

ANALYSIS 7
CPSU PRIVATISATION
AN UPHILL TASK**MONEY 8**
CHINESE HACKERS TARGETED INDIA'S
POWER THROUGH MALWARE: US FIRM**SPORTS 11**
ENG DIDN'T PREPARE WELL FOR
SPIN CHALLENGE: RICHARDS

VIJAYAWADA, TUESDAY MARCH 2, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3



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A COMRADE
MOMENT FOR
CHARAN

Page 12

V-P, Modi get their first jabs as India expands vaccine coverage

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India expanded its COVID-19 vaccine coverage on Monday by including everyone over 60 and those aged between 45-59 who have co-morbidities in the net with Prime Minister Narendra Modi setting the pace by being the first person to take a jab.

Thousands of people queued up at government and private medical facilities across the country as the country further opened its vaccination programme that started on January 16 for health-care and sanitary workers.

Amid reports of glitches and some people saying they were finding it difficult to navigate the Co-WIN 2.0 app to register and book an appointment, the Union Health ministry clarified to say the app on Play Store is meant for use only by administrators. Registration and booking for appointments has to be done through the portal, it said.

More than one million citizens were registered on the



Co-WIN portal till 1 pm, the ministry said.

Though registration opened at 9 am, the prime minister was the first off the block. He visited the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) early in the morning to take his first dose and appeal to everyone eligible to get themselves inoculated.

"Take my first dose of the

COVID-19 vaccine at AIIMS.

Remarkable how our doctors and scientists have worked in quick time to strengthen the global fight against COVID-19," Modi tweeted at 7.06 am. "I appeal to all those who are eligible to take the vaccine. Together, let us make India COVID-19 free!" he said.

Elderly reluctant to register for Covid vax fearing side effects

SUMIT ONKA
■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Even as the second phase of the Covid-19 vaccination begins, many eligible people are reluctant to register for it, doubting the safety and efficacy of the vaccine.

People over the age of 60 and those within the age bracket of 45-59 years with co-morbidities specified by the Central Government have been deemed eligible to be administered the Covid-19 vaccine across the country in the second phase.

However, some senior citizens, even educated ones in Vizag, remain wary of taking it. When asked if they registered for the vaccination in the CoWIN portal, most of them confessed that

they were afraid of the jab. "I will not take a vaccine shot. We have been hearing about people dying after taking the vaccine. Even many health workers, including doctors, refused to take it. Why would I take unnecessary risk," said N Sankar Rao, a 68-year-old resident of Madhurawada in the city.

"They have developed the vaccine in haste and it is being experimented on us," rued P Madhusudan.

About 53 lakh people are 60 years of age or older as per Census 2011 while there are about 7 lakh people between 45 to 59 with comorbidities suffering from chronic ailments like cancer, diabetes, heart problem, hypertension and others.



Stopped at Tirupati airport, Naidu basks in the spotlight

CPRADEEP KUMAR
■ VIJAYAWADA

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

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

It was obvious that the TDP chief was well aware that his planned protests in Tirupati and Chittoor wouldn't have had such wide coverage as his

SEC ejects Varla Ramaiah from all-party meeting

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

State Election Commissioner Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar ejected TDP senior leader Varla Ramaiah from an all-party meeting after the latter kept on intervening the State poll panel chief repeatedly.

According to sources, the SEC was visibly irked by Varla Ramaiah's interventions while he was address-

ing the meeting.

The SEC had called the meeting to discuss the ensuing civic body elections with leaders of all parties. Narayana Murthy, Padmaja Reddy from the ruling YSRCP, Varla Ramaiah from TDP, Jelly Wilson from CPI, Mastan Vali from the Congress, YV Rao from CPM were among those present at the meeting.

squatting on the airport floor. Television cameras whirled, flashbulbs popped and a buzz

was created that soon spread across the State, and beyond.

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's first auction of spectrum in five years attracted Rs 77,146 crore of bids on the opening day on Monday with Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel, and Vodafone Idea participating in the bidding process - a response that the government said was better than expected.

There were, however, no takers for spectrum in 700 MHz and 2500 MHz bands on the first day, and the auctions will continue and conclude on Tuesday.

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

Communications Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said Rs 77,146 crore worth of spectrum was bid on the first day but there were no takers for the airwaves in the premium 700 MHz as also 2500 MHz bands. The response from players



and the bids received surpassed government's internal estimates that had anticipated bids worth Rs 45,000 crore.

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

ter of assurance that it has gone as high as Rs 77,146 crore," Prasad said.

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

HC allows Varavara Rao to furnish cash surety for bail

YSRCP's victory march will continue in civic body polls: Sajjala

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Government Advisor Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy on Monday said that the results of the panchayat elections will be replicated in ULB polls.

Speaking to the media in Anantapur on Monday after a meeting over elections to the Urban Local Bodies across the State, Sajjala said that N Chandrababu Naidu is blaming the YSRCP for withdrawal of nominations by candidates of his party, while the reality was that there are no takers for TDP tickets.

Warrant issued against Kangana

PNS ■ MUMBAI

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

POSCO-RINL had inked pact for a major steel plant in Vizag

SNV SUDHIR
■ VIJAYAWADA

An RTI query has revealed hitherto unknown facts behind a non-binding MoU signed on October 23, 2019 between the South Korean steel giant POSCO and state-run Navaratna steelmaker RINL. The agreement between the two entities proposed a Joint Venture Company (JVC) that would set up an integrated steel plant in Vizag with a final production capacity of 7 to 10 million metric tonnes per

annum (MMTA).

The contents of the non-binding MoU came to light in a reply from the Union Ministry of Steel under RTI Act. The MoU says that the new steel plant planned by the JVC was to produce hot rolled coils, plates, pickled and oiled coils, cold rolled coils and galvanised coils.

Significantly there is a mention in the MoU that the JVC would grant the Korean company's Indian subsidiary 'POSCO Maharashtra' a preferential right to purchase hot

rolled coils at competitive price if the quality and quantity specifications were met.

Another important aspect of the MoU was that POSCO and RINL would have an option to include a third party as an additional shareholder to the JVC provided both the companies agree on participation of such third party.

The MoU was signed by POSCO senior vice-president Kyeong Chan Kim and RINL's director (projects) KK Ghosh.

Summer to be relatively less harsh in south-central India

PNS ■ HYDERABAD/NEW DELHI

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

It is considered heat wave if the maximum temperature of



a station reaches at least 40°C or more for plains and at least

30°C or more for hilly regions. According to weather authorities, during the upcoming hot weather season --from March to May, 'above normal' seasonal maximum temperatures are likely over most of the subdivisions of north, north-west and north-east India, a few subdivisions from eastern and western parts of central India and a few coastal subdivisions of north peninsular India.

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TODAY

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Month & Paksham:

Magha & Shukla Paksha

Panchangam

Tithi : Chaturthi: 02:58 am (Next Day)**Nakshatram** : 03:29 am (Next Day)**Time to Avoid**: (Bad time to start any important work)**Rahukalam**: 03:23 pm - 04:51 pm**Yamagandam**: 09:32 am - 11:00 am**Varjyam**: 12:50 pm - 02:18 pm**Gulika**: 12:28 pm - 01:56 pm**Good Time**: (to start any important work)**Amritakalam**: 09:37 pm - 11:05 pm**Ahijit Muhurtham**: 12:04 pm - 12:51 pm

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Partly cloudy

Temp: 37/19

Humidity: 48%

Sunrise: 06:33 am

Sunset: 06:22 pm

Current Weather Conditions

Updated march 1, 2021 5:00 PM

Opposition bid to fuel fire against Modi will fizzle out

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Towards development of infrastructure in AP, the Indian Institute of Petroleum

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

The Bengaluru-Chennai Expressway, Amaravati-Anantapur Expressway will play a crucial role in AP's development. Up-gradation of

Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam, Tirupati airports as international airports took place only during the Modi regime. The first phase of the Visakha-Chennai industrial corridor is under



Y SATYA KUMAR
BJP National Secretary

implementation and will create thousands of jobs.

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

sons directly and another 2 lakh indirectly?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ready Polavaram cofferdam by May-end, officials told

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Monday instructed officials to expedite the Polavaram project works and complete the cofferdam by May-end.

The Chief Minister was speaking at a review meeting on the progress of key works of the Polavaram project like spillway, approach channel, upstream cofferdam, ECRF dam, gate alignment among others at his camp office on Monday.

It was discussed in the meeting that construction work of Polavaram was hampered due to the mistakes of the previous

government as construction of cofferdam was started before the works of spillway were completed.

It was also mentioned that the works were executed partially but not in a proper manner. The officials said the flood water reached at a speed of about 13 meters per second during the floods due to gaps in the cofferdam constructed by previous government which led to large-scale cuts in Gap1 and Gap2 at the ECRF dam and as a result, the works of the spill channel were severely disrupted during the floods. They said special focus is being laid on all such works.

The officials said the works

of the spillway are completed and fixing of gates and cylinders are on at a brisk pace.

Jagan rules out reduction in height of Polavaram dam
Condemning reports in a section of the media suggesting that the State Government was amenable to a reduction of the height of the Polavaram project, officials said there was no chance of reducing the height of the dam. They pointed out that this was also made clear by the Central Water Commission (CWC). They said the fixing of shutters as per the specified height is being completed.

Reviewing the matter of interlinking of rivers, the Chief

Minister asked officials to prepare proposals on the issue and ensure that the interests of the state are well protected.

He said the proposals should be categorical and free from ambiguity in the interest of the State and it would also be sent to the Centre

YSR Gardens to come up on G-Hill site

Officials briefed the Chief Minister on the master plan of YSR Gardens to be constructed at Polavaram. The statue of former chief minister YS Rajashekar Reddy will be installed on the G-Hill site at Polavaram.

V-P, Modi get their first jabs as India...

Continued from Page 1

He received the indigenously developed Covaxin vaccine from Bharat Biotech. The other vaccine being administered in the country is Covishield from the Oxford-AstraZeneca stable.

Modi's move to take the first dose of Covid vaccine on the very first day of India opening up the inoculation drive should eliminate any hesitancy from the minds of people about the vaccine, AIIMS chief Dr Randeep Guleria said.

He said AIIMS was informed about the prime minister's visit to the hospital to take the vaccine only late Sunday night.

"As it was a week day, he chose to come early in the morning so as not to cause any inconvenience to patients at the hospital," Guleria told PTI.

The AIIMS director said Modi took the shot around 6.30 am and was kept under observation for half-and-hour as per protocol and left after that. His second dose is due after 28 days

"He is fine after taking the vaccine," Guleria said.

Sister P Niveda, from Puducherry, administered the shot and was informed only in the morning.

She told reporters that the prime minister, after being administered the vaccine shot, remarked, "Laga bhi diya, pata bhi nahin chala (Already done? I didn't even feel it.)"

The other nurse, Rosamma Anil, is from Kerala and said it was the happiest day of her life.

"Because our Prime Minister Modiji came to our AIIMS hospital for taking vaccine," she said.

Elderly reluctant to register for vax fearing side effects...

Continued from Page 1

Special Officer for Covid-19 and Andhra Medical College Principal, P Sudhakar, said: "We can't deny that there is fear among the people. It was evident from Phase-I. I also took the Covid-19 jab and have been encouraging people to get inoculated.

However, some stray incidents of side effects are still in the minds of the people. We have to conduct awareness programmes too."

Apart from this, lack of awareness over registration and technical issues have

hampered the vaccination process for the elderly, and people with co-morbidities on Day-I of the second phase.

However, people in the age bracket of 45-59 are a bit enthusiastic to take the Covid-19 jab and are registering in the portal.

In AP, vaccination is being carried out in all the government hospitals and in about 546 private hospitals in 13 districts of AP.

Private hospitals have been asked to pay the amount beforehand to avail the vaccine vials from the health department.

Centre all charged up

Continued from Page 1

Bids were received in 800 MHz, 900 MHz, 1800 MHz, 2100 MHz and 2300 MHz bands, as players gave the prized 700 MHz band a miss on the first day of auctions.

"Total value of spectrum put to auction was about Rs 4 lakh crore. In this, 700 MHz band was a costly band, and that cost itself is Rs 1.97 lakh crore," the minister said adding that the government will take a call on 700 MHz band, used for 5G, in case it remains unsold.

Excluding 700 MHz and 2500 MHz bands, the bidding accounted for 60 per cent of the spectrum that was put to auction.

The 700 MHz band went unsold during the 2016 auctions, too. During 2016, when there were seven bidders, the spectrum sold was 41 per cent by quantity and 12 per cent by value of the total spectrum put to auction. The corresponding figures in the 2021 auction so far are 37 per cent and 19 per cent respectively, with three participants.

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₹ 72, 500 (1kg)	
₹ 800	
CHICKEN RATES ₹/kg	
Dressed/With Skin	₹168
Without Skin	₹191
Broiler at Farm	₹116
EGG RATES ₹/100	
HYDERABAD	405
VIJAYAWADA	393
VISAKHAPATNAM	505
RETAIL PRICE (HYDERABAD)	₹4. 05

POSCO-RINL had..

Continued from Page 1

The shore-based Visakhapatnam Steel Plant being run by RINL at Vizag has already augmented its production capacity from 3 million tonne to 6.3 million tonne, and subsequently to 7.3 million tonne with an investment of nearly Rs 17,000 crores.

Pursuant to the MoU, a Joint Working Group (JWG) has been formed for exchange of information between POSCO and RINL.

As per the MoU, POSCO wished to have at least 50 per cent shareholding while the shareholding of RINL would be worked out on the basis of valuation of RINL's in kind contribution of the land for setting up of the plant.

"The production capacity of the new plant may be expanded in stages subject to feasibility with mutual agreement. The final production capacity and facilities to be constructed and installed at the new plant will be mutually decided

by the parties (RINL & POSCO) taking the conditions of the site like size and shape into consideration," said the MoU.

While the initial offering by RINL was 1,167 acres of land for the new steel plant, the MoU said the Navaratna company will cooperate to offer an additional site within Vizag Steel Works, after obtaining the approval of the ministry of steel if request by POSCO after reviewing the facility layout of the new plant.

This additional offering would be subject to the availability of additional site. The valuation of the site will be conducted by an outside expert chosen by both the parties.

POSCO in the past had a failed attempt to set up a 12-million tonne steel plant in Odisha's Jagatsinghpur district with an investment of Rs 52,000 crore. The MoU inked in 2005 lapsed five years later due to environmental issues. It also tried to establish a plant in West Bengal in 2008.

Warrant issued ...

Continued from Page 1

The Andheri metropolitan magistrate's court issued a summons to Ranaut on February 1, directing her to appear before it on March 1.

However, Ranaut failed to appear on Monday following which Magistrate R R Khan issued a bailable warrant against her and posted the matter for further hearing on March 26.

A lawyer in the case had earlier informed March 22 as the next date of hearing.

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

Siddiquee said a petition would be filed in the Bombay

High Court challenging the process issued by the magistrate.

Akhtar's advocate Vrinda Grover, however, argued that even if the process is being challenged, Ranaut has to appear before the court as directed, in the absence of any stay on the summons by a higher court.

"It is the accused's right to appeal against the order, or even challenge the proceedings, that no one can deny and no one can stop, not even this court. However, she (Ranaut) has failed to comply with the order of this court and there is also no stay obtained from a higher court," the lawyer argued.

Grover then filed an application seeking a non-bailable warrant against the actor.

HC allows Varavara to give cash for bail

PNS ■ MUMBAI

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

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

Later, the activist, who is currently admitted in the Nanavati Hospital here since November last year, filed an

application in the HC to allow him to furnish cash surety to seek urgent release as the process of submitting solvent sureties was taking time.

A division bench of Justices S S Shinde and Manish Pitale on Monday allowed Rao to furnish a cash surety of Rs 50,000 and gave him time till April 5 to submit the two solvent sureties of the same amount.

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

On February 24, Rao filed the application seeking modification of the bail order and permission to deposit temporary cash bonds before the NIA court here, instead of the solvent sureties.

YSRCP's victory march will ...

Continued from Page 1

"Naidu is finding it difficult to even field candidates in municipal elections on the TDP party symbol," he said.

Sajjala said that Naidu was indulging in theatrics by staging a protest in Renigunta airport after Chittoor police detained him due to election code being in place and Covid protocol.

He recalled how Chief

Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy was detained at Visakhapatnam airport while on his way to join a protest demanding Special Category Status.

He said that the poll process is transparent, but it is Naidu who has been alleging that atrocities are taking place, just to mislead people. Sajjala said people are casting their votes for the YSRCP as they are impressed with Jagan's rule.

Summer to be relatively less ...

Continued from Page 1

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

According to IMD, season averaged maximum and min-

imum temperatures are likely to be below normal within - 0.14°C of climatological normals.

K Nagrathna, Director-IMD Hyderabad, said, "During March to May, below normal seasonal maximum temperatures (-0.140C with probability of below normal by 40% to 60%) are very likely to occur over most parts of Telangana. Below normal seasonal minimum temperatures (-0.060C

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

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



cadre, who seized the opportunity to go to town against the "injustice" meted out to their leader.

To make matters more complex, TDP leaders in Chittoor district had been earlier in the day placed under house arrest. This alone had the potential to make the situation volatile; Naidu's detention and subsequent dharna effectively gave the party cadre a strong weapon to attack the YSRCP with.

By the end of Naidu's impromptu protest, TDP cadre staged dharnas across the state.

Later, Naidu tweeted, "We will not be stopped, we'll not be silenced".

He also claimed that his phones, and those of his PA and medical officers were snatched away.

Naidu trying to make his presence felt: Peddireddy

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Criticising TDP Chief N Chandrababu Naidu for trying to disturb law and order in the State, Minister for Panchayat Raj Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy has appealed to TDP Chief N Chandrababu Naidu to withdraw from Renigunta Airport. He is trying to make his presence felt through his friendly media, he added.

Addressing a press conference here on Monday, the minister said that the TDP chief should have been aware that Model Code of Conduct (MCC) and Covid protocol were in place.

Creating a scene at the air-



port, with malafide theatrics, is only an attempt to divert the attention of people from TDP's debacle in panchayat polls, the minister said.

He clarified that no one had arrested Chandrababu Naidu

and the question of humiliation is irrelevant when compared to the restrictions imposed by the TDP Government on YS Jaganmohan Reddy during Special Status rally.

The police clearly explained about the election code which does not permit protests, he said.

There was no need for YSRCP to threaten TDP candidates as alleged by Naidu.

Our party candidates will win majority seats on the strength of welfare programmes being implemented by Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy. It was Chandrababu Naidu who was misleading the public for the

sake of defaming the YSRCP rule. In fact, it was the TDP that was unable to find candidates to contest elections, he added.

The Minister recalled how Chandrababu Naidu treated Jagan when he was in opposition and came to participate in a candlelight rally in support of Special Category Status detaining him on the runway of Visakhapatnam airport.

He stated that Chandrababu Naidu had toured his own constituency Kuppam after his defeat in the panchayat elections. He said that the results of the panchayat elections will be repeated in the municipal elections as well.

Forced withdrawals: SEC allows renominations

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

State Election Commissioner Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar on Monday has decided to provide an opportunity to the candidates, who claimed forced withdrawal of their nominations, to file renominations.

After carefully examining the reports received from the collectors and district election authorities with regard to forced withdrawal of nominations, the SEC has given opportunity to the candidates who claimed forcible withdrawal of their nominations during March 2020 for Tirupati municipal corporation, Punganur, Rayachoti municipalities and Erraguntla city panchayats.

In Tirupati Municipal Corporation, D Vimala, R Sadasiva, CN Saravana, A Munemmma, G Surya Kumari and A Chandra Mohan have been given opportunity file nominations again.

In Punganur municipality, S Munni, C Geethamma and B Chandra Kala, while in Rayachoti municipality, Kotte Venkatachalapathi and Kayanur Abdul Rahiman will file nominations again.

The nominations will be accepted till March 2 from 11 am to 3 pm and they will be scrutinised on March 2 after 3 pm. The candidates can withdraw their nominations till 3pm on March 3.



Vice-Admiral Ajendra Bahadur Singh takes charge as the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Naval Command from Vice-Admiral Atul Kumar Jain at Naval Base here on Monday.

Vice-Admiral Ajendra Bahadur Singh is new ENC chief

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Vice-Admiral Ajendra Bahadur Singh took over as the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief (FOC-in-C), Eastern Naval Command (ENC) from Vice-Admiral Atul Kumar Jain at an impressive Ceremonial Parade held at the Naval Base here on Monday.

Vice-Admiral AB Singh inspected the Ceremonial Guard and reviewed platoons of naval personnel drawn from various ships and establishments of the ENC. The ceremony was attended by all Flag Officers and Commanding Officers of ships, submarines and establishments.

Later, he also paid homage to martyrs who have made the supreme sacrifice in service of the nation, by laying a floral wreath at the War Memorial on Beach Road, Visakhapatnam.

Commissioned on July 1, 1983, Vice-Admiral Ajendra Bahadur Singh is an alumnus of the prestigious National

Defence Academy (NDA) Khadakvasla. A Navigation and Direction Specialist, he has held various operational staff and command appointments in his career spanning over 38 years.

The officer has excelled in all professional courses in India and abroad and received his first Masters from Madras University during the Staff Course, where he was awarded the Scudder Medal. The Flag Officer has also earned a Master's Degree in Global Security from Cranfield University, United Kingdom.

He has commanded Indian Naval Ships Veer, Vindhyagiri, Trishul and Viraat. He has rich operational experience of Op Pawan in Sri Lanka and Op Parakram on the Western Seaboard as the Fleet Navigating Officer of Western Fleet. He has also been the Chief of Staff at Western Naval Command during the period of intense Op activity in early 2019.

He has commanded the Eastern Fleet and is familiar

with the peculiarities of Eastern Seaboard and was closely associated with the response to Super Cyclone Hudhud in 2014.

As Principal Director and ACNS (Policy & Plans) at Naval HQ, he was closely associated with promulgation of Maritime Strategy, Transformation & Long Term capability development plan and Atmanirbhar shipbuilding roadmap of the Indian Navy.

The officer has a rich tri-service exposure in jointmanship during the tenures as instructor at NDA and DSSC Wellington, Deputy C-in-C at Strategic Forces Command and Deputy Chief (Operations & Training) at HQ IDS (prior to assuming Command of the Eastern Naval Command).

He is the first Alumnus of UP Sainik School to achieve the rank of Commander-in-Chief in the Indian Navy. For his distinguished service, he was awarded the Vishisht Seva Medal in 2011 and Ati Vishisht Seva Medal in 2016.

‘Naidu creating chaos in state’

VIJAYAWADA: YSRCP spokesperson and MLA Ambati Rambabu said that opposition leader Chandrababu Naidu was trying to create chaos, despite knowing that the election code was in force. He questioned as to what happened to the democracy he was talking about when Naidu stopped YSRCP leaders at Visakhapatnam airport runway, when there was no Covid or election code. Addressing a press conference here on Monday, he said that the police on Sunday had issued orders stipulating that protests were not allowed due to

election code, but Naidu ignored the police orders and staged a protest with malafide intentions. TDP activists lost faith in Chandrababu Naidu and are not coming forward to contest, he added. Brushing aside the allegations of TDP leaders that Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy has not been coming out for election campaign, Ambati Rambabu said that there was no need for the YSRCP candidates to rope in the Chief Minister for winning civic bodies/polls. The Chief Minister need not campaign for party candidates as good gover-

nance and welfare schemes speak a lot about YSRCP, he added. Chandrababu Naidu lost in Kuppam by securing only 14 seats. Hence, he toured Kuppam and apologised to people for ignoring them, he derided. Ambati Rambabu came down heavily on Chandrababu Naidu for trying to take law into his hands and violating democratic principles. He said that Chandrababu Naidu has been running a high drama at Renigunta with the support of his friendly media only to mislead people and gain sympathy.

Naidu returns to Hyderabad

VIJAYAWADA: The high-voltage drama at Renigunta airport came to an end with TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu taking a flight back to Hyderabad on Monday evening. After a long discussion, police advised Naidu to leave to Hyderabad as it was the last flight. Earlier, the police detained Naidu at Renigunta Airport as he had no permission to participate in a protest at Gandhi statue in Tirupati Bus Station centre. Naidu staged a sit-in in the lounge and even refused to drink water.

Senior auditor in ACB net

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A senior auditor working in the District Audit Officer in Kadapa district was caught red-handed while accepting bribe by the Anti Corruption Bureau officials on Monday.

The accused officer was identified as Abdul Zabbar, the senior auditor of district audit officer in Kadapa district.

According to the ACB DSP, one KP Venkataiah, a retired employee of Thuvvapalli village in Mydukur Mandal, Kadapa district, lodged a complaint with the ACB sleuths stating that S Abdul Zabbar demanded a bribe of Rs 5,000 for forwarding his pension and gratuity papers to the District Treasury Office, Kadapa, and to give a forwarded OC copy to the complainant.

The ACB sleuths laid a trap on Monday and caught Abdul Zabbar red-handed in his chamber while he was accepting the bribe amount from the complainant.



Thief tries to sell high-end TV for just Rs 500; held

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Chillakallu police arrested a person who was trying to sell a television set for Rs 500 at Gauravaram highway on Monday and recovered electronic goods worth Rs nine lakh from the culprit.

The police took him into custody for questioning as they grew suspicious when they found him selling a high-end television set for just Rs 500.

The accused, who is from Uttar Pradesh, confessed that he stole the TV from Yanamalakuduru village near

Vijayawada. He admitted that he stole the autrickshaw that was loaded with electronic goods at LG Showroom in Yanamalakuduru. He tried to sell the TV for Rs 500 to refuse the vehicle at Gouravaram village while travelling to Hyderabad.

Chillakallu police handed over the culprit and the electronic goods to Patamata Sub-Inspector Satyanarayana was tight-lipped to reveal any information about the incident.

Atchannaidu likens Jagan to Hitler, Mussolini

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP AP president K Atchannaidu on Monday demanded YSRCP leaders to publicly say whether or not his party supremo N Chandrababu Naidu has any right to tour the state and conduct public meetings.

Reminding that Naidu had served as Chief Minister of AP for over 14 years and has over 40 year of political standing, Atchannaidu said that YSRCP leaders have no right to create obstacles or try to block the tours of such a senior leader. “The common people are now beginning to have doubts whether they are living under jungle raj after the YSRCP came to power,” he said.

In a statement here, the TDP leader condemned the place of his party's leaders from Chittoor district under house arrest ahead of Naidu's tour to Tirupati. “With what



right have they arrested Opposition leaders, without assigning valid reasons?” Atchannaidu asked.

He accused YS Jaganmohan Reddy of behaving like Hitler and Mussolini with utter contempt towards democratic norms and ideologies. “The adamant Jaganmohan Reddy rule is pursuing an agenda of arrogance, dictatorship and political vendetta. Thousands of people were allowed to take part in rallies and meetings of caste associations but no permission was being given to

People are now beginning to have doubts whether they are living under jungle raj after the YSRCP came to power, says Atchannaidu

democratic protests of the Opposition leaders,” he said.

He asserted that the TDP agitation would not stop and the party would not be afraid if some of its leaders were placed under “false arrests”.

“The goondaism, misdeeds and oppression of the YSRCP leaders would be exposed in front of the public. It was only because of the rising unpopularity of Jaganmohan Reddy's rule that the YSRCP MLAs and leaders were unleashing oppression and threats on everybody,” Atchannaidu said.

College girl found in unconscious state with hands, legs tied

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A 20-year-old-girl, whose hands and legs were tied, was found in an unconscious state in a secluded place on the outskirts of Gurla in Vizianagaram district in the early hours on Monday.

The victim is not in a state to explain to the cops what happened to her.

Alerted by eyewitnesses, the Gurla police led by Sub-Inspector Neelavathi rescued the girl and rushed her to the government hospital in Vizianagaram Town.

The preliminary inquiry revealed that the girl belonged to the village under Terlam mandal in the district and she is a student

of a degree college in Vizianagaram.

The girl, according to police, is responding to the treatment and she is not in a position to explain what has happened exactly.

The Vizianagaram police chief B Raja Kumari also visited the spot and enquired about the health condition of the girl with the doctors of the hospital.

The clues team and dog squad have been deployed to gather clues. The police said they were waiting for the statement of the victim to intensify the investigation into the incident.

The police also visited the hometown of the victim to find out the reasons behind the incident.

Soft Tennis teams leave for Srinagar

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh soft tennis men and women teams have left for Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir, to participate in the 17th National Senior Soft Tennis Championship scheduled to be held from March 4 to 8.

Speaking on the occasion, Andhra Pradesh Soft Tennis Association general secretary D Naveen Kumar said the training camp was held from February 13 to February 28 for the selected players at Indira Gandhi Municipal Corporation Stadium.

He said that the champi-



onship was actually slated from March 27 to 31 last year but was postponed due to the

Covid pandemic.

Players representing the state are K Suhrudh Amru, P Surya

Akash, M Yudhir, S Veahith, N Kushal Vamsi, G Ajay Kumar and G Vijaya Kumar represent the men's team, while N Anusha, S Yasasvi, K Preethi Vardhini, P Yuthika, K Chaya, V Krishna Keerthana and G Kasturi represent women's team.

Y Siva Rama Krishna is the coach, while M Pradeep is the manager for both the teams. The players were handed over the sports-wear after the training camp.

President Valle Sreenu Babu, Treasurer Abdul Kareem and others congratulated the participants.

GYV Victor takes charge as DCIL MD, CEO

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

ProfDr GYV Victor assumes charge as MD and CEO of Dredging Corporation of India Limited, Visakhapatnam on Monday.

This is the first senior appointment after DCI came under the consortium of four ports - VPT, Paradip Port Trust, Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust and Deendayal Port Trust post a strategic divestment deal.

NTPC-Simhadri holds training programme for SHG women

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

NTPC-Simhadri, under CSR initiatives, is organising a 30-day training programme in tailoring for members of Self Help Groups of Vennelapalem to promote women empowerment through skill development.

The workshop was inaugurated by Seema Kaushik, President, Deepika Ladies Club, Deepanjaninagar.

Interacting with the participants, Seema Kaushik requested them to utilise the opportunity develop skills in tailoring though the programme and support their families.

She assured that the best participants who regularly attend the course and acquire the skill shall be rewarded after completion of the programme.

To promote entrepreneurial and enterprising spirit in

women, NTPC CSR shall also explore the possibilities of drawing market linkage for the products of Self Help Groups in Vennelapalem. As a part of the programme, tailoring tool kits were distributed to all 40 participants.

The programme was attended by Vennelapalem Sarpanch Vennela Apparao, panchayat secretary Vandana, local leaders and CSR team.

CII AP chapter gets new office-bearers

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Andhra Pradesh Chapter, has announced the appointment of new office-bearers for the year 2021-22.

Vijaynagar Biotech Pvt Ltd Executive Chairman Datla Tirupathi Raju has been elected as the Chairman of CII Andhra Pradesh State Council for the year 2021-22.

Tirupathi Raju did his Masters in Management from Dr Rajendra Prasad Institute of technology. He started his career with trading of chemicals, established poultry, steel re-rolling mills, cement grind-

ing, pesticide formulations, horticulture. Presently, he is executive chairman of the Vijaynagar biotech Private Limited. KCP Sugar and Industries Corporation Limited CEO G Venkateswara Rao, will be the Vice-Chairman of CII Andhra Pradesh for the year 2021-22. He holds M. Tech (Sugar Engineering) and joined in KCP Sugar and Industries Corporation Limited in 1992. He worked in various positions and presently holds the position of Chief Operating Officer. Venkateswara Rao received a National Energy Conservation Award in sugar sector from President of India.

Digitalisation helping industry to minimise Covid effect: Bizmen

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Industrial sector has shown greater resilience to recover from Covid-19 pandemic adopting a calibrated approach to fight against the pandemic, opined the experts in a panel discussion organised by Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Andhra Pradesh Chapter on Monday.

The theme was: Embracing the New Normal: Building Resilience & Emerging Opportunities: Lives, Livelihood and Growth.

Addressing the conference through virtual mode, B Santhanam, CMD, Saint-Gobain India Pvt Ltd, stated that Covid has posed a challenge to businesses with the imposition of lockdown. However, Industry could

manage business by focusing on survival with adequate safety measures. In fact, he said that industry has adopted a calibrated approach to fight against the pandemic.

Digitalisation has been increasingly adopted across various industry verticals to minimise the impact of lockdown on industry. In this context, he highlighted that innovation became vital for industry and offers immense opportunities for industry.

He pointed out that aspire, digitalise, accelerate and transform became common phenomena in post-Covid scenario. It indeed necessary to survive, revive and thrive now, he added.

Ravindra Sannareddy, Managing Director, Sri City (P) Ltd, addressing the confer-



ence through virtual mode, said that saving the life was paramount importance in the initial phase of Covid. After restart of operations, livelihood and economic growth became vital, he observed.

With the announcement of Atma Nirbhar Bharat package by Central Government, industry has advantage in building required capabilities for domestic manufacturing, he added.

Moderating the panel discussion on 'Building the Resilience & Sector Focus in Andhra Pradesh', Shivaprasad Raja, Partner, Boston Consulting Group stated that Andhra Pradesh has the advantage of having the longest coastline which offers immense opportunities for industry.

Sharing perspective from Heavy Industry Vijay Subramanian, Site Managing

Director, Alstom Transport, Sricity, said that they could address manufacturing and supply chain bottlenecks by taking required precautions during lockdown. Designing functional abilities was a challenge, he added.

Sharing a perspective from the primary sector, Saurabh Lal, Director - Supply Chain, India & South Asia, Kellogg India, pointed out there was a shift in demand pattern in post-covid scenario.

D Ramakrishna, Managing Director, Efftronics Systems Pvt. Ltd, in his address, said that artificial intelligence and mission learning plays vital role in easing the operations of industry in the coming days.

He advocated for curriculum reforms in educa-

tional institutions as per the requirement of the industry. Sharing perspective from the IT sector Shiva Prasad, Global Operations Director & Centre Head, Vijayawada, HCL Technologies, said that Andhra Pradesh has the required human resources with talent for establishing IT companies in the state.

Sharing perspective from infrastructure, Sreedhar Potthukuchi, Vice-President GMR Group, said that half of the east coast is located in Andhra Pradesh.

This could be a major advantage for industry, he felt. With North-South Industrial corridors passing through Andhra Pradesh, industry has ample opportunities, he said.

CM GREETHS HC CJ



Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Reddy giving a bouquet to Chief Justice Hima Kohli in Hyderabad on Monday

TRS pushed state into debt trap, alleges Uttam

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Membership drive: Minister, MLAs face wrath of KTR

K VENKATESHWARLU ■ HYDERABAD

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

KTR had a meeting with the

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

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

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

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

'Family role vital in curbing addiction'

PNS ■ PEDDAPALLI

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

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

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

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

Mobile towers in Telangana safe: DoT

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Legislative Houses lost sheen in TRS' tenure, says Kishan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

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

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

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

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

He questioned the govern-



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

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

Sharmila likely to announce party name on April 9

PNS ■ HYDERABAD



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

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

'Radiation plays a major role in healthcare'

■ Science Day celebrated at GITAM

PNS ■ PATANCHERU

GITAM Deemed-to-be University, Hyderabad, celebrated the National Science Day on Monday to commemorate the invention of the Raman Effect by the Indian physicist and Nobel Laureate Sir CV Raman. The event was celebrated in the presence of the students, award winners, research scholars, faculty and the functionaries of the institute.

Dr Meera Venkatesh, former Director, Physical and Chemical Sciences, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), delivering the guest lecture on 'Radiation: Unique role in healthcare' said that radiation is used in several ways in healthcare from diagnosis to therapy and from radiation sterilisation to producing novel materials.

A large number of specialties were involved in the development and deployment of radiation-based products, she said. In a nutshell, Dr Meera explained that reactor Dhruva-BARC producing several



radionuclides for healthcare, 20 Med Cyclotrons, 350 Nuclear Medicine Centres and X-Ray & CT Scan centres have been catering to the needs of the patients.

While responding to a query, she made it clear that they can't carry nuclear medicine systems like a tool kit. She cautioned that brain cancer in the world is on the rise. Meera advised students not to keep the mobile under a pillow and one should

be careful while using such radiation-emitting gadgets.

Vice-Chancellor Prof K Siva Ramakrishna calls upon the students to think differently. Prof N Siva Prasad, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, DVVSR Varma, Resident Director, Prof A Subrahmanyam, Dean, Sciences, Prof GA Rama Rao, Principal, School of Science, Prof N Seetaramaiah, Principal, School of Technology, also took part in the Science Day celebrations.

Cong to fight till last job vacancy is filled

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

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

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

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

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

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

Owaisi urges people to take Covid jab

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

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

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

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

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

Keesara temple decked up for Shivaratri Brahmotsavams

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

PNS ■ MEDCHAL

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

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

District Collector Swetha

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

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

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

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



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



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

SEAT-SHARING TALKS WITH AIADMK

Our aim is to ensure victory: TN BJP chief

PNS ■ CHENNAI

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

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

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

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



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

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

INDIA CORNER

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

Amid speculation of a tie-up with the Trinamool Congress for the upcoming West Bengal assembly elections, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav on Monday met TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee. Yadav, who led the RJD in its fight against the NDA in the Bihar elections, went to state secretariat Nabanna to meet Banerjee, also the chief minister. Senior TMC leader and Urban Development Minister Firhad Hakim also joined the meeting.



Whistleblower Prof's student finally gets PhD from IIT

A six years struggle for IIT Kharagpur scholar Mahesh Shirole ended recently when he was awarded a PhD degree after repeated rejections of his doctorate thesis since January 2015, his supervisor said. Shirole and Professor Rajeev Kumar had been approaching different authorities, including the office of the President of India, against the denial of PhD. The president is the Visitor to the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kharagpur among other central institutes. "I am happy that Mahesh Shirole has got a PhD degree after six years of battle with the IIT Kharagpur and the Ministry of Education," Kumar, who is Shirole's supervisor and is now a professor in the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) here, said. Kumar, a former professor of the computer science and engineering department at IIT Kharagpur, said that Shirole could get his hard-earned degree only due to the intervention of the Visitor and direction from the concerned education ministry. "It is better to be late than never," he told PTI. Shirole was awarded PhD in the 66th convocation of the institute, which was held virtually on Tuesday last week.



PDP workers stage protest in Jammu against fuel price hike

Dozens of PDP leaders and workers staged a protest here on Monday against the BJP-led central government over the rising fuel prices and the proposed property tax on the people in Jammu and Kashmir, officials said. Police blocked the Dogra chowk here and did not allow the activists of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to take out a rally, they said. The protesters, who were carrying party flags and shouting anti-BJP slogans, later dispersed peacefully, officials said. Earlier, the PDP activists assembled near the Press Club near Dogra chowk and staged a demonstration against Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government for rising prices of essential commodities, especially petrol, diesel and LPG. "The BJP government is anti-poor and pro-capitalist... It has broken the backbone of the commoners by its anti-people policies and dictatorial attitude," PDP leader Pervaz Waffa said. Prominent party leaders who participated in the protest include Rajinder Manhas, R K Bali, Narinder Singh and Sardar V S Sonu.



Woman beaten up to treat her infertility, say police

A 33-year-old woman died of alleged torture by an exorcist who branded her body, including private parts, with hot iron tongs and beat her up with a lathi purportedly to treat her infertility, police said on Monday. Victim Sharda Devi of the Karnhara village of the district was admitted to the hospital on February 27, three days after being tortured, and died on Sunday during treatment, Puwayan Circle Officer Navneet Naik said. Saharda was married to Sarvesh of Karnhara village but the couple did not have any child, said Naik, adding that on her husband's insistence, she took the help of her brother-in-law Durvesh who also practised exorcism. Durvesh convinced the family that Sharda was under the influence of a witch and needed to be beaten up to be rid of the evil spirit. Accordingly, Durvesh allegedly first branded various parts of the woman's body, including the private ones, with hot iron tongs on February 24 and as she cried out of pain, he brutally beat her up with a lathi, saying all the pain is being inflicted to the witch, said police. Following the woman's death, an FIR was lodged in Puwayan police station against five persons, including the exorcist, on her parents' complaint.



Farmers should get more avenues to sell crops: PM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

Addressing a webinar on

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

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

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

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

Restrictions had a negative impact on the sector, he added.

While the Modi govern-

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

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

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

Only fraction of GST dues paid: Maha Guv

PNS ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

Punjab Assembly pays tributes to farmers

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

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

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

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

Modi greets Nitish Kumar on his 70th birthday

PNS ■ PATNA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi extended birthday greetings to Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar who turned 70 on Monday.

"Best wishes to Bihar CM @NitishKumarji on his birthday. Under his leadership the NDA government in Bihar is taking numerous steps for developing the state. Praying for his long and healthy life," Modi tweeted.

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

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



Assembly Speaker Vijay Kumar Sinha read out a statement on the floor of the House.

Kumar was also greeted, on behalf of the opposition, by RJD MLA and chief spokesman Bhai Virendra.

The leader of the opposition, Tejashwi Yadav, who is away canvassing for the RJD in poll-bound Assam and West Bengal, also came out with a tweet greeting the chief minister on his birthday.

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

Kumar's close aide and minister Ashok Choudhary has planned the plantation of 70 saplings at his official residence, as a mark of respect for the chief minister's enthusiasm for environmental preservation.

Man held in Odisha for raping 3-year-old

PNS ■ BHAWANIPATNA (ODISHA)

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

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

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

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



condition deteriorated. Doctors at the government hospital referred her to VSS Medical College, Burla, the officer said.

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

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

BJP leaders write to Kolkata police

PNS ■ KOLKATA

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

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

Prashant Kishor is principal advisor to Punjab CM

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

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

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

Kishor had handled the Congress party's poll campaign in Punjab in the 2017



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

‘Warming will increase frequency of flash droughts’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

According to the researchers, flash droughts occur due to rapid depletion of soil moisture.

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

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



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

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

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

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

rent hot and dry extremes, the researchers explained, is projected to rise by about five-fold, causing approximately seven-fold increase in flash droughts like 1979 by the end of the 21st century.

"We find that flash droughts in India are caused by the monsoon breaks or delayed monsoon and the number of flash droughts will increase in the future," said Vimal Mishra, Associate Professor of Civil Engineering at IIT Gandhinagar.

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

Taming the virus

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

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

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



A mural depicting Pope Francis in Baghdad, Iraq

Beware of Pak's softening stand

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

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

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

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

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



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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

HAIL INDIA'S VACCINATION DRIVE

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

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

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

CK Ramani | Mumbai

PINK-BALL TEST MATCH MAGIC

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

Win-win situation for India, Pak



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

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

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

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

P Senthil | Mumbai

SOUND BITE

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

Delhi Health Minister
—Satyendar Jain

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

American President
—Joe Biden

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

Actor
—Vijayendra Kumeria

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


Former Australia captain
—Steve Waugh

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

UP Chief Minister
—Yogi Adityanath


FIRST COLUMN

MANY FORTUNES AT STAKE



KALYANI SHANKAR

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



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

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

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

CPSU privatisation an uphill task

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

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

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

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

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



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

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



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

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

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

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

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

realisation from every sale.

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

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

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

POINT COUNTERPOINT

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



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



AI making a place for itself in modern healthcare

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



KM CHERIAN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



patients and medical personnel.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

With the potential application of AI within the

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

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

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



Sensex soars 750 pts as investors cheer GDP data

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

PNS ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

Of the Sensex constituents, 29 closed with gains.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

MONEY MATTERS

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



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

BOC Aviation inks pact with IndiGo for A320 neo planes



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

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



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

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



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

Manufacturing activities ease; firms upbeat on demand spike

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

"However, many hope that such controls will shortly be

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

5F World invests undisclosed amount in InnoServ

PNS ■ PUNE

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

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

Commenting on the devel-

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

Poor offtake, high pithead stock hurting Coal India

PNS ■ KOLKATA

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

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

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

when it reported a drop of 4.1 per cent.

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

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

HDFC Sec says tech glitch resolved; mkt ops normal

PNS ■ MUMBAI/NEW DELHI

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

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



find out the root cause.

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

Gold price rises Rs 241; silver jumps Rs 781

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

HDFC Securities Senior

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

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

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

world Shares rise on hopes for US stimulus

PNS ■ TOKYO

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

started in most Asian nations.

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

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

ALIA BHATT ANNOUNCES HER OWN PRODUCTION HOUSE



Actor Alia Bhatt is also a producer now! *The Student Of The Year* actress has launched her own production company called Eternal Sunshine Productions, and hopes to make 'happy films under her banner.'

Sharing the news, Alia wrote: "And I am so happy to announce.... PRODUCTION!! Eternal Sunshine Productions. Let us tell you tales. Happy tales. Warm and fuzzy tales. Real tales. Timeless tales. @eternal-sunshineproduction." She also shared the logo of her production house.

A number of her industry friends reacted to the news. Filmmaker and her mentor Karan Johar wrote: "You go girl." Her mother and actor Soni Razdan said: "Congratulations! Super duper proud." Celebrity

diet and fitness consultant Rujuta Diwekar said: "You go girl!! Congrats!!" Rakul Preet Singh and Zoya Akhtar both wrote "congratulations" followed by heart emojis.

Last week, the makers of Alia's next film, *Gangubai Kathiawadi*, dropped the first teaser of the film. Playing the titular role of Gangubai, Alia was a smash hit. The film will chronicle the life of 1960s brothel owner Gangubai Kothewali of Kamathipura, Mumbai. The film is based on a chapter from Hussain Zaidi's book *Mafia Queens of Mumbai*, about Gangubai Kothewali.

Not only did her contemporaries lavish praise on her performance, her fans, too, lapped it up.

Jane Fonda urges Hollywood to get 'in step' with elevating diverse voices

Jane Fonda was not short for words at the 2021 Golden Globe Awards. The longtime actress and activist, 83, took the stage and accepted the Cecil B. DeMille award on February 28, where she delivered an impassioned speech. The actress stepped onto the stage in a bold white suit, and her words resonated with everyone in the limited audience. "I'm so moved to receive this honour," Jane humbly began. "We are a community of storytellers and in turbulent times like these, storytelling has always been essential."

The star highlighted the incredible films

from 2020, and how they enlightened her to experiences of people and stories across the globe. But Jane was also very thoughtful about the need for inclusion in the industry moving forward. "So, let's all of us...let's all of us make an effort to expand that tent so that everyone rises and that everyone's story has a chance to be seen and heard." Jane also encouraged her contemporaries to be "in step with the emerging diversity that's happening, because of all those who marched and fought in the past." In closing her speech, Jane told Hollywood to "be leaders" and active agents of change. Jane joins an elite group of artists with her Cecil B. DeMille honour, named after the famed Hollywood filmmaker who directed films like *The Ten Commandments* (1956), Best Picture winner *Greatest Show On Earth* (1952), and *Samson and Delilah* (1949),

among others. Last year, the award was presented to actor Tom Hanks, who lovingly dedicated his speech to his family and the humble beginnings of his career. Other past recipients include Oprah Winfrey, Jeff Bridges, Meryl Streep and more.

The actress is already a decorated veteran of Hollywood, with two Academy Awards and five Golden Globe Awards, among other honors. The daughter of the late venerated actor Henry Fonda, Jane began acting in her early 20s and earned her first Academy Award nomination in 1970 for the 1969 motion picture *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* She starred alongside her own father in the 1981 film *On Golden Pond*, Henry Fonda's last film for which he and his daughter were nominated for Academy Award recognition, with Henry winning the Oscar for Best Actor in a Leading Role



MAN UP: RHEA CHAKRABORTY MAKES A FRESH STATEMENT AFTER 'LET'S SMASH THE PATRIARCHY'

Actor Rhea Chakraborty was spotted with her family at the Mumbai airport on Sunday, wearing a hoodie with the slogan 'Man up' printed on it. Rhea is currently out on bail in a drugs-related case, connected to the death of her boyfriend, Sushant Singh Rajput. Rhea's hoodie is by Anusha Dandekar and Karan Kundrra's label, Man Up Woman Up. Rhea has slowly been returning to public life after being accused by Sushant's family

of abetment to suicide last year. Rhea spent nearly a month in jail before being released on bail. Last month, she was involved in a new controversy, when her name and likeness was erased from all promotional material for the upcoming film *Chehre*.

The film, which also stars Emraan Hashmi and Amitabh Bachchan, will be released on April 30 in theatres. "No comment," was the official response to queries to the film's publicity team about Rhea's absence.



CHADWICK BOSEMAN'S WIFE ACCEPTS HIS GOLDEN GLOBE IN TEARS

In a sorrowful yet oddly joyous moment, Chadwick Boseman was named the winner of the Lead Actor in a Motion Picture, Drama category at the 2021 Golden Globes. The nomination was his first, and sadly to be his only, from the Hollywood Foreign Press Assn., as the young actor tragically died last summer at just 43 years old, after a 4-year battle with colon cancer. Shortly after his passing, he lit up the screen as Levee, a gifted but troubled trumpet player in Netflix's *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, the role he posthumously won for.

In his absence, his wife and long-time love Taylor Simone Ledward accepted the award on his behalf from her home. Through tears, she tried to give a voice to her husband and say what she thought he would say if he were still with us. "He would thank God," she said. "He would thank his parents. He would thank his ancestors for their guidance and sacrifices." She went on to thank members of his team, both on his personal team and



the team that worked with him on the Netflix film.

Chadwick Boseman wins posthumously for his final performance in *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* and his wife accepted on his behalf. (NBC)

As she spoke, she continued to break, and it was clear her words had an affect on others as well. She thanked his fellow *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* co-stars, like Viola Davis, who was also seen crying from her own home. She then added, "He would say




something beautiful, something inspiring, something that would amplify that little voice that tells you can, that tells you to keep going, that calls you back to what you are meant to be doing at this moment in history." She ended with a note to her man: "Hun, you keep's coming."

When Chadwick passed away in August 2020, it was revealed in the family's official statement that Taylor Simone was with him "by his side," along with his family when he died. Though he never publicly revealed his battle, Chadwick was diagnosed with stage III colon cancer in 2016. Chadwick and Taylor Simone were equally private about their relationship. They were very infrequently seen out together, their last red carpet appearance was in Nov. 2019 at the premiere of Chadwick's film *21 Bridges* in New York City.




Chadwick starred in eight films during his 4 year battle with cancer, including *Ma Rainey*, *Da 5 Bloods*, and *Marshall*. He also starred as T'Challa in the final Avengers films, and the stand alone, *Black Panther*.

FUN




ARCHIE



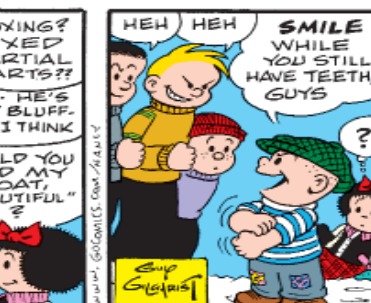


CALVIN AND HOBBS






GARFIELD



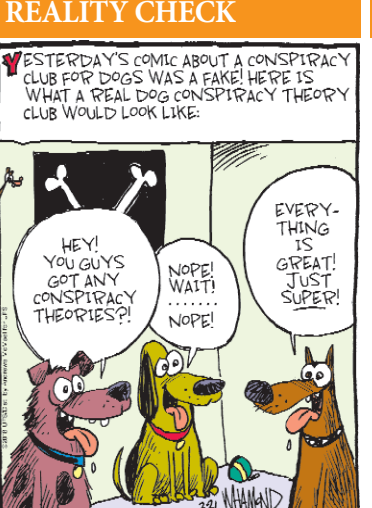
NANCY




GINGER MEGGS



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4		
5					6
7			8		
9				10	
11					
12	13		14		15
16					
17				18	
19					

ACROSS

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

DOWN

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

SOLUTION

1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24

SUDOKU


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


Yesterday's solution


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


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.














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



AI IN AGRICULTURE: THE NEW HELPING HAND

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



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



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

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

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

Frozen to give you the chills

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

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



Celebrating Hyderabad's street food

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

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



Building the author-reader relationship

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

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

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



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

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

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



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

India’s top guns go full throttle at nets

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

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

The fourth Test starts here on Thursday.

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

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

bowlers and spinners at the Narendra Modi Stadium here.

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

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

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

Eng didn’t prepare well for spin challenge: Richards

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

side of the coin guys.

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

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

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

to encounter.

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

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

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

England appoint Trescothick as batting coach

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

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

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

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

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

PTI

Maxi eager to learn from Kohli



PTI ■ WELLINGTON

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

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

‘Virat is like modern day hero’

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

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

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

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

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

“What they love about Kohli is that it’s like the new attitude of India, get stuck in, don’t be intimidated. Take everything on and anything is achievable and possible. But he’s like the modern-day hero,” Waugh was quoted as saying in a media release after the launch of the documentary.

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

Mumbai trounce HP by 200 runs

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

PTI ■ JAIPUR

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Himachal attack with ease.

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

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

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

SAURASHTRA IN Q/F

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

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

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

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

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

U’KHAND PIP ASSAM

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

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

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

Reds answer critics with win

AFP ■ SHEFFIELD

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

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

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

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

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



he lost his father this week.

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

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

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

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

Milan back on track

AFP ■ ROME

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

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

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

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

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

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

over a year,” said Pioli.

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



Atlético keep rivals at bay

AFP ■ VILLARREAL

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

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

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

two very strange weeks.”

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



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

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

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

sit just a point behind Roma in sixth.

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

half an hour for his 131st Napoli goal.

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

ANAND DEVERAKONDA'S NEXT TITLED *PUSHPAKA VIMANAM*



Actor Anand Deverakonda who made his debut in the Telugu film industry through *Dorasani*, has gained his own fan base for the kind of roles he plays.

Post the success of *Middle Class Melodies*, the actor is eyeing realistic roles that are easier for his audiences to connect to.

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

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

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

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

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

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

ADAH MORE COMFORTABLE AROUND ANIMALS THAN HUMANS

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

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

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

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



A COMRADE MOMENT FOR CHARAN

Ram Charan is living the dream of working with his father and Megastar Chiranjeevi for the upcoming mega-budget movie titled, *Acharya*. The film has been the talk of the town since its inception as the

father-son duo will be sharing the screen space. Director Siva Koratala took to Twitter and shared a glimpse of Ram Charan's look as Siddha with Chiranjeevi's hand on his shoulder. The new still from the film has taken social media by storm.

Overwhelmed by the experience of acting with his dad, Ram Charan took to social media to share his joy. He posted a picture of his

father placing his hand on his shoulder. "A Comrade moment! Enjoying every moment with Dad and Koratala Siva on *Acharya* sets," he wrote. *Acharya*, which also stars Kajal Aggarwal in the female lead role is set to release on May 13. Ram Charan and Niranjan Reddy are jointly producing the film under Konidela Production Company and Matinee Entertainment. Mani Sharma is scoring the music.



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

Romantic that will see director Puri Jagannadh's son Akash

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

just a spectator, he's a family member."

Actress Hemmel added, "Thanks to the visionary producers who gave me this opportunity and trusted me with this film. Making this film was a joy ride."

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



Saranga Dariya from *Love Story* wins hearts

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

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

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

Master's second collaboration with Sai Pallavi and director Sekhar Kammula after their chartbuster *Vachchinde* from *Fidaa*.

The film is slated to hit screens on April 16.

