for instance smart prosthetics for people with disabilities and the treatment of the elderly. The interactive components range from applications for electronic health record systems to neural network-based guide in care decisions for patients.

There is increasing use of AI-powered robots in the surgical environment. Robotics technology can be applied in many areas that directly affect patient care. Some of their applications include disinfecting patient rooms and operating sets and reducing the risks for

patients and medical personnel.

They can be used in laboratories to take samples and transport, analyse and store them. Also, the robotic lab assistant can exactly locate the vessel from which the blood is required to be taken and extract the sample without causing pain and anxiety to the patients, who are troubled a lot by the multiple pokes that a doctor or nurse makes for finding a good vein.

AI software also helps primary healthcare doctors in identifying patients who need additional treatment and have specific protocols. It will be used by medical practitioners for commenting, reviewing patient conversations and so on.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the world and adversely affected multiple layers of our society. Frontline



workers and particularly those who have been in direct contact with patients are exposed to major risk.

To mitigate the spread of the Coronavirus and to protect healthcare workers and patients, medical services had been largely restricted, including the cancellation of elective surgeries. This result-

ed in a substantial burden for patients and economic loss for various hospitals. It is in situations like this that AI-robot surgeries could be a powerful tool to maintain surgical volumes while at the same time mitigating the fear of contamination by operating procedures on patients without healthcare workers coming in physical contact.

While talking about the Coronavirus, it is imperative to mention that using AI to predict its pattern was able to help mitigate the crisis to some extent. For instance — BlueDot — a Canadian organisation specialising in infectious disease forecasting, used AI to gather data from multiple points.

It was able to predict the COVID-19 outbreak and alert people around, even before the World Health Organisation (WHO) did so.

Similarly, an AI-powered chatbot, based in Singapore named SGDoBot, helped in mass screening for symptoms among migrant workers.

The pandemic has also highlighted the need for rapid screening and testing of patients to improve treatment pathways and reduce the risk of cross-infection. The use of AI here, for accessing electronic health records (EHR) of routinely-ordered tests and vital signs can produce an effective tool to screen patients in emergency departments and hospital admission units.

Data collected from EHRs can be further supplemented with data from wearable technology such as smart watches or mobile health apps and medical devices.

With the potential application of AI within the

healthcare system, the question remains how this will affect the workforce. According to McKinsey Global Institute, 50 per cent of companies say that automation will decrease the number of full-time staff by 2022 and that by 2030, robots will replace 800 million workers across the world.

Also, automation of clerical processes could potentially have an impact on the non-clinical workforce of the healthcare system. Specialties such as radiology where imaging reports can be automated and produced by AI algorithms may well be the reality.

Of course, the ethics of data sharing and privacy implications for patients and their insurers is debatable. As we enter a brave new world with AI, it entails certain benefits and limitations.

Sensex soars 750 pts as investors cheer GDP data

Foreign investors had sold equities worth Rs 8,295.17 crore on a net basis on Friday, as per exchange data.

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The benchmark BSE Sensex surged nearly 750 points and NSE Nifty rallied over 232 points on Monday as investors cheered the domestic economy returning to positive territory after two quarters of contraction.

The 30-share BSE index briefly traded above the 50,000-mark during the mid-session, before ending at 49,849.84, showing a rise of 749.85 points or 1.53 per cent.

Likewise, the NSE barometer Nifty settled with a gain of 232.40 points or 1.60 per cent at 14,761.55.

Of the Sensex constituents, 29 closed with gains.

Top performers were PowerGrid, ONGC, Ultratech Cement, Asian Paint, Kotak Bank and Titan – rising as much as 5.94 per cent.

After two consecutive quarters of contraction, the Indian economy has finally entered an expansionary path.

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew 0.4 per cent in the October-December 2020 period compared with the same period

a year back, data released by the National Statistics Office on Friday showed.

Analysts said, the high-frequency indicators were pointing towards the fact that the domestic economy is slowly entering the recovery path.

On Friday, the BSE Sensex had crashed 1,939.32 points or 3.80 per cent – its worst one-day fall since May 4 last year. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty had plunged 568.20 points or 3.76 per cent – its biggest single-day drop since March 23 last year.

Foreign investors had sold equities worth Rs 8,295.17 crore on a net basis on Friday, as per exchange data.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses closed significantly higher amid some stability in bond markets after last week's turmoil. Further, progress in the US stimulus package also lent some support to investor sentiments globally.

Meanwhile, the global oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 0.88 per cent lower at USD 65.39 per barrel.

On the forex market front, the rupee dropped 8 paise to end at 73.55 against the US dollar.

Chinese hackers targeted India's power through malware: US firm

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

Amidst the tense border tension between India and China, a Chinese government-linked group of hackers targeted India's critical power grid system through malware, a US company has said in its latest study, raising suspicion whether last year's massive power outage in Mumbai was a result of the online intrusion.

Recorded Future, a Massachusetts-based company which studies the use of the internet by state actors, in its recent report details the campaign conducted by a China-linked threat activity group RedEcho targeting the Indian power sector.

The activity was identified through a combination of large-scale automated network traffic analytics and expert analysis.

Data sources include the Recorded Future Platform, SecurityTrails, Spur, Farsight and common open-source tools and techniques, the report said.

On October 12, a grid failure in Mumbai resulted in massive power outages, stopping trains on tracks, hamper-



ing those working from home amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and hitting the stuttering economic activity hard.

It took two hours for the power supply to resume for essential services, prompting Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray to order an enquiry into the incident.

In its report, Recorded Future notified the appropriate Indian government departments prior to publication of the suspected intrusions to support incident response and remediation investigations within the impacted organisations.

There was no immediate response from the Indian government on the study by the US company.

Since early 2020, Recorded Future's Insikt Group observed a large increase in suspected targeted intrusion activity against Indian organisations from the Chinese state-sponsored group. The New York Times, in a report, said that the discovery raises the question about whether the Mumbai outage was meant as a message from Beijing about what might happen if India pushed its border claims too vigorously.

In response to the allegation, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin on Monday rejected the criticism about China's involvement in the hacking of India's power grid, saying it is "irresponsible and ill-intentioned" to make allegations without proof.

MONEY MATTERS

TVS sales grew registering 297,747 units in February '21



TVS Motor Company sales grew by 18% registering 297,747 units in February 2021 as against 253,261 units in the month of February 2020. **Two-Wheeler** : Total two-wheeler sales grew by 21% recording 284,581 units in February 2021 as against 235,891 units in February 2020. Domestic two-wheeler sales grew by 15% registering 195,145 units in February 2021 as against 169,684 units in February 2020. Motorcycle grew by 16% recording 137,259 units in February 2021 as against 118,514 units in February 2020. Scooter sales of the Company grew by 56% registering 95,525 units in February 2021 as against 60,633 units in February 2020. **Exports** : The Company's total exports grew by 23% registering 101,789 units in the month of February 2021 as against 82,877 units in February 2020.

BOC Aviation inks pact with IndiGo for A320 neo planes



Aircraft leasing firm BOC Aviation on Monday said it has signed a purchase-and-leaseback agreement with budget carrier IndiGo parent InterGlobe Aviation for eight new Airbus A320 neo planes. The aircraft, to be powered by CFM Leap engines, are scheduled to be delivered in the second half of 2021, a release said. "We are delighted to partner once again with IndiGo as we continue to support our airline customers to finance their aircraft. This incremental capital expenditure also reflects our disciplined investment strategy throughout the cycle, focused on building a portfolio of latest technology aircraft deliveries," BOC Aviation Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Robert Martin said.

Honda reports 28 pc increase in sales at 9,324 units in Feb



Honda Cars India Ltd (HCIL) on Monday reported a 28.3 increase in domestic sales at 9,324 units in February as compared with the same month last year. The company had sold 7,269 units in the domestic market in February last year, HCIL said in a statement. Exports for the period under review stood at 987 units as against 64 units in the year-ago period, it added. "The market demand continues to be good which is reflected in our positive growth in February sales," HCIL Senior Vice-President and Director Marketing & Sales Rajesh Goel said. However, the shortage of semiconductor related parts impacted the company on the supply front last month, which limited its production volume and dispatches for certain models, it added. "In the coming months, we will continue to make production adjustments in order to reduce its impact on our waiting customers," Goel said.

GST collections rise 7 pc to Rs 1.13 lakh-cr in Feb



GST collections crossed the Rs 1 lakh crore-mark for the fifth month in a row in February, rising 7 per cent to over Rs 1.13 lakh crore, indicating economic recovery, the Finance Ministry said on Monday. The collection is, however, lower than the record Rs 1,19,875 crore collected in the previous month. The gross GST revenue collected in February 2021 is Rs 1,13,143 crore, of which CGST is Rs 21,092 crore, SGST is Rs 27,273 crore, IGST is Rs 55,253 crore (including Rs 24,382 crore collected on import of goods) and Cess is Rs 9,525 crore (including Rs 660 crore collected on import of goods). In line with the trend of recovery in the GST revenues over past five months, the revenues for the month of February 2021 are 7 per cent higher than the GST revenues in the same month last year.



Poor offtake, high pithead stock hurting Coal India

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Coal India's production and offtake remained subdued in February amid lower demand and robust pithead stock of 78 million tonnes, sources said on Monday.

The mining major is likely to report provisional dry fuel production of 61.8 million tonnes in February as against 66.26 million tonnes in the corresponding month last year, a decline of 6.6 per cent, they said.

On a monthly basis, the production fall was sharper in February compared to January,

when it reported a drop of 4.1 per cent.

Offtake is likely to be around 51.2 million tonnes during the reporting month compared to 54.9 million tonnes in the year-ago period, the sources said.

"Demand is not picking up as envisaged. Even after adiscount offered by Bharat Coking Coal of 24 per cent to dilute its stock, movement is not that attractive. It still carried a stock of 1.6 million tonnes, down from 2.5 million tonnes when the discount was announced," one of the sources told.

Manufacturing activities ease; firms upbeat on demand spike

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's manufacturing sector activities eased slightly in February but firms were upbeat as they responded to increased new work intakes by stepping up production and purchasing activities, a monthly survey said on Monday.

seasonally-adjusted IHS Markit India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) fell marginally to 57.5 in February from 57.7 in January, indicating that even though the pace of growth eased from January it remained sharp in the context of historical data.

The headline figure for February remained above its long-run average of 53.6, the survey noted.

In PMI parlance, a print above 50 means expansion while a score below 50 denotes contraction.

"Indian goods producers reported a healthy inflow of new orders in February, a situation that underpinned a further upturn in output and



quantity of purchases," Pollyanna De Lima, Economics Associate Director at IHS Markit, said.

Lima noted that production growth could have been stronger if firms had appropriate resources to handle their workloads. "This was evident from a quicker rise in outstanding business and another decline in inventories of finished goods," Lima said.

However, employment decreased further amid COVID-19 restrictions related to shift work.

"However, many hope that such controls will shortly be

removed as the vaccination programme widens. Once larger parts of the population are immunised against COVID-19 and restrictions start to be lifted, companies expect a gradual improvement in economic conditions which they hope will translate into output growth," Lima said. Meanwhile, goods producers expect output to increase over the coming 12 months. Optimistic growth projections reflected forecasts of an improvement in economic conditions and the lifting of restrictions as the vaccination programme expands, as per the survey.

5F World invests undisclosed amount in InnoServ

PNS ■ PUNE

InnoServ Group, a fast-growing integrated digital acceleration firm, serving media, corporate and academia, today announced that it has received an undisclosed investment from Dr. Ganesh Natarajan led 5F World, a platform for Digital Start-ups, Skills, and Social Ventures in India.

He also would be joining its advisory board which already has stalwarts like Gopalakrishnan Ramachandran. As part of its growth strategy, company aims to strengthen its capabilities across digital stack.

Commenting on the devel-

opment, Ramachandran Gopalakrishna, Chairman, Innoserv Group, said "Over the last 8 years Innoserv has rapidly grown to emerge as among the leading digital consulting firms in India. Strengthening leadership and global expansion are the two key focus areas we the group looks to scale even further and expand into related areas. The investment from and the coming onboard of Dr. Ganesh Natarajan, a visionary business leader in the technology space, is a shot in the arm for the group. We look forward to his advice and guidance in our leap to the next phase of growth."

Gold price rises Rs 241; silver jumps Rs 781

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices on Monday rose by Rs 241 to Rs 45,520 per 10 grams in the national capital in line with the strong global bullion market trend, according to HDFC Securities.

The precious metal had closed at Rs 45,279 per 10 grams in the previous trading session. Silver also jumped by Rs 781 to Rs 68,877 per kg, compared with the previous close of 68,096 per kg.

HDFC Securities Senior

Analyst (Commodities) Tapan Patel said, "Spot prices for 24 karat gold in Delhi rose by Rs 241, in line with the recovery in global gold prices while rupee appreciation capped upside."

The spot rupee was trading around 16 paise stronger against the dollar halting the three days during the day, HDFC Securities added.

In the international markets, gold was trading stronger at USD 1,753 an ounce, while silver was up at USD 26.90 an ounce.

world Shares rise on hopes for US stimulus

PNS ■ TOKYO

Asian shares rose Monday on hopes for President Joe Biden's stimulus package and bargain-hunting after sell off last week.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 surged 2.2% in morning trading to 29,587.82. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 jumped 1.5% to 6,774.00.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng advanced 0.9% to 29,253.72, while the Shanghai Composite rose 0.6% to 3,529.98 despite a survey showing slightly weaker manufacturing indicators for the month of February.

South Korean markets were closed for a national holiday. But the government reported



that exports rose 9.5% in February from a year earlier and imports jumped nearly 14%, in signs the economy is picking up momentum.

A manufacturing survey for Japan showed an expansion in February for the first time since April 2019. The au Jibun

purchasing managers index reading of 51.4 — on a scale of 1-100, where 50 and above show expansion — was a sharp improvement from the 49.8 level registered in January.

The survey showed improvements in many areas including higher sales and orders and higher exports, reflecting improved demand in overseas markets, especially China.

Asia's export-reliant economies are counting on a healthy American economy to boost trade, which has tended to stagnate during the pandemic. As the region's recovery begins to take off, vaccine roll-outs are also gradually getting

started in most Asian nations.

Worries about the economy, as well as about COVID-19, are still relatively widespread in Japan, which is seeing yet another wave of coronavirus cases. Some urban areas, like Osaka, have lifted measures to help prevent the spread of infections, but the Tokyo area remains under a "state of emergency," focused on having restaurants, bars and other businesses close at 8 p.m. Japan has never had a lockdown.

The U.S. House of Representatives approved Biden's \$1.9 trillion pandemic relief bill on Friday and it now goes to the Senate for approval.

India, a land of agriculture, has already begun looking to Artificial Intelligence for help. *The Pioneer's* SHIKHA DUGGAL talks to experts from the city who've been making the most of AI, about adopting AI in agriculture, its future and more..



AI IN AGRICULTURE: THE NEW HELPING HAND

The trends in food security have mostly pointed towards technology! We must walk towards the progress of achieving sustainable development goals of food security while also eradicating issues of malnutrition. It's a need of the hour for us to move beyond traditional methods. Artificial Intelligence inputs have helped us in various ways! From improved seeds, early warning system, maximising yields, resource management to market access and bringing transparency to the agricultural market, it has all the potential to address such challenges. Machine algorithms reduce the risks in agriculture while also making it possible to forecast any pest outbreak, alerting the farmers. The key technology these days is shaping the future of the Hyderabad as well. Moreover, in a unique distinction, Hyderabad has become the only city in India to be recognised as a 'Tree City of the World' by the Arbor Day Foundation and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations. With such recognitions, the state government now is looking to develop more strategies to enhance the agricultural sector along with the city skyline. Artificial intelligence will turn out to be a significant tool for the city's economic transformation. Creating better solutions for societal pressions is what we ought to do. About adopting AI-based solutions, Rituparna Majumder, Manage, Life science advisory



group at Sathguru Management Consultants, a Hyderabad-based company, shares, "In the recent years, artificial intelligence based technologies have been driving innovations in the agricultural industry by creating pathways for analysing data in ways not used earlier. These tools help in developing agricultural produce in a more sustainable, efficient and affordable manner. To witness next level paradigm shift in the seed industry, wide scale adoption of such technologies across the seed industry value chain is essential! The seed industry today is mature and has standardised maneuvers over the course of time, however, it has inherently slowed down by low levels of automation across the seed



supply chain. Seeds are primary building blocks for ensuring improved productivity across crops. The predominant current rate of genetic improvement for crop productivity enhancement is not sufficient to meet the global demand of sustainable food security. Further, operational challenges related to time consuming and labor intensive operations, biotic and abiotic stresses, weather dependency and quality issues hinder efficiency of the business. So, modern AI based technologies today target shrinking breeding time and costs, increase the probability of achieving breeding targets, multiple trait detection, augmenting physical and morphological seed data, rapid results and secure platform for systematic data storage. Amalgamation of AI based technologies across the seed industry value chain not only bring about the needed time and cost effective solutions for the industry but also improve operational efficiency across agriculture business operations. Adoption of such AI based

processes would mean better, quicker, informed and accurate decision making regardless of rapid changes in the environment. On the overall agricultural front, this would help in mitigation of the environment risks since the most critical agricultural input seeds will be precisely delivered." Artificial intelligence is going to change the world more than anything in the history of mankind! Today it's acting as a key-giver of robotics, techno-power and information skills — a technological innovator for the foreseeable future! Talking about the same, Sachin Darbarwar, CEO of Simply Fresh at Hyderabad, who uses global technology in farming based on European standards, shares, "Artificial intelligence when combined with precision farming becomes so relevant in the farming arena. For a human to pay attention to each and every variable or factor in the agricultural sector becomes unfeasible at times. It's time for us to rely on the new waves of tech-power as well! For example, if one has to take over the control of climate in a green-house, the person must be equipped well to know what happens two hours later. Predicting humidity slots, these kinds of calculations can be well-maintained with the help of AI. Humans are allowed to take recreational breaks, the AI technology will always be at its toes. Simply Fresh is shaping the city's agricultural future with the help of these intelligence inputs, we use AI tech-

nology in farming to grow, nourish, pick and process. Our farming uses sustainable practices that don't exhaust natural resources. Right now, we managed close to 60 variables along with approximately five-thousand sensors in the farm and with our new technique called 'Farm in a Box' it takes care of the full life-cycle process of the agriculture farming. It's all programmed — what kind of feeding the plant requires, the climate conditions, further forecasting, etc. Additionally, in a country like ours, where issues of water scarcity persist, especially for agricultural use, we can reduce our water-consumption for farming purposes by using hydroponic and AI technology." Telangana IT Minister K T Rama Rao feels artificial intelligence has the potential to offer immense possibilities for farmers, the government and all the other stakeholders of the ecosystem. "Telangana has defined its vision to be a global leader in emerging technologies including artificial intelligence now, and has also made rapid strides towards achieving this dream," he was recently quoted as saying when the state collaborated for an agricultural innovation programme. The government of Telangana declared last year as the year of artificial intelligence so we could accelerate artificial intelligence willingness along with developing a conducive AI innovation bionetwork for social impact. So, cheers to an AI-led innovation state now!

Frozen to give you the chills

A great hero needs a great villain, goes the popular saying! In Bollywood, all you need is Danny Denzongpa who is known for his intrinsic villainous roles, he has often played the antagonist. The seasoned actor is now excited about his movie *Frozen* in which, for a change, he is playing a positive lead! The film explores the journey of a father and his kids seen through the daughter's eyes which is going to be in the public view, being recognised, watched and appreciated at various film festivals. Talking about his character in *Frozen*, he said,

"It was an adventurous and pleasant experience shooting in Ladakh in the dead of winter! My father was one of the head monks in a monastery in Sikkim. Living and observing him helped me portray this character very easily. The body language, chanting mantras and praying all have come from him. The slight Ladakhi accent came from my local speech teacher and interactions with the local assistants and crew members. Also, it's great that there are platforms for us to showcase cult movies, it's like a hidden gem which showcases cinema from the past for the people to watch at the moment."



Celebrating Hyderabad's street food

With a central theme of a food festival engulfed with heart-relishing true-to-its-roots Hyderabad cuisine, Ohri Sahib Barbeque is organising 'Dawat-e-Jashn' food fiesta for all the locals this week! Wondering what this fest has to offer? The resto has decided to recreate the street food experience with a blend of dishes that originated from the by-lanes of the old city and was dearly missed in the last one year. From Patti Samosa, Mirchi Bhajji, Hyderabad Dahi wada, Haleem, Masala Papad, Nihari, Paya, Falooda and many more, along with the regular buffet and starters, there is going to be an enormous spread of food-stuff in the food festival there. Who doesn't want to explore food carnivals like these, especially

when it's being organised right in her heart of the city? With all the long-lasting love for Hyderabad cuisine that's quite famous everywhere in the country, Ohri Sahib Barbeque will serve you well with the right food plate filled with finger-licking Nizami food. The cuisine has a strong influence of the flavours north Indian frontiers amalgamated with the local spices and cooking styles, it's going to bring royalty to your plates. Amar Ohri, Executive Director Ohri's Group, mentioned, "In the last one year we all have craved for Hyderabad street food delicacies that we have missed relishing for a long time. We have curated this special 'Dawat-E-Jashn' a special and authentic experience, in an assured safe and secure environment. We are sure that you all will not miss this opportunity."



Building the author-reader relationship

Back in the day, book lovers yearned to meet their favourite authors. A signed-copy meant the world to us. Remember how Hazel Lancaster from the famed *The Fault in Our Stars* went all the way to Amsterdam so she could talk to her favourite author about his book? Yep, that's how badly readers want to meet the person that more often than not, changed their lives. Cut to now, we have social networking platforms that bring reads and authors closer. The biggest of such

platforms has to be Twitter. Not only does this help authors stay in touch with their readers, but it also helps promote their work, receive love and critical feedback too and who wouldn't want it all? Here are a few ways authors are making most of Twitter: **Using threads or building newsletters** Authors are sharing information on their upcoming book launch, seminar or even interesting excerpts and anecdotes, which are longer than 280 characters via Twitter Threads. It helps

connect all their Tweets to form one cohesive stream. **Retweeting with a comment** To provide additional context to their readers, authors retweet with a comment tweets of their #WritingCommunity members. They add additional text, images, GIFs, or videos to a Retweet with this feature. They sure can invite followers to Tweet about their favourite chapter, and then Retweet some of their favourite responses with a GIF that sums up their reaction.



Making an announcement Writers also share updates with their fans on Twitter ranging from book tours to cover reveals in order to create excitement and help them stay informed about their latest projects. **Sharing their interviews** When authors release a new book, their fans want to know everything about it and their writing process.

They Tweet links to their articles, videos or podcasts so that fans can follow along and learn more about their work. **Share what they're reading** Everyone loves to build a 'to-be read' (TBR) pile, so writers let the author community know by sharing what they're currently reading. They also mention other authors or publishing houses by including their Twitter handle or tagging

them in a photo, or maybe host a Twitter Poll to invite readers to vote on what to read next while asking them to share titles that are on their TBR list. **Thanking readers for helping them grow** Fans and followers love to celebrate authors' success with them. Authors are Tweeting with images or videos to make fans feel a part of their joy. So are you following your favourite author on Twitter?

what's brewing?



HEALTH AND HAPPINESS

A one day workshop on Intra Uterine Insemination was held at the Hyatt Place Hotel recently. Organised by the Angel's Fertility Centre, the workshop illuminated visitors on subjects like Ovulation Induction. Dr. Adnan, the Consulate General of the Republic of Turkey attended and appreciated the informative workshop.

Photos by **SV Chary**

FUN

THANK YOU FOR FLYING GARFIELD AIRLINES!

STYLING: JAMES J. JONES

NO, YOU TELL HIM ITS WRONG.

GOD IS MY CO-PILATE

1 Expecting a baby
7 Similar
8 Eat soup with this
9 Reply
10 A large furry animal
12 A snake's noise
14 Overtakes
17 A dentist repairs these
18 Living
19 A game of jumping a rope

- 1 Sets of two
- 2 The number of players in a cricket team
- 3 Smell with this
- 4 A rope loop

SOLUTION

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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.

ANAND DEVERAKONDA'S NEXT TITLED *PUSHPAKA VIMANAM*



Actor Anand Deverakonda who made his debut in the Telugu film industry through *Dorasani*, has gained his own fan base for the kind of roles he plays. Post the success of *Middle Class Melodies*, the actor is eyeing realistic roles that are easier for his audiences to connect to.

The actor's next, a concept-based movie, with debutant director Damodar has been titled *Pushpaka Vimanam*. The film is jointly produced

by his brother and actor Vijay Deverakonda's production banner King of the Hill Productions and Tanga Productions. The first look of the film has been released.

Inspired by a news article, the director of this project built the story with real-life characters. He first narrated the story to Vijay Deverakonda's father Govardhan Rao Deverakonda who liked the script very much and

tution of marriage. Actor Sunil and Naresh will be seen in pivotal roles and Sanvi Megha, Geeta Saayini have been roped in to play the female leads in this film. This film is touted to be a complete comedy entertainer.

Currently, the post-production works are in full swing. The release of this venture is expected soon.

Hestin Jose Joseph will be the director of photography, while Ram Miriyala, Sidharth Sadasivuni and Amit Dasani will take care of the music.

ADAH MORE COMFORTABLE AROUND ANIMALS THAN HUMANS

Actress Adah Sharma recently said that she is more comfortable around animals than humans. Animals, she adds, are uncomplicated and easy to interact with. "I'm the most uncomfortable in social places like parties with people I don't know. But put me in a jungle with animals and I feel at home! Animals are uncomplicated, easy to interact with. They live in the moment," Adah said.

The actress recently rescued an injured bird while shooting and named it Twitter! The bird fell from a tree in a jungle close to Hyderabad where she was shooting for an upcoming project. "I asked my audience on Instagram what they would like to call the bird. Twitter was one of the answers. Since I like tweeting and making bird sounds I thought Twitter would be a nice name," she explained the name.

Adah is also worried about the issue of birds dying due to mobile network, air pollution and other man-made problems which are damaging our environment. The actress shared, "Birds becoming extinct is sad. They are a part of mother nature and she deals with humans for pollution and other issues in her own tough ways."

The actress recently featured in the short film *Chuha Billi*, co-starring Anupriya Goenka. She recently said she has signed a few Telugu films and is all set to entertain her fans with five films this year!



A COMRADE MOMENT FOR CHARAN

Ram Charan is living the dream of working with his father and Megastar Chiranjeevi for the upcoming mega-budget movie titled, *Acharya*. The film has been the talk of the town since its inception as the father-son duo will be sharing the screen space. Director Siva Koratala took to Twitter and shared a glimpse of Ram Charan's look as Siddha with Chiranjeevi's hand on his shoulder. The new still from the film has taken social media by storm.

Overwhelmed by the experience of acting with his dad, Ram Charan took to social media to share his joy. He posted a picture of his father placing his hand on his shoulder. "A Comrade moment! Enjoying every moment with Dad and Koratala Siva on *Acharya* sets," he wrote. *Acharya*, which also stars Kajal Aggarwal in the female lead role is set to release on May 13. Ram Charan and Niranjan Reddy are jointly producing the film under Konidela Production Company and Matinee Entertainment. Mani Sharma is scoring the music.



AKASH PURI'S

Romantic set to hit theatres on June 18

Romantic that will see director Puri Jagannadh's son Akash Puri is doing the rounds for various reasons ever since its trailer was out. Puri, who has provided the story, screenplay and dialogues for the film, being helmed by his protégé Anil Paduri, is also co-producing the film along with Charmme Kaur after the successful *iSmart Shankar*. The makers of the film on Monday announced the release date was announced in style. The worldwide

theatrical release date of *Romantic* has now been locked for June 18. The release date poster shows Akash locking lips with his romantic interest in the film Ketika Sharma on a moving vehicle.

Starring Ramya Krishna in a pivotal role, *Romantic* is touted to be an intense romantic entertainer. Sunil Kashyap scores music for the film, while Naresh handles the cinematography.

The first song of the film received tremendous response and all the posters created lots of buzz on social media platforms.



SUDHEER BABU-Indraganti's next named *Aa Ammayi Gurinchi Meeku Cheppali*

Actor Sudheer Babu and director Mohanakrishna Indraganti's third film together gets an interesting title. *Aa Ammayi Gurinchi Meeku Cheppali* is the title finalised for this exciting project.

Mohanakrishna Indraganti takes special care in titling his films and he likes to have chaste Telugu titles. The title *Aa Ammayi Gurinchi Meeku Cheppali* is an attention-grabbing one as it indicates that the film is going to be a romantic entertainer with a wonderful love story.

The most happening beauty Krithi Shetty plays Sudheer Babu's love interest in the film. It will be interesting to know what Sudheer Babu wants to tell us about his girl played by Krithi Shetty in the film. Avasarala Srinivas, Vennela Kishore, Rahul Ramakrishna, Srikanth Iyengar and Kalyani Natarajan are the other prominent cast in the film.

The film is being jointly produced by B Mahendra Babu and Kiran Ballapalli while Gajulapalle Sudheer Babu presents it under Benchmark Studios.

Vivek Sagar composes the music, while cinematography is handled by PG Vinda. Sahi Suresh and Marthand K Venkatesh will look after the art and editing departments respectively.



RAJ TARUN'S POWER PLAY PROMISES TO BE A GOOD FILM

After a series of failures since *Kittu Unnadu Jagratha* in 2017, Raj Tarun heaved a huge sigh of relief in 2020 as *Orey Bujjiga* released to a positive response from netizens. Despite garnering mixed reviews from critics, the Vijay Kumar Konda directorial delivered the much-needed fun to the Telugu viewers and raked in good numbers on the OTT platform. Raj Tarun has once again collaborated with the same director for his upcoming film *Power Play*.

Starring Hemal Ingle as the leading lady, the intriguing trailer of the film was unveiled recently and it promises to be an edge-of-the-seat thriller. The crime thriller is said to deal with money, drugs, politics and corruption.

The film is being co-produced by Madhidhar and Devesh as Production No.1 under the banner of Vainmali Creations Pvt. Ltd. The film is set to release worldwide on March 5 as a summer special. The movie's pre-release function was held that had several film personalities, producers, and leaders in attendance.

An excited Raj Tarun said, "The film went to a different level with Poorna garu playing the role. Thanks to everyone who is a part of this movie. Vijay garu, Nandiyala Ravi and Madhuranandan came together and prepared a wonderful script. Suresh Bobbili gave good music as well as creepy R.R. Devesh became a good friend. Special thanks to Vijay sir for giving me this opportunity. He's not



just a spectator, he's a family member." Actress Hemmel added, "Thanks to the visionary producers who gave me this opportunity and trusted me with this film. Making this film was a joy ride."

Creative Commercials' KS Rama Rao, speaking on the occasion, wished the whole team luck and said, "I have known the producer of this movie, Madhidhar, for long. He would release our movies in overseas territory. He has produced *Power Play* with the help of Devesh from Seattle. When he told me about the budget of this movie, I asked him to be cautious. I have learned that he has wrapped up the film on the planned budget. I am more confident about the movie after watching the trailer."

Saranga Dariya from Love Story wins hearts

The much-awaited song *Saranga Dariya* from Naga Chaitanya and Sai Pallavi starrer- *Love Story* that released on Sunday has already garnered more than 7 million views at the time of writing this article. The song witnessed lakhs of views within a couple of minutes after release. Popular folk artist Mangli has sung the song beautifully, touching the hearts of listeners. Suddala Ashok Teja penned the lyrics of the song to which the Sekhar master choreographed the actors.

Directed by Sekhar Kammula and produced by Narayan Das K Narang and Puskur Ram Mohan Rao under Sree Venkateswara Cinemas LLP, the first song is going viral on social media and receiving positive comments.

Saranga Dariya is an out-and-out dance number and Sai Pallavi assures a full-on treat for fans with her mercurial moves. Singer Mangli infuses energy into the lyrics. This is Sekhar

Master's second collaboration with Sai Pallavi and director Sekhar Kammula after their chartbuster *Vachchinde* from *Fidaa*. The film is slated to hit screens on April 16.





India opener Rohit Sharma bats during nets session ahead of fourth Test against England @BCCI

India’s top guns go full throttle at nets

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Big guns Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma and Ajinkya Rahane went full throttle at the nets as the Indian cricket on Monday trained in earnest for the upcoming fourth and final Test against England.

The fourth Test starts here on Thursday.

Captain Kohli, his deputy Rahane and senior opener Rohit were seen batting at the nets in a video posted by the BCCI on Twitter.

The three senior players drove, pulled and flicked against the fast

bowlers and spinners at the Narendra Modi Stadium here.

Head coach Ravi Shastri was seen interacting with Rohit and Kohli before the two star batsmen sat together for a discussion.

Left-arm spinner Axar Patel, who bagged 11 wickets in India’s thumping win in the pink ball third Test at the same venue, was seen rolling his arms over at the nets against some of the world’s best batsmen.

They were also seen fielding with Rahane, sliding next to Rohit in the second slip position, taking a one-handed diving catch to his right.

Eng didn’t prepare well for spin challenge: Richards

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

West Indian batting legend Viv Richards is not amused with past and present English cricketers “moaning and groaning” about the spin-friendly pitches in India and said the visitors did not prepare well for the challenge.

The newly-laid Motera track in Ahmedabad became a subject of debate after India crushed England inside two days in the third Test to go 2-1 up in the four-match series. The severe criticism came from former England captains like Michael Vaughan and a section of the British media.

All the chatter has not gone down well with Richards, whose incredible range of strokes and fearless approach to the game terrorised the best of bowlers in his prime in every corner of the cricketing world.

“I’ve been asked questions recently about the Test match that was played in India, the second and third Test match against England.

“And I am a little confused about the question really because there seems to be a lot of moaning and groaning about the wicket that they were playing on,” Richards said in a video posted on his Facebook page.

“I just felt that the ones who are moaning, in my opinion, should realise that there are times that you’re going to get a seaming track, a ball that is basically jumping off a good length and everyone thinks that’s a problem for batters,” he reasoned.



England all-rounder Ben Stokes plays shot against India during third Test in Ahmedabad @BCCI/Twitter

The 68-year-old pointed out that playing in India has mostly been about tackling quality spinners and that England may not have done their homework properly ahead of the tour.

Weighing in on the debate, the batting great said, “... But now you’ve seen the other side, and this is why I think it was given the name Test match cricket, because of the test of the mind and will and everything else that goes with it when you’re competing.

“And the complaints have been that the wicket is spinning too much and all that sorts of stuff. This is another

side of the coin guys.

“People seem to forget that if you’re going to India, you should expect that. You are going to spin land. You should basically prepare yourself to know what you’re going to encounter.”

Richards said that India have pushed England out of their comfort zone, weeks after the visitors started the series with a big win.

“Ever since that first Test match, England were in their comfort zone. They have now been taken out of their comfort zone at present and they have got to find ways and means to cope with what they are going

to encounter.

“Spin is also a part of the game, this is what a Test match brings. The Indian pacers have been brilliant over the past few years in terms of substance, the wicket-taking ability and stuff like that.”

The legend urged the English team to work harder and face the challenge resolutely.

“... Now that you’re in India, you are going to encounter things and have got to find a way. You’re going to get dirty. There is nothing in the rule book that says I’ve got to score my runs in pretty, classical ways,” he said.

England appoint Trescothick as batting coach

London: England on Monday appointed former opener Marcus Trescothick as the new batting coach of the national team, besides roping in Jon Lewis and New Zealand’s Jeetan Patel as bowling and spin bowling coaches on permanent basis.

These three are part of the four new appointments to England’s coaching set-up, which is being headed by chief coach Chris Silverwood.

Trescothick will take over from Jonathan Trott, who replaced South African Jacques Kallis in the ongoing tour. Kallis had played the role of a batting consultant for England in Sri Lanka.

“...I’m really excited about the calibre of the individuals that we’ve appointed into these specialist roles. Marcus, Jon and Jeetan have demonstrated their ability at the highest level and also show huge potential for the future,” ECB performance director Mo Bobat said in a statement.

Trescothick, who scored over 10,000 International runs across formats between 2000 and 2006, is expected to take up his new role in mid-March after stepping down from his position as assistant coach at Somerset.

PTI

Maxi eager to learn from Kohli



PTI ■ WELLINGTON

Australian all-rounder Glenn Maxwell is chuffed about playing alongside and learning from Virat Kohli in the upcoming IPL, calling the Indian captain “the pinnacle of the game” for his dominance across formats. The Kohli-led RCB bought Maxwell, who was released by Punjab Kings, for a whopping ₹14.25 crore at the auctions last month.

“It’s (RCB stint) going to be next level,” Maxwell told *Australian Associated Press*. “He’s (Kohli) been the pinnacle of the game for a while as a multi-for-

‘Virat is like modern day hero’

New Delhi: Australian great Steve Waugh feels that Virat Kohli is like a “modern-day hero” who represents the “new attitude of India” of taking everything head on with a mind set of nothing is impossible.

In a 60-minute documentary titled, *Capturing Cricket: Steve Waugh in India*, the former Australia captain said that Kohli is loved by the fans for his attitude of not being intimidated by an opposition.

mat player from Tests all the way to T20s. “He’s been able to adapt his game, dominate for a long period of time and deal with the Indian pressure of being their captain and their best player,” Maxwell added.

The Indian Premier League is scheduled to start in the second week of April and the swashbuckling all-rounder hopes to pick up some leadership qualities from the Indian skipper, who will also be Maxwell’s captain at RCB.

“I’m looking forward to watching him go about his work, not just in games but in training, and hopefully tapping into some of the leadership stuff and try and learn off him.”

Himachal were then bundled out for a meagre 121, with leg-spinner Prashant Solanki (4/31) shining with the ball.

After losing four for 49, Suryakumar began the rescue act and toyed with the Himachal attack, striking 15 boundaries on his way to a 75-ball 91.

He found an able ally in the experienced Tare (83 off 98 balls; 6x4; 1x6) who played the perfect second fiddle as the duo forged a 99-run fifth wicket stand to rally the innings.

After Suryakumar fell in the 31st over, Tare and Shardul added 112 runs for the sixth wicket, as they tackled the

Mumbai trounce HP by 200 runs

lyer-led side remain unbeaten in league stage to advance in Hazare knockouts

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Domestic giants Mumbai trounced Himachal Pradesh by 200 runs in their final Elite Group D game here on Monday to remain unbeaten in the league stage of the Vijay Hazare Trophy.

Mumbai had won their first four matches against Delhi, Maharashtra, Puducherry and Rajasthan.

Opting to bat at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium, Mumbai posted an imposing 321/9, courtesy Shardul Thakur’s 92, Suryakumar Yadav’s 91 and Aditya Tare’s 83 after a top-order failure.

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Himachal attack with ease.

Shardul, one of the heroes of the Brisbane Test against Australia, hammered six boundaries and as many sixes, as he cantered to 92 in just 57 balls.

Thanks to Shardul’s hitting, Mumbai crossed the 300-run mark, but Tare’s patient knock was equally important as he anchored the innings and supported the aggressors.

In the other two Elite Group D league games, Maharashtra thrashed Puducherry by 137 runs, while Delhi defeated Rajasthan by eight wickets.

hands of Services but still managed to finish as group toppers and qualified for the knock-out phase.

Saurashtra finished with 16 points, four clear of Chandigarh whose direct qualification hopes were dashed with an eight-wicket loss to Jammu & Kashmir at the Jadavpur University second campus in Saltlake.

At the 22 Yards Academy in Saltlake, Services rode on Rahul Singh Gahlaut’s career-best 158 to post a challenging 301 for seven and in reply Saurashtra were bundled out for 233 in 43.1 overs.

Elsewhere at Eden Gardens, hosts Bengal lose by five wickets against Haryana.

U’KHAND PIP ASSAM

Uttarakhand thrashed Sikkim by 145 runs to remain unbeaten in the Plate group, and clinch a spot in the knockout phase, pipping Assam by virtue of a better net run-rate.

Assam completed its engagements with a crushing 182-run win over Mizoram.

Both Uttarakhand and Assam finished with an all-win record but the former qualified for the next stage due to a higher NRR (3.273) as against the latter’s 1.909. Meghalaya edged Nagaland to the third spot by virtue of a superior NRR despite securing 16 points. They were followed by Sikkim (4 points), Arunachal Pradesh (2), Mizoram (2) and Manipur (0).

Reds answer critics with win

AFP ■ SHEFFIELD

Jurgen Klopp believes Liverpool can prove the doubters that have written their season off wrong after snapping a four-game Premier League losing streak to win 2-0 at Sheffield United on Sunday.

The English champions’ title defence has been decimated by injuries and they face a battle just to qualify for next season’s Champions League via a top-four finish.

Klopp’s men remain in sixth, but are now just two points behind fourth-placed West Ham and can leapfrog Chelsea in fifth when the Blues visit Anfield on Thursday.

“Plenty of people have written us off. That’s fine,” said Klopp. “With all the problems we have had, we’re still around the exciting places.”

Jordan Henderson has been added to Liverpool’s long-term injury list, while goalkeeper Alisson Becker was absent after



he lost his father this week.

But the Championship-bound Blades proved the perfect opponents for Klopp’s men to restore some confidence as Curtis Jones’ second-half strike and Kean Bryan’s own goal got the Reds back to winning ways.

“This was about us showing we’re still there,” added Klopp.

“We play Chelsea on Thursday, we have to show it again. We have to win football games, we know that. There’s no way into the Champions League without results.”

Sheffield United are still 15 points adrift of safety at the bottom of the table and manager Chris Wilder admitted his side lacked the quality to challenge even a depleted Liverpool.

Milan back on track

AFP ■ ROME

Milan won an intense battle with rivals Roma at the Stadio Olimpico in the Italian capital on Sunday night, as Stefano Pioli’s side push for a first league title since 2011.

A Franck Kessie penalty gave Milan the lead five minutes before the break after Federico Fazio fouled Davide Calabria.

Jordan Veretout pulled Roma level five minutes after the break with an arrowed shot, but the away side were soon back in front.

Ante Rebic drilled home the winner eight minutes later after collecting a pass from Alexis Saelemaekers following a poor clearance from Roma goalkeeper Pau Lopez.

Off-form Milan star Zlatan Ibrahimovic had been substituted shortly before Croatia international Rebic scored the decisive goal.

“I told the lads that two games (losses) cannot take away the confidence build up

over a year,” said Pioli.

“It’s an important win at a decisive moment in the season which takes us out of



Atlético keep rivals at bay

AFP ■ VILLARREAL

Atletico Madrid bounced back from recent poor form with a hard-fought 2-0 win at Villarreal on Sunday that allowed the La Liga pace-setters to extend their lead to five points.

An own goal from Alfonso Pedraza and Joao Felix’s powerful strike gave Atletico a precious win after a wobble which had allowed Barcelona and Real Madrid to gain ground in the title race.

Diego Simeone’s side had come into the match off the back of a Champions League last 16 defeat to Chelsea and a league run in which they picked up just five points from two very strange weeks.”

Earlier, Napoli’s record goalscorer, Dries Mertens, returned from injury to help the southerners boost their Champions League hopes with a 2-0 win over local rivals Benevento, to



Joao Felix scores Atletico Madrid’s second goal against Villarreal @ATM/Twitter

their previous four matches.

However, the win ensures Atletico hold second-placed Barca at bay and crucially

keeps the gap between them and rivals Real Madrid at six points ahead of next weekend’s local derby.

half an hour for his 131st Napoli goal.

Matteo Politano turned in the second in the 66th minute, with Gattuso’s side holding on for the points despite Kalidou Koulibaly’s sending-off 10 minutes from time.