

ANUSHA PUPPALA

HYDERABAD

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A COMRADE MOMENT FOR CHARAN

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Tobacco vendors'

bodies up in arms

the pioneer

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 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".

Second phase vax drive at 93 centres in state

Telangana's Health Minister Eatala Rajender on Monday launched the second phase of Covid vaccination by receiving the first dose at governmentrun 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 confu-

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.



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 For the first week only those not 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 governmentrun 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.



www.dailypioneer.com

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 Hyderabadi, got vaccinated in Telangana. He was among the first one to take the jab at Medicover 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.

VITEEE 202

---- B.Tech. Admissions -----

EXAM DATES 18" - 26" June

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.



sell other products.

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

Stopped at Tirupati airport, Naidu basks in the spotlight

of vendors selling beedits, cig-

arettes and chewing tobacco

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, safe-ty and well-being of people. The report also says shops sell-ing tobacco products cannot

products.

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.

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.



HC allows Varavara to furnish cash for bail

The Bombay High Court on Monday allowed ailing poetactivist Varavara Rao, accused in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case, to furnish a temporary cash surety for release on bail until the process of subcompleted.

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 urrently admitted

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

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).



'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.



TODAY

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 12:50 pm - 02:18 pm 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

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 tables

PRANAB GHOSH

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.



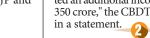
I-T unearths Rs 400 cr tax evasion by pharma firm

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



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.













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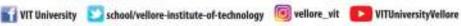
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Engineering • Electrical and Electronics Engineering • Electronics and Communication









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Opposition bid to fuel fire against Modi will fizzle out

orgetting 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

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

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, Ťirupati 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 pedalling of the NEMZ which seeks to provide employment to 2 lakh persons directly and another 2

AP was allotted 20,28,868 TRULY houses under the PMAY, **SPEAKING**

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

been transferred to AP in various ways. Why is AP making a

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 The Nandyal-Yerraguntla railway line project, sanctioned during PV

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 nonexistent 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 govern-ment value, the CBDT said.

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VISAKHAPATNAM 505

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RATES ₹/KG

BULLION RATES

₹ 46, 580 (10 gm)

₹ 72, 500 (1kg)

₹168

₹191

405

393

₹ 390

₹ 800

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

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 ficed at the jatara. Plays of the devotees in traditional dresses become a main attraction at the

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

After the arrival of the divine 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

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

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

Srinivas Yadav said Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar 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 Survapet district, which, Srinivas Yadav felt, could be seen in the eyes of the devotees from various dis-

Traffic was jammed for three kilometres on the National Highway 65 following a huge rush of the devotees. Though heavy vehicles were diverted to native routes 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.

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

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

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

He further added, "FRAI 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. FRAI 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

without impacting large retail-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

aimed at destroying the busi-

ness for the smaller retailers

Centre all...

Continued from page 1

Communications Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said Rs 77,146 crore worth of spectrum was bid on the first day but there were no takers for the airwaves in the premium 700 MHz as also 2500 MHz bands. The response from players and the bids received surpassed government's internal estimates that had anticipated bids worth Rs 45,000 crore.

"The winning bids that have come till 6 PM today is Rs 77,146 crore. We thought since there are only three players, and spectrum replacement happening...our estimation was that the bids will touch about Rs 45,000 crore, but it is a matter of assurance that it has gone as high as Rs

77,146 crore," Prasad said. The bidder-wise details were not available immediately. A total of 2,308.80 MHz spectrum is being put to auction, out of which there have been bids for 849.20 MHz so far, an offi-

cial release said. Bids were received in 800 MHz, 900 MHz, 1800 MHz, 2100 MHz and 2300 MHz

bands, as players gave the prized 700 MHz band a miss on the first day of auctions

HC allows Varavara to furnish...

Continued from page 1

On February 24, Rao filed the application seeking modification of the bail order and permissionto deposit temporary cash bonds before the NIÁ 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 solvent 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 eithersurrender 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. Deshmukhs 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

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 whirred, 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

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 my 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 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 Subhendu 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.

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

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 min-

imum temperatures are likely

to be below normal within -

0.14°C of climatological nor-

The probability forecast for maximum temperatures indicates most parts 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-Metrological Indian 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 western part of central India 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 northeast India, a few subdivisions from eastern and western parts of central India and a few coastal subdivisions of north peninsular India. However, below normal seasonal maximum temperatures are likely over most of the subdivisions of south peninsula and adjoining central India.

India along the foot hills of

Himalayas, north-east India,

Seasonal minimum temperatures are likely over most of the subdivisions of north

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 probability forecast for

maximum temperatures indicates above normal maximum temperatures over most of the subdivisions of north, northwest 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 peninsular India. the spotlight from him.

SOUTHERN POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY OF TELANGANA STATE LIMITED

TENDER NOTICE NO :11 /2020-21 OF DEE/OP/KEESARA 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-reg, 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 Olof the Divisional Engineer Elect/OP/Keesara. Contact Person: Sri G.V.Madhusudhan, AAE/Tech/Keesara: 7901644733. Email: ID: de_o_keesara@tssouthempower.com R.O. No.: 1532-PPICL-AGENCYIADVT/1/3038-21 SdJ- DEE / OP / KEESARA R.O. No.: 1532-PPICL-AGENCY/ADVT/1/2029-21

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Cyber crime cops arrest two for credit card fraud

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Two persons, who allegedly cheated a city-based man after promising to extend the validity date of his credit card, were arrested by the Hyderabad cyber crime police on Monday.

The arrested persons were identified as Vineet Singh (28) and Deepak Singh (32), both natives of Delhi. According to the police, the duo called up people over phone and posing as bank officials, told them their credit cards were about to expire.

'On the pretext of extending the validity, they collected One Time Passwords from the card holders and duped them after withdrawing or transferring money from their accounts," said KVM Prasad, ACP (cyber crime), 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.

Onion prices drop in Hyd markets as arrivals go up

Onion prices in wholesale and retail markets in Telangana have dropped drastically in Hyderabad markets as the market is flooded with onions mainly from Maharashtra.

Also, the onions from Gujarat and Karnataka have reached the markets here to bring the prices under control in spite of farmers turning away from raising the onion crop in rabi.

The first grade onion was sold between Rs 35 and 45 in the wholesale market in Malakpet till a week ago. Now the onion is being traded at between Rs 25 and 30 per kg, the drop in the prices is as good as Rs 15-20 per kg.

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 back-drop, the onion prices will



skyrocket in domestic markets. But, the prices have been on the decline as there is glut in the market due to export of

onions from other states. The retail traders are now selling a kg of onions at Rs 35 as against Rs 50. On account of second wave of Covid in Maharashtra, the onion prices are held under the check as Maharashtra traders bring onions to the state. On week days, daily 6000 to

7000 quintals of onions reach the city and on Sundays the supply has increases to 8000

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 Maha, onions are being diverted in to the city markets.

Cyberabad cops arrest 10 of a gang for e-commerce fraud

The Cyberabad Cybercrime police on Monday busted an ecommerce fraud gang and arrested 10 persons, including five from Mancherial, for cheating people by sending gift scratch cards and application letters in the name of popular e-commerce and telemarketing companies.

The arrested persons were identified as Tarun Kumar from Bihar, Prabhakar Kumar Sinha from Jharkhand, Kamlesh Dubey from Mancherial, Yashwanth Thakur from Madhya Pradesh, Sourabh Patel from Madhya Pradesh, M Venkatesh, G Rakesh, E Prashanth, S Rajender Reddy and L Rajalingu, all from Ranchi and natives of Mancherial. Five suspects, Alok, Tiranju and Bajrangi from Bihar and Kotesh and Sunil from Jharkhand, were absconding.

Cyberabad Commissioner VC Śajjanar 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



Cyberabad Commissioner VC Sajjanar takes a look at mobile phones, laptops rubber stamps and debit cards seized from the gang.

scratch cards to them by post. "Customers believed the letters to be genuine, as they had purchased some product or the other from these online ecommerce companies. They fell into the trap and called the fraudsters on the mobile phone numbers given in the post received by them to confirm winning gifts including cars and costly gadgets among oth-

ers," Sajjanar said. The fraudsters, on receiving these calls, would send fake ID cards of e-commerce companies on WhatsApp to convince

the customer. "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

CITY LIGHTS

CSIR-NGRI holds programme on 'Analytical Geochemistry'

nder the Integrated Skill Initiative of CSIR in corroboration with Skill India mission of Govern-ment of India, CSIR-NGRI is organising a ten-day online training progra-mme on "Advanced Analytical Geochemistry" from



March 1 to 10. This programme has attracted research scholars and young faculty members from 27 different Universities/organisations all over the country, a release here said on Monday. This programme is intended to impart practical training on different analytical equipment used in the research of Earth System sciences covering areas of mineral exploration, understanding the earth processes and environmental studies. This event was inaugurated by Prof SIC Tandon, Former Pro Vice Chancellor, University of Delhi. He emphasised the need for the human resource development in the country's growth, and skills to be upgraded among young research scholars in the field of analytical geochemistry.

MANUU Dean Siddiqui presented 'Maulana Azad Memorial Award'

rof Siddiqui Mohd Mahmood, Registra I/c & Dean, School of Education &Training, Maulana Azad National tne prestigious iviau Memorial Award' in



Aurangabad, Maharashtra, for his outstanding services in the field of education, last week. The award was given to him on the occasion of one-day National seminar organized jointly by Maulana Azad Chair, Dr Baba Sahab Ambedkar Marathwada University, Maulana Azad Research Center, Municipal Corporation of Aurangabad; Arts and Science College of Lok Seva Education Society and Chishtia College of Arts and Science, Khuldabad on the death anniversary of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, a release said here on Monday. The seminar titled "Literature, Culture and Journalism: A Modern Analysis" reviewed the literary and journalistic life of Maulana Azad. Prof Siddiqui in his lecture highlighted various aspects of Maulana Azad's life.

TSWRJC CET: Last date for online application extended

or the TSWRJC CET 2021, the last date for submission of online applications for admission into 1st year intermediate courses (Arts, Science and Vocational streams) in social welfare residential educational institutions for the academic year 2021-2022, has been extended up to March 10. The candidates were instructed to visit TSWREIS website tswreis.in for prospectus, online application and other details.

Vehicles pile up at Police Ground

he Police Ground at Khajaguda near Raidurgam is turning into a massive parking lot, with an increase in the number of vehicles being parked there. However, these vehicles are not parked there without a reason. The vehicles are those seized during the special drives taken up by the Cyberabad Traffic Police against drunk driving and other violations. During enforcement drives, officials seize vehicles for specific violations like drunk driving or vehicles involved in accidents or other criminal cases and park them either at the local police station or a designated area like an open ground

State records 116 fresh Covid cases, no fatality

PNS HYDERABAD

Telangana has recorded 116 new Čovid infections and no fatality on Sunday taking the total number of positive cases is 2,98,923 while the cumulative number fatalities remained at 1,634.

As on Sunday, there were 1,902 active Covid cases in the state. A total of 165 persons recovered on Sunday taking the cumulative Covid recoveries in the state to 2,95,387 with a recovery rate of 98.80 per cent, while the countrywide recovery rate was 97.2

Between Saturday and Sunday, 20,375 Covid-19 tests were conducted in the state while reports of another 276 samples were awaited. So far, a total of 87,21,026 Covid tests have been conducted in the State out of which 2,98,923 have tested positive and 2,95,387 persons have recov-

The Covid-19 positive cases included four from Adilabad, from Yadadri.



two from Bhadradri, 26 from areas under Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation, five from Jagtiyal, one from Bhupalpally, eight from Karimnagar, one from Khammam, three from Mahabubnagar, two from Mahabubabad, four from Mancherial, three from Medak, 11 from Medchal Malkajgiri, one each from Nagarkurnool and Nalgonda, four from Nizamabad, one from Peddapalli, three from Siricilla, 11 from Rangareddy, seven from Sangareddy, one each from Siddipet and Suryapet, three from Vikarabad, two from Warangal Rural, eight from

Six women beg, create nuisance on roads, held

PNS HYDERABAD

The Ghatkesar police detained six women from Gujarat on charges of begging and creating nuisance to motorists here on Monday.

The police patrol staff, who received information on Dial 100 about these women, who were clad in T-shirts and trousers, reached the spot and shifted them to the police station, where enquiries revealed that the women, residents of Ahmedabad, were residing in a shelter home near Secunderabad Railway Station in the city and had started seeking alms to return home.

The police said a bind over case was being registered. They were warned and let off.

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

Guv pitches against Covid vax hesitancy

PNS HYDERABAD

Governor of Telangana state Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan has called for no vaccine-hesitancy among the people. She urged all the eligible people to register and take the vaccine to prevent Covid.

The Governor on Monday reviewed the Telangana State affairs with the Raj Bhavan officials through a video conference from Puducherry, where she is holding an additional charge as the Lt. Governor. Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan stated that all the eligible people like those above 60 years and those above 45 years with co-morbidity conditions must be motivated to register on the COWIN 2.0 and take the vaccine.

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 getvaccinated," she directed.



The Governor also appealed to all the people to strictly adhere to the Covid-19 preventive norms so as to prevent the spread of the pandemic, as the vaccination process is still n progress. Dr. Tamilisai Soundararajan

reviewed the requests and appeals received through the social media and directed the officials to respond according to the merits of the each case.

Responding to a request from a Home Guard, who is working in Raj Bhavan and sought the help for his daughter's surgery, the Governor directed the officials to coordinate with the senior paediatrician surgeons at the

HCA president supports KTR's appeal to BCCI

PNS HYDERABAD

Hyderabad Cricket Association president and former India captain Mohammed Azharuddin has pitched for holding Indian Premier League matches this season in Hyderabad, amid reports that the city may not be part of the venues for the high-profile T20 cricket tournament.

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 a single host not looking feasible anymore following a surge in Covid cases in and around the city. The 14th edition of start in second week of April.





REVIVING LAKES

Close to four years after 'floating islands' were introduced into Hyderabad's historic Neknampur 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 loating 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 Neknampur lake

Cattle herder killed in crocodile attack in TS

A 45-year-old man was killed by a crocodile in Sangareddy district on Sunday. The victim was fatally attacked by the crocodile in the Manjeera River, when he had taken cattle to the water body to wash them.

The victim was identified as Golla Ramulu, 45, hailing from Esojipeta village in Pulkal mandal. The incident took place between 11.30 am and noon, police said.

The police said no complaint has been filed, as the victim's family has not come forward.

crocodile approaching him. Caught unaware, Ramulu was dragged into the water by the animal and attacked. Reportedly, some of the villagers tried to save Ramulu by striking the crocodile with lathis. The villagers later recovered his body from the river.

A crocodile was spotted in Manjeera River near Pasalwadi last year. After being alerted to the presence of the crocodile. forest department officials cautioned villagers nearby. The Manjeera dam has a wildlife sanctuary for crocodile con-According to the reports, servation.

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 reguted firms / contractors For the work of Repairs and replacement to electromechanical items in Waddepally, KUC and Deshaipet 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://igwmc.gov.in. Quotation can be sent by post or Email to the following address and NO EMD is psyable at this juncture. Download Starting Date:02003/02/1, Last date for submission of bid Date: 08/03/2021 at 4.40 PM, For further details contact: 9100908404/9100915022. Mail id: segwmo@gmail.com

R.O. No.: 1533-PPICL-AGENCY/ADVT/1/2020-21 Rajasthan Co-operative Dairy Federation Limited

SARAS SAMKUL", J.L.N. MARG, JAPUR-302017 Ph. No. 2702 Direct: 0141-2710299: Website: www.sarasmilkted.tajasthar.gov.in E-mail: No. BONE DESCRIPTION More Transport (2013) 43301-40. **NOTICE INVITING E-TENDERS**

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BITTER ON TWITTER

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

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 Rao. was another 'Twitter' war between TRS and BJP brass on the subject of 'jobs', which has of late become hyper-sensitive. Already allegations and counter-allegations have on social media platforms.

The latest episode of the Twitter war involved TRS working president and IT Minister KT Ramarao and Graduates MLC candidate from the Hyderabad-Rangareddy-Mahabubnagar constituency N Ramchander

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 made on the job front been "waiting at Arts College, Osmania University" for



him. In response, KT Rama Rao tweeted, saying that he had been busy collecting information on the jobs given by the BJP.

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

Mentioning that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had assured people that he would provide 2 crore jobs per year, KTR said in his tweet that he was not getting information about that as well as about Rs.15 lakh each being deposited in Jan Dhan accounts.

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

Available. Please share if you have any answers https://t.co/NQf2FFF74z- KTR (@KTRTRS) March 1, 2021. 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 misled people. He said he was ready to clear KTR's doubts and suggested that the TRS working president should not to "hide under Twitter"

CM GREETS 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 Ùttam 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-interspent 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

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA

FORM - VII PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION (See Sub-rule (1) of rule-25 and Section-15(1) of the Act-38(2813)

Saib-Collector, Bhadrachalann, Land Asquisition Officer, Seefamma Sagar Multi Purpose Project, Ac. No. C1011/00/20-0 died: 15/02/2021 Dist Collector, Bhadrach Kothagadem Rc. No. C3796/0020. dated: 16/02/2021 District Gazette No. 83/38/2021.

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

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

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 stu-dents 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 unemploy-The TPCC Chief said that

the TRS and BJP governments also conspired to 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**

■ 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 Balakishan and also made phone calls to Ramagundam MLA Korukanti Chander, Kodangal MLA Narender Reddy and a Minister. KTR reportedly asked the Minister that how the party will ask that how the party will ask others if the Minister fails to complete the membership

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

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 gener-

al 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

Legislative Houses lost sheen in TRS' tenure, says Kishan

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 BIP 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 (ČSR) 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?

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.

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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 TSP and 4.244 BTSs. So far the authority has come across only one mobile tower slightly beyond the norms, which also subsequent-

ly 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 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

Tarang Sanchar www.tarangsanchar.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 rtance of mobile broad band/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



Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy's sister YS Śharmila decided to announce her

Andhra

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 YSRTP and YSRPT and 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.

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 gim-

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 Goebbelian 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 journal

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

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

Special queue lines, including providing wheelchairs for physicalchallenged and elderly devotees, will be made available for them. Parking lots will be arranged for bikes, four-wheelers, autos, minibuses 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 Sigra darshnam, Rs 400 VIP and Rs 800 for abhisekham are being arranged.



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





SEAT-SHARING TALKS WITH AIADMK

Our aim is to ensure victory: TN BJP chief

PNS CHENNAI

The BJP in Tamil Nadu on Monday asserted seat-sharing talks with lead alliance partner AIADMK for the April 6 assembly elections were not 'dragging' and their aim was to ensure the victory of the combine.

State BJP President L Murugan refused to divulge how many seats the party has sought from AIADMK and said a clarity on seat allocation might emerge in a day or two.

He, however, maintained the BJP return MLAs in "double digit" in the elections to the 234member assembly, to be held in a single phase.

"Our aim is to ensure the AIADMK-led NDA should come to power. For that BJP's Tamil Nadu workers will work hard," he told reporters here, a day after senior leader and Union Home Minister Amit Shah held parleys with AIADMK top leaders, Chief Minister K Palaniswami and his deputy O Panneerselvam on seat sharing. Asked if seat-shar-



ing was firmed up during the late night talks on Sunday, he shot back asking "who said so? Yesterday, only talks were held," he said. Murugan denied the talks were 'dragging'. When reporters sought to know how many seats the party has sought from the AIADMK, Murugan merely said "our MLAs will be in two digits... I have been saying this for the last many days," he added.

On the possible merger of AIADMK and TTV Dhinakaran-led Amma Makkal Munntera Kazhagam in the wake of release of hisaunt V K Sasikala from prison after serving a four-year term in an assets case, Murugan said it has to be decided by the two respec-

INDIA CORNER

After meeting Mamata, Tejashwi appeals to people to vote for TMC

mid speculation of a tie-up Acongress for the upcoming West Bengal assembly elections, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav on Monday met TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee. Yadav, who led the RJD in its fight against the NDA in the Bihar elections, went to state secretariat Nabanna to



meet Banerjee, also the chief minister. Senior TMC leader and Urban Development Minister Firhad Hakim also joined the meeting.

Whistleblower Prof's student finally gets PhD from IIT

Asix years struggle for IIT
Kharagpur scholar Mahesh
Shirole ended recently when he was awarded a PhD degree after repeated rejections of his doctorate thesis since January 2015, his supervisor said. Shirole and Professor Rajeev Kumar had been approaching different authorities, including the office of the President of India, against the denial of PhD. The president is the



Visitor to the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kharagpur among other central institutes. "I am happy that Mahesh Shirole has got a PhD degree after six years of battle with the IIT Kharagpur and the Ministry of Education," Kumar, who is Shirole's supervisor and is now a professor in the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) here, said. Kumar, a former professor of the computer science and engineering department at IIT Kharagpur, said that Shirole could get his hard-earned degree only due to the intervention of the Visitor and direction from the concerned education ministry. "It is better to be late than never," he told PTI. Shirole was awarded PhD in the 66th convocation of the institute, which was held virtually on Tuesday last week.

PDP workers stage protest in Jammu against fuel price hike

workers staged a protest here on Monday against the BJP-led central government over the rising fuel prices and the proposed property tax on the people in Jammu and Kashmir, officials said. Police blocked the Dogra chowk here and did not allow the activists of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to take out a rally, they said. The protesters, who



were carrying party flags and shouting anti-BJP slogans, later dispersed peacefully, officials said. Earlier, the PDP activists assembled near the Press Club near Dogra chowk and staged a demonstration against Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government for rising prices of essential commodities, especially petrol, diesel and LPG. "The BJP government is anti-poor and procapitalist... It has broken the backbone of the commoners by its anti-people policies and dictatorial attitude," PDP leader Pervez Waffa said. Prominent party leaders who participated in the protest include Rajinder Manhas, R K Bali, Narinder Singh and Sardar V S Sonu.

Woman beaten up to treat her infertility, say police

33-year-old woman died of alleged torture by an exorcist who branded her body, including private parts, with hot iron tongs and beat her up with a lathi purportedly to treat her infertility, police said on Monday. Victim Sharda Devi of



the Kamhara village of the district was admitted to the hospital on February 27, three days after being tortured, and died on Sunday during treatment, Puwayan Circle Officer Navneet Naik said. Saharda was married to Sarvesh of Kamhara village but the couple did not have any child, said Naik, adding that on her husband's insistence, she took the help of her brother-in-law Durvesh who also practised exorcism. Durvesh convinced the family that Sharda was under the influence of a witch and needed to be beaten up to be rid of the evil spirit. Accordingly, Durvesh allegedly first branded various parts of the woman's body, including the private ones, with hot iron tongs on February 24 and as she cried out of pain, he brutally beat her up with a lathi, saying all the pain is being inflicted to the witch, said police. Following the woman's death, an FIR was lodged in Puwayan police station against five persons, including the exorcist, on her parents' complaint.



Farmers should get more avenues to sell crops: PM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday emphasised on farmers getting more avenues to sell crops and said a food processing revolution was needed in the country for value addition to farm produce and to realise better

Addressing a webinar on

effective implementation of Budget provisions regarding the Agriculture Ministry, he underlined the need for increased participation of private players in the farm sector, including in research and development (R&D) work.

Without making any direct reference to the three new farm reform laws or to the three-month-old agitation by

farmers, Modi said there is a ment says the three laws give need for expanding options for the country's farming community to sell agri produce.

'Today the need of the hour is that farmers of the country get more and more options to sell their produce," he said. Restrictions had a negative

While the Modi govern-

farmers alternate options to sell their produce, thousands of farmers from Punjab and other states have been protesting at Delhi borders against the laws which they see will end the government procurement at Minimum Support Price (MSP). Highlighting impact on the sector, he various provisions for agriculture in the Union Budget, the

'Govt should come forward to resume talks with farmers'

Bijnor: BKU leader Rakesh Tikait has claimed that the Centre's "silence" for the past few days indicates that it is planning some steps against the farmers' agitation over newly enacted agriculture laws.

He also stressed that it is the government that will have to come forward with a proposal for talks to resume with the protesting farmers.

Before leaving for Uttarakhand's Udham Singh Nagar on Sunday night, the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) leader told reporters in Bijnor's Afzalgarh, "The government's silence for the past 15-20 days is indicating

prime minister said agriculture credit target has been hiked to Rs 16.5 lakh crore with priority to animal husbandry, dairy and fisheries

He said Rural Infrastructure Fund has been increased to Rs 40,000 crore and allocation for micro irrigation has been doubled. Scope of Operation Green Scheme has been expanded to 22 perishable products and 1,000 more mandis with e-NAM will be linked, Modi highlighted.

that something is going to happen. The government is planning some steps against the agitation."

However, Tikait said farmers will not step back till a solution is found.

The farmer is also ready. He will look after his crop as well as the agitation. Let the government hold talks when it has the time," he said.

Tikait also said farmers' "mahapanchayats" will be held at several places in the country till March 24.

When asked about the violence during a tractor parade on the Republic Day in New Delhi, he alleged that the government creat-

The prime minister laid emphasis on the effective and timely implementation of these budget provisions so that benefits reach to maximum peo-

> "There is a need for post harvest revolution or food processing revolution and value addition in the country in the 21st century, amidst ever-increasing agricultural production," he said. It would have been very good for the country if this work was done two-three decades ago, Modi said.

Only fraction of GST dues paid: Maha Guv

Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari on Monday said out of Rs 46,950 crore dues to the state government as GST compensation, the Centre has paid just Rs 6,140 crore and Rs 11,520 crore as loan by the end of February.

Addressing the joint sitting of members of the state Legislature on the first day of the budget session, Koshyari said compensation to the tune of Rs 29,290 crore is overduefrom the central government.

"By the end of February 2021, out of the Rs 46,950 crore due to my government as Goods and Services Tax compensation, the central government has paid just Rs 6,140 crore and Rs 11,520 crore as loan for GST compensation," the governor said.

navirus-induced lockdown slowed down the state's economy in addition to medical emergency and natural calamities. Out of the revenue collection target of Rs 3,47,456 crore, the state has collected just Rs



1,88,542 crore at theend of January 2021, which is 35 per cent less than the budgetary estimate and 21 per cent lower than the collection in the same period during the previous year, he said.

Despite significant reduction in revenue, the state has provided priority funding to the departments of public health, medical education and drugs, relief and rehabilitation, food and civil supplies and home during the pandemic, the governor said in his speech.

"To stimulate the economy, for 75 per cent of the budgetary provision for capital expenditure and released 100 per cent money to the Local Development Fund, DPC schemes and Dongri Vikas Karyakram," he said.

Punjab Assembly pays tributes to farmers

PNS CHANDIGARH

The Punjab Assembly on Monday paid tributes to the farmers who died during the ongoing agitation against the Centre's farm laws. Several farmers who were part of the agitation against the three farm legislations had died due to varied reasons, including health issues like heart

On the first day of the Budget session, the House also remembered former Union Home Minister Buta Singh, former ministers MS Gill, Major Singh Uboke, Bal Mukund Sharma and Satpal Gosain. The House also paid tributes to noted Punjabi singer Sardool Sinkander, "bhajan" singer Narinder Chanchal and freedom fighters Ajit Singh, Gohal Singh Tur and Balwant

A two-minute silence was observed as a mark of respect to the departed

Modi greets Nitish Kumar on his 70th birthday

PNS PATNA

Prime Minister Narendra extended birthday greetings to Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar who turned 70 on Monday. "Best wishes to Bihar CM

@NitishKumarji on his birthday. Under his leadership the NĎA government in Bihar i taking numerous steps for developing the state. Praying for his long and healthy life," Modi tweeted.

In Bihar, where his Janata Dal (United) is organising state-wide celebrations and observing the day as 'Vikas Divas', greetings poured in from all sides for Kumar who has been the Bihar chief minister for a decade-and-a-half.

Governor Phagu Chauhan came out with a message greeting the chief minister while



Assembly Speaker Vijay Kumar Sinha read out a statement on the floor of the House. Kumar was also greeted, on

behalf of the opposition, by RJD MLA and chief spokesman Bhai Virendra. The leader of the opposition,

Tejashwi Yadav, who is away canvassing for the RJD in pollbound Assam and West Bengal, also came out with a tweet greeting the chief min-

Several programmes are being held by JD(U) leaders to celebrate Kumar's birthday. A huge cake weighing 70 pounds is to be cut at the party's state headquarters here.

Kumar's close aide and minister Ashok Choudhary hasplanned the plantation of 70 saplings at his official residence, as a mark of respect for the chief minister's enthusiasm for environmental preserva-

NCP chief Sharad Pawar takes first dose of COVID-19 vaccine

PNS MUMBAI

NCP chief Sharad Pawar, his wife, and MP daughter on Monday received the first dose of COVID-19vaccine at a civic hospital here in Maharashtra, a senior health official said.

The former Union minister was administered 'Covishield' vaccine, which is manufac-tured by Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII) in collaboration with the\ University of Oxford and AstraZeneca, he said."Pawar (80) took the first



daughter Supriya Sule," Dr

Tatyaro Lahane, Director of the

Directorate of Medical Education and Research (DMER), told reporters.

Sule (51) represents Baramati Lok Sabha seat in Pune district.

On Monday, the second phase of the COVID-19 vaccination drive began nation-wide wherein people above 60 years of age and those over 45 years with comorbidities will be able to get COVID-19 vaccine for free at government facilities and for a charge at many private hospitals.

Man held in Odisha for raping 3-year-old

PNS ■ BHAWANIPATNA (ODISHA)

A 22-year-old man has been arrested in Odisha's Kalahandi district for allegedly raping his three-year-old niece, a police officer said here on Monday.

The man, a resident of Maskapadar village in Lanjigarh police station area, apparently lured the girl with toys and sweets on Sunday and took her to 'Jhami Yatra' (a local festival), he said.

Later, he allegedly raped her at a deserted place and dropped her home.

The child's mother, on finding out that she was bleeding, rushed her to a community health centre. From there, she was shifted to Bhawanipatna Government Hospital as her



condition deteriorated. Doctors at the government hospital referred her to VSS Medical

College, Burla, the officer said. Meanwhile, her mother lodged a complaint with the local police station, following which, the accused, who was trying to escape on his motorcycle, was arrested, he said.

The girl has undergone medical examination, and more details in the case will be available when the report arrives, the officer added

BJP leaders write to Kolkata police

PNS KOLKATA

A BJP delegation on Monday Commissioner Soumen Mitra alleging that an illegal exercise was being carried out in the force to "enable collection of postal ballot and effect proxy votes" during assembly elections, set to begin on March 27

In the letter undersigned by BJP MP Swapan Dasgupta and senior leaders Sabyasachi Dutta and Shishir Bajoria, the party claimed that a section of police officers, under the banner of Welfare Association, is collecting photocopies of voter and Aadhaar cards of their colleagues across all ranks as part of the operation.

'Warming will increase frequency of flash droughts'

PNS NEW DELHI

Climate change will increase the frequency of flash droughts in India in the future, which will have a negative impact on crop production, irrigation demands, and groundwater abstraction, says a study by researchers at Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Gandhinagar.

According to the researchers, flash droughts occur due to rapid depletion of soil moisture. In contrast to the convention-

al droughts, they said, flash droughts can impact a large region within two-three weeks, severely affecting crop health and irrigation water demands.

However, the occurrence and impacts of flash droughts in the current and future climate in India are not well known. The study, published in the journal npj Climate and Atmospheric



Science, examined the role of human-caused climate warming and intra-seasonal variability during the summer monsoon season on the flash

The researchers used soil moisture simulations, observations from Meteorological Department (IMD), and climate projections

drought occurrence over India.

to examine the frequency of flash droughts in the country under the observed and future climate scenarios.

The team noted that the worst flash drought in the observed timeframe from 1951-2016 occurred in 1979, when more than 40 per cent of the country was affected. The frequency of concur-

the researchers explained, is projected to rise by about five-fold, causing approxi-mately seven-fold increase in flash droughts like 1979 by the end of the 21st century. "We find that flash droughts in India are caused

rent hot and dry extremes,

by the monsoon breaks or delayed monsoon and the number of flash droughts will increase in the future," said Vimal Mishra, Associate Professor of Engineering at IIT Gandhinagar.

"As air temperature is projected to get warmer signifi-cantly in the future due to climate change, monsoon breaks and increased air temperature can exacerbate the flash drought occurrence in India, said Mishra, the corresponding author of the study.

Prashant Kishor is principal advisor to Punjab CM

PNS CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh Monday said poll-strategist Prashant Kishor has joined him as his

principal advisor.

"Happy to share that
@PrashantKishor has joined me as my Principal Advisor. Look forward to working together for the betterment of the people of Punjab!"

Singh said in a tweet. Kishor had handled the Congress party's poll campaign in Punjab in the 2017



assembly Currently, Kishor's company, Indian Political Action Committee (I-PAC), is assisting Mamata Banerjee's TMC in West Bengal elecwww.dailypioneer.com

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-PAPER WITH PASSION-

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 core 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.



Overt bonhomie

By praising Modi, Azad is consolidating his position within the dissenter group

here is nothing unusual in leaders of rival parties having a cordial relationship despite serious political differences. But what makes such "friendships" different from the others is their public display. The bonhomie between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad is a case in point. Recently, the manner in which Azad heaped praises on Modi indicates that it is something more than just geniality.



Everybody appreciated when the PM first displayed it while bidding an emotional farewell to the Congress stalwart on his retirement from the Rajya Sabha. Azad echoed the sentiments as the occasion called for it. However, Azad heaping praises on the PM in Jammu, that too, a day after a few senior Congress leaders reiterated their call for leadership change, has a political message. Being one of the most senior members of the group of 23 Congressmen — unofficially termed "G23" — Azad wants to carve a space for himself within this faction and also tell the party that it must go by the advice of its "elders". It seems that this group is sending a message that sidelining the old guard will only prove counterproductive to the

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 "rusted 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.

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

ne mistake Indians must not make is to read Pakistan through Indian 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 illed "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
India as a great threat to the



ing 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 IN PAKISTAN NOW 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 ARE TWO-THIRDS thereafter. But mohajirs soon OF THE COUNTRY'S 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 assas-BEEN TO KEEP THE sinated 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

WHAT PREVAILS IS THE WILL OF THE WEST PUNJABIS WHO POPULATION. THEIR NEED FOR KASHMIR HAS COUNTRY TOGETHER AND PAPER OVER THEIR DOMINANCE OF **EVERYTHING**

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

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 con-frontation 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 inch by inch, as one has by continuing to harass the already begun to see with the Indian forces by creating local points that would pose a threat. Similarly, Islamabad wants to cool off vis-à-vis

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 China Pakistan Economic Corridor coming into play.

(The writer is a wellknown columnist and an New Delhi until China warms author. The views expressed up again after, say, arriving at are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

HAIL INDIA'S VACCINATION DRIVE Sir —The second phase of India's vacci-

nation drive has been rolled out and Prime Minister Narendra Modi got the first shot of COVAXIN, the Indiaresearched 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



he 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

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

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

gloss on it. Also, there have been only 16 pink-ball Test matches in the world and many of those have finished fairly early. There have been some abysmal batting performances, like in the pink-ball Tests ndia and England have played.

The pink ball is bringing new dimensions to the game, and the players need to adopt these. If one plays more and more, he would obviously get used to it. Cricketers were playing with the red ball for a long period of time, then they shifted to the white ball. That's how the format keeps on evolving and, with this new dimesnsion ,more action is expected in the coming days. Not only the players but also spectators will enjoy more pink-ball game in the coming days.

V Nagendra Kumar | Hyderabad

CONDUCT AN IMPARTIAL INQUIRY

Sir — It is good on the part of Maharashtra Forest Minister Sanjay Rathod to resign from his post after the Opposition BJP linked him to a 23-year-

old woman's alleged death by suicide in Pune. This will pave the way for an

impartial enquiry in the case. The audio clip which surfaced on social media two days after her death, in which two men are talking about the woman's death, should be sent to forensic science laboratory for examination. The BJP has claimed that one of the men in the audio clip is Rathod while the Shiv Sena leader has denied the charge. On the other hand, responding to the Opposition's demand for a case against the Minister, Chief Minister Thackeray said a First Information Report (FIR) can't be registered before investigation. The Maha Vikas Aghadi Government must get the case investigated by the Central agencies for a free and impartial investigation. The CM must act and think out-of-the-box to save his image. MR Jayanthy | Coimbatore

> Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

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



across



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

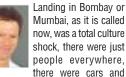
Workers

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



-Vijayendra Kumeria



shock, there were just people everywhere, there were cars and bikes and animals and rats and cats running along the footpath.

Former Australia captain

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

UP Chief Minister

—Yogi Adityanath

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FIRST COLUMN

MANY FORTUNES AT STAKE

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



KALYANI SHANKAR

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



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 toppling 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 North 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 Javalalithaa'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 (The writer is a senior journalist. The views expressed

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

nder 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 pub-

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

MANAGEMENT

The writer is a

policy analyst. The views expressed

WITH THE



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 buy. During 2018-19, Air India was also put on the block but failed.

also took up sale of all of its shareholding 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 bo necks in the way like policy flipflops (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 topdown approach; linking share sale of REC too, it asked the PFC to to meeting the FD target. The last two reasons have the inevitable effect of delaying and reducing

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 PŚUs 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 respec tive fields, the company should to be given full autonomy in its

This mechanism will also help in de-linking divestment from the Budget exercise and give muchneeded 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

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

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

n today's world we are surrounded by Artificial LIntelligence (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

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

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



KM CHERIAN

The writer is a Padma Shri awardee and cardiothoracic surgeon credited with India's first bypass. He is Chairman and CEO of Frontier Lifeline Hospital. The views expressed are personal.

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 per-They can be used in lab-

oratories 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

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 resulted in a substantial burden for patients and economic loss for various hospitals. It is in situations like this that AIrobot 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 SGDormBot, helped in mass screening for symptoms among migrant work-

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 benefits and limitations.

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 nonclinical workforce of the healthcare system. Specialties such as radiology where imaging reports can be automated and produced by AI algorithms may well be the

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



investors cheer GDP 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

Likewise, the NSE barom-eter Nifty settled with a gain of 232.40 points or 1.60 per

Of the Sensex constituents, 29 closed with

Top performers were owerGrid, ONGC, Ultratech Cement, Asian Paint, Kotak Bank and Titan - rising as much as 5.94 per

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

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 highfrequency 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

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 cam-paign conducted by a Chinalinked 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

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 stutter-

ing 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 organisa-

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

MONEY MATTERS

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 Ćhina's involvement in the hacking of India's power grid, saying it is "irresponsible and ill-intentioned" to make allegations without proof.



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.

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.

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

when it reported a drop of 4.1per cent.

Offtake is llikely 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 i as envisaged. Even after adiscount offered by Bharat Coking Coal of 24 per cent todilute its stock, movement is not that attractive. It stillcarried a stock of 1.6 million tonnes, down from 2.5 milliontonnes when the discount was announced," one of the

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.

February remained above its survey noted. In PMI parlance, a print above 50 means expansion

The headline figure for

while a score below 50 denotes contraction. "Indian goods producers reported a healthy inflow of new orders in February, a sit-

uation that underpinned a

further upturn in output and

Economics Associate Director at IHS Markit, said. Lima noted that production growth could have been

quantity of

Pollyanna

purchases,"

Lima,

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 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

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



Rupee slips 8 at 73.55

The rupee ended 8 paise

It finally

which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, advanced 0.22 per cent to 91.07. Meanwhile, Brent

On the domestic equity market front, the BSE Sensex ended 749.85 points or 1.53 per cent higher at 49,849.84, while the broader NSE Nifty advanced 232.40 points or 1.6 per cent to 14,761.55.

Foreign institutional investors were net sellers in the capital market as they offloaded shares worth Rs 8,295.17 crore on Friday, according to exchange data.



paise to settle against \$

lower at 73.55 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, weighed down by a spike in global crude oil prices and strengthening American currency.

At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened at 73.76 against the greenback and witnessed an intra-day high of 73.19 and a low of 73.76.

73.55 against the American currency, registering a fall of 8 paise over its previous clos-

On Friday, the rupee had settled at 73.47 against the American currency.
The dollar index,

crude futures, the global oil benchmark, rose 1.69 per cent to USD 65.51 per barrel.

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

February 2021 as against 235,891 units in February 2020. Domestic two-wheeler sales grew by 15% registering 195,145 units in

PNS MUMBAI

Aircraft leasing Monday said it has signed a purchaseagreement with budget carrier IndiGo parent

for eight new Airbus A320 neo planes. The aircraft, to be powered by CFM Leap engines, are scheduled to be delivered in

HDFC Sec says tech glitch resolved; mkt ops normal

PNS MUMBAI/NEW DELHI

Leading stock exchanges NSE and BSE on Monday said all their operations are functioning in a normal manner after HDFC Securities flagged that confirmations were not received for orders placed in the NSE cash segment due to a "technical glitch".

After mentioning about the technical glitch in a tweet at 10.01 am, HDFC Securities, at around 11.53 am, issued a statement saying the issue "got resolved at 9.50 am" and that investigation is going on to



find out the root cause.

The episode, which happened less than one hour after markets opened for trading, comes within days of a technical glitch forcing NSE (National Stock Exchange) to halt trading for nearly four

In a statement, a NSE spokesperson said that all the operations on its platforms were "functioning smooth and normal". At little past 10.10

am, BSE tweeted that there was no issue on fresh orders or square-offs at the exchange. "... all segments working fine statement was given in response to brokers and investors reporting the problem on twitter on a competing exchange today morning. No one has reported any problems in trading at @bseindia today or last week any day," BSE CEO Ashish Chauhan said.

5F World invests undisclosed amount in InnoServ

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 Startups, 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-

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

Asian shares rose Monday on hopes for President Joe Biden's stimulus package and bargainhunting after sell offs 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.

export-reliant Asia's 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 rollouts are also gradually getting

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

February 2021 as against 169,684 units in February 2020.

February 2021 as against 82,877 units in February 2020.

Motorcycle grew by 16% recording 137,259 units in February 2021

Company grew by 56% registering 95,525 units in February 2021 as

total exports grew by 23% registering 101,789 units in the month of

against 60,633 units in February 2020. **Exports**: The Company's

as against 118,514 units in February 2020. Scooter sales of the

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 tworecording 284,581 units in

BOC Aviation inks pact with **IndiGo for A320 neo planes**



InterGlobe Aviation

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 à 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



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.

the pioneer derabad

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> > Tuesday March 2, 2021

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

he trends in food securihe 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 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 agri-cultural 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 Moreover, in a unique disting tion, 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 agricultur-al 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 posses-

sions 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 years, artificial intelligence based technologies have been driving innovations in the agricultural industry by creating pathways for analysing data in ways not used ear-lier. 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 suffi-cient to meet the global demand of sustainable food security. Further, operational challenges related to time consuming and labor intensive operations, biotic and abiotic stre operations, notic and abiotic stress-es, weather dependency and quality issues hinder efficiency of the busi-ness. So, modern AI based tech-nologies today target shrinking breeding time and costs, increase the probability of achieving breedthe 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 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 agricul-tural 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 atte 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 techpower 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 wellmaintained 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 agricul-tural future with the help of these intelligence inputs, we use AI technology 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 fivethousand censors in the farm and with our new technique called with our new technique called 'Farm in a Box' it takes care of the 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.

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 govern-ment and all the other stakeholde 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

great hero needs a great villain, goes the popular saying! In Bollywood, all you need is all you need is Danny Denzongpa who is known for his intrin-sic 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!

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. acter 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

ith a central theme of a food festival engulfed with heart-relishing true-toits-roots Hyderabadi cuisine. Ohris 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, Hyderabadi 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 foodstuff in the food festival

Who doesn't want to explore food carnivals like these, especially

when it's being organ-ised right in her heart of the city? With all the long-lasting love for Hyderabadi cuisine that's quite famous everywhere in the country, Ohris Sahib Barbeque will serve you well with the right food plate filled with fingerlicking 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 Hyderabadi 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

ack 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 reac-



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 inter-**

reading

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

Share what they're

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?



Dr Adnan and Mrs Kubra



Abdur Rahman



Sumina Reddy





Syeda Azra



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 urkey attended and appreciated the

Photos by SV Chary



Madhavi Latha and Amulya



FUN •

ARCHIE







CALVIN AND HOBBES



REALITY CHECK

ESTERDAY'S COMIC ABOUT A CONSPIRACY CLUB FOR DOGS WAS A FAKE! HERE IS WHAT A REAL DOG CONSPIRACY THEORY CLUB WOULD LOOK LIKE:

NOPE! WAIT!



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD











NANCY









SUDOKU

EVERY-THING

IS GREAT! JUST SUPER!

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

783492156 162357948

NO, YOU TELL HIM ITS WRONG.

any row or column must equal 45.

ACROSS

18 Living

DOWN 1 Sets of two

- 1 Expecting a baby
- 7 Similar
- 8 Eat soup with this 9 Reply
- 10 A large furry animal
- 12 A snake's noise 17 A dentist repairs these

19 A game of jumping a rope

2 The number of players in

a cricket team 3 Smell with this

4 A rope loop

- 14 Overtakes
- 13 Say something 15 A wasp's weapon
 - 16 Cut with an axe

5 A skydiver wears this

11 Honolulu is the capital

of this American island

6 Without dothing



GINGER MEGGS









Each row and column can contain each number (1 to 9) exactly once.

• The sum of all numbers in

Rules

tollywood

ANAND DEVERAKONDA'S

NEXT TITLED PUSHPAKA VIMANAM



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 conceptbased movie, with debutant director Damodar has been titled *Pushpaka Vimanam*. The film is jointly produced

expressed his interest in producing the Vijay Deverakonda's production banner King of the Hill Productions and Tanga Productions. The first look of

"During that time, Anand Deverakonda's *Dorasani* had just released, and I felt he would be best for this script and that's how this film started," Damodar said.

In this movie, you will see Anand Deverakonda as a government school teacher which primarily depicts the lives of middle-class families and the dramatic situations taking place around the insti-

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 entertain-

cr.
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

recently said that she is more comfortable around animals than humans. Animals, she adds, are

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 at the state of the st cated, easy to interact with. They live in the moment," Adah said.

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 Llike tweeting." 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 film has been the talk of the town since its The actress recently fea-The actress recently fetured 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

A COMRADE MOMENT FOR CHARAN

sharing the screen space. Director Siva Koratala

shared a glimpse of Ram Charan's look as Siddha

with Chiranjeevi's hand

has taken social media

on his shoulder. The new still from the film

took to Twitter and

living the dream of working with his father and Megastar Chiranjeevi for the upcoming mega-budget movie titled, *Acharya*.

> 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

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

five films his year!

AKASH PURI'S Romantic set to hit theatres on June 18

brother

and actor

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

Deverakonda who liked the

the story to Vijay Deverakonda's father

script very much and

Govardhan Rao

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

omantic that theatrical release date of 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

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

Indraganti takes special care in titling his films and he likes to have chaste Telugu titles. The title Aa Ammavi

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



fter a series of failures since Kittu Unnadu Jagratha in 2017, Raj Tarun heaved a 2017, Raj Iarun 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 upcom-

ing 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 prerelease 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, Nandyala Ravi and Madhunandan 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

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

he 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 lis-teners. 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 collabora-

tion with Sai Pallavi and director Sekhar Kammula

after their chartbuster

Vachchinde from Fidaa.

The film is slated to hit







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

India's top guns go full throttle at nets

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

They were also seen fielding with Rahane, standing 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

rest 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



England all-rounder Ben Stokes plays shot against India during third Test in Ahmedabad

side of the coin guys.

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

"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 resolute-

"...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

Doha: Ace Indian paddlers Manika Batra and Harmee Desai made an impressive return to the international circuit on Monday by registering straight-game victories in their respective qualifying round-2 matches at the WTT Contender series. Batra registered a 12-10, 14-12, 11-8 victory over Spain's Sofia-Xuan Zhang in women's singles, while world No 73 Desai notched up an easy 11-5, 12-10, 11-6 win over compatriot Anthony Amalraj to progress to the third round of the men's singles qualifiers. However, Sutirtha Mukherjee, Mudit Dani and Diya Chitale suffered defeats in their respective singles qualifying round matches

VIJENDER'S BOUT ON ROOFTOP DECK

next bout, his first since November 2019, against a yetto-be-announced opponent will take place in Goa on the rooftop deck of a docked ship on March 19. "Undefeated professional boxing star Vijender Singh is set to make his return to the ring on March 19. The first-of-its-kind fight will be held on the rooftop deck of the Majestic Pride Casino Ship — who have been roped in as the venue partner," his promoters IOS Boxing Promotions said in a statement. The Majestic Pride is a ship docked on the Mandovi River in Panaji, Goa.

VARUN, MALVIKA WIN UGANDA INT'L TITLES

New Delhi: Indian shuttlers Varun Kapur and Malvika Bansod registered hard-fought wins to clinch the men's and women's singles titles respectively at the 2021 Uganda International in Kampala. Varun had to sweat it out to get the better of seventh seeded Sankar Muthusamy 21-18, 16-21, 21-17 in the men's singles final, while second seed Malvika notched up a comefrom-behind 17-21, 25-23, 21-10 victory over Anupama Upadhyaya in the summit clash

BRADY LOSES IN 1ST ROUND OF DOHA

DOHA: Jennifer Brady lost in her first match since the Australian Open final, falling to Anett Kontaveit 6-1, 6-2 on Monday in the first round of the Qatar Open. Brady made 25 unforced errors against her Estonian opponent. Kontaveit had only nine unforced errors and didn't face a single break point against the seventh-

SEVERAL ARRESTED DURING RAID AT BARCA BARCELONA: Police raided the offices of FC Barcelona on Monday, carrying out several arrests just six days ahead of the club's presidential elections. Spain's Cadena Ser radio said one of those arrested was former club president Josep Maria Bartomeu, who resigned in October, along with CEO Oscar Grau and the

club's head of legal services.

BAJRANG TAKES BREAK FROM SOCIAL MEDIA NEW DELHI: Olympic-bound star Indian grappler Bajrang Punia on Monday announced he will be deactivating all his social media accounts until the Games in Tokyo this July-August. One of India's biggest medal hopes at the Olympics, Bajrang took to Twitter to announce the decision.

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

These three are part of the 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.

Maxi eager to learn from Kohli Mumbai trounce HP by 200 runs



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

"It's (RCB stint) going to be next level," Maxwell told Australian Associated Press. "He's (Kohli) been the pinnacle of the PTI 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 İndia" 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.

"What they love about Kohli is that it's like the new

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

is scheduled to start in the sec-

ond week of April and the swashbuckling all-rounder

hopes to pick up some leader-

skipper, who will also be

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?

"I'm looking forward to

Maxwell's captain at RCB.

The Indian Premier League

player," Maxwell added.

attitude of India, get stuck in, don't be intimidated. Take everything on and anything is achievable and possible. But he's like the modern-day hero," Waugh was quoted as saying in a media release after the launch of the documentary.

The documentary captures the very essence and undying love for the game in India through the lens of Waugh and is brought by discovery+. PNS

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 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

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

"It's an important win at a

which takes us out of

decisive moment in the season

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 300run 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.

SAURASHTRA IN O/F

In Group E games at Kolkata, Saurashtra suffered a shocking 62-run loss at the

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

Saurashtra finished with 16 points, four clear of Chandigarh whose direct qualification hopes were dashed with an eightwicket 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

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 Championshipbound Blades proved the perfect opponents for Klopp's men to restore some confidence as Curtis Jones' secondhalf strike and Kean Bryan's own goal got the Reds back to

winning ways. 'This was about us showing we're still there," added

"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 over a year," said Pioli.

 $M^{
m ilan}$ 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 Jordan Veretout pulled

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



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 pacesetters 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 keeps the gap between them

their previous four matches. However, the win ensures Atletico hold second-placed Barca at bay and crucially

points ahead of next weekend's local derby. sit just a point behind Roma in sixth.

Mertens started for the first time in over two months after injuring his ankle in mid-December, and the 33year-old got his boot to a Faouzi Ghoulam cross after minutes from time.

half an hour for his 131st Napoli goal.

and rivals Real Madrid at six

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