

ANALYSIS 7

A LESS TALKED ABOUT
CRIME AGAINST WOMEN

MONEY 8

INDIA'S 'RECOVERY FASTER
THAN EXPECTED'

SPORTS 11

PITCH WILL BE SIMILAR TO
LAST 2 TESTS: RAHANE

HYDERABAD, WEDNESDAY MARCH 3, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

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KRITHI SHETTY
TO SPEAK IN
TELANGANA
DIALECT
Page 12HARYANA TO RESERVE 75% JOBS IN
PVT SECTOR FOR LOCALS: MINISTER

The Haryana governor has approved the bill that reserves 75 percent private jobs for the people of the state, Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala has informed. The legislation was passed by the state assembly last year. "This is the day of great happiness for the youths of the state. The youths now will get 75 per cent reservation in private jobs. They will get reservation in every company, society and trust," he said. Reservation in the private sector jobs for locals was the main election promise of Chautala's Jannayak Janta Party, which had formed a government in alliance with the BJP after winning 10 of the 90 seats in 2019.

G-23 "EXTRACTED POUND OF FLESH", WANT
TO JOIN BJP: CONGRESS BENGAL CHIEF

Congressmen who are accusing the party of breaching secularism are those who "have already extracted their own pound of flesh," said the party's angry Bengal chief in an interview to media. Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, retaliated by describing him and his G-23 cohort as "leaders, who over the decades, have enjoyed the power of the Congress party." Now that the Congress is reduced to a far more modest standing, he professed, "they think the Congress does not have resources to offer them...so that is why they are castigating the Congress."

UK'S PRINCE PHILIP REMAINS IN
HOSPITAL AFTER TWO WEEKS

Britain's Prince Philip was receiving treatment and undergoing heart tests on Tuesday, two weeks after the 99-year-old husband of Queen Elizabeth was admitted to hospital in London as a precaution after he felt unwell. Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, was transferred from the private King Edward VII hospital to St Bartholomew's Hospital, which is a centre of excellence for cardiac care, for tests for a pre-existing heart condition and treatment for an unspecified infection which is not Covid-related. His stay in hospital is the longest he has needed treatment, although Buckingham Palace has said he is comfortable and responding to treatment.

PFIZER, OXFORD VACCINES REDUCE SEVERE
COVID IN ELDERLY, UK STUDY FINDS

The Pfizer and Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines for Covid are highly effective in reducing coronavirus infection among people aged 70 years and above, according to a study. The research estimated the effect of both the Covid vaccines on laboratory confirmed symptomatic disease in individuals aged 70 years or older. The researchers compared the rate of hospitalisation and deaths in confirmed Covid patients aged over 80 who were vaccinated more than 14 days before testing positive, with unvaccinated cases.



Covid made India's RICH RICHER

PNS ■ DELHI/HYDERABAD

The wealth of Indian billionaires rose by over a third during the COVID-19 lockdown, according to a study, which suggests that the pandemic, while devastating most homes and almost the whole of the economy, made India's rich richer.

According to the Billionaires Insights Report 2020 published by UBS and PwC, the net worth of Indian billionaires between April and July increased by 35% to \$ 423 billion.

India's billionaires reported a rise in their combined net worth by more than a third during the first four months of the coronavirus-induced nationwide lockdown, i.e., between April and July, defying the impact of the global economic fallout of the



pandemic. India reportedly added more than three dollar billionaires every month in 2019, taking the tally to 138 that has helped the country to feature at the third position globally.

According to the Forbes' India Rich List 2020 released earlier this month, the net worth of India's richest man, Mukesh Ambani, rose 73%

over the past year to nearly \$89 billion (Rs 6.52 lakh crore). This is over three times more wealth than the second richest person on the list, Gautam Adani, at \$25.2 billion. With this, Ambani remains the wealthiest Indian for the 13th year in a row.

Others in this list include HCL founder Shiv Nadar, Serum Institute of India's

India added more than three dollar billionaires every month in 2019, taking the tally to 138 that has helped the country to feature at the third position globally

Cyrus Poonawalla, Biocon chairman and managing director Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, among others.

Since 2009, the net worth of India's billionaires surged 90% as on July 31, 2020 - to rank sixth in the world, after the US, China, Germany, Russia and France, respectively.

CoWIN brings little relief from tech glitches

Give jab to those registering directly at the centre, says DPH

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Even the updated CoWin 2.0 version is not without glitches and software issues, due to which the administration of the vaccine on Monday and Tuesday was unduly delayed. Some of the people who visited designated centres could not receive the jab as the software failed to respond to the process of online booking of slots, and caused other hiccups.

The second phase of the vaccination commenced on the first day in 70 centres. On Monday, the authorities began administering vaccine to those who are aged above 60 years and to those who are in the age



group of 45-49 years, but with morbidities. Contrary to expectations, CoWin 2.0 posed many problems like not being able to generate OTP in some cases; and, even if the OTP was generated, the appropriate link was not opening. The website showed that registration was over, though the medical personnel at the appropriate centre did not receive messages.

The web page also did not respond properly. As a result, the vaccination process was delayed.

TS to increase vaccination centres to over 1K in 1 week

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Vaccination of people who are 60 years or above, and for those with comorbidities in the 45-59 years age group continued across Telangana for the second consecutive day.

Union Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy on Tuesday received the first dose of the Covid vaccine here. The Minister was inoculated at the government-run Gandhi Hospital in his Parliamentary constituency of Secunderabad. Kishan Reddy, who was accompanied by state Health Minister Eatala Rajender, appealed to people who come under the two categories to come forward to take the vaccine without any hesitancy.

KTR: Will work on advocates protection law soon



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TRS working president and IT Minister KT Rama Rao has said that he would take up the question of enacting a special piece of legislation to protect advocates, after exploring whether there was any relevant act across the nation. The TRS government would strive to come up with an Advocates Protection Act for the sake of lawyers, he said, while addressing advocates' meeting held at Telangana Bhavan on Tuesday.

Manmohan blames note ban for high joblessness

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Attacking the Centre, former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh on Tuesday said unemployment is high in the country and its informal sector is in shambles following the "ill considered demonetisation decision" taken by the BJP-led government in 2016.

He also criticised the central government for not holding regular consultations with the states.

Inaugurating a development summit virtually organised by the Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Development Studies, an economic think tank aligned to



the Congress ideology in poll-bound Kerala, Singh said temporary measures by the central government and the RBI to paper over the credit problem cannot blind us to the looming credit crisis ahead that could affect the small and

medium sector.

"Unemployment is high and the informal sector is in shambles, a crisis precipitated by the ill considered demonetisation decision taken in 2016", he said at "Pratheeksha 2030."

The summit was organised to launch a Vision Document, a framework of ideas for development of Kerala well in advance of the state elections.

He observed that in Kerala and many other states, public finances were in disarray with states having to resort to excessive borrowing, which creates an intolerable burden on future budgets.



TRS goes for the kill: Harish Rao enters MLC poll scenario

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TRS troubleshooter T Harish Rao has entered the MLC poll scenario and deployed party MLAs, MLCs and important leaders for the campaign. He has appointed one in-charge for every 60 voters.

Although largely confined all these days to undivided Medak district, Harish has suddenly become hyper

active with tasks related to the MLC elections, following party supremo and Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao's intervention, it is learnt. Harish has planned out the campaign in such detail that party leaders will now call on each voter. The Ministers have been entrusted with the task of supervising the work of TRS leaders.



Modi, a brand ambassador of 'good governance': Naqvi

5



Leaders lack steely resolve to stop VSP disinvestment

2



Sensex rises for second day; reclaims 50K-level

8

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:

Magha & Shukla Paksha

Panchangam

Tithi : Panchami: 12:21 am (Next Day)

Nakshatram: Swati: 01:35 am (Next Day)

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

Rahukalam: 12:28 pm - 01:55 pm

Yamagandham: 08:04 am - 09:32 am

Varjyam: 08:38 am - 10:07 am

Gulika: 11:00 am - 12:28 pm

Good Time: (to start any important work)

Amritakalam: 05:29 pm - 06:57 pm

Abhijit Muhurtham: NIL

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Partly cloudy

Temp: 35/17

Humidity: 28%

Sunrise: 06:33 am

Sunset: 06:23 pm

Current Weather Conditions

Updated march 2, 2021 5:00 PM

TRS Govt's negligence stymied ITIR project: BJP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana BJP chief Bandi Sanjay Kumar has said that the TRS government's 'negligent attitude' stymied ITIR project in Telangana. He said that TRS leaders were trying to shield their mistake by addressing letters to the Centre in this regard. He said that the ITIR project's aim was to set up IT, hardware, ESDM industries around Hyderabad city in various clusters. However, the state government failed to set up an extension of MMTS from Falaknuma to Rajiv Gandhi International Airport and the government also failed to develop infrastructure like radial roads. The state government failed to also send the quarterly report on infrastructure to the Central Electronic, IT Department, he alleged.



Lambada women drape YS Sharmila with their traditional attire during their visit to Lotus Pond in Hyderabad on Tuesday where the latter was meeting her followers and sympathisers, who are coming from across Telangana districts to wish her and lend their support to her as she would announce the party's name on April 9

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Tuesday permitted all private hospitals to give Covid vaccine, provided they adhere to the norms laid down. The Centre also asked States and Union Territories to utilise the optimum capacity of private medical facilities empanelled under three categories.

The States and Union territories were also urged not to

store, reserve, conserve or create a buffer stock of the Covid-19 vaccines, the Union Health ministry said in a statement, a day after the start of the second phase of India's inoculation drive in which the coverage has been expanded to include everyone above 60 and those over 45 with specified co-morbidities.

At an official review meeting with the states, the Centre reiterated there is no shortage

GRADUATE MLC ELECTIONS

PV link may drive away Muslims from TRS

K VENKATESHWARLU
■ HYDERABAD

The Congress feels that it is on a strong wicket when it comes to the Hyderabad-Rangareddy-Mahabubnagar Graduates constituency MLC polls; for, Muslims may not cast their votes to both former PM late PV Narasimha Rao's daughter Surabhi Vani Devi (TRS candidate) and sitting MLC N Ramchander Rao (BJP). So, the grand old party has intensified its campaign in the Old City.

On Tuesday, TPCC chief N Uttam Kumar Reddy participat-



ed in an election campaign on behalf of party candidate Dr G Chinnna Reddy.

Interestingly, about 22,000 Muslims from the Old City have been enrolled as graduate voters for the Graduates MLC

elections. This number is not a small one and moreover it will play a pivotal role in the ongoing Hyderabad-Rangareddy-Mahabubnagar Graduates constituency MLC elections.

The total number of voters in

the Hyderabad-Rangareddy-Mahabubnagar Graduates' constituency is 5,17,883. Among the total voters, 3,27,727 are male and 1,90,088 female, with 68 registered in third category.

The district wise break-up is: Rangareddy - Rangareddy - 1,40,968, Vikarabad-25,544, Medchal-1,27,543, total 2,94,055; Mahabubnagar (Mahabubnagar-34,772, Nagarkurnool-33,257, Wanaparthy-20,689, Jogulamba Gadwala-14,438, Narayanapet-13,568, total 1,16,704; and Hyderabad-1,07,124 voters.

Centre allows all pvt hospitals to give Covid vaccine

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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At an official review meeting with the states, the Centre reiterated there is no shortage



of the vaccines and hence, adequate vaccine doses should be allocated to the Covid Vaccination Centres (CVCs). "The Central government

has adequate stock and will provide the required vaccine doses to the states and UTs," it said.

The Centre urged the states and the UTs to ensure adequate allocation of Covid-19 vaccines to all hospitals, government as well as private, for the entire duration for which vaccination sessions have been planned.

It asked them to utilise the optimum capacity of all private hospitals empanelled

under the Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY), the Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) and the state health insurance schemes to enable them to effectively function as CVCs.

The states and UTs were asked to regularly collaborate with the private hospitals to ensure that their optimum capacity for vaccination is utilised.

Cess, surcharge share doubles to 19.9 %

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The share of cesses and surcharges in the gross tax revenue of the Centre has nearly doubled to 19.9 per cent in 2020-21 from 10.4 per cent in 2011-12, leading to the 15th Finance Commission to recommend a higher grant-in-aid and lower tax devolution to the states.

Leaders lack steely resolve to stop VSP disinvestment

“The Government has no business to do business”... these words, uttered recently by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, speak volumes about how the Government perceives the public sector, and its future role in nation building! Successive governments downplayed the public sector, and by the time NDA-I came to power, it acquired a fancy name – disinvestment. Privatisation sounds harsh with negative connotations, but “disinvestment” does have a nice ring to it.

The fact that its exact meaning is not known to a vast majority is beside the point. In fact, AB Vajpayee who led the NDA-I Government set up a separate portfolio to implement this “disinvestment” process, leaving millions befuddled and wondering in what way it would make an impact in their lives. It is perhaps this bewilderment that encouraged the Government to put another public sector giant with thousands of workers – the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP) – on the list of PSUs for disinvestment and effectively propose handing over a major stake of it to the Korean company POSCO.

VSP is considered the jewel in the crown of Telugu pride that was achieved with the supreme sacrifice of 32 persons and many others who gave away their valuable lands. It is also the only steel plant in the country to be set up on the coastline.

The slogan of the people who spearheaded the movement for achieving steel project – Visakha vukku - Andhrula hakku (Visakha steel is the right of Andhraites)

Politics play a major role in deciding key issues like allotting captive mines that can often be misused for minting money in the name of setting up the steel industry. Absence of a dedicated source of raw material impacted VSP's earnings, leaving it open for the Government to propose “disinvestment”

gained such widespread acceptance that it became a mantra chanted by one and all five decades ago.

The agitation for the steel plant peaked with the resignation of 65 legislators of undivided Andhra Pradesh.

In contrast, claims of the so-called people's representatives nowadays that resignation won't solve the problem and that their 'official position' is necessary to exert pressure to save the steel plant are unfortunate. They probably are unaware of the historic truth that resignations by those 65 MLAs finally led to the achievement of VSP. If they are aware, perhaps it's their egos that may be stopping them from admitting this openly.

Unpardonable callousness has been shown towards the VSP by governments by not allotting captive mines, which are the lifeline for any steel plant, to it.

Abundant raw material can



be had from captive mines that enable a steel plant to become sustainable. Unfortunately, VSP was never provided such assurance. In simpler terms, a steel plant without captive mines is the same as an irrigation project without assured water.

Politics play a major role in deciding key issues like allot-

ting captive mines that can often be misused for minting money in the name of setting up the steel industry. Absence of a dedicated source of raw material impacted VSP's earnings, leaving it open for the Government to propose “disinvestment”.

Now that “disinvestment” is being bandied about, leaders from the ruling dispensation are gradually putting forth the arguments that privatisation would be beneficial for the plant.

Some of those who had been staunchly against privatisation have overnight changed their tune; perhaps the words of the Prime Minister “inspired” them.

Earlier, Brahmani Steels Limited owned by prominent BJP leader Gali Janardhan Reddy proposed a steel industry in AP and the Government allotted captive mines in Anantapur to his firm. Gali's

clout was on full display in this entire episode.

Captive mining means that the raw material should only be used in the plant to which it has been allotted and not for any other purpose. Interestingly, the GO allotting the captive mines to Brahmani Steels was altered and the word 'captive' was deleted, allowing the owner to resort to excessive mining.

Even before its steel plant was functional, Brahmani resorted to so much excessive mining that the ecology on the AP-Karnataka border was destroyed. Governments of the two states had to appoint officials, including from their survey departments, to redraw the border.

It's most unfortunate that a steel plant that realised the dreams of lakhs of people after a fierce movement has not been allotted captive mines to sustain itself, where-

What to expect after getting a Covid vax?

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Phase 2 of the vaccination drive against the coronavirus - in which people aged above 60 and those above 45 with comorbidities are being inoculated on priority - began on Monday. The Centre said over 25 lakh people registered for vaccination on the first day on CoWin portal. Covishield, being manufactured by Serum Institute of India, is the other vaccine being used in the campaign. The government has said both vaccines are safe, but there are some associated side-effects. The companies have detailed these possi-

ble adverse events in fact-sheets uploaded on their websites.

Who should not take Covaxin?

Those who have any history of allergies, fever, bleeding disorder or are on a blood thinner, are immune-compromised or are on a medicine that affects your immune system, are pregnant, are breast-feeding, have received another COVID-19 vaccine, any other serious health related issues, as determined by the vaccinator/officer supervising vaccination, must not take Covaxin.

Covaxin Side-effects

The mild side-effects of the drug include injection site pain, injection site swelling, injection site redness, injection site itching, stiffness in the upper arm, weakness in injection arm, body ache, headache, fever, malaise, weakness, rashes, nausea, vomiting.

The company said that there is a slim chance the vaccine causes a severe allergic reaction. Signs of a severe adverse event include difficulty in breathing, swelling of face and throat, fast heart-beat, rashes all over the body, dizziness and weakness.

Who should not take Covishield?

The Serum Institute of India fact-sheet says those who have ever had severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) after any drug, food, any vaccine or any ingredients of the vaccine must avoid the drug.

Those who have fever, have a bleeding disorder or are on a blood thinner, are immunocompromised or are on a medicine that affects the immune system must also not take the vaccine. Those who are pregnant or plan to become pregnant, those breastfeeding must also skip the vaccine.

CoWIN 2.0 gives no relief from ...

Continued from page 1

When the first phase of the vaccination commenced on January 16 this year, the mobile application posed problems. Even the updated version has been of little use.

Many people were seen registering their names at the vaccination centre itself.

Due to the glitches, most people are now keen on registering their names at the vaccination centre. Medical and Health department officials say that people feel inconvenienced to register their data in the mobile application, entering the OTP, registration, and validating the data with the vaccination centre and so on.

'MARRY THE VICTIM' REMARK

Women groups demand CJI Sharad to step down

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Deeply distressed by the regressive statements of the Chief Justice of India Sharad Arvind Bobde asking a rapist to marry the victim and condoning marital rape in court on March 1, 2021, over 4,000 concerned citizens, from representatives of India's women's movements, progressive groups and feminists, from students to senior citizens to advocates to filmmakers got together and issued an open letter to the CJI demanding an apology, retraction of his remarks and said 'propriety demands you step down without a

moment's delay!'. The CJI was hearing the petition for protection from arrest, of a man accused of stalking, tying up, gagging, repeatedly raping a minor school going girl, and threatening to douse her in petrol and set her alight, to hurl acid at her, and to have her brother killed. Stating that the facts of the case are that the rape came to light when the minor school-going victim attempted suicide, the letter condemned the comment by CJI and said that "it fills us with rage that women bear the burden of having to explain the meaning of 'seduction', 'rape', and 'marriage'".

The letter cites the second case (Vinay Pratap Singh vs State of UP) also reported in the media, where the CJI commented that, "If a couple is living together as man and wife, the husband may be a brutal man, but can you call the act of sexual intercourse between a lawfully wedded man and wife as rape?" Criticising the comment, the letter stated that it not only legitimises any kind of sexual, physical and mental violence by the husband, but it normalises the torture that Indian women have been facing within marriages for years without any legal recourse.

Cess, surcharge...

Continued from page 1

Under the existing Finance Commission (FC) framework, the cesses and surcharges collected by the Centre are not part of the tax devolution. And, the massive spike in the same has forced the FC to suggest higher grant-in-aid to the states to compensate for the low growth in tax devolution which is pegged at 41 per cent during the operation of the 15th FC award, India Ratings said on Tuesday in the report.

The key reason for higher growth in grants-in-aid and lower growth in tax devolution to the states is the increase in the proportion of the central cess and surcharges as they are not part of the tax devolution to the states, said the agency's Principal Economist Sunil Kumar Sinha.

As a result, the transfer from the Centre to the states including non-finance commission transfers declined to 48.6 per cent in 2019-20 from 53.4 per cent in 2011-12, he said.

Covid made India's rich richer

Continued from page 1

The wealth of India's billionaires grew only faster than their Russian counterparts - whose wealth surged 80% since 2009 to \$467.6 billion - among the top 10 countries, the UBS-PwC report showed.

According to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index, Reliance Industries' chairman Ambani became the only Asian tycoon to be among the world's top 10 richest people.

As India heads for its worst recession, it is ironic how "fewer billionaires saw their wealth erode this year than

they did in last year", Forbes said in its report. Therefore, it is also important to note that India's richest 1% of the population holds 42.5% of national wealth, while the bottom 50% - the majority of the population, owns a mere 2.8%, showed an Oxfam report.

India's top 10% of the population holds 74.3% of the total national wealth, while the bottom 90% holds 25.7% of national wealth, the report said. "Ambani's companies (particularly the telecom giant Jio) have prospered, and his personal wealth has increased

substantially," Jayati Ghosh, chair of the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, told a daily.

The Hurun India list named the richest individuals in India having a wealth of Rs 1,000 crore or more as on August 31, 2020.

The names included Ambani, Hinduja brothers (SP Hinduja, along with his three brothers) with a joint wealth of Rs 1.43 lakh crore, HCL founder Shiv Nadar with a wealth of Rs 1.41 lakh crore, among the 828 rich Indians.

TRS goes for the kill: Harish...

Continued from page 1

With KCR entrusting the crucial poll-related work to Harish Rao, there is animated discussion among the TRS cadre regarding the curious development.

Harish Rao said on Tuesday that over 5 lakh people had so far enrolled themselves as members of TRS in the erstwhile Medak district in the ongoing membership drive. "Medak is ahead of all other districts in the membership drive," he said.

TS to increase ..

Continued from page 1

He urged them not to believe misinformation being spread by some people about the vaccine. Reddy said Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other leaders showed the way by taking the vaccine to make the country free from the pandemic.

The state health department on the first day administered the vaccine to 4,558 people from the two categories at 93 government and private health facilities. Out of 2,647 people who were targeted to be vaccinated at 48 government health facilities, 2,005

turned up. At 45 private hospitals, 2,553 beneficiaries took the shot while the target was 4,112.

According to the department, no Adverse Event Following Immunisation cases were reported. The department plans to increase the number of vaccination centres to over 1,000 in one week.

Director of Public Health G Srinivasa Rao said people will have more option of choosing a hospital of their convenience.

People can choose to register for vaccination either online, or on the spot registration at vaccination centres.

Centre allows all pvt hospitals to give Covid...

Continued from page 1

"Private hospitals not empanelled under the above-mentioned three categories have also been permitted to operate as CVCs if they have adequate number of vaccinators, adequate space for Observation of the vaccinated, adequate cold chain arrangement and adequate arrangement for management of Adverse Events. Following Immunisation (AEFI)," the statement said.

In addition to all the government health facilities, all private hospitals empanelled under the CGHS, the AB-PMJAY and the state health insurance schemes can function as CVCs, subject to them mandatorily adhering to certain norms, the statement said.

All private vaccination centres should have effective crowd management protocols in place, along with facilities for seating, water, proper signage etc. They should also ensure adherence to Covid-appropriate behaviour among the beneficiaries.

KTR: Will work on advocates protection...

Continued from page 1

KTR asserted that everyone involved in the advocate couple G Vaman Rao and PV Nagamani murder case would get condign punishment. The TRS party had suspended the local party unit leader immediately upon coming to know of allegations that he was involved in the killings, KTR added. The IT Minister said that everyone was pained at

the murder of Vamanrao couple and made it clear that Chief Minister was serious in regard to law and order situation.

KTR said that he would initiate steps to address the issue concerning posts. There was no truth in the words of BJP candidate for Hyderabad-Rangareddy-Mahabubnagar Graduates MLC elections N Ramchander Rao in this regard.

PV link may drive away Muslims...

Continued from page 1

Muslim graduate voters may not cast their vote to PV Narasimha Rao's daughter S Vani Devi as Muslims have been against PV Narasimha Rao's perceived inaction in the Babri Masjid demolition issue.

On condition of anonymity, a Muslim graduate voter from the Old City said that not only he, but also no other Muslim would cast their vote

to PV's family members. "Muslims, in general, cast their votes to the TRS party, but this time the Muslims certainly will not cast their vote to TRS candidate because S Vani Devi is PV's daughter. The Muslims won't cast their vote even if Vani Devi contested from any other political party, rather than TRS party", he said. He also said that the Muslims would not cast their vote to BJP candidates either.

MIM Chief Asaduddin Owaisi, speaking at MIM's Foundation Day celebrations on Tuesday, said that BJP's tactics would not work in the Old City. Muslims would not cast their votes to BJP candidates in any elections. He ridiculed BJP saying that the BJP fielded UP Chief Minister and the entire BJP team to defeat MIM in the recent GHMC elections.

Reminding BJP's statements of 'surgical strike' in

the Old City if it won GHMC elections, Asaduddin Owaisi suggested the BJP to do a surgical strike in the states where BJP was in power.

In this backdrop, the Congress entered the Old City on Tuesday, along with its candidate Dr G China Reddy and intensified Hyderabad-Rangareddy-Mahabubnagar graduate MLC election campaign to attract Muslim graduates' votes.

5 Maoist members surrender

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Five members of CPI (Maoist) surrendered before police in Kothagudem district on Tuesday, police said. The five people have been working as members of CPI (Maoist) village committee and militia of the proscribed outfit for the last three years, a police release said.

The five were allegedly involved in two cases of blasting and an attempt to injure police with some sharp objects.

Continued from page 1

"Federalism and regular consultation with states, which was the cornerstone of India's economic and political philosophy as enshrined in the Constitution, no longer finds favour with the present Central government," he said.

Singh said while Kerala's social standards are high, there are other sectors that need strong attention in the future.

"There are many roadblocks ahead that the state has to overcome. The global downturn of the last two or three years, aggravated by the pandemic, has made the global

interface of Kerala more fragile.

"While the increased use of digital modes of work may keep the IT sector afloat, tourism has been hit badly and the rate at which the pandemic is galloping in Kerala poses challenges for this industry", Singh said.

Noting that the focus on health and education has enabled Kerala to take advantage of job opportunities elsewhere in the country and in all parts of the world, Singh said this has led to a growing stream of remittances from abroad which created a booming real estate sector and sharp growth of the ser-

vices sector, led by tourism and information technology.

The former PM also hailed the decision of the leadership of Kerala's Congress-led UDF to incorporate "radical ideas" like "NYAY" in its Assembly election manifesto, saying the scheme outlined in the Congress manifesto of 2019 Lok Sabha polls, will provide direct benefit transfer to the poorest among us.

He said this, together with other measures such as no-bill health care through more medical establishments and other measures to strengthen the social infrastructure will provide a framework for inclusive development,

focused on the needs of the underprivileged. "This is the essence of Congress ideology and it is a matter of gratification that all UDF parties think alike on this."

According to Singh, while providing support to the poor, such schemes will also kick-start the economy as demand will be stimulated, leading to more production particularly in the small and micro sector, in agriculture and in the unorganised sector, creating more employment opportunities and bringing the economy rapidly back to normalcy after the prolonged economic slowdown at the national level.

TRS Govt's negligence...

Continued from page 1

Bandi addressed a letter to KCR on Tuesday in this regard. He said that the Centre stated in its review meeting held in 2017 that the response of the Telangana government was disappointing with regard to ITIR project. Still, the TRS government had been trying to blame the Centre by addressing letters to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and former Union minister Bandaru Dattatreya without taking up any action plan. People would understand the

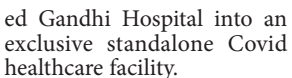
game plan of TRS leaders that they were trying to sidetrack the opposing points of view coming from the youth in the ongoing Graduates MLC elections, he said.

Sanjay claimed that the Centre would have implemented ITIR project in the state if the state government had developed railway links, MMTS, radial roads and the lime. However, the TRS government, which chose to neglect its responsibility then, was now making ITIR as an issue in view of the Graduates MLC elections.



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

result, the state government took a decision to centralise Covid treatment and convert-



"We even had a number of kidney patients who had tested positive for Covid and have

down, which gave us time to understand and prepare our response to Covid," he said.

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

"The two were addicted to toddy and whitener liquid. On Monday evening, they had a fight, Reshma strangled Sohail to death with a scarf and escaped from the place," said police.

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The victim, identified as Linguswamy, 40, was recently detained by police. After questioning, he was asked to appear the next day. However, he was caught by three unidentified men and taken to an eatery where he was beaten up. He was let off later. The police are investigating.

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

And sometimes they script stories of remarkable resilience and liberation.

During the past three years, over 1,26,340 women obtained their driving license - some got the license to drive four-wheelers, some others got it to drive only two-wheelers while and yet another group of women got license to drive both four and two-wheelers, as they want to become increasingly mobile. Some bureaucrats obtained the driving license in spite of



Out of the total driving licenses, 65 per cent pertain to driving four-wheelers, while 35 per cent pertain to two-wheelers.

In 2018-19, over 42,334 women have obtained the driving license, while 50,111 have obtained it in 2019-20. During 2020-21 (till February 26) over 33,000 have got it. In all,

Reddy Motor Driving School of Banjara Hills said that women switched over to personal transport after the outbreak of the pandemic. Therefore, the number of women receiving training in driving vehicles has increased. Those who receive training include housewives too.

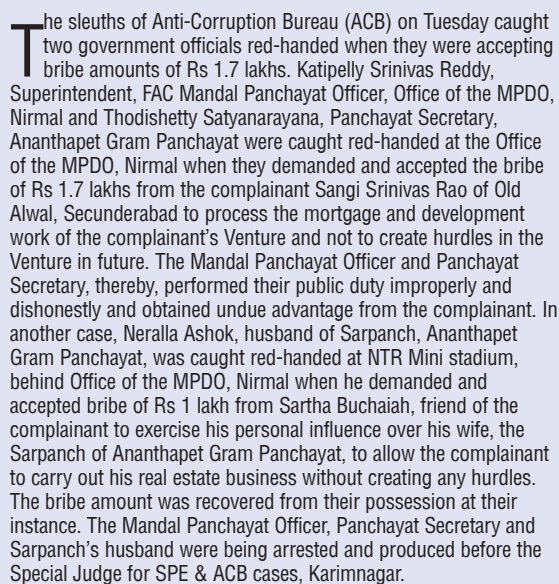
PNS ■ HYDERABAD

According to the police, the gang visited different cities and searched for people interested in exchanging Indian currency for foreign currency illegally. After identifying such

The three along with the seized cash were handed over to Rein Bazaar police station for further action.



All teachers of the primary schools in the State have been instructed to attend the schools on daily basis from Wednesday instead of alternate days. 'All the Regional Joint Directors of School Education and District Educational Officers (DEOs) in the State are requested to instruct the teachers of primary schools from March 3 instead of alternate days. The DEOs were asked to utilize the primary schools to teach in the schools wherever required.



The historic Qutb Shahi Tombs have seen a remarkable change over the past few years ever since the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) began working on it. From removal of several layers of cement on domes to recreating the fine architectural designs, almost half of the nearly 80 structures in the royal necropolis have already been restored to their lost glory. Principal Secretary of Urban Development Arvind Kumar along with GHMC officials visited the premises and thanked Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC). "Quli Qutub Shahi Tombs continues to be an enigma & a jewel in the rich heritage we in #Hyderabad are so proud of... more than Hundred points symbol structures, 7 Baolis & spread over 106 acres. Thanks @NandaRatish & @AKF_Global for the restoration effort," Arvind Kumar tweeted.



said all those caught were produced before the court, which imposed fines of Rs 3.6 lakh on them. The traffic cops urged citizens to exhibit self-discipline while driving.

ANUSHA PUPPALA
 ■ HYDERABAD

Based on a complaint by a Hyderabad resident, District Legal Metrology Officer of Medchal Malkajgiri has inspected both the establishments on February 24.

The District Legal Metrology Officer has found no violations on service tax at 'Sherlocks Lounge & Kitchen', but a mineral water bottle was sold for Rs 39 against the declared MRP of Rs 20. The District Legal Metrology Officer has registered a case under Section 18, 18(2) & 33 of the Legal Metrology Act,

Hyderabad said, "We have been to that restaurant and ordered the things during the time of billing we have observed the charging of service tax and also over pricing on the cool drink. I have complained about the service charge but the Legal Metrology department has booked case against the establishments for more than Maximum Retail Price (MRP). I request people who ever find violations regarding the illegal practices complaint to legal metrology on dlm-t@nic.in and then file a RTI to them to get the ATN."

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The tank is spread over 31 acres of land under survey number 155 of Jillelaguda under Meerpet Municipality Corporation. Already Rs 3.5 crore had been spent for the tank beautification. The officials estimate spending another Rs 2.50 crore to modernise

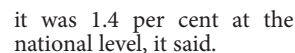


proposals had been sent to provide lighting all around the tank at a cost of Rs 90 lakh. A 1.5-km-long walking track has been developed all around the tank. Grills and fencing have been provided as a security measure for the walkers. Islands have been developed in the middle of the tank. A ghat is being

Minister Sabitha Indra Reddy said that the objective was to develop the tank into a beautiful tourist spot irrespective of the expenditure. It would become an asset for the people of Meerpeta Municipal Corporation. The walking track works would be completed in 10 days.

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The case fatality rate in the state was 0.54 per cent, while



Meanwhile, vaccination for people aged 60 and above and those over 45 years of age with co-morbidities continued in the state on the second day.

It has been one year since the first case of COVID-19 was reported in Telangana and state Health Minister Eatala Rajender felicitated Covid warriors at the Gandhi hospital, which served as nodal centre for COVID-19 care for long during the year.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA

REVENUE (LAND ACQUISITION) DEPARTMENT FORM-C

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION

(Under Section-11 of the Act where 10 A Exemption is given) (Section rule 6/12)

Gazette No: GHMC-33

Date: 18-02-2021

No.A/130/SDP/2020

Date: 17-02-2021

Where it appears to the Government of Telangana/Special Collector, (L.A.) and Commissioner, GHMC, Hyderabad that a total of 404.99 Sq.Yards of land is required in Madanapet Village, Saidabad Mandal of Hyderabad District, for public purpose, namely proposed 100'x50' Wide Road from Printing Press via Madanapet Graveyard to Owasli Hospital for construction of Flyover under SDOP. Therefore it is notified that for the above said project in the Madanapet Village, Saidabad Mandal of Hyderabad District, land measuring more or less 404.99 Sq. Yards of Standard measurement, whose detail description is as following, is proposed for acquisition:

Sl No/No	Village	BLOCK	TYPE OF LAND	Area under acquisition in Sq.Yards	Name & Address As per Requisition	Boundaries					Tinos		Structures	
						M	S	E	W	North	North	North	Type	Value
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1	-	-	-	57.72	Dr Ahmed Ali 17-1-38045/24						-	-	-	-
2	30/A	1725/over	public land	30.42	Muthappa Ali 17-1-38045/200A						-	-	open	nil
3	-	-	-	89.02	M.A.Javed 17-1-38047/223						-	-	-	-
4	-	-	-	62.53	Meequmilla Begum 17-1-3801/23						-	-	-	-
5	-	-	-	31.13	A Pathanwala 17-1-3802/8						-	-	-	-
6	31/174/2	F house	public land	43.41	Sethi Kumar 17-1-197/6						-	-	G+1	-
7	32/114/10	F house	public land	9.81	G Sannamadev 17-1-197/5						-	-	G+1	-
8	32/114/6	F house	public land	17.41	G Rajeswar Rao 17-1-197/4						-	-	open	nil
9	32/114/3	F house	public land	44.36	DV Suresh 17-1-197/8						-	-	tile	5000
				404.99										

This Notification is made under the provisions of Section-11(i) of The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (Central Act 30/2013), as amended by the Right to Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (Telangana Amendment) Act, 2016 (Act No.3 of 2017) to all whom it may concern. A plan of the land may be inspected in the Office of the Special Collector (L.A.) and Commissioner GHMC, Hyderabad on any working day during the working hours. The Government of Telangana/Collector-cum-Appropriate Government is pleased to authorize Officer i.e. Spl Dy. Collector, Land Acquisition, GHMC, Hyderabad and his Survey staff to enter upon and survey lands, take levels of any land, dig or bore into the sub-soil & do all other acts required for the proper execution of their work as provided and specified in Section 12 of the said Act. Under Section 11 (4) of the Act, no person shall make any transaction or cause any transaction of cause any transaction of land i.e. sale or purchase, etc., or create any encumbrance on such land from the date of publication of notification without prior approval of the Special Collector. Objections to the acquisition if any, and claims from all the persons interested in regard to settlement by negotiation of the compensation, may be filed by the person interested in the land within 60 (sixty) days from the date of publication of this notification as provided under Section 15 of the Act before Special Collector / Authorized officer.

SPL. DY. COLLECTOR
L.A. GHMC, HYDERABAD

Special Collector (L.A.) &
Commissioner, GHMC, Hyderabad.

DIPR R.O. No: 1294/LAPP/Advt/Pub/2020-21

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA										FORM-VII										DECLARATION										(See Sub-rule (1) of rule-25 and Section 19(1) of the Act-30/2013)																																																																																									
Sub-Collector, Bhadrachalam, Land Acquisition Officer, Seetamma Sagar Multi Purpose Project, R.C. No. C/1912/2020-1										Dated: 17-02-2021																																																																																																													
District Collector, Bhadrachalam, Land Acquisition Officer, Seetamma Sagar Multi Purpose Project, R.C. No. C/1912/2020-1										Dated: 25-02-2021																																																																																																													
District Gazette No: B347/2021										Dated: 23-02-2021																																																																																																													
Whereas it appears to the District Collector, Bhadrachalam that a total extent of Ac. 99.162 gns. land is required in the S.Kothagudem village, Dummugudem Mandal of Bhadrachalam District for public purpose, namely for the Construction of Seetamma Sagar Multi Purpose Project.																																																																																																																							
Therefore, declaration is made that a piece of land measuring more or less Ac. 99.162 gns. of standard measurement under Land Acquisition for the said project in the S.Kothagudem village, Dummugudem Mandal of Bhadrachalam District whose land detailed description is as following:																																																																																																																							
SCHEDULE																																																																																																																							
Village: S.Kothagudem										Mandal: Dummugudem																																																																																																													
District: Bhadrachalam										Kothagudem																																																																																																													
Sl. No.										Particulars										Area (Ac. Gns. P.)										Type of Land										Name of the Proprietor										Name of the Tenant										Variety										Yield (kg/ha)																																																	
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Asaduddin rules out BJP calling shots in Old City

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

MIM president Asaduddin Owaisi has created a sensation by stating that the BJP will not be able to gain a foothold in the Old City as long as the MIM is in politics. Making the sensational statement at the MIM Foundation Day celebrations here on Tuesday, he dared the BJP to conduct surgical strikes in the state where the BJP is in power. He was referring to the BJP leaders remarks of making surgical strikes in the Old City provided it wins the GHMC polls.

He pointed out that the people have been suffering for want of basic amenities in places like Ahmedabad and Uttar Pradesh. To defeat the MIM in the GHMC polls, the whole BJP team, including the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, was deployed in the Old City, he said and added that the MIM is an undisputed political outfit in the Old City who ever is the challenger. The BJP would not be able to call the shots in the Old City, he said adding that he is not the one to be cowed down by BJP threats.

S Kumar is national secy of BJP SC Morcha

PNS ■ PEDDAPALLI

Senior member of BJP state unit Sogala Kumar has been appointed as the national secretary of the BJP SC Morcha by national president Lal Singh Arya on Tuesday.

A journalist-turned-politician from the Godavari region, Kumar joined the BJP two decades ago and worked as a member of the State Executive Committee and official spokesperson of the state unit.

He represented the BJP at the Dharmapuri Assembly segment during the 2009 Assembly elections and in the 2019 general elections, he contested in the Peddapalli Parliament constituency.

Born to a coal miner, Kumar started his career as a reporter from the coal belt region. He crusaded for the cause of those who had been ousted from their lands by the Singareni Collieries and the NTPC Ramagundam.

He won the KK Birla Award for journalism for his portrayal of the people in the coal belt region and the problems they faced. He played a crucial role during the movement demanding the statehood for Telangana and strengthened the BJP's presence in the coal belt region. Known to be a tough fighter for the protection of the miners' rights and the revival of the Singareni Collieries, He remains in the forefront in the protection of Dalits' rights in the coal belt region and other parts of Karimnagar district.

MUDRA LOANS REVAMP

Telangana seeks FM's intervention

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

B Vinod Kumar, former MP and State Planning Board chairman in a letter addressed to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitaraman, said, "The Pradhana Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY) was started with an ambition of providing self-employment to poor small businessmen and unemployed. To serve the very purpose of providing security free loan to the eligible poor and needy in Telangana State and to fulfil the shortage of sanctioning PMMY loans when compared to the national average, it is requested that Finance Minister may kindly instruct banks in the State to achieve the revised target of sanctioning of 28 lakh PMMY loans in a time-bound manner."

Petty traders like vegetable vendors, fruit vendors, small

Uttam accuses TRS govt of neglecting Old City

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) President and MP N Uttam Kumar Reddy has accused the TRS government in the State and BJP government at the Centre of neglecting Hyderabad, especially the Old City, during the past seven years.

Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao never visited the Old City in the last seven years. He did not hold a single review meeting since 2014 to understand, or resolve the problems being faced by the residents of Old City though he had promised to develop this region as the next Istanbul. Graduates from the Old City have no job opportunities and they often face discrimination at their places of works due to their area of residence," he said.

He was addressing a series of meetings in the Old City on Tuesday as part of a campaign for the MLC candidate G Chinna Reddy of Hyderabad-



Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) President and MP N Uttam Kumar Reddy addressing party workers in the Old City of Hyderabad on Tuesday

Rangareddy-Mahabubnagar Graduates constituency. The TPCC chief, along with Congress candidate Chinna Reddy and other leaders, performed puja at Mahankali temple in Lal Darwaza. Later, he addressed a meeting with Congress cadre of Charminar, Chandrayangutta, Bahadurpura and Yakutpura constituencies near Charminar. They also had a meeting with the leaders of the Shia community.

Uttam Kumar Reddy, Chinna Reddy and other leaders visited Dargah Yousufain at

Nampally. Later, they also addressed a meeting at Musheerabad constituency. The TPCC chief alleged that the TRS government behaved as if the Old City of Hyderabad did not exist in the state. He said not a single new project was launched in the Old City in 2014. Furthermore, he said the projects like Charminar pedestrianisation and Musi river rejuvenation remained incomplete due to paucity of funds and lethargy.

He condemned the TRS government for not bringing the

The Old City has a huge potential for tourism. But no efforts were made to improve roads and other facilities, said TPCC President N Uttam Kumar Reddy

Metro Rail to the Old City. He said the Hyderabad Metro Rail, the biggest metro rail in the country, was started by the previous Congress government and it had a clear plan to connect the Old City with Metro Rail services.

However, he alleged that the TRS and MIM parties have altered the routes and did not allow the Metro Rail in the Old City. Consequently, he said that the people of the Old City were forced to spend huge time and money on transportation.

Govt striving for development of temples, says Harish Rao

PNS ■ ZAHERAABAD

Delhi riots: HC asks AAP govt to reply on payout plea

PNS ■ MALDA (WB)

The Delhi High Court Tuesday sought response of Delhi government on a plea by parents of two children, who lost their lives during the communal violence in north east Delhi last year, challenging an assistance scheme to help the riot victims as it provides inadequate compensation for the death of minors.

Parents of the two minors have challenged fixing of a maximum compensation of Rs five lakh for the death of a child in riots while the maximum compensation for death of an adult has been fixed at Rs 10 lakh. Justice Prathiba M Singh issued notice to Delhi government and sub-divisional magistrate of Seelampur on the petition, which has also been filed on behalf of CPI (M) leader Brinda Karat, who has also been instrumental in securing scholarships for some of such victims of the North East Delhi violence.

Modi, a brand ambassador of 'good governance': Naqvi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Attacking the Opposition, Union minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi on Tuesday said the upcoming assembly election in four states and a union territory would be a battle for mandate between "communal vote bank owners" and "inclusive development practitioners".

Addressing BJP workers in Uttar Pradesh's Rampur, the Minority Affairs Minister said confidence in development would be a "strong criterion" in the upcoming polls in West Bengal, Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has become an authentic brand of development and good governance, he was quoted as saying by a statement issued by his office.

Modi has made a successful attempt to ensure that the light of development reaches every



needy person through his resolve of "inclusive development and universal empowerment" without any discrimination, Naqvi said.

He said the days of climbing the ladder of politics with the help of "rhetoric" are over.

Some political parties consider politics of inheritance their birthright but such peo-

ple are failing to perform on the development front, Naqvi said in a swipe at the Congress.

He said the upcoming polls would be a battle for mandate between "communal vote bank owners" and "inclusive development practitioners".

Prime Minister Modi has given a strong message to politicians over their ways of

doing work by destroying the "VIP culture", he said.

"As we enter the 75th year of independence, we have a big chance to change the character of the country's politics and bring it in line with the dreams of our independence movement icons," he said.

Voting for five assembly elections would begin on March 27, the Election Commission had announced Friday with West Bengal set to hold eight-phase polls and Assam three. Counting for all the seats will be held on May 2.

To be held till April 29 amid the coronavirus pandemic, the elections are expected to witness a determined attempt by the BJP to put a strong show, including in Assam where it is already in power, as well as in West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry where the saffron party has been pushing hard in recent years.

India has exhibited capacity to innovate, manufacture vax: WHO

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has shown the capacity to be a global-scale manufacturer and also an innovator when it comes to coronavirus vaccines, World Health Organization's Chief Scientist Soumya Swaminathan said Monday.

Speaking at the Global Bio-India 2021, she opined that the fight against the coronavirus pandemic is at a very critical juncture now as cases have suddenly gone up, particularly in Europe and America.

There are many uncertainties now, especially on the different variants of the virus, she noted.

"India has shown the capacity to be a manufacturer at the global scale and also be an innovator when it came to vaccine development. There is a huge amount of scope to study the impact of vaccines, which needs to be thought-through by a very coordinated approach," she said.

As many as 30 vaccines are at different stages of development in India. Covaxin, developed indigenously by Biotech, and



Covishield, developed by Oxford-AstraZeneca and being manufactured at Serum Institute of India, are already in use in the country.

The vaccine candidates of Zydus Cadila and Russia's Sputnik V are in phase 3 of the human clinical trials. Sputnik V, which is being manufactured by Reddy's Laboratories in India, has initiated the process for Emergency Use Authorisation (EUA) with the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI).

India has supplied vaccines to several nations while many oth-

ers have also placed orders for the same. Vinod Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog lauded the efforts of scientific community and said the speed with which the solutions during the pandemic appeared was phenomenal.

"The stories of development of vaccines are amazing examples of how time can be compressed and scientific mobilisation can be initiated. The intent to have a global footprint in the manufacturing sector when it came to COVID-19 vaccine was path-breaking and something to be proud of."

INDIA CORNER

Ryots' stir: Fadnavis raises issue of celeb' tweets; Deshmukh counters

BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis on Tuesday trained guns at the Maharashtra government, suggesting it was trying to probe icons like Sachin Tendulkar and Lata Mangeshkar over their pro-India tweets issued after some foreign celebrities talked about farmers' protest near Delhi. Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh promptly refuted the charge in the state Assembly, saying the state government has ordered a probe into tweets by the BJP's IT cell and not by cricketer Tendulkar and legendary singer Mangeshkar. On February 8, Deshmukh said the state intelligence department will conduct a probe into allegations that some celebrities were pressurised recently to issue tweets in connection with the ongoing farmers' protest. Deshmukh had made the remarks on an online platform after the Congress, a ruling coalition partner in Maharashtra, sought an investigation into the BJP's alleged connection with tweets of some celebrities and whether the saffron party "arm-twisted" them. A number of prominent personalities, including Tendulkar and Mangeshkar, had rallied around the central government on social media using hashtags #IndiaTogether and #IndiaAgainstPropaganda.



'Giriftari'. Shri Ram Centre to welcome back theatre lovers

In a good news for theatre enthusiasts, the Shri Ram Centre (SRC) for performing arts will finally reopen its doors to the public on Friday with its upcoming play, "Giriftari", said the organisers in a statement. The play, adaptation of Franz Kafka's popular novel "The Trial", will be the first to be staged at SRC, Mandi House since the coronavirus-induced lockdown on March 25. All government guidelines, including wearing of masks and spaced-seating, will be followed during the staging of the play, it added. It is a debut production of Rama Theatre Natya Vidya (RATNAV) in collaboration with the Austrian Embassy, the Austrian Cultural Forum and the Embassy of the Czech Republic. "Both countries have been brought together by their love and deep historical connection with Kafka's life and legacy. This Hindi play will also have a unique online showcase. A treat for lovers of both Hindi literature and Kafka's work. This endeavor also brings together the international literary works and the diverse folk arts and artists of India. Later on, RATNAV aims to showcase the play in Austria and The Czech Republic as well," said Rama Pandey, director of the play and founder RATNAV.

Saddening to see Azad being 'castigated' by Congress: BJP

The BJP Tuesday took a swipe at the Congress amid a vocal dissidence within the opposition party, saying its ideology is all about fulfilling the Gandhi family's "ambition", and anyone speaking against it or standing with the "rightful" agenda of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is castigated.



BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra told a press conference that the Congress will "castigate" anyone who wants democracy in the party, wants its president to be elected, speaks in favour of politics of development or stands with Modi's rightful agenda. While stating that the G23, a reference to the group of 23 Congress leaders who have pushed for an organisational overhaul in the party, is an internal matter of the opposition party, Patra said it is "saddening" to see senior leaders like Ghulam Nabi Azad and others being targeted.

Kamal Haasan receives first dose of COVID vaccine

Makkal Needhi Maiam (MNM) founder Kamal Haasan was on Tuesday administered with the COVID-19 vaccine at a city hospital. The actor-politician was inoculated a day after the nationwide vaccination of 60 plus age group and those aged between 45-59 with co-morbidities was launched, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi receiving the first shot on Monday. "I took the coronavirus vaccine at Sri Ramachandra Hospital. Those who care not only for themselves but also for others should get vaccinated," Haasan said in a tweet that was accompanied with a picture of him getting vaccinated. "Immunisation of the body immediately (and) vaccination against corruption next month. Get ready," he said in an apparent reference to the April 6 Assembly elections. Haasan has often hit out at the ruling AIADMK over corruption allegations. His party will contest the single phase April 6 polls.



Maha BJP leader lodges complaint

PNS ■ MUMBAI

An FIR was registered on the complaint of Maharashtra BJP leader Chitra Wagh who told police she was getting threat calls and her morphed photographs were being circulated, an official said on Tuesday.

Wagh has been at the forefront of the BJP's attack on the MVA government over the past few days demanding the resignation of a state minister being linked to the death of a woman in Pune. Wagh (46) lodged a complaint with Cyber police station in Bandra Kurla Complex, after which an offence under IPC sections 354D, 509, 506 as well as section 67 of the IT

Emergency was a mistake, says Rahul

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Terming the Emergency that was imposed by former prime minister Indira Gandhi a "mistake", Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday said what happened during that period was "wrong", but it was fundamentally different from the current scenario as the Congress at no point attempted to capture the country's institutional framework.

In a conversation with Kaushik Basu, professor in the Cornell University in the US and India's former chief economic advisor, Gandhi said he is all for internal democracy in the Congress, which fought for India's independence, gave



the country its Constitution and stood for equality.

Asked about his views on the Emergency, he said, "I think that was a mistake. Absolutely, that was a mistake. And my grandmother (Indira Gandhi) said as much."

Asked about Indira Gandhi announcing elections at the end of the Emergency and Pranab Mukherjee telling Basu later that she did so as

she thought she might lose and wanted to put that to test, the former Congress chief said there is a fundamental difference between what happened during the Emergency, which "was wrong", and what is happening in the country now.

"The Congress party at no point attempted to capture India's institutional framework and frankly, the Congress party does not even have that capability. Our design does not allow us that and even if we want, we cannot do it," he said.

Gandhi alleged that the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) is doing something "fundamentally different" and filling up the institutions of the country with its people.

AMMK welcomes anti-DMK parties to its fold

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (AMMK) leader TTV Dhinakaran on Tuesday dubbed as "speculations" that his party was holding alliance-related talks with the ruling AIADMK and said any party opposed to the DMK and willing to accept his party's leadership could join its led combine.

The AMMK's "only aim" was to keep the DMK away from power and for this purpose like-minded parties could join its bloc, he said when asked if he was ready to align with the BJP and AIADMK.

However, he hastened to add that "I know they won't come" for alliance parleys, referring to the AIADMK and the BJP. Single phase Assembly elections are scheduled in Tamil Nadu on April 6.

"Elections are nearing. Our only aim is to prevent the DMK from coming to power. I am taking efforts for that. It is not that this party should come or not... we are ready to include (in AMMK-led alliance) all parties opposed to the DMK and willing to accept our leadership and face the polls," he told reporters here.



'Ujjwala': 8 croreth beneficiary from Maha struggles to buy LPG cylinder

PNS ■ AURANGABAD

Ayesha Shaikh, who became the eight croreth beneficiary of the national scheme to provide LPG connections to women from Below Poverty Line (BPL). "The cost of an LPG cylinder has exceeded my room rent now. I pay Rs 600 in rent whereas the price of the cooking gas cylinder has crossed Rs 700. What should we do? Should we pay for the gas cylinder or take care of the household expenses?" Shaikh asked in anguish while speaking to ABP Maza.

Like Shaikh, another beneficiary Mandabai Pable, who hails from Lohgaon in Aurangabad district of Maharashtra, is also struggling to buy the cylinder for cooking gas.

Videos of Shaikh and Pable using firewood for earthen stoves in their respective kitchens are being aired by a Marathi news channel they spoke to.

On September 7, 2019, PM Modi handed then 30-year-old Shaikh an Ujjwala certificate,

making her the 'Beneficiary No.8 crore' of the country-wide scheme to provide LPG connections to women from Below Poverty Line (BPL).

"The cost of an LPG cylinder has exceeded my room rent now. I pay Rs 600 in rent whereas the price of the cooking gas cylinder has crossed Rs 700. What should we do? Should we pay for the gas cylinder or take care of the household expenses?" Shaikh asked in anguish while speaking to ABP Maza.

Shaikh, a daily wage and the mother of five, is a resident of Indiranagar in Ajanta village of Aurangabad district.

For Shaikh, the new gas connection had proved to be a boon as it spared her the labour of gathering firewood for her earthen stove. She had also started spending some more time with her children.

UP CM slams TMC 'vote bank' politics

PNS ■ MALDA (WB)

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday lambasted his West Bengal counterpart Mamata Banerjee for allegedly pursuing appeasement politics and endangering national security by allowing illegal immigrants into the state for vote bank politics.

He promised that cow smuggling will be stopped within a day if the BJP is voted to power in the state.

Claiming that West Bengal, which had once led the nation, is now facing a lawless situation, Adityanath, while addressing a rally in Malda district's Gazole,

alleged that incidents of 'Love Jihad' are happening in the state, but the TMC government has failed to stop them.

"Appeasement politics for the sake of vote bank has endangered the security of not only West Bengal but also of the country. The TMC government has a problem with refugees getting citizenship but has no issue with illegal immigrants coming to the state," Adityanath said.

Claiming that the raising of 'Jai Shri Ram' slogan is not allowed in West Bengal, Adityanath said that the people of the state will give a befitting reply to the TMC government.

People want to forget March 1, 2020

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

It's a day most Delhiites would like to erase from their memories but March 1, 2020, the day the city reported its first case of COVID-19, is seared into Rohit Datta's memory.

There's no erase button for the businessman, the national capital's first patient.

From facing stigma in the initial days after the diagnosis to becoming "Googleable" and a popular subject on quizzing platforms now, Datta says life has come a full circle.

"As I was the first case, initially there was lot of fear and guilt too. I would consider



myself as the carrier of the virus as I had just returned from Italy after a work-related visit and found myself positioned in a scenario where the unpredictability of this new virus fuelled more fear and apprehensions among people," he told PTI.

A resident of Mayur Vihar in east Delhi, Datta had flown in from Italy on February 25 last year, and got a fever the same night. Next morning, he paid a visit to a local doctor and got some medicines, he recalled.

February 28, 2020 was his son's 12th birthday, and he hosted a small get-together at a luxury hotel in south Delhi. That night, he got a fever again. By February-end last year, the novel coronavirus had already wreaked havoc in China, where it was reported first globally in the city of Wuhan, and Italy too had been ravaged by it.

"I then decided to go to RML

Hospital, and my samples were taken on February 29 for a COVID test," the businessman said.

Datta, who turned 46 on July 5, was diagnosed with the infection on March 1. From RML Hospital, he was sent to the isolation facility at the Safdarjung hospital.

"My test report had come positive on March 1, but I was told about it by doctors the next day, March 2. Initially, the plan was to keep me in isolation there for 28 days, but then it was revised to 14 days at the isolation facility and then 14 days of home isolation, where I fully recovered," he said.

Scorcher ahead!

Climate change is real; not acknowledging it is not going to protect us from the inevitable

If the rising temperatures in the last few days of February and an unusually hot March are bothering you, it is because most of the northern, western and eastern parts of India breached the 30°C-mark nearly two to three weeks before they usually do. In fact, the country needs to brace for a hotter-than-usual summer this year as the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast that day temperatures are likely to be 0.86°C higher than normal in the north, northeast, parts of east and west India between March and May. The worst impact is likely in Odisha and Chhattisgarh, where the maximum temperatures will deviate 0.86°C from their usual averages. Last week, Bhubaneswar was the first region to record 40°C anywhere in the country this year and Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh should brace for summer temperatures anywhere from 0.46°C to 0.71°C above normal. The IMD last month had said the minimum temperature recorded in the country in January was the warmest for the month in 62 years, with South India being particularly warm. It is not surprising that we experienced a shorter winter and are getting warnings of a sizzling summer ahead as, according to a Government report on current climate change impacts and future scenarios till the end of the century, India needs to control greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions on a war footing. The failure to do so will mean major heat-waves, droughts, cloudbursts, floods and a more



degraded coastline, says a report by the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM).

Worryingly, India's average temperature rose by around 0.7°C during 1901–2018 and, unless urgent steps are taken to control GHG emissions between 2070 and 2099 average, the temperature will rise by approximately 4.4°C relative to the recent past (1976–2005 average). The high GHG emissions would increase the heat on Earth's surface by 8.5 watts per square metre. Called RCP8.5, this is the worst-case scenario used by climate modellers worldwide. In a medium GHG emissions scenario, called RCP4.5, the average temperature in India would rise by 2.7°C in the last 30 years of this century. Before that, during 2040-2069, India's average temperature would rise by 2°C in a medium emissions scenario, and by 2.4°C in a high emissions scenario. Despite all nations making pledges under the 2015 Paris climate agreement, current emissions are taking the world to the worst-case scenario, though other development pathways are not only available but economically more attractive in the medium and long term. So, the only option before us is to go green, else we will perish because we are already feeling the effects of a planet that has been pushed to breaking point. The most recent examples of this are the Chamoli tragedy in Uttarakhand and the "Big freeze" in Texas. It is the collective responsibility of the peoples, every business and every industry on the planet to fight climate change so that we leave a greener, cleaner world for our children and not a dying planet.

PICTALK



Mount Sinabung spews volcanic material during an eruption in Karo, North Sumatra, Indonesia, on Tuesday

The right path

Modi's plans and policies speak volumes about his intention to empower the 'real' farmers at the grassroots

Thousands of farmers in India die by suicide every year as they see no option to get out of the debt trap. The poor and marginal farmers depend upon loans for purchasing seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, irrigation and even harvesting. Most of these growers find it more convenient to borrow at heavy interest rates from moneylenders or big cultivators rather than from banks, thanks to the cumbersome paperwork and the broker-bank officials' nexus. However, these deaths, as recorded by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), fail to shake the collective conscience of society and are just another figure for most of us. Ironically, there is no outcry, no borders are sealed, no tractor rallies organised, no national monuments sieged, no violence. This is because these deaths don't affect the interests of the politically connected and powerful "arhatiya" community that drives the Agricultural Produce Marketing Community (APMC) in Punjab, Haryana and parts of Western Uttar Pradesh. This strong community is at loggerheads with the Government over three new agri laws for shielding its own interests. Prime Minister Narendra

Modi recently endorsed the provisions made for the agriculture sector in Budget 2021-22 and reiterated that the Government is working for small and medium-level farmers.

One might argue that Modi is not concerned about the farmers camping at Delhi's borders and project him as "anti-farmer" and "pro-corporate", but his plans and policies speak volumes about his intention to empower the "real" farmers at the grassroots. The Prime Minister has said that India needs to expand its agriculture sector to the global market for processed food. He also emphasised that the number of agro-industry clusters near villages should be increased so that the rural populace gets farm-related employment in the vicinity. It is indeed a plan that will likely empower the marginal and small farmers. If the Government succeeds in providing market access to these farmers (small and marginal) beyond *mandis*, it would prove to be a milestone. Further, the Government has increased the agriculture credit target to ₹16.50 lakh crore and infrastructure fund to ₹40,000 crore, besides doubling the micro-irrigation fund. All this proves that the Government is striving to bring systemic changes in the agriculture sector with the focus on empowering the "have-nots" among the farmers. We also would like to see the real farmers get empowered and not the ones with enough resources and money to camp at Delhi's borders for months and hold the Government to ransom.

The Internationale: Kumbh of protests

The agrarian issue is being politicised by media magicians but, for the farmers, it's a question of livelihood and existence

Green mango flowers are now bursting and kites dance in the sky while bright yellow, purple flowers bloom one last time and farmers in Bihar, New Delhi, welcome a silent spring. The warm air rustles the yellow plastic tents at the Ghazipur Border, flowing from AH2 to the Tikri Border, announcing a new season and the next phase of the Farmers' Revolution begins.

It's been over a month since farmer leader Rakesh Tikait's tears galvanised the farmers from Uttar Pradesh (UP) to Rajasthan and much has happened over the spring — *Basant Ritu* — since then. Lakhs of devotees have cleansed themselves taking dips in the holy Ganga from Haridwar to Prayagraj, Prime Minister Narendra Modi may have shed expiatory tears as he reassured his followers that the three farm laws are good for farmers and for business. But the farmers of the world are not convinced.

Recently, major US-based farmer groups like Agrarian Trust, National Farmers Union and 87 other organisations have started an international movement expressing solidarity with the farmers' revolution. Over 50 Canadian organisations have also extended support. They have been exerting pressure on their public representatives too to end this "injustice". Their criticism comes from having suffered due to the market-led agricultural policies since the 1960s in the US. This is no longer an "international conspiracy" or "attack on India's sovereignty" or "sedition" perpetrated by "international media celebrities like Rihanna or Greta" but a moment of true global solidarity beyond race and religion.

Foreclosures and debt have destroyed millions of US farm families. Suicides and despondency plague rural America while Big Ag grows. It's not only the older generation but young farmer leaders like Severine Fleming who have supported the farmers' revolution. All, save for the corporate media, see the invisible hand behind these



reforms — Big Ag. Modi has led the Big Ag to India's doors and sacrificed Indian farmers for agri-dollars.

India farmers are jubilant about the US support but, as the harvest season nears, some of them are now returning with the stories of their struggles and indignation to their villages to work the fields, while others farmers are on the road to Delhi's borders. In Haryana, media reports indicate, hundreds of villages have pledged to send one person from each house to join the revolution. The farmers' revolution is getting ready for the hot summer. Although the Modi Government's version occupies the media discourse, the farmers may have outwitted the Government once again.

How? With the help of the returning farmers, their unions and leaders have now expanded their base far beyond Delhi's borders. *YouTube* videos and independent vernacular citizen journalists have spread each update across the country. The tune of Farmer Revolution's Haryanavi anthem — "Modi ji hum Dilli aage" — now sways young and old farmers from Bengal to Rajasthan.

From Ganganagar to Kerala, the farmer unions have



THE FARMERS' REVOLUTION IS GETTING READY FOR THE HOT SUMMER. ALTHOUGH THE MODI GOVERNMENT'S VERSION OCCUPIES THE MEDIA DISCOURSE, THE FARMERS MAY HAVE OUTWITTED THE GOVERNMENT ONCE AGAIN

addressed millions of people in a short span of 30 days. Now that the movement has reached a mature stage, it will spread even faster. Even the Government is finding it hard to call them "a handful of farmers" as it did in early January. Now the discourse has become "crowds don't get the work done". The movement today represents not just farmers but all those who work the land — migrant workers, labourers, urban *mandi* workers and the traders. This is a united rural India resisting a corporate auction. Meanwhile, the Government has unleashed the biggest round of privatisation of public assets since Yeltsin's Russia.

No one knows why fuel prices have skyrocketed. Why taxes and cess keep increasing, squeezing the middle class, and yet arterial roads of Delhi have potholes? The fuel prices directly impact farmers' input costs and offset the MSP calculations. India is being rigged for food inflation. Indian agri produce vastly outperforms against the highly subsidised imports from countries like the US.

The agricultural bubble is soon going to burst; the collateral will be rural India and millions of lives. History

will repeat itself as from its ashes shall emerge a new class of *neo-zamindars* that shall profit from each morsel. The US is a fine example of this, where four corporations control over 80 per cent of the food and about 50 per cent of all produce is wasted!

The Modi Government needs to correct course by abandoning the laws and making a fresh start with farmers, for their movement is no longer an Indian affair or internal matter as the External Affairs Ministry is already involved in this diplomatic issue.

We as a nation should remember that India loses face in the world only because democracy dies at home. This is an agrarian issue that is being politicised by media magicians, swaying public opinion inciting more hate in society. But for the farmers, at home and abroad, it's a question of livelihood and existence. We need to stand in solidarity because it's a fight for the survival of our soul and *roti*, together.

(The author writes on agriculture and environment, and is a former Director — Policy and Outreach, National Seed Association of India. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CONGRESS MUST BOUNCE BACK FAST

Sir — It is said that the BJP is afraid of losing a State and the Congress is shy of winning one. It does not matter for the BJP how big or small the State is, it just wants to form a Government there.

Though it had a minuscule presence in Puducherry, the astute power game of the BJP ensured its indirect control over the Union Territory (UT). Assam, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal and Puducherry are going to polls shortly, and the party has a stake in each State. But what about the Congress? The Congress' grip over the States is loosening each passing day.

For the Congress, the intention to go all the way and the determination to win appears to be missing. That the Congress is enjoying power in only three States is an unmistakable sign of decay and degeneration in the party. Of the three, the wind may change direction in Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh anytime. So, what's the party left with? When a party is reluctant to learn even after repeated drubbings, nothing can infuse hope among the people in the party's future.

Despite top leaders saying "enough is enough", nothing has been done to revive the party. The flip-flops over Rahul Gandhi assuming the party presidency should end. Either he should assume party presidency or leave politics. Even at the cost of some leaders leaving the party, the Congress must resolve its issues soon.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

FULL SPEED AHEAD WITH INOCULATION

Sir — This refers to the editorial 'Taming the virus' (March 2). By taking the job, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given a promising impetus to the pace of vaccination in the second phase. This phase of vaccination for senior citizens and those above 45 with comorbidities is expected to witness a good foothold or inoculation rate.

So far, the drive hasn't matched up to India's immense population challenge but the opening of centres at private hospitals and flexible options for registration can give it a big boost. All Chief Ministers,

Make the cyber system robust



The Maharashtra cyber department has submitted a provisional report to the State Government on the recent massive grid failure. If the massive power outage in Mumbai in October last year is the result of a Chinese cyber campaign against India, it should be a cause of concern for the Indian Government. If it is true, it means none of our establishments, including the Defence Research and Development Organisation and other institutions

related to national security, are safe from malware attacks by foreign forces.

A cyber threat is looming large on India's security and the Government needs to counter it effectively. According to unverified sources, the 100-page report confirms that a malware attack was behind the blackout and about 14 Trojan Horses and eight GB of unaccounted data was found in the system installed at the Maharashtra State Electricity Board.

An American firm has said that the Chinese could have introduced the malware. The State Government, however, did not want to confirm which country was behind the possible malware in the system as it felt there could be far-reaching international ramifications. However, it's time for the Centre and State Governments to think about and act upon it. Our Government must devise a robust system which is not to be breached by the hostile foreign nations. India must be prepared for cyber war.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

Union and State Ministers and Opposition leaders must follow suit so as to encourage others for inoculation. Not only politicians but also bureaucrats and celebrities must take the job.

Since February 13, India's seven-day rolling average of daily COVID infections has shown a steady surge, signalling a fresh need to ramp up the campaign. India's vaccination strategy is closely intertwined to its economic fortunes. A GDP contraction of eight per cent in 2020-21 requires a big bounce-back in the new year. But the restrictions on interstate movement in response to February's COVID surge are symptomatic of persisting jitters.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

STOP HARASSING WOMEN FOR DOWRY

Sir — India has an alarming trend of dowry deaths, harassment and domestic violence, and yet society is indifferent towards it. It was heart-wrenching to watch a video on the social media in which a girl in Gujarat

committed suicide. She recorded a video message and then jumped into a river. She was allegedly facing harassment from her husband since their marriage in 2018.

A case of abetment to suicide has been lodged against the husband. Her story is similar to the plight of lakhs of women who face harassment on a daily basis either in office spaces or inside their homes.

Despite several NGOs championing the cause of women rights, strict laws for crime against women, special courts and women-only branches in police, nothing seems to have changed on the ground. Women are still vulnerable and are subjected to various sorts of atrocities by their relatives. Even the religious organisations, which keep crying foul over one or the other issue, keep silent over women's issues until it is related to religious tenets.

Asim Sohail | Bihar

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

The Budget that the Madhya Pradesh Government presented today is a pack of lies. It is directionless, hopeless and just a maze of data.



Congress leader

— Kamal Nath

I think it's time to make efforts to adopt a new Constitution in October of this year by a national referendum, and transition to a semi-presidential system should be one of the possible options.

Armenian Prime Minister

— Nikol Pashinyan

Another day another FIR, yesterday Javed *chacha* with help of Maharashtra Government got a warrant issued for me and now another FIR for supporting farmers' Act.

Actress

— Kangana Ranaut

I want to play for West Indies'. That's where my heart is. I'm never going to turn down anything pertaining to West Indies cricket at this particular time.

Cricketer

— Chris Gayle

Close to 40 lakh people have registered themselves to receive the COVID vaccines on the CoWIN portal till Tuesday morning.


Union Health Minister

— Harsh Vardhan

FIRST COLUMN


CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

We still have a narrow window for vaccinating most people amid the falling number of new infections



RAJINDER DHAMIJA

A year ago the Coronavirus made its entry into the country. Since then, we have come a long way from the hard lockdown beginning in March-end to the second phase of the vaccine rollout which started from Monday with Prime Minister Narendra Modi taking a shot. By opting for the ICMR vaccine, he sent a clear signal that our indigenous vaccines are safe. Right now we are at a crucial stage of the pandemic's trajectory as we still have a narrow window for vaccinating the maximum number of people amid the falling number of new infections in most parts of India. This is the time to focus on mitigation with no scope for complacency. The pandemic is not over until it is actually over in all States and the virus does not have an adequate number of susceptible individuals to infect and survive. We need to chase the virus aggressively rather than the contagion chasing us.



It has been a sort of partial success so far as we have managed to keep infections as well as mortality rates low as compared to many countries in the West with a better infrastructure and capacity to contain and mitigate the virus. However, still more needs to be done as we enter into the next stage of the trajectory with an upsurge in cases in Kerala, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Gujarat and looming signs of increasing numbers in Delhi. Vaccine hesitancy remains an issue, with half of the eligible people coming forward for the inoculation. This is a universal phenomenon seen across the globe. Much of this is due to misinformation on social media and the tendency of many individuals to wait and watch. This needs to be aggressively countered and the State has made all efforts to quell this phenomenon. This all-out effort by the Government needs to continue in order to accelerate the vaccination drive which can gain momentum if more vaccines are made available to the public and in the open market so that everyone can get the jab on demand both through the public as well as private healthcare system.


The second strategy should be to continue mass-scale RT-PCR testing. There is no reason to scale down testing as we have seen lately in many States because that can be disastrous, especially with new mutant variants of the virus making entry into our cities. These variants will be seen in India as it is difficult to stop the transmission in view of relaxation of movement in an era of necessary international travel. More genomic sequencing would perhaps help us in early detection of these new variants arriving in the country and within India. We need to prepare for the inevitable and the focus should remain on both COVID-appropriate behaviour as well as vaccinating the masses.

Third, we need to create resilient district health systems. A weak link in most States is the poor status of district hospitals. In contrast to the prevailing political and bureaucratic response with focus on hardware (beds, ventilators, oxygen, and so on) in healthcare facilities, we should also focus on software development (capacity building and better-quality health workers) which is more important. The current pandemic provides us opportunity and finances to influence politicians and bureaucrats to build resilient and responsive health systems at both primary and secondary healthcare centres in States. Since health is a State subject, a collaborative and collective effort both by States and the Centre should be made to augment these district hospitals. Excellence in secondary healthcare is crucial and well-placed, well-funded, well-staffed and well-equipped district hospitals should be developed as the most important component of the healthcare chain to respond to future outbreaks. We have the opportunity to create a resilient secondary district healthcare system that is responsive to the needs of the public with focus on preventive, promotive, curative and restorative patient care.

(The writer is Head of Neurology Department, Lady Hardinge Medical College and SSK Hospital, New Delhi. The views expressed are personal.)

A less talked about crime against women

Witch-hunting is used as a tool to subjugate women and there will always be a new reason to brand a woman a witch in the hinterlands of India



AS INCIDENTS OF WOMEN BEARING THE BRUNT OF PERSONAL VENDETTA AND UNFOUNDED SMEAR CAMPAIGNS CONTINUE TO POUR IN FROM MANY PARTS OF INDIA, THE ISSUE OF WITCH-HUNTING DESERVES GREATER ATTENTION NOT ONLY FROM THE LEGAL POINT OF VIEW BUT FROM A WIDER SOCIO-ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE

I can never forget the night when the entire village, including women, armed with weapons came to attack a helpless woman on the suspicion of being a witch. I would also have been killed with her had I not called the police", recalls 72-year-old Birubala Rabha, a victim-turned-crusader from Assam's Goalpara district, referring to a ghastly incident that took place in a small village on the Assam-Meghalaya border in 2007.

This year the primary school-educated Rabha was the recipient of the Padma Shri, India's highest civilian award for her crusade against witch-hunting. The award was a much-deserved pan-India recognition of her work. Rabha, ostracised and branded as a witch, devoted her life for the cause of other women like her, and, through her organisation Mission Birubala, has been the force behind the State's law to check the practice of witch-hunting in Assam.

There is no dearth of women like Rabha in Assam, who came close to death or got killed, as more than two-thirds of its districts reported incidents of witch-hunting. As per the State Government's records, 107 people, mostly women, got killed between 2011-2019. Locally, even a village on the Assam-Meghalaya border, is called "dainigaon (village of the witches)", where many ostracised women live in isolation.

"In rural hinterlands, a *Deodhani*, *Bez* or an *Ojha* (people who allegedly specialise in healing, casting out unclean spirits and telling fortunes) wields tremendous influence. They often target a widow, a single or a guardian-less woman.with little or no formal education and label her a witch, when they are clueless about a malaise. Many poor people fall into their clutches, not solely out of superstitious belief, but also because of their inability to pay for a qualified doctor", says a 2014 field report from the districts of Goalpara and Sonitpur, conducted by the Partners for Law in Development (PLD), a Delhi-based legal resource group.

Rightly, Rabha in her '*Manuhe Manuhor Babe*' campaign, cautions gullible villagers against falling prey to such quacks who are nothing but "money-making racketeers exploiting people's ignorance."

The PLD's field study in Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand and Chattisgarh, also reveals that "women are more often targeted for material motives." Dibyajyoti Saikia, a human rights activist, who leads a Guwahati-based organisation, Brothers, feels that "individual factors like personal rivalry, jealousy, conspiracy come into play in such targeting in semi-urban and rural areas." Mamani Saikia, district co-ordinator, Goalpara, further explains that "in calculated attacks, gender relationship determines the selection of targets, often driven by ulterior interests like grabbing a property or for sexual exploitation, whereas, in surprise attacks, which are more violent in nature, the goal is supposedly to eliminate an evil".

Dalit and marginalised women are doubly prone to such attacks because of systemic patriarchy and also because of their social identity. However, Natyabir Das, a medical practitioner and a co-ordinator of Mission Birubala, says: "Though women as victims are more in number but in recent times, men are also facing such accusations."

Now, as per the National Crime Records



Bureau, more than 2,500 people, mostly women, got killed in such incidents between 2000-2016, while many believe that the number is much higher, as most States don't list witchcraft as a motive for murder.

Nevertheless, some States like Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Rajasthan, Assam, Maharashtra and Karnataka have framed anti-witchcraft Acts. Commenting on the existing Tonahi Pratadna Nivaran Act, 2005, Chhattisgarh, Dinesh Sharma, a doctor-turned-activist and founder of Andhshraddha, Nirmoolan Samitee, rues that "hundreds of cases are pending under the Act. Many victims have died and without fast-track courts, the purpose of the Act is somewhat defeated.

Moreover, in such incidents of organised community violence, the law cannot overlook the complicity and accountability of a village sarpanch or a kotwal."

Ajay Agarwal, Secretary, Association for Social and Human Awareness, Ranchi, Jharkhand, echoes similar sentiments. He says: "Though more than 1,300 women were killed since 2000 in the State, there's no official data available under the Prevention of Witch (DAAIN) Practices Act, 2001. Some cases get registered under the IPC and only one or two get convicted, while almost the entire village is responsible for such killings."

Assam's new Act, notified in 2018, has been feted as India's toughest anti-witch-hunting law, which makes any offence under it non-bailable, cognisable and non-compoundable.

However, the State's ADGP, LR Bishnoi, highlighted that the wider scope of legal protection included in the Act with the setting up of special courts and addition of new offences related to targeting, humiliation and ostracism, and so on are hitherto not part of the IPC.

Dibyajyoti Saikia opines that "the Act is yet to make any visible impact.... and the police still have a tendency to settle cases through a compromise." Natyabir Das says that agencies like the ASTEC (Assam Science Technology and Environment Council) have been chipping in through awareness drives, but admits that "a thorough training of police officials is required." Executive Director, PLD, Madhu Mehra, states that the Assam Act is definitely an improvement, more like the Rajasthan Act. But, unlike Rajasthan, the State is yet to frame rules regarding compensation and rehabilitation.

Manisha Behal, Executive Director, North East Network, a Guwahati-based women's rights organisation, also laments that the menace could have been better tackled on the ground by the frontline workers had the rules been in place.

Many activists point out that the existing legal regime, be it the IPC or special Acts, vests enormous power with the police, who are often found to be wanting in their preventive and protective role, particularly when the victim is poor or a woman.

Thus such Acts remain merely as pieces of paper failing to make any dent in the impunity attached to the practice. The legal vacuum for compensation of losses due to social ostracisation, forced displacement, or deprivation in livelihood opportunities is another drawback. Mehra, however, is sceptical about the actual realisation of compensation even if such a provision gets legal backing as the process of conviction is a long-drawn affair, with the accused mostly being as poor as the victim.

Many activists vouch for socio-legal measures like dialogue and awareness creation to help people distinguish between what is a socially permissible act and a crime. Some also voice the need for a central legislation reviving the Prevention of Witch-Hunting Bill, introduced in the Lok Sabha in 2016.

Witch-hunting is used as a tool to subjugate women and there will always be a new reason to brand a woman as a witch. As incidents of women bearing the brunt of personal vendetta and unfounded smear campaigns continue to pour in from many parts of India, the issue of witch-hunting deserves greater attention not only from the legal point of view but from a wider socio-economic perspective.



ARCHANA DATTA

POINT COUNTERPOINT

TIE-UP WITH THE ISF MILITATES AGAINST THE CORE IDEOLOGY AND GANDHIAN SECULARISM, WHICH FORMS THE SOUL OF THE CONGRESS. —CONGRESS LEADER ANAND SHARMA



WE ARE IN CHARGE OF A STATE AND DON'T TAKE ANY DECISION ON OUR OWN WITHOUT ANY PERMISSION. —BENGAL CONGRESS CHIEF ADHIR RANJAN CHOWDHURY



Don't treat Puducherry differently from the rest of India

Do nominated members in other State legislatures, Union Territories and in Parliament, too, enjoy voting rights during a trust vote?



KUMAR CHELAPPAN

Expressio unius est exclusio alterius (expression of one subject, object or idea is the exclusion of other subjects, objects or ideas)", is a maxim in Latin, which is heard quite frequently in law classes as well as in courtrooms. It finds application in the construction of Constitutions, statutes and similar instruments. This phrase came to mind after watching the proceedings in Puducherry that led to the fall of the V Narayanasamy-led Congress Government last week.


The resignation of Narayanasamy as the Chief Minister (CM) has not surprised any of the political observers. The only question being asked by them is why did it take four years for Narayanasamy to quit his post.

Though the BJP is accused of political manipulation, encouraging defections from

the ruling party to topple the Government and MK Stalin, the president of the DMK, is accused of murdering democracy, the fact is that the fall of the Congress Government was bound to happen from the day Narayanasamy was sworn in in 2016.

"Why did the Congress high command appoint Narayanasamy, who had not contested the 2016 Assembly election as CM, superseding many party heavyweights in the Union Territory?" wonders Kolahala Srenivasan, political chronicler of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry. "There were seasoned leaders like former CM Vaithilingam and A Namasivayam who were in the running for the top post," says Srenivasan.

Narayanasamy, the all-powerful Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) during the United



Progressive Alliance (UPA) regime under Manmohan Singh, had been defeated in the Lok Sabha election held in 2014. Sources say that the interests of other Congress leaders were overlooked by the party high command while appointing him. Apparently, there was strong discontentment among the Congress MLAs when he was hand-picked by the party president. The appointment of Kiran Bedi, the former super cop of Delhi as the Lieutenant Governor (L-G) of the Union Territory (UT), was like opening another war front by the BJP. Consequently, the running battle between the CM and the L-G hogged the limelight in the last four years. This style of functioning of the L-G was a new experience for the population of the UT and naturally, Narayanasamy got annoyed!

The nomination of three

BJP leaders as MLAs by the Union Home Ministry was also on expected lines. But the nominated legislators getting a chance to cast their votes in the trust vote held on Monday has to be explained by the BJP's national leadership.

What sealed Narayanasamy's fate was the resignations of K Lakshminarayanan, MLA and former Minister who was also the Parliamentary Secretary to the CM and that of D Venkatesan, an MLA belonging to the DMK. These resignations happened 24 hours before the trust vote. Lakshminarayanan had been

complaining since 2016 that the party was not recognising his seniority and experience. He was hurt when he was overlooked by Narayanasamy when Speaker Vaithilingam resigned to contest the 2019 Lok Sabha poll and appointed first-time MLA Sivakozhundu as the presiding officer of the House.

The resignation of John Kumar from the House, too, speaks about the discontentment that had set in. John Kumar was elected as an MLA in 2016 but resigned his seat to facilitate the election of Narayanasamy to the House. Though John Kumar was elected subsequently to the House in 2019, he too fell out with Narayanasamy eventually.

Though Venkatesan, the DMK MLA, announced his resignation from the House well in advance, the party leadership in Tamil Nadu kept silent over the issue. Despite the

declaration by Venkatesan that he quit from the House with the concurrence of his party leader (MK Stalin), the DMK did not do anything till Tuesday to buy peace with him. It was on Tuesday that the party's general secretary Durai Murugan announced the removal of Venkatesan from all official posts in the party.

Last month saw Stalin deputing party MP and moneybags Jagathrakshakan to rejuvenate the DMK in the UT. "This gave rise to many doubts in the minds of the Congress and DMK leaders in Puducherry. What we saw during the last two days was the impact of this decision," said Srenivasan.

The question why Jagathrakshakan was sent to Puducherry at this juncture remains unanswered. Narayanasamy did not include his alliance partner, the DMK,

in the Government and this resulted in a lot of heartburn.

Though the Congress and the DMK challenged the L-G's nomination of three BJP leaders to the Assembly, the apex court upheld her act. But how the nominated members were allowed to cast their votes in the Assembly reminds one of the Latin maxim "*expressio unius...*"

Do nominated members in State legislatures, other UTs and in Parliament, too, enjoy voting rights. There cannot be one rule for Puducherry and another for the rest of the country. Let's have the same rules for the whole country.

This was what Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared when Parliament abrogated Article 370: "Now people in Jammu and Kashmir enjoy the same status as that of the rest of the Indians." People of Puducherry, too, should get the same status. Shouldn't they?



Sensex rises for second day; reclaims 50K-level

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark BSE Sensex spurted by 447 points to close above the psychological 50,000-mark on Tuesday following hectic buying in auto and IT counters amid positive domestic and global cues.

The 30-share index swung nearly 633 points during the session before ending at 50,296.89, showing a rise of 447.05 points or 0.90 per cent.

Likewise, the NSE Nifty climbed 157.55 points or 1.07 per cent to settle at 14,919.10, extending gains to a second day.

Among Sensex stocks, Mahindra & Mahindra was lead gainer rising by 4.98 per cent. NTPC rose by 3.83 per cent, Bajaj Auto by 3.53 per cent, and Tech Mahindra by 3.44 per cent. TCS, Maruti, Infosys, HCL Tech, Nestle and Bharti Airtel were among the gainers.

On the other hand, ONGC, HDFC, Dr Reddy's, PowerGrid and SBI suffered losses.

Of the Sensex constituents, 25 shares ended with gains.

Sectorally, BSE auto surged the most with 3.18 per cent gains, followed by IT (2.85 per cent), tech (2.84 per cent) and industrials (2.20 per cent). All the 19 sectoral indices closed in the green.

Broader smallcap, midcap and largecap indices too rallied 1.60 per cent, 1.55 per cent and 1.11 per cent, respectively - outperforming the benchmark. Analysts said investor sentiment remained upbeat

due to encouraging GDP numbers for the third quarter as well as returning of calmness in global bond markets after the last week's turmoil.

Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services said, "An improved outlook post-February auto sales numbers resulted in continued buying in auto stocks with IT sector also being a major contributor in the rally".

S Ranganathan, Head of Research at LKP Securities said that markets exhibited buoyancy today despite its share of volatility in afternoon trade. IT stocks and auto stocks led the rally while the broader market saw keen interest in paper stocks on rising product prices.

A strong buying was seen in midcap and smallcap packs and outperformed broader indices as visible earnings recovery is attracting investors in this space.

Notably, the volatility index contracted sharply for the second consecutive day by over 6 per cent, Binod Modi, Head-Strategy at Reliance Securities said.

"Concerns pertaining to rising bond yields appear to have softened a bit after central bankers across the world have begun to push back against higher rates.

"This should offer some comfort to Indian equities and INR as rising bond yields in the USA and declining spread between USA Treasury yields and India's GSec yields had started putting pressure on INR," Modi said.

India's 'recovery faster than expected'

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Indian economy is recovering faster than expected and the government will spend on building infrastructure rather than boosting consumer demand artificially, principal economic advisor to the finance ministry Sanjeev Sanyal said on Tuesday. Speaking at a webinar organised by the Bharat Chamber of Commerce, he said the country needs to keep the growth momentum and it is the only means to create employment and reduce poverty. "We are recovering much faster than expected and need to keep the growth momentum in the next two years. The government will make capital expenditure on infrastructure to create assets rather than boosting consumer demand artificially. "If we need to reduce poverty, the growth has to keep



going. Else, we will end up in redistributing poverty as had happened in West Bengal where I come from," Sanyal said. After contracting for two quarters in a row, the country's economy grew by 0.4 per cent in the October-

December quarter of the current fiscal amid the coronavirus pandemic. The gross domestic product (GDP) had expanded by 3.3 per cent in the corresponding period of 2019-20, the data released by the National Statistical Office

(NSO) showed. The economy had shrunk by an unprecedented 24.4 per cent in the first quarter this fiscal following the coronavirus pandemic and resultant lockdowns. In the second quarter, the GDP declined by 7.3 per cent amid a perk up in economic activities after the easing of the lockdown. Sanyal said the nominal GDP growth rate in the Union Budget for 2021-22 was projected at around 14 per cent, which is a "conservative estimate". The noted economist said the government is "unapologetic" about the privatisation of some public sector entities. "We are unapologetic about the privatisation of some areas. PSUs will exist where it is needed but not where the private sector can do a better job," he said. There is a need to unleash the spirit of the private sector, the principal economic advisor said.

India aspires at least 50 pc of global ship recycling business

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India aspires to raise its share in the global ship recycling business to at least 50 per cent, union minister Mansukh Mandaviya said on Tuesday.

Ports, Shipping and Waterways Minister Mandaviya was addressing the 'Maritime India Summit 2021', inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"India aspires at least 50 per cent of global ship recycling business after passing of the Recycling of Ships Act," Mandaviya said in his welcome address. The country's share in the global ship recycling business is around 30 per cent at present. He said the maritime sector in India is being pro-



pelled in a bid to make this sector a key pillar of transport, trade and infrastructure.

Currently, India recycles 70 lakh gross tonnage of ships per annum. Mandaviya said that the Indian government is all geared up for facilitating and grounding the investments in the maritime

sector. Earlier the Prime Minister released an e-book of 'Maritime India Vision-2030'.

Maritime India Vision 2030 aims to make the Indian Maritime Industry at par with top global benchmarks in next 10 years.



Shipping Corp shares hit 52-week high on receiving bids

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of Shipping Corporation of India Ltd on Tuesday jumped 20 per cent to touch its 52-week high after the government received multiple bids for its proposed stake sale in the company. On BSE, the shares were locked in upper circuit limit and 52-week high of Rs 124.4, up 19.96 per cent. Similarly, on NSE, the stock traded at the upper band limit of Rs 124.5 -- 52-week high -- by surging 20 per cent. Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey on Monday said that multiple Expressions of Interest (EoIs) have been received for privatisation of Shipping Corp. In December, the government invited EoIs for strategic disinvestment of its entire stake of 63.75 per cent in Shipping Corp along with the transfer of management.



Airtel buys radiowaves worth Rs 18,699 crore

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bharti Airtel on Tuesday said it has picked up radiowaves worth Rs 18,699 crore in just-concluded auction, while rival Vodafone Idea said spectrum acquired by it in five circles will help boost 4G coverage and capacity.

The auction, which put on offer a total of 2308.80 MHz of spectrum worth Rs 4 lakh crore in seven bands, concluded on Tuesday, just a day after it commenced.

Market sources estimated that Reliance Jio had acquired spectrum valued at about Rs 55,000 crore, but there is no official confirmation so far.

Airtel, in a statement, said it has acquired radiowaves worth Rs 18,699 crore entailing 355.45 MHz spectrum across Sub GHz, mid band and 2300 MHz bands, arming it with "most formidable" spectrum holding in the country.

ER&D policy: K'taka aims to create 50K jobs

PNS ■ BENGALURU

The Karnataka government on Tuesday launched the Engineering Research & Development (ER&D) policy-2021, claimed to be the first such in the country, that aims to enable the state to contribute about 45 per cent to India's Engineering R&D during the policy period and create an additional about 50,000 new jobs. Department of Electronics, IT, Bt and S&T, Karnataka Innovation and Technology Society (KITS), and NASSCOM were involved



in drafting this policy after wider consultations with all the other participating stakeholders including the representatives of the industry, an official release said.

The five priority sectors of the policy include Aerospace & Defence; Auto, Auto Components & EV; Bio technology, Pharma & Medical Devices; Semi conductors, Telecom, ESDM; and Software Products. "The ER&D sector in the country is the fastest growing industry with a CAGR of 12.8 per cent. Meanwhile, the global Engineering Research and Development industry is expected to reach a spend of USD 2 trillion by 2025."

"Considering this scenario, this policy aims to prepare the state to make use of the future

opportunities emanating from this sector," Deputy Chief Minister C N Ashwath Narayan said.

Karnataka is currently the leading contributor to the Indian Engineering R&D industry revenue, and the state is home to over 400 leading R&D Centres/GCCs (global capability centres), according to the DCM, who also holds the IT/Bt and S&T portfolio.

The policy aims to retain its position, generation of intellectual property (IPs), and to make this as a skilled knowledge capital.

MYSUN plans to invest Rs 600 cr to develop 200MW solar portfolio

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rooftop solar firm MYSUN plans to invest Rs 600 crore in the next three years to develop a 200MW solar portfolio of the first phase of its recently launched asset vehicle.

This new venture will provide bespoke solar energy solutions to large corporate, industrial, and commercial establishments on a built, own, operate, and transfer (BOOT) or RESCO (Renewable Energy Service Company) model, Gagan Vermani, CEO and Founder, MYSUN told PTI.

"MYSUN is aiming to invest Rs 600 crore to develop a 200



MW solar portfolio of the first phase (of three years) of its recently launched asset vehicle MYSUN+. The new asset vehicle will provide on-site and off-site solar energy solutions to industrial and

commercial clients under the RESCO model," he said.

MYSUN+ has already gained traction with some of the large and renowned Indian as well as multinational companies becoming clients and has signed up and executed/executing projects in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Puducherry, Vermani added.

With this new venture, MYSUN becomes a complete 360-degree solar company meeting vastly different financing needs of its diversified client base of the large, medium and small industry as well as homes, all under one roof.



BPCL stocks rise over 3 per cent

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) on Tuesday rose over 3 per cent after the company said that it will exit Numaligarh refinery in Assam.

BPCL said it will exit Numaligarh refinery in Assam by selling its entire stake to a consortium of Oil India Ltd and Engineers India Ltd for Rs 9,876 crore.

The sale of Numaligarh Refinery Ltd clears the way for privatisation of India's second-largest fuel retailer.

On BSE, the scrip closed the counter at Rs 469, higher 3.1 per cent over the previous close. Intra-day, it touched 52-week high value of Rs 482.40, up 6.04 per cent.

Likewise, on NSE, the scrip closed at Rs 469.8, increasing 3.2 per cent. During the day,

it was trading at its 52-week high value of Rs 482.40 by rising 5.96 per cent.

In keeping with the Assam Peace Accord, the government had decided to keep Numaligarh Refinery Ltd (NRL) in the public sector. As part of this, BPCL was to sell its entire 61.65 per cent stake to state-owned firms.

A consortium of Oil India Ltd, Engineers India Ltd, and the government of Assam expressed interest in buying the stake and the BPCL board on Monday approved the sale.

"The board of directors of BPCL at the meeting held on March 1, 2021, has approved the proposal for sale of entire equity shares of 445.35 crore held by BPCL in NRL to a consortium of OIL and EIL and to government of Assam," the firm said in a filing to the stock exchanges.



Infra projects to boost tourism, says Gadkari

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Infrastructure projects in the pipeline will help boost tourism as well as create opportunities for MSMEs, according to Union Minister for MSME and Roads, Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari.

"The infrastructural projects in the pipeline as part of the central government's plans have laid the foundation of 'AatmaNirbhar Bharat' and will also boost domestic tourism in the country. Innovation is key to the revival of the travel and hospitality sector.

"Industry players such as FICCI, OYO Hotels and Homes and IATO should take advantage of the government schemes to come together and support MSMEs," Gadkari was quoted as saying in a statement.

The statement, on the basis of a webinar held on Monday, was issued by Ficci on Tuesday.

The minister said the government's initiatives such as collateral-free automatic loans for business, including MSMEs, and Rs 50,000 crore-equity infusion through MSME Fund of Funds, which benefits companies with higher credit ratings, will generate tremendous business opportunities. "The domestic tourist destinations, including hills, forests, and religious pilgrimage, will benefit from upcoming projects such as Char Dham Road, New Delhi-Dehradun Expressway, 22 Green Express Highways, and others. There's a huge potential for small hotel partners, agents to tap into this and look at expanding their offerings catering to the needs of tourists," he added.

MONEY MATTERS

HP CM presents Rs 9,125-cr supplementary demands



Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur on Tuesday tabled supplementary demands for grants of Rs 9,125 crore for 2020-21 in the Legislative Assembly, and said the state is coming out of the coronavirus-induced economic crisis. On the third day of the Budget session of the Assembly, he also said revenue receipts were affected in the COVID-19 pandemic, and it was necessary to ensure that committed obligations of the government are fully met. Relief was provided to every section of the society and now, the state is coming out of the economic recession, he added. Out of the total supplementary demands, Rs 8,448 crore is under non-plan schemes, Rs 281 crore under the plan and Rs 396 crore under the centrally sponsored schemes, he added. Under the non-plan expenditure, a sum of Rs 7,999 crore has been provided for ways and means advance.

Lupin launches generic drug to treat Wilson's disease



Drug major Lupin on Tuesday said it has launched Pencillamine tablets, used to treat Wilson's disease, in the US market. The company has launched a generic product in the market after having received approval from the US and Drug Administration (U.S.FDA) earlier. The Mumbai-based drug firm's product is the generic equivalent of Mylan Specialty's Depen tablets, which are indicated for the treatment of Wilson's disease, Cystinuria, and in patients with severe, active rheumatoid arthritis who have failed to respond to an adequate trial of conventional therapy.

Hero MotoCorp shares rise nearly 4 pc as sales rise in Feb



Shares of Hero MotoCorp ended with nearly 4 per cent gains on Tuesday after the two-wheeler maker reported rise in total sales during February. On BSE, the scrip ended at Rs 3,474.8, rising 3.73 per cent over the previous close. Intra-day, it jumped to Rs 3,491.75. The scrip on NSE gained 3.91 per cent to end at Rs 3,481.2. During the trading session, it had touched Rs 3,490. On Monday, the company reported a 1.45 per cent increase in total sales at 5,05,467 units in February. The company had sold 4,98,242 units in the same month of the previous year, Hero MotoCorp said in a statement. Total motorcycle sales stood at 4,63,723 units last month as against 4,79,310 units in February 2020, down 3.25 per cent. Total scooter sales, however, increased over two fold to 41,744 units as compared with 18,932 units in the year-ago month, it added in a statement.

Jagran Prakashan to buy back shares worth Rs 118 cr



Jagran Prakashan, the publisher of leading Hindi daily Danik Jagran, on Tuesday said its board has approved buying back shares worth up to Rs 118 crore. The board of directors of the company... approved the buyback of the company's fully paid-up equity shares of face value of Rs 2 each for an aggregate amount not exceeding Rs 118 crore... and at a price not exceeding Rs 60 per equity share payable in cash, from its shareholders/ beneficial owners (other than those who are promoters, members of the promoter group or persons in control), from the open market," it said in a regulatory filing. Jagran Prakashan said the public announcement setting out the process, timelines and other statutory details of the buy-back will be released in due course.

SHUT OUTSIDE VOICES TO HEAR YOUR OWN: KIARA



embrace living unrestrained. It's important to shut down the voices from outside, so you could listen to your own."

The hit song was composed and performed by Raja Kumari, and also features significant women achievers from diverse backgrounds including MMA professional Sanika Patil, gender-fluid artist and sculptor Durga Gawde, and television actress Ayesha Adlakha among others. Sharing her thoughts on bringing her fore 'you-get-what-you-see persona' once again for this campaign, Bani J adds, "Dealing with being misjudged and misunderstood doesn't ever get easier, especially if you are a woman with a voice. There are so many people who really don't get who I am, and they misjudge me which was quite bothersome initially, but not anymore. One gets used to it, but it never gets easier. I also think I am able to shrug off

movement.

Hip hop empress Kumari makes efficient use of incisive wit and irony to protest the society's opinionated contempt toward women and champion the unapologetic feminine tribe who endorse their avant-garde individuality and continue to defy convention and break the rules. The parodic takedown of misogynistic stereotypes casting women as passive, dependent and needy is an essential sonic centrepiece for this millennial creative and that opening riff is nothing short of iconic. With a tag line denoting 'rebellion is contagious', the glitzy video that was shot across Los Angeles and Mumbai, with its neon hues and fluid silhouettes capturing the contagious spirit of disengaging with the eternal voices and rewiring with the inner voices. From athletes to artists to activists, the video captures inspiring flag bearers who have walked the thin line between societal norms and expectations while being inimitable and fierce in their approach towards changing the fabric of societal standards.

Highlighting the recent trend of brands leveraging their new offerings via music videos, Universal Music and EMI Music, India and South Asia Managing Director and CEO and *The Stage* judge, Devraj Sanyal says, "A rapidly evolving Indian media landscape is changing the way people consume content and music is undoubtedly and inextricably woven into the fabric of this consumption economy.

Brands today can create an emotional imprint using music as a trigger and we're seeing some massive examples of these globally. Modern brands have huge cultural resonance just like music and for me, the audio player is the epitome of that. We create the most memorable and coolest partnerships to help amplify brand storytelling. 'I am a rebel' is a global coming together of counter culture, attitude, empowerment making this a category-defining moment for us."

The video came out just a week before International Women's Day. BoAt and Universal Music India have come together to celebrate women of today and tomorrow who live life on their own terms by unleashing the 'Rebel' campaign with the poignant all-woman collaborative song.

The multifaceted Kiara Advani has starred in and headlined the women empowerment anthem titled *I'm a Rebel* that also stars Grammy-nominated multi-platinum rapper Raja Kumari and fitness model Bani J.

The song celebrates women who want to explore, encourage individuality, and pushes them to live life unrestrained! The idea was to create a progressive narrative around the spirit of new age women who don't live by conventional expectations.

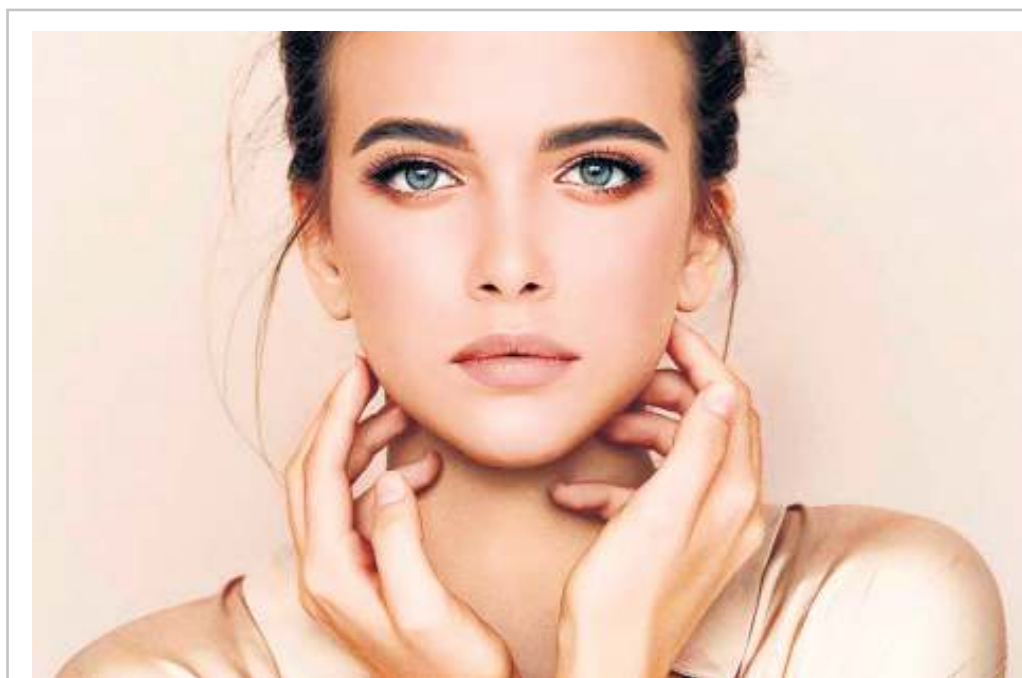
Talking about *TRebel*, Kiara Advani, who will be making her non-film music video maiden

foray with this single tells us, "This collaboration resonated with my core persona. Being a rebel isn't a look or style. It is a way of life and I have always endorsed it. For me, it's always been about living your life on your own terms, being comfortable in your own skin and not caring about what the world thinks. If society calls me a rebel for me being myself and breaking walls down and the laws are written on them, then well, at least I know I stand for something. I want to inspire the next generation of women to believe in themselves and let go of the inhibitions and conditioning they have been raised with, and

ing judgment ever since my teenage years. I continue to get trolled for being the strong, independent, downright badass woman that I am. People ask me to be feminine, to behave like a woman, to stop getting tattooed and building muscles otherwise I'll soon be an outcast but I'm not here to cater to anyone's definition of what I should be."

Kiara Advani was chosen to star in the video for she had been breaking the girl-next-door mould with an array of diverse performances! Focussing more on women empowerment and gender equality, the empowering drop is pegged to be an anthem for the fourth-wave feminist

negativity faster now because I have been facing



BEAUTY lies within

Good health and beauty are two sides of the same coin. A healthy woman is also better equipped to deal with the stresses of daily life. A body that is healthy is imperative for preserving beauty and building up immunity.

The right diet is absolutely essential to good looks. A diet for beauty should be high in vitamin-rich foods and low in carbohydrates and sugar. The answer is to choose from a variety of foods, to ensure a balanced diet. Fresh fruits, raw salads, sprouted grains and yoghurt should be included in the daily diet. Have whole-grain cereals. Reduce tea and coffee and have freshly extracted fruit and vegetable juices, lassi and clear soups. Avoid fried snacks, rich gravies and desserts, and confectionary items. Add the juice of a lemon to a glass of water and have it first thing in the morning. Drinking adequate water helps to eliminate toxins and wastes from the system.

Exercise, together with a balanced diet, can work wonders. Not only does it build up stamina and strength, but improves blood circulation to the skin and scalp. Every tissue of the body needs oxygen, so begin your exercises by doing deep breathing in front of an open window. Check with your doctor before beginning regular exercise. Walking is a good physical activity, as it exercises all the muscle groups. The



ancient Indian doctrine of Yoga has attained universal popularity today. In fact, it has become very relevant to the modern lifestyle, bringing about the harmony of body and mind.

Pay attention to cleansing and daily hygiene. Improper daily hygiene can undermine health in a number of ways. The skin is influenced by many external factors, like dirt, chemical pollutants, bacteria and virus. By daily washing, bathing and cleaning, we can remove impurities and keep ourselves free from infections.

A daily bath, or shower, is a must, especially on returning home. During ancient times, infusions were used to wash the body. Soak neem leaves in hot water and let them stand

For flawless skin, lustrous hair and a slim figure, good health is a prerequisite, says **SHAHNAZ HUSSAIN**

overnight. Use the water to bathe the next morning. Adequate sleep is also essential for fitness. Sleep is a way of restoring energy to the body and is nature's best cure. It is a beauty treatment in itself.

A positive mental attitude is also important because the mind and body are closely related.

All of us encounter a certain amount of stress and anxiety in our daily life. It is a matter of learning how to cope with it. We have to train our minds towards positive thinking and relaxation. Regular patterns of rest and exercise, along with hobbies and interests certainly help. Some people are so aware of the world around them. They are always keen to learn new things. Hobbies, interests and new activities can actually be very relaxing to the mind. They also give another dimension to the personality.

Indeed, the finest foundation for beauty consists of some common factors, which we often overlook.

(The writer is the founder of The Shahnaz Hussain Group.)

A wedding ceremony serves sacred and mundane purposes but what's extremely important is how the couple seizes the moment! Thanks to concepts of sustainable living, women empowerment and more, weddings sure have changed this 2021, writes **The Pioneer's SHIKHA DUGGAL.**



What's happening INSIDE A 2021 WEDDING?

For some, weddings are a public display of love and rituals and ceremonies and for others, it holds utmost significance, beyond just a display. With a love for each other, commitment values, etc., how are the wedding vows taking place? It is truly taking a different route as we enter 2021 to an extent that it's smashing stereotypes as well. Recently, when actress Dia Mirza shared a photo of a female priest, Sheela *atta* solemnising her wedding, it brought back the talks on gender equality and that was a spectacular gaze! While it just doesn't stop there, customs that have been passed on for decades

were opted out in 2021, for example, the *kanyadaan* ritual and the *bidai* custom.

So, this year is definitely calling out for some tailored changes in the way bridal festivities are taking place!

Reducing ecological impact of your special event on the planet



Reducing all of the carbon footprints, weddings are solemnly swearing by a waste-less one. Without skipping any gorgeous details, the plans are to go full eco-friendly! Brand strategist Divya Khandelwal and software engineer Aman Kapur's recent wedding had certain grounds to be laid for the wedding vows to take place and that is the manifestation of memories in a truly sustainable fashion. So, by featuring tiny changes in weddings many couples are creating huge impacts though. Planning an environmental-friendly wedding doesn't seem like a huge task, what do you have to do? Just decrease

the ecological impact of your special event on the planet!

The insta-official wedding



While proclaiming vows and chanting mantras for the sake of never-ending love at the wedding venue, to make your nuptials Instagram-official is also catching on the trend! Social media plays a really mammoth-like part in wedding planning these days, so weds want to first seek ideas from it from all the aspects of celebrations to finally making it Instagram-official. That just sparks the followers' interest with an ambience full of happiness and pomp even on social media handles.

And oh, not to forget the cute hashtags with the couple's nicknames!

Where in the world do you want to wed?



Nowadays, couples have to take care of a lot of things before getting married! Deciding on a destination wedding is one of them. With Niharika Konidela and Chaitanya getting married in star-studded royal celebrations that took place at The Oberoi Udayvilas, Udaipur took many of us by a storm and one was hoping to gear up for a destination wedding too.

It's like creating an event that has a sense of place with many personal touches just as if you were getting married in your hometown. There will be local elements, great planning, design extravaganza and pretty décor to make an authentic experience for the guests as well as for the bride and bridegroom to cherish it forever.

Covid-struck wedding!

Aren't we pretty much used to the phrase 'the new normal' but that is likely to be fitted into the



weddings too, because couples have been gifting hand sanitisers to their guests, maintaining social distancing even in the seating arrangements, the number of guests is restricted to 50-100 members only, etc. Instead of a spectacle, they are rather focused on safety these days! The year has been a little wild, so why shouldn't the celebrations be so too. Couples took many profound decisions while planning for their big day!

Actress Kajal Aggarwal's wedding designer recently opened up about the challenges they had to face due to a covid-struck wedding. The availability of flowers was a challenge, working with the rules and regulations and still getting things done in time leaving enough time to sanitise the venue was also a challenge as both Kajal and Gautam were very particular that everybody has to be tested, the venue has to be sanitised properly because there were too many elderly people present at the venue.

Innovative-invites!



As we bid farewell to big fat Indian weddings, a lot of new standards for a wedding was set including an animated-guest invitation card!

When Gauhar Khan and Zaid Darbar's wedding invite went viral with all the cute animated graphics, it made each and every netizen's heart melt. Going from one home to another for inviting your loved ones is long gone, these kinds of digital invitations are sparking some noise around the corner. Some take the help of parody, some try to trace their journey of how they met and some add their most heartfelt moments! With no high expenditures on the digital wedding cards, when one sees the digital card it certainly makes them laugh out loud with all the cartoonish stuff on it.

So what's your wedding going to look like?



● Boney Kapoor



● Janaki Rajgopal Lagadapati



● Komatireddy Venkata Reddy and Sarve Satyanarayana



● Konda Vishweshwar Reddy and BB Patil



● Madhu Yashki Goud and Mehboob



● Waleed Alamoudi



● Sravan



● Mohamed Ali and Jabir Patel



● Mohib Mirza and Abdur Rahman



● Mrs Kubra

WEDDING BELLS

The wedding of Nasiba Siraj, niece of Shabbir Hussain and Jabir Patel, with Waleed Alamoudi took place at King's Palace in Mehdiapatnam. Many a celebrity and business bigwig was spotted partaking in the festivities under the bright lights.

Photos by **SV Chary**



● Kasava Rao



● Kavita Jain

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



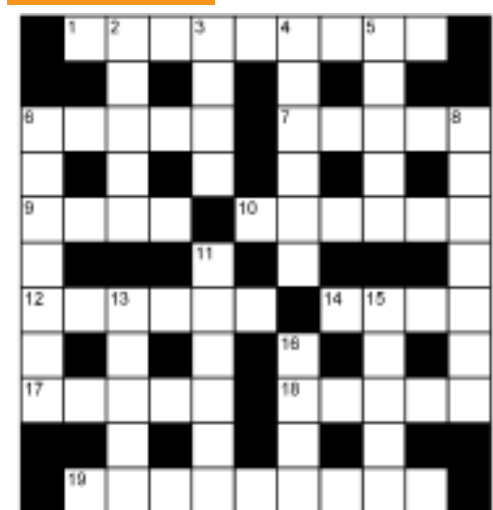
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- Saying again
- These brown fruit grow on a palm tree
- A clothing size
- A hard black fuel
- Beat in a battle
- A fire-breathing monster
- The number in a quartet
- Frown
- Played a part in a play
- Replaying

DOWN

- More than is needed
- A compass direction
- Had a conversation



SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution								
2	6	8	5	7	4	1	9	3
3	5	9	1	2	6	4	7	8
4	1	7	8	9	3	2	5	6
1	9	5	3	8	2	7	6	4
7	8	4	6	5	1	9	3	2
6	3	2	9	4	7	8	1	5
9	4	1	2	6	5	3	8	7
8	2	6	7	3	9	5	4	1
5	7	3	4	1	8	6	2	9

Rules

- Each row and column can contain each number (1 to 9) exactly once.
- The sum of all numbers in any row or column must equal 45.

tollywood



KRITHI SHETTY to speak in Telangana dialect

Bebamma aka Krithi Shetty scored full marks with her appearance in the debut movie *Uppena*. While the director and the hero Vaishnav Tej got applause from all over, Krithi Shetty got a bit more appreciation everywhere. It looks like the beautiful talent has signed a new role that would be in complete contrast to 'Bebamma' — she would be speaking in the Telangana accent for this role of hers. Krithi Shetty is playing a girl from Hyderabad in her next movie, *Aa Ammayi Gurinchi Meeku Cheppali*, alongside

Sudheer Babu in this love story. Beamma will be directed by Mohana Krishna Indraganti, and the movie is again expected to be a soothing love story like *Sammohanam* after his action-thriller *V* with Nani and Sudheer Babu. The actress says she strongly believes this is a story all of us will relate to and fall in love with. Krithi Shetty earlier acted as a student in Hrithik's *Super 30* and is playing a role in Nani's *Shyam Singha Roy*. Now, with *Aa Ammayi Gurinchi Meeku Cheppali*, Krithi Shetty is signing movies at a faster pace and is soon expected to sign in the star ticket films.



A1 Express all set to take audiences on a ride

Actor Sundeep Kishan-starrer *A1 Express*, a sport-based movie, has completed the censor formalities and received a 'U' certificate from the censor board. The film that stars Lavanya Tripathi opposite Sundeep Kishan, is all set to have a grand theatrical launch on March 5. Sundeep Kishan considers his maiden production *Ninu Veedni Needanu Nene*, which was released in 2019 as the beginning of a fresh phase in his career. When he chanced upon the Tamil sports drama *Natpe Thunai* starring Hip Hop Thamilzha, he wanted to tweak it and remake it in Telugu. The actor in a recent interview said that he is confident *A1 Express* will make for a collective theatrical viewing experience. According to Sundeep Kishan, the story of *A1 Express* is based on *Natpe Thunai*. "We retained the core emotions and as we had scope to improvise, we made an effort to put forth a visually and technically better film than the original," shares the *Venkatadri Express* actor. The actor trained with coaches of the Hyderabad Hockey Association as well as in Mohali.

DHRUVA SARJA'S *Bharjari* to have a telugu release soon

Kannada actor Dhruva Sarja, who has wowed fans and critics alike with his blockbuster hit *Pogaru* in Kannada, Telugu and Tamil languages, is all set to have his other hit *Bharjari* released in Telugu. Padmavati Pictures production house's V Shiva Subbarao, who bought the rights for the film, said, "Many producers wanted to buy the film's rights, we're glad we were

able to buy it for a fancy price. We're sure the audience will love Dhruva's *Bharjari* as much as they loved him in *Pogaru*." The film's promotion is on at a brisk pace and the novel ways are only set to grab more eyeballs. *Bharjari* is a 2017 action comedy film written and directed by Chethan Kumar. The film also stars Rachita Ram and Haripriya in the lead roles.



Allu Arjun's push to Karthikeya



RX 100 and 90ML fame Kartikeya Gummakonda-starrer *Chaavu Kaburu Challaga* is finally gearing up for a theatrical release on March 19. A grand pre-release event has been scheduled for March 9, in Hyderabad. The latest we hear is that Stylish star Allu Arjun will grace the pre-release event of the film co-produced by his father Allu Aravind along with Bunny Vas under GA2 Productions. Several other personalities from the industry will grace the event to support the actor. While Lavanya Tripathi is playing the female lead, Aamani Srikanth Iyyengar, Rajitha, Murali Sharma, Achanta Mahesh, Bhadrans and Prabhu will also be seen essaying some key roles. Directed by debutant Pegallapati Koushik, Karm Chawla is handling the



cinematography and G Satya roped in for the editing. Jakes Bejoy is scoring the music of this film.

DRUSHYAM 2 LAUNCHED



Venkatesh Daggubati's much-anticipated film, *Drushyam 2*, the Telugu remake of *Drishyam 2*, was officially launched in Hyderabad. The film's launch began with a pooja in the presence of the cast and crew. Mohanlal's *Drishyam 2* released on Amazon Prime Video on February 19 and it has been garnering great response from both audience as well as critics. Following the film's success, Jeethu Joseph announced that he will be directing the Telugu remake of the film that will go on floors on March 5. Jeethu took to Instagram to share a picture from the pooja ceremony saying, "Telugu *Drishyam 2* starts rolling on March 5th in Hyderabad (sic)."

KEERTHY TO PLAY SITA IN ADIPURUSH?



Young Rebel star Prabhas, who has a promising line-up of films, was recently spotted in Mumbai at the Bandra Kurla Complex. According to the latest report, Prabhas is all set to join the sets of *Adipurush*, which will be helmed by Om Raut of *Tanhaji* fame. The film that also stars Saif Ali Khan is a mythological film based on the epic Ramayana. Now, makers of *Adipurush* are yet to lock the heroine who will be playing the role of Goddess Sita in the Prabhas-starrer. After considering many names, the team is said to be tilting towards South star heroine Keerthy Suresh for the role of Sita in Prabhas and Om Raut's *Adipurush*, sources say. However, an official confirmation regarding the inclusion of the *Mahanadi* actress in this much-hyped big-budget project is awaited. Insiders say that Prabhas is hitting the gym twice a day to get a leaner look for his upcoming film, which is being shot in 3D. Prabhas will play Lord Ram while Saif Ali Khan will play Ravana-Lankesh. Apart from this, Prabhas' other movies include *Salaar* and *Radhe Shyam*.



Pitch will be similar to last 2 Tests: Rahane

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

India's Test vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane on Tuesday said there is no need to take criticism of the spin-friendly pitches in the country "seriously" as not a word is spoken about the "damp" tracks elsewhere and England can expect another turner in the fourth Test.

There has been a lot of talk about the spinning tracks in the second Test at Chepauk and the pink ball game at Motera which ended inside two days. The fourth and final Test starts on March 4.

"I think the wicket will be similar to the second Test match in Chennai, spinning track. Yes, pink ball made the difference and it came much quicker off the wicket compared to red ball and we had to make adjustments," Rahane said during a virtual media conference.

"Wicket will be a lot similar to last two Test matches," he added.

Rahane, for the first time in many years, shed his reticence when asked to respond to the criticism from former England players that the pitches have not been ideal. Some have even urged the ICC to act against India for preparing a turner.

"See, let people speak what they want to. The wickets, when we tour abroad, no one speaks about how seaming they are. They always speak about the technique of the Indian batsmen. I don't feel we need to take seriously what people say," Rahane was sharp in his response.

"...You see, when we tour abroad, the first day wicket is damp. When wicket becomes grassy and behaves up and down, then the pitch becomes dangerous but we haven't complained about it or we have never spoken about it."



'VERY SIMILAR PITCH'

Young England opener Zak Crawley too echoed Ajinkya Rahane's sentiments on the Motera strip which he believes will be "similar" in nature but red ball will make it "slightly easier" for the batsmen.

"Yeah, I think it will be a very similar pitch this week. It wasn't easy to score for sure, but it was the same for both sides, and they played very well compared to us. So, we had our chance to bat first and did well and unfortunately, we didn't play well as we needed to," Crawley said at a virtual conference.

Quizzed whether batting will be easier in the final Test as it will be a red ball game again,

he answered in affirmative.

"It depends on the pitch obviously, but I do think that it will be slightly easier. I felt that the pink ball was a bit harder (to play) and that ball skidded on quite quickly, which is why Axar got so many wickets through leg before and bowled."

Axar's arm ball will be a massive threat, conceded Crawley.

"I think he still has that ball in his armoury for sure and he'll still be a massive threat with that one (red ball). But I think it might not skid on with the same pace as the pink ball but it won't be completely different," explained Crawley.

Crawley was the only half century for England in the last

game.

"Yeah, it's nice to score some runs. I probably had the best (chance) to face seamers early, but still nice to score some runs, nonetheless," he said, adding that hopefully he will have the game-plan in the final match.

The 23-year-old, lavished praise on left-arm spinner Axar Patel, who has grabbed 18 wickets from two Tests.

"You know, he (Axar) is a very good bowler, especially in these conditions, he has been very accurate, he doesn't give you much to score, and he has got one that goes straight on, in these conditions, one (to) turn, so he is very good bowler," said Crawley.

'Ashwin constantly reinventing himself'

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Ravichandran Ashwin is a constantly reinventing himself, said former India batsman VVS Laxman, insisting that preparation is key to the veteran off-spinner's success.

Ashwin recently became the fourth Indian bowler to take 400 Test wickets, when he achieved the feat by dismissing Jofra Archer in the pink ball Test at Ahmedabad. He also became the second fastest bowler to reach the landmark after Sri Lanka spin wizard Muttiah Muralitharan.

"I think he's (Ashwin) a very intelligent person. When you're playing at the highest level, then it's not only about your skill, it's about your preparation, your planning and execution is so critical.

"So, he works out what are the weaknesses of the batsman. He plans those dismissals and that's why I think he is reinventing himself," Laxman, a veteran of 134 Tests, said on *Star Sports show Cricket Connected*.

To prove his point, Laxman cited the example of Steve Smith's trouble against Ashwin during India's recent tour Down Under.

"We saw recently in the Australia series how he (Ashwin) troubled someone as great as Steve Smith and that's another thing that makes Ashwin or any champion player special, that he wants to be the best and compete against the best," he said.

Former India opener Akash Chopra too lavished praise on Ashwin, saying he is one of the biggest match winners the country has ever produced.



Ash, Root in contention for ICC Player of Month

PTI ■ DUBAI

Seasoned India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin along with England captain Joe Root and West Indies' new batting sensation Kyle Mayers were on Tuesday nominated for the ICC Player of the Month for their exceptional performances in February.

Ashwin played three Tests against England and scored 106 in the second innings of India's second Test victory at Chennai and took his 400th Test wicket in the third Test victory at Ahmedabad.

"Scoring a total of 176 runs across these games with taking a total of 24 wickets, Ashwin is the deserving candidate to be nominated in the men's category for

February," the ICC release stated.

"England Test captain Joe Root makes it to the list of nominations again this month for his outstanding performance with the bat and the ball. He scored a total of 333 runs and took 6 wickets overall in the 3 Tests that he played against India," it further stated.

From the West Indies, Test debutant Mayers played two matches against Bangladesh and had a match-winning knock of 210 to help his team successfully chase a target of 395 at Chittagong.

In the women's section, Tammy Beaumont and Nat Sciver of England along with Brooke Halliday of New Zealand have been nominated.

Gayle focused to win third T20 World Cup

AFP ■ ANTIGUA

Chris Gayle said on Monday he is focused on the "bigger picture" of winning a third T20 world title with the West Indies later this year, ahead of the veteran batsman's return to International cricket this week.

The 41-year-old was named in the Windies' 14-man squad for the three-game T20I series against Sri Lanka, which starts in Antigua on Wednesday.

Gayle, who was part of the World T20-winning sides in both 2012 and 2016, played the last of his 58 T20Is against England in March 2019.

The Windies will attempt to defend their title in India in October and November.

"I want to accomplish, starting off by winning the series, but the bigger picture is actually to get three T20 titles under my belt," Gayle told a press conference.

"That's actually the goal I'm setting in my head — winning the T20 World Cup. The World Cup is still a long way off but by the time you quint (blink), it's World Cup time."

Gayle has made 1,627 T20I runs with a highest score of 117 at an average of over 32.

"I want to win the series," Gayle added. "I want to get off to a good start. It's really good to be back. Hopefully I can perform, help the team, and put the



team in a winning position."

He is one of four openers in the West Indies squad, but said that he could be used lower down the order again.

"It seems like I'm the number three specialist now," he said. "It's not a problem. I'm good at playing spin, I'm as good at playing fast bowlers as anyone as I'm an opener."

"But with West Indies cricket, whatever role they want me to play, I'm willing to play that particular role. If it's opening, I'm ready, number three, number five — I'm pretty much flexible. I will still be the best number five in the world, best number three in the world."

Crowds can be avoided at least initially in IPL: Wadia

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Punjab Kings co-owner Ness Wadia feels the IPL can avoid crowds initially in the tournament and also wants to know from the BCCI that why his team's base in Mohali has not been picked among the potential venues for the 2021 edition despite a low Covid-19 caseload.

Delhi, Ahmedabad, Kolkata, Bengaluru and Chennai have been shortlisted as potential venues but the BCCI is yet to take a final call on the matter.

"We have written to the BCCI to find out under what criteria they have selected the venues and why they have not selected us. We were hoping to have games in Punjab," Wadia said.

"Some of the teams will not have a home advantage, those are the concerns. The cases in Chandigarh and Mohali are not that much, I don't know on what basis they have shortlisted the venues," he added, referring to Chandigarh's 69 new cases on Monday.

The 2020 edition of the IPL was held in the UAE in empty stadiums but there is a possibility that the upcoming edition at home will allow spectators with the Covid situation improving drastically since the last IPL.

The current India-England Test series too is being played in front of lim-



ited fans.

However, Wadia feels IPL is a much tougher challenge logistically compared to a bilateral series and crowds can be avoided at least initially due to safety concerns.

"I think it would better to have no crowd initially and then evaluate the Covid-19 situation as the event progresses. There is no question that the IPL is tougher to organise than a bilateral series. We want whatever is best and safe for the players and the bio-bubble.

Leach eager to learn from Ashwin, Axar

PTI ■ LONDON

By his own admission, England's Jack Leach is in awe of the exploits of Ravichandran Ashwin and Axar Patel during the pink ball Test and he is eager to learn the nuances of spin bowling from the Indian duo in the fourth and final match, starting here on Thursday.

Ashwin and Axar used the spin-friendly Motera pitch to great effect and picked up 18 of the 20 English wickets in the match to demolish the visitors.

"When you see players having so much success, like Ravichandran Ashwin, who has just got to 400 Test wickets and has a lot of experience in India, and Axar Patel, who has had a great start to Test cricket, of course, you try to learn from them," Leach wrote



in a column for *Sky Sports*.

"It's important not to look at it too emotionally though and think I just want to bowl exactly like them!"

The 29-year-old left-arm spinner felt the experienced

Ashwin was very clever in the way he changed his seam position.

"He (Ashwin) will bowl to the same spot but the way it gets there and whether it hits the seam or hits the lacquer varies and the ball reacts very differently," Leach observed.

"Then Axar is someone who seems to present every ball the same, a squarish seam, then a few skid on and the odd one grips — that has been so effective on the wickets we've played on."

Leach is up for the challenge that awaits him in the final Test and sounded confident after picking up the wickets of top four Indian batsmen in the third Test.

"...We're all keen to learn and are excited by the challenge; you have to be because if it was all easy then it wouldn't be Test cricket and it wouldn't be as much fun when you have those good moments. It's something that I'm relishing," he said.

"I was really pleased with the way I got the wickets, lbw and they were all from straight balls, obviously the balls before spin and then you get the wicket with the straight one."

He said he will not get a better four-wicket than he grabbed in the last Test in the form of Rohit Sharma, Cheteshwar Pujara, Virat Kohli and Ajinkya Rahane.

"I'm pleased with the wickets that I've taken, bowling to some of the best players in the world in their own backyard. I don't think I'll get a better four-for and I feel like I've held my own really; that gives me a lot of confidence moving forward," he said.

Money gets more importance than cricket in IPL: Steyn

PTI ■ KARACHI

South Africa pace great Dale Steyn has claimed that Cricket takes a back seat at the Indian Premier League, insisting that money is given more importance than the game in the lucrative T20 tournament.

Justifying his on-and-off IPL career, Steyn said this was one of the reasons he had not featured regularly in the world's biggest franchise-based T20 tournament.

"I think when you go to the IPL, there are such big squads and so many big names and so much emphasis on maybe the amount of money players earn and everything like that, so sometimes, somewhere down the line, cricket gets forgotten," said Steyn, who was part of the Royal Challengers Bangalore squad in the last IPL.

In January this year, Steyn announced that he is opting out of the IPL 2021 but will play other leagues around the world.

Steyn's decision influenced RCB to release him ahead of the IPL 2021 auction.

Steyn has played 95 IPL matches, picking up 97 wickets with a best of 3 for 8.

But the South African's repeated injury breakdowns didn't help his cause as he just featured in 12 IPL matches in the last three seasons.

The South African pacer, who is representing Quetta Gladiators in the Pakistan Super League 6, said he took the break as he needed time off from the game and also because he found playing in other leagues around the world more rewarding as a player.

"When you come to like the PSL or the Sri Lankan Premier League, for that matter, there is an importance on cricket. I have only been here for a couple of days and I have had people in and out of my room, just wanting to know about where I have played and how I went about it," Steyn said.

"Whereas, when I go to something like the IPL that gets forgotten and the main topic is how much money did you go for in this IPL? That's just me being brutally honest. I wanted to stay away from that and really put more emphasis on playing and bringing good vibes to good cricket teams and tournaments I feel are worth it," he added.

Vinicius rescues point for Real



AFP ■ MADRID

Real Madrid's chances of chasing down La Liga leaders Atletico Madrid were dealt a blow on Monday as they needed a late Vinicius Junior equaliser to secure a 1-1 draw with Real Sociedad.

It could have been worse for Zinedine Zidane's side, with Vinicius' finish in the 89th minute preventing what would have been a damaging defeat after a weekend in which both Atletico and Barcelona had won.

Atletico's victory over Villarreal on Sunday put them six points clear of Real Madrid, an advantage that is now only cut to five ahead of next week's Madrid derby at the Wanda Metropolitano. Atletico also have a game in hand.

The result ends Real Madrid's run of five consecutive wins while Porto's brilliant header for Real Sociedad early in the second half was also the first goal conceded by the reigning champions in five games.

It represents an important shift in momentum. A few days ago Atletico might have hoped just to hold on to first place next weekend but now they could spy an opportunity to all but

knock their opponents out of the title race.

Madrid had 20 shots to Real Sociedad's six but lacked edge in the final third, with the injured Karim Benzema watching on from the stands.

"We've had games where we won and maybe we didn't deserve to win as well, we can't change anything," said Madrid coach Zidane. "We have to keep going. There is a long way to go."

Richarlison boosts Everton's top-4 bid



Liverpool: Everton boosted their bid to earn a top-four finish in the Premier League as Richarlison sealed a 1-0 win against struggling Southampton on Monday.

Carlo Ancelotti's side won for the first time in six home league games thanks to Richarlison's early goal.

Everton's last success at Goodison Park had come against Arsenal just before Christmas, but ending a run of three consecutive home league defeats lifted them to within two points of fourth-placed West Ham.

The seventh-placed Toffees have a game in hand on West Ham, as well as Liverpool and Chelsea, who occupy the places directly above them. AFP

SINGLES

'INDO-PAK EXPRESS' TO BE BACK ON TOUR
NEW DELHI: The much-popular Indo-Pak pairing of Rohan Bopanna and Aisam-ul-haq Qureshi will be back after six years when it competes at the Acapulco ATP 500 event but as of now it's an one-off arrangement since their combined ranking won't let them enter bigger tournaments together. It will be first time that Bopanna and Aisam, known as 'Indo-Pak Express' will play together since they last competed at the ATP 250 event in Shenzhen in 2014.

MANIKA, SREEJA ADVANCE INTO FINAL ROUND
DOHA: Star paddler Manika Batra and young Sreeja Akula moved to the final round of the women's singles qualifiers at the WTT Contender after winning their respective matches. The world number 150, Sreeja prevailed over world number 74 Vega Paulina before she sent packing 87th-ranked Orsavan Parananang 11-5, 11-5, 11-6 in the third round. While Manika got the better of Irina Ciobanu 11-7, 15-13, 11-8 comfortably in the third round of women's singles qualifiers and will face Ganna Gaponova in the last round.

HAT-TRICK OF DEFEATS FOR INDIA WOMEN
DUSSELDORF: The Indian women's hockey team's defence resisted well but formidable Germany walked away with a 2-0 win in the third game, taking an unassailable 3-0 lead in the four-match series, here. Sonja Zimmermann (26') and Franzisca Hauke (42') scored the goals for Germany, who won their third consecutive match on Monday. The fourth match of the series will be played on Thursday.

SMRITI SLIPS 2 PLACES IN ODI RANKINGS
DUBAI: Indian opener Smriti Mandhana slipped two places to sixth among batters but Jhulan Goswami retained her fifth spot among bowlers in the latest ICC women's ODI Players' rankings issued on Tuesday. England opener Tammy Beaumont has rocketed five places to grab the top position after an excellent display in the three-match series against New Zealand. She has overtaken the likes of Stafanie Taylor and Amy Satterthwaite to top the list and now leads Australia captain Meg Lanning by 16 points.

STIMAC NAMES 35 PROBABLES FOR FRIENDLIES
NEW DELHI: National football coach Igor Stimac on Tuesday named 10 new players in his 35-member list of probabilities for India's back-to-back international friendlies against Oman and the UAE to be played in Dubai on March 25 and 29 respectively. The final list of 28 players will be announced after the ISL final on March 13. The players will then assemble for a preparatory camp in Dubai from March 15.

MARY, PANGHAL AMONG 13 IN QUARTERS
NEW DELHI: Six-time world champion M.C. Mary Kom and Asian Games Gold-medallist Amit Panghal were among 13 Indian boxers who made the quarterfinals of Boxam International Tournament on Tuesday, leaving them just win away from securing medals at the event. While 12 of them either got byes or benefitted from the small size of their respective draws, Commonwealth Games Bronze-medallist Mohammed Hussamuddin (57kg) defeated local hope Joan Manuel Torres in his opening bout on Tuesday.

SANIA RETURNS WITH WIN IN DOHA
DOHA: Sania Mirza made a winning return to the WTA circuit as she and her Slovenian partner Andreja Klepac beat Ukrainians Nadiia Kichenok and Lyudmyla Kichenok to reach the doubles quarterfinals of the Qatar Total Open here. The Indo-Slovenian pair won 6-4, 6-7(5), 10-5 against the duo of Kichenok and Kichenok in the opening round of the WTA 500 tournament Monday night.

FEDERER OUT OF MIAMI OPEN
MIAMI: Roger Federer is withdrawing from this month's Miami Open so he can spend extra time preparing to "work his way back out on tour," his agent told AP. The 20-time Grand Slam champion has not competed in more than a year. He is scheduled to make his return to the tour next week in a hard-court tournament at Doha, Qatar. Agencies