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FOR BETTER LIVES**MONEY 8**
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TOP CONCERNS FOR BANKS**SPORTS 11**
SUNDAR CAN PERFORM ROLE I USED
TO PLAY FOR INDIA: SHASTRI

VIJAYAWADA, MONDAY MARCH 8, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3

the pioneer

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MITHUN CHAKRABORTY JOINS BJP AHEAD OF PM'S RALLY IN KOLKATA

Veteran actor Mithun Chakraborty joined the BJP on Sunday at Brigade Parade Ground here, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to address a rally later in the day. Chakraborty was welcomed into the party fold by BJP national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya and state party chief Dilip Ghosh among others. RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat had met the actor at his Mumbai residence last month setting off speculation that he might join the BJP. Chakraborty, a former Rajya Sabha member of the TMC, had quit the Upper House in 2016 after his name surfaced in Saradha Ponzi scam.



COUNTRY'S FIRST FOREST HEALING CENTRE COMES UP IN U'KHAND

The country's first forest healing centre based on the concept of making people healthy by bringing them into direct contact with nature was opened to the public on Sunday at Kalika near Ranikhet, an official said. Signboards on either side of its sloped entrance advise visitors to hug trees, walk barefoot on the grass, lie on their back and gaze at the swaying trees or the ever changing sky above to soothe their senses. Cute little wooden structures called tree platforms have been built for the purpose of providing visitors a perfectly natural ambience to meditate.



ROWDY' INDIAN PASSENGER FORCES PLANE TO MAKE EMERGENCY LANDING

A rowdy Indian passenger on board an Air France flight from Ghana via Paris to New Delhi forced the plane to make an emergency landing at Bulgaria's capital here, according to a media report. The Indian national, whose identity was not made public, has been detained for 72 hours, Bulgarian News Agency BTA quoted Sofia City Prosecutor Iliana Kirilova as saying on Saturday. After the troublemaker's detention, the flight proceeded to its destination, he said. The Indian has been charged with endangering the safety of an aircraft while airborne, said Ivailo Angelov of the National Investigation Service. If convicted, he faces from 5 to 10 years' imprisonment, the report said.



READY TO TAKE UP ANY TASK, SAYS 'METROMAN' SREEDHARAN

Metroman' E Sreedharan on Sunday said he was ready to take up any responsibility given to him by the BJP, which he had recently joined. Speaking at a rally attended by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, at nearby Shangumugham, Sreedharan said he wanted to utilise his energy for the state of Kerala. "For the last 67 years I was a government servant. Many people have asked me why I ventured into politics after these many years. For 67 years, I worked as part of many projects for this country." "I am still energetic and want to utilise my energy for the state of Kerala."

**Re-invention, resilience
and research give India
edge**

5

RINL expects Rs 1,000 cr from sale of 22-acre land in Vizag

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned RINL expects to garner Rs 1,000 crore from the sale of its 22.19 acre land located in the heart of Visakhapatnam city, a popular tourist destination in Andhra Pradesh.

On Thursday, state-run construction company NBCC had announced signing an MoU with Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Ltd (RINL) for redevelopment and monetisation of its 22.19 acres of land in Visakhapatnam.

"The company expects to get around Rs 1,000 crore as the market price of land is around Rs 1 lakh per square yard. The amount raised would be utilised to pay back portion of debt of the company," a source in the company said.

According to available data on RINL's website, the company had a net debt of Rs 19,592 crore in financial year 2018-19.



The company without any captive iron ore mine produces over 19,000 tonne of hot metal per day from its three fully operational blast furnaces at the plant.

The per tonne steel production

cost of a company with captive iron ore and coking mine is less compared to a steel maker buying raw materials from the open market, an expert said.

Sharing details with respect to

the land parcel, the source said it is at Maddilapalem which is a prime location situated about 3 to 4 km from the beach. NH-16 which connects Howrah in West Bengal to Chennai in Tamil Nadu passes at a distance of about 2 km from the site. Besides, the land is in the proximity of tourist attractions like zoo, Simhachalam temple, stadium etc.

However, the value of the project would be ascertained after the preparation and finalisation of a Detailed Project Report (DPR). NBCC would conduct the DPR and submit it to RINL.

The redevelopment and monetisation would be undertaken on a self-sustainable model.

RINL, under the Ministry of Steel, owns and operates a 7.3 million tonne steel plant in Visakhapatnam. It is the country's first shore-based integrated steel plant producing special steel products.

Junk old car and get about 5% rebate on new car: Gadkari

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

There is good news for consumers who are going to junk their old vehicles and buy a new one under the Vehicle Scrapping Policy as automakers will give about 5 per cent rebate on the new purchase, Union minister Nitin Gadkari has said.

The voluntary vehicle scrapping policy announced in the Union Budget for 2021-22 provides for fitness test after 20 years for personal vehicles while commercial vehicles would require it after the completion of 15 years.

"Automobile manufacturers will provide about 5 per cent rebate on new car purchases" to the consumers in lieu of scrapping of the old, Road Transport, Highways and MSMEs Minister Gadkari told PTI.

"There are four major components of the policy... Apart from

rebate, there are provisions of green taxes and other levies on old polluting vehicles. These will be required to undergo mandatory fitness and pollution tests in automated facilities. For this automated fitness centres would be required through out in the country and we are working in that direction," Gadkari said.

Automated fitness tests will be set up under public private partnership (PPP) mode while the government will assist private partners and state governments for scrapping centres, he said.

Driving such vehicles that fail to pass automated tests will attract huge penalties and also be impounded, the minister said.

This policy is going to be a boon for the automobile sector, making it one of the most profitable sectors which in turn would generate huge employment, the minister said.

2

**Naidu provoking
Vijayawada people,
says Nani**

3

No electioneering: SEC to resource persons

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The State Election Commission on Sunday directed all the Resource Persons (RPs) and Community Resource Persons (CRPs) working in urban local bodies not to indulge in electioneering or campaigning in favour of any party/person.

They shall not be involved in the distribution of authenticated photo voter slips to voters.

The decision came in the wake of many instances that came to the notice of the State Election Commission that the Resource Persons and Community Resource Persons working in Mission for Elimination of Poverty in Municipal Areas (MEPMA) are participating in the electioneering or campaigning in certain areas in violation of the provisions of Model code of Conduct.

The SEC has further warned all the RPs and CRPs of serious disciplinary action if they violated the directions issued by the commission.

Banks slash home loan rates to decadal lows

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Flushed with excess liquidity as general credit demand still way below the desired levels, leading home loan players State Bank of India, HDFC, ICICI Bank and Kotak Mahindra Bank have slashed their rates to a decadal low, leaving consumers spoilt for choices.

The interest rate war comes as banks are sitting on huge excess liquidity which as of last week was over Rs 6.5 lakh crore, according to Care Ratings. Excess liquidity is a drag on the banks bottomlines as they have to pay interest to depositors which is as low as 2.5 per cent now, though.

The rate war also comes on the back of continuous prodding by the monetary authority which has slashed the repo rates by a whopping 200 bps since March 2020 to 4 per cent to help revive the economy ravaged by the pandemic, but still credit demand remains under 6 per cent.

According to the RBI data, home loan growth decelerated in FY21 due to the pandemic, though the decline in fact began in March 2020. From 17.5 per cent in January 2020, home loan growth halved to 7.7 per cent in January 2021.

For banks, housing loans are safe bets in the current scenario as the risk of default is minimal with a gross NPA of just 0.67 per cent for SBI which leads the market and for HDFC too this NPA is under 1 per cent.

Banks are hoping that the nascent economic recovery will lead to more home purchases, which has been faltering since last March. With corporates demand still a far cry and down in the dumps from an NPA point of view, for banks the biggest reason to push home loan is its risk-free nature. Unlike personal loans, housing loans involve a collateral. In case of default, banks can seize the asset and auction it off.

2

Naidu loses cool, curses people during road show in Vijayawada

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Leader of the Opposition N Chandrababu Naidu lost his cool and took out all his frustration and ire on the people during the road-show in Vijayawada on Sunday. As part of the election campaign for the upcoming Municipal Corporation elections slated on March 10, Naidu accused the people of being ever ready to migrate to the neighbouring state in search of work, but least bothered to save the capital Amaravati.

Naidu said that at least one person from every house should come forward to fight for the cause of continuing Amaravati as the state capital. "Amaravati is not for me. It's for the people," said Naidu recalling that farmers gave their land for building the state capital. The people of Vijayawada should move ahead with a clear plan and fight for Amaravati. He said the fight to save Amaravati as the only state capital was a people's fight.

Questioning the motive of the people of Vijayawada, Naidu said



Amaravati and Pattisima were for the people, but the same people lacked in masculinity even after drinking the water of Pattisima. He said that the people did not have commitment and were behaving without sense.

Naidu said that the time had come to ask the people as to why they were not bothered about these issues, which were visible to everyone.

A visibly frustrated Naidu said take Rs 2,000 and cast your vote in favour of YSRCP and lead a life of slavery.

Naidu further lamented that the one who sold coconut shells was a Minister for Endowments and Kanaka Durga at that even the Goddess Kanaka Durga atop Indrakeeladri was stinking of corruption.

Fuming at the gathering, he said, "Don't you get angry over the illegal things happening in the sacred Durga temple damaging the sanctity of the temple?" You cannot open your eyes until Goddess Durga will open her eyes in anger, he said.

'NOMINATIONS WITHDRAWN WITH FORGED SIGNATURES'

AP High Court seeks explanation from SEC

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The AP High Court took up the House Motion Petition filed by the Chittoor TDP candidates seeking a stay of the polls stating that the nominations of the TDP candidates in 18 divisions were withdrawn with forged signatures.

Senior counsel for the petitioners Dammalapati Srinivas presented his arguments on Sunday morning.

Following the arguments, the case was adjourned to Monday post-lunch seeking an explanation from the State Election Commission on the issue. The High Court will hear the arguments in the case related to the seventh ward Tirupati again at 2:15 pm on Monday, March 8.

Earlier on Saturday, the TDP candidates from Chittoor filed a



petition in the High Court seeking orders to stop the ongoing municipal elections in Chittoor. In all, 18 TDP candidates from Chittoor filed a house motion petitions in AP High Court stating that their nominations were withdrawn with forged signatures. The TDP contestants requested the High Court to cancel the Chittoor municipal elections.

'Covid vaccine by India has 'rescued the world'

PNS ■ HOUSTON

The rollout of the COVID-19 vaccines by India in collaboration with leading global institutions has "rescued the world" from the deadly coronavirus and the contributions by the country must not be underestimated, a top American scientist has said.

India is called the pharmacy of the world during the COVID-19 pandemic with its vast experience and deep knowledge in medicine. The country is one of the world's biggest drug-makers and an increasing number of countries have already approached it for procuring coronavirus vaccines.

Dr Peter Hotez, Dean of the National School of Tropical Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine (BCM) in Houston during a recent webinar said that the two mRNA vaccines may not impact the world's low and middle income countries, but India's vaccines, made in collaboration with universities across the world such as BCM and the Oxford University,



have rescued the world and its contributions must not be underestimated.

During the webinar, COVID-19: Vaccination and Potential Return to Normalcy - If and When, Dr Hotez, an internationally-recognized physician-scientist in neglected tropical diseases and vaccine development, said that the COVID-19 vaccine rollout is "India's gift" to the world in combating the virus.

India's drugs regulator gave emergency use authorisation to

Covishield, produced by Pune-based Serum Institute of India after securing licence from British pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca, and Covaxin, indigenously developed jointly by Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech and Indian Council of Medical Research scientists.

The webinar was organised by Indo American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Houston (IACCGH).

This is something very special and I see it myself because I'm on weekly teleconferences with our colleagues in India, you make a recommendation, and within days it's done and not only done, but it's done well and with incredible rigor and thought and creativity," Dr Hotez said, stressing that he felt compelled to make this statement because "India's huge efforts in combating global pandemic is a story that's not really getting out in the world."

Dr Hotez, considered as the authority on vaccinations, is working on an affordable coronavirus vaccine in collaboration with

Indian pharmaceutical companies. There is increasing evidence that vaccines not only interrupt symptomatic illness and keep you out of the hospital but halts asymptomatic transmission as well.

However, the troubling news is that the vaccines work well against the UK B.1.1.7 variant, which is now accelerating across the US, but doesn't work quite as well against the variant coming out of South Africa.

It is likely that all the vaccines will require a booster for two reasons: the durability of protection for the vaccines is unknown and to create an added immune response that's better tailored towards the South African variant.

Consul General of India in Houston, Aseem Mahajan, along with a distinguished panel of doctors participated in this webinar, that tracked the possibilities of a return to some semblance of normality due to the accelerated roll out of vaccines across the country.

2

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:

Magha & Shukla Paksha
Panchangam

Tithi : Dashami: 03:43 pm

Nakshatram : Purna Ashadha: 03:40 pm

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

Rahukalam: 08:01 am – 09:29 am

Yamagandam: 10:58 am – 12:26 pm

Varjyam: 04:40 am – 06:16 am

Gulika: 01:55 pm – 03:23 pm

Good Time: (to start any important work)

Anvritakalam: 03:56 pm – 05:30 pm

Ahijit Muhurtham: 12:03 pm – 12:50 pm

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Partly cloudy
Temp: 35/18
Humidity: 27%
Sunrise: 06:29 am
Sunset: 06:24 pm
Current Weather Conditions
Updated march 7, 2021 5:00 PM



Monday Mirchi

Is CMO cleansing in the offing?

After CMO PRO Vijaykumar came under cloud and was asked to go, the scene has now shifted to the babudom in Telangana to rid it of elements leaning towards the saffron brigade and those who are believed to have leaked sensitive information mainly to discredit the government.

The intelligence report that was submitted recently to the Chief Minister is learnt to have doped on the widespread presence of people believing in RSS ideology at various levels. It is now being determined whether these far right forces are working as 'conduits' for passing sensitive information to trouble-makers that be. It appears that some of those frequenting Pragati Bhavan have a soft corner towards RSS and BJP. So, in retrospect, dependable babus are wondering how vulnerable crucial government and political information has been for the ruling TRS party all these days. Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao is expected to take up spring cleaning to shunt out these inimical forces. The process of identification of the black sheep is on, with a senior official coordinating the activity under the directions of the Chief Minister. A little bird told us that CMO will now take more precautions to ensure 100 per cent confidentiality on all matters related to government policies and key decisions. From the party side also steps have been initiated by the TRS leadership to identify the 'conduits' of information leak.

Is Covid chasing finance officials?

Due to a strange coincidence, Covid-19 seems to be after those holding the purse strings. The virus, all along deemed to be impartial, has noticeably targeted finance officials in both Telugu states. Initially principal finance secretaries of both states were infected and they recovered from Covid. Later, the second rung officials in the department were infected by the virus. Ever since Coronavirus landed in India, several finance officials at various levels have been infected, keeping them out of duty for prolonged periods. With the virus completing one year of its spread in multiple waves, more and more finance officials are falling prey to the deadly virus. TS finance head K Ramakrishna Rao was out of duty for almost one month and now AP finance chief SS Rawat has been out of action, citing Covid infection as the reason, for almost a month. In Andhra special secretary Satyanarayana also got infected by coronavirus, leaving the entire department headless. While contractors and suppliers have been moving around freely to go to the Secretariat and other government offices without any fear of contracting Covid, the Finance Department officials are taking extra precautions not to meet any of them, citing Covid as the official reason.

Contractors may or may not be the asymptomatic carriers of the virus. Since the officials are keeping contractors and others away without any observable symptoms or evidence of their possible infection, those who could not get their payments from the Finance Department due to non-availability of the officers are alleging that the real intention of the absentee babus is to hold or deny their payments, with Covid coming in handy to shoo them away. Who is telling the truth needs to be verified.

From disaster to disaster

Being clean is OK, but self-proclamation

of that trait, and that too as a loner in a group where others are shady, is not so. A babu in AP has learnt this the hard way.

The agonizingly long wait of senior IPS officer Madireddy Pratap for posting has come to an end. Having fallen out of favour with Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy after a disastrous press conference, he had been without any posting for more than eight months. His abrupt transfers, twice in less than a week, took in July last year. He was finally asked to report to GAD, where he could do nothing but await posting. At last, he has now been posted as Director General, Andhra Pradesh State Disaster Response & Fire Services.

Pratap was shifted from his last post as the Additional DGP (Director General of Police), APSP (Andhra Pradesh Special Police) Battalions, and asked to report to GAD, following his distasteful (to powers that be) statements at a press meet after his ouster from his previous position in APSRTC. Pratap, who had assumed charge as the Vice-Chairman and Managing Director (VC & MD) of Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (APSRTC) in January last year, was transferred in less than seven months for reasons that could not be fathomed by him or others. Pratap then held a press conference, where he said that he had received the transfer order unexpectedly and that it was "a surprise" for him. While underlining his commitment to work, he recalled his close association with Chief Minister Jaganmohan Reddy's late father and former undivided AP CM Y S Rajasekhara Reddy. While referring to the ED cases against Jagan, Pratap merely boasted: "Many officers and political leaders were jailed. ... The CBI conducted inquiries with officers who had worked in the CM office at the time ... But during that time, if there was one person who was never suspected for his involvement, it was me". This did not trigger any 'me too' movement in babudom, but the remarks singled Jagan. After almost eight months of hibernation, Pratap got the new posting.

Srilakshmi as Special CS

The babudom in Andhra Pradesh is still watching keenly what will happen to the state government's recommendation promoting senior IAS official Y Srilakshmi to the level of Special Chief Secretary. In January, the Jaganmohan Reddy government issued orders promoting her to the Above Supertime Scale (HAG Scale). However, the GO came with a rider that the promotion would be effected, subject to the outcome of all the court cases that are pending against her. And it is learnt that the Centre too had pointed to the cases pending against her, while considering the state government's recommendation. The 1988 batch IAS officer is an accused in the quid pro quo case filed by CBI against Jagan and was lodged in jail. After Jagan became the Chief Minister she evinced interest to shift to Andhra Pradesh cadre and, using the good offices of the Jagan government and the CM's rapport with the Centre, got herself shifted from Telangana to Andhra Pradesh cadre. She was given posting as the MA & UD principal secretary in December last year. It is learnt that Jagan has assured her that he would make her the Chief Secretary.

Your's truly

TTD poised to save around 8.68 MU power per annum

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Soon, the world famous Tirumala temple is poised to save energy in a big way and significantly reduce electricity bills, besides reducing carbon footprint. TTD Board that manages Tirumala temple has laid an ambitious plan to introduce eco-friendly energy efficiency measures to enhance efficiency in electricity usage that will not only bring great energy savings but also significantly reduce electricity bills. In a preliminary energy audit conducted by APSECM, state designated agency of AP on the properties of TTD, it is observed that there is vast scope for saving energy to the tune of around 8.68 Million Units (MU) by replacing only the existing ceiling fans and air conditioners with the more efficient five-star rated equipment other than items such as boilers, drinking water pumps, vehicles etc.

Besides, around 25 per cent of energy can be saved in water supply management, hot water management and steam generation etc. The TTD is one of the biggest power consuming organisations having a consumption of around 68 MU per annum. The energy consumption is high in big temples in general for various



TTD consumes 64 million units of power per annum

Vijayawada: Out of total energy consumption of 68 MU per annum in TTD, around 36 per cent is being met from solar and wind power generation. The remaining 64 per cent of the electricity needs of 435 lakh units for Tirupati, its surroundings, and Tirumala hills are being supplied by AP Southern Power Distribution Company Limited (APSPDCL), Tirupati. "Energy audit and preparation of detailed project report by APSECM with recommendations of possible energy efficiency measures that can be implemented in TTD

reasons, including their lighting, cooking and other needs. Currently, TTD is paying around Rs 40 crore towards elec-

tricity charges as per applicable tariff as under: At 33Kv Voltage :Rs.5.06/unit + Rs.475/KVA and at 11KV Voltage: Rs.7.65/unit + buildings, thereby implementing all the best possible energy efficiency measures shall make TTD the best institution in the area of energy efficiency, which in turn will allow TTD to play a great role in protecting the environment as well," said TTD EO KS Jawahar Reddy. The SECM, energy department, is also contemplating to implement energy efficiency measures in famous temples at Srisailem, Vijayawada, Srikalahasti, Kanipakam, Dwaraka Tirumala, Simhachalam and Annavaram, with the support of Endowments department.

tricity charges as per applicable tariff as under: At 33Kv Voltage :Rs.5.06/unit + Rs.475/KVA and at 11KV Voltage: Rs.7.65/unit +

Junk old car and get about 5%...

Continued from Page 1

The policy is touted as a major step to boost the Indian automobile sector, reeling under the adverse impact of the Covid. He said it would lead to a 30 per cent boost to the Indian automobile industry turnover to Rs 10 lakh crore in the years to come from the present about Rs 4.5 lakh crore.

Gadkari said: "Automobile industry turnover which is

Rs 4.5 lakh crore at present is likely to swell to Rs 10 lakh crore in years to come."

The export component of this which at present is Rs 1.45 lakh crore will go up to Rs Rs 3 lakh crore, he said and added that once the policy comes to practice availability of scrapped material like steel, plastic, rubber, aluminium etc will be used in manufacturing of spares which in turn will reduce cost by 30-40 per cent.

Banks slash home loan rates to...

Continued from Page 1

At Rs 14.17 lakh crore as of November 2020, live housing loans account for more than half of personal loans for banks.

For consumers there are other advantages too-- attractive property prices due to the pandemic and the resultant reduction in stamp duty by many states after the pandemic hit the realty sector badly.

But lenders are still choosy

by pricing loans differently, depending on the risk profile and creditworthiness of borrowers. For SBI and Kotak Mahindra, the new rates of 6.7 per cent and 6.65 per cent, respectively, are applicable only to those borrowers with a credit score of 800 and above. The rate war began on March 1 when market leader SBI, which has over Rs 5 lakh crore of live home loan book and commanding a market share of

34 per cent of the Rs 14.17 lakh crore market, has even gone to the extent of waiving the processing fee and cut the rates by 10 bps to 6.7 per cent.

The SBI offer of 6.7 per cent with no processing fee is up to March 31 for loans up to Rs 75 lakh and 6.75 per cent for above that. It is also offering an additional 5 bps lower rate to women if applied through Yono app, said Saloni Narayan, deputy MD for retail business at SBI.

Making pickles may cost you more during next three months

DR. H.C UPADHYAY
■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad (NVS): A couple of factors impacted the gold market globally during the week ended Saturday. First, the US dollar continued to be strong vis-à-vis other major currencies, including the Indian Rupee. Second, the corporate sector and funds reported higher yields. Now that Covid-19 restrictions have been eased in the US, new optimism has been generated. Consequently, New York gold further declined and closed at US \$ 1,700 (per ounce) while silver followed the suit and closed at \$ 25.22 (per ounce). Platinum and palladium closed at \$ 1,126 (per ounce) and \$ 2,248 (per ounce) respectively. With the progressive return of normalcy in

the US, gold is expected to shed its extra weight in the foreseeable future and likely to stabilise at the realistic level of 1,500 (per ounce). Other economic parameters remained stable. Brent closed at US \$ 69.36 (per barrel) while Crude MCX oil was quoted at Rs.4,858 (per barrel). While Gold MCX stood at Rs.44,640 (per 10 gms), MCX Silver closed at Rs.65,717 (per kg), Copper MCX closed at Rs.690.20 (per kg), Sensex and Nifty 50 closed at 53,119.96 and 14,938.10 points.

Leading foreign currencies' exchange rates were, US \$: Rs.73.18, British Pound: Rs.101.28, Euro: Rs.87.20, Singapore \$: Rs.54.51, Swiss Franc: Rs.78.61, Australian \$: Rs.56.25, Saudi Riyal: Rs.19.50, New Zealand Dollar: Rs.52.43,

Kuwaiti Dinar: Rs.241.43, Omani Rial: Rs.190.07, UAE Dirham: Rs.19.92, Japanese Yen: Rs.0.68 and Hong Kong Dollar: Rs.9.43. In local markets, standard gold (24 carats) further declined by Rs.1,090 and closed at Rs.45,490 (per 10 gms). Ornamental gold too, followed the suit and closed at Rs.45,490 (per 10 gms). During the week, common pulses such as tuar dal, masoor dal, moong dal and urad dal and commodities like chillies and garlic recorded a marginal appreciation during the week, while staple food-grains and common edible recorded a negligible decline. Prices of chillies, jaggery and other ingredients that are added to make pickle are up at least for a small increase during next three months, which is the

period when pickle-making at homes and in small-scale factories takes precedence in the country. Due to sufficient stock of chillies, jaggery and spices, the increase in seasonal demand will, however, be minimal. Common vegetables such as cabbage, cauliflower, ribbed guard, snake guard, lady fingers, cucumber, potatoes, onions, tomatoes and French beans along with other leafy vegetables flared up still further in the range of 8 percent to 21 percent. Due to setting in of summer, particularly in the south, the NECC wholesale egg-price in Hyderabad declined by Rs.17 and closed at Rs.388 (per 100). The highest price of Rs.455 was recorded at Surat, while Hospet recorded the lowest of Rs.375.

ONCE AGAIN THE TT GANG IS OUT TO DEFAME CJI

HC UPADHYAY
■ HYDERABAD

Like dog's curtailed tail it is impossible to strengthen the dirty mind set of the infamous Tukde-Tukde gang or the TT gang. The gang which is a cog in the gigantic anti India machine has in the past too, indulged in nefarious activities.

The gang with the blessings of some political parties and anti-India forces operating from abroad had maligned the image of the higher judiciary by branding four incumbent Chief Justices of India (CJI) either as corrupt, inefficient, partisan or persons of lose character. The gang even had tried in vain to bring the motion of impeachment against a former CJI and levelled baseless charges of sexual harassment of a ministerial staff against another. Therefore, there is nothing new in a few hundred concerned citizens with deep political affiliations writing a letter to the CJI Sharad A Bobde for his alleged defama-

tory remarks against a rape victim in the form of a query to an accused as to whether he was ready to marry the woman as per written agreement entered between him and the victim girl. To this, the accused answered in negative.

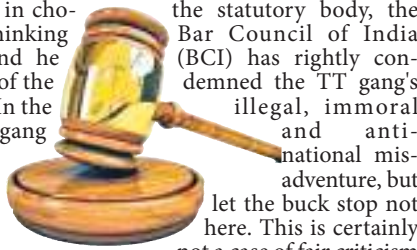
The TT gang picked up this single query to malign the CJI and thereby entire judiciary. The gang shouted in chorus that the CJI's thinking was retrograde and he was unconcerned of the victim's interests. In the same breath, the gang demanded unconditional apology and resignation from the CJI.

In fact, there is no water in the reckless allegations made by the gang. In course of hearing of a case it is quite common in the courts all over the world that the Judges pass some comments, make observations and put queries to the parties. However, all that transpires in the court does not become the basis of a judgement or does

not become binding decision.

Unfortunately, some of the 'learned' members of the TT gang who have had the honour of being a part of the justice delivery system of the country, also lost sight of the difference between the 'obiter dicta' and the 'ratio decidendi'.

The legal fraternity through different Bar Associations and the statutory body, the Bar Council of India (BCI) has rightly condemned the TT gang's illegal, immoral and anti-national misadventure, but let the buck stop not here. This is certainly not a case of fair criticism which the law permits but this is a case of calling a Judge of the Supreme Court by name and deliberately attempt to lower the majesty of law. Hence, let the Apex court haul up the entire gang for casting aspersions on the Judges of the highest Court under Contempt of Courts Act, 1971 and show the gang its rightful place.



LEGAL ROUNDUP

SORDID TALE OF 20 YEARS JAIL BIRD

His name is Vishnu Tiwari, a life imprisonment convict of rape and insulting the SC/ST community person by caste. He already spent over 20 years in Agra jail after his arrest on 16-09-2000. Now the Allahabad High Court has come to his rescue and reversed the judgement of the lower court citing inconsistencies in witnesses' evidence and lack of proof of the offence of rape.

Tiwari, now 43 is a helpless person. He has completely broken down physically as well as morally. No body came to receive him at the gate of the Agra jail. He boarded for an overnight journey to his village with just Rs.600 in his pocket. This amount was given to him by the prison authorities at the time of his release.

Tiwari's case may be termed as an isolated case involving miscarriage of justice, but it certainly raises several pertinent questions. Who is to compensate Tiwari and his likes for having to had languished in the

prison for such a long period of over two decades? How is he going to be compensated for the loss of freedom, youth and opportunities? Whether the people responsible for his lengthy incarceration would be punished and if so, how soon? When the legal jurisprudence ordains that let 99 guilty people go scott free for the lack of evidence and other reasons, but let one innocent person not be punished, what effective measures all three pillars of the Constitution have taken so far is also a moot question.

NEED TO DISCIPLINE CORPORATE HOSPITALS
While it is true that some of the corporate hospitals spread over major cities and other urban areas render yeoman services in medical and surgical fields, it is also true that most of these hospitals are nothing but big business establishments. Mostly built with tax exempted incomes from agriculture, export and foreign earnings, their hunger for maximization of earnings never satiates. The government regulations with regard to reserving

beds for the poor are more followed in breach than compliance. In fact, in the name of superior services, these business tycoons fleece the public. Barring a few, most of the meritorious doctors are also exploited by such money hungry sharks.

What is still worse is the arbitrary and high handed manner in which hefty bills under one pretext or the other are slapped on the patient's relatives by the hospital management. This is nothing but extortion, also called, arm twisting. Though there are rules which require the hospitals to prominently display a board detailing charges for various services rendered by the hospital, they are hardly followed and there is obviously no effort to educate the people about them.

But the worst among unethical medical practices is the refusal by the hospital management to hand over the dead body of a person who succumbs during treatment. Added to this, these hospitals also coerce the bereaved and mourning relatives to shell down several lakhs of rupees in the name of full and

final settlement of their bill. They do not budge on their demand and hold the dead body for ransom. This is nothing but extortion and pure extortion.

Unfortunately, except judiciary no other authority of law comes to the rescue of the victims in such a situation. Most of the people connected with regulating the working of corporate hospitals are hand in gloves with the latter. Politicians too, make a hey in such a grim situation. Indeed, there is an urgent need to put to an end such menace. It is high time the high court takes suo motu cognizance of the matter and issues appropriate orders to save the relatives of the deceased person from added agony and insult at a time of the death of the dear and near one.

AP GOVT, READY FOR THE CBI PROBE

The issue relating to the Special Investigation Team probe ordered by the present State government of Andhra Pradesh into allegations of large scale scam through the sale of lands near Amaravati, in anticipation of the estab-

lishment of new state capital there after the bifurcation of the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh in 2014 and subsequent filing of the FIR naming several high profile individuals as accused, after which the state high court had granted stay, came up for hearing in the supreme court recently.

During the hearing, significantly the state government expressed its readiness to accept the court-monitored probe by the CBI and also to extend its full support to the CBI during investigation. The bench comprising Justice Ashok Bhushan and Justice R. Subhash Reddy, however, adjourned the matter to March 8.

SC TO SWITCH OVER TO HYBRID MODE OF HEARING

After consulting different bar associations the supreme court has decided to introduce the hybrid mode of hearing of the cases from March 15. The apex court issued the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) giving a slew of guidelines to the stake holders.



Governor greets women on IWD

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Governor Biswa Bhushan Harichandan extended his wishes to the women on the occasion of International Women's Day on Monday.

In a message here on Sunday, the Governor said: "On the occasion of International Women's Day, I convey my best wishes to the women of state. Women in our country have always played a great role in the nation building and in upholding national integrity, peace and harmony. Women have always been an inspiration to society."

Women have also been at the forefront in the battle against Covid, as front-line health workers, scientists and doctors, the Governor praised.

"In our society, women play an undisputed leadership role in the family tradition and in the nation building. They shoulder greater responsibilities with forbearance, which is a God given gift to them," he said.

Naidu provoking Vijayawada people, alleges Kodali Nani

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Civil Supplies Minister Kodali Venkateswara Rao (Nani) came down heavily on TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu for provoking people of Vijayawada to protest against the government. He criticised that Naidu and his son Nara Lokesh should be ashamed for confining themselves to Hyderabad for last eight months and hitting the road ahead of elections to seek votes.

Speaking to the media here on Sunday, he said: "Though the state government has borrowed one lakh crore, Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy spent Rs 95,000 crore for implementing various welfare schemes by providing financial aid to people through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)."

He slammed Naidu for borrowing more than three lakh crore during his term and involving in large scale corruption.

Demanding that Naidu prove if he had spent Rs 3,000 crore for Krishna Pushkaralu during his term, Nani alleged that Naidu and his coterie had indulged in huge corruption in Pushkaralu works.

Holding Central



Government responsible for hike in prices of petrol, diesel and gas and for privatisation of Vizag steel plant, he dared Naidu to raise his voice against Prime Minister Narendra Modi on these issues.

He recalled that Naidu took to occult in Durga temple which boomeranged.

He alleged that Naidu and his followers indulged in large scale corruption in Amaravati lands and challenged Naidu to vacate the stays in courts regarding Amaravati scam.

He said former chief minister NT Rama Rao implemented total prohibition while it was Naidu who encouraged belt shops.

The Minister criticised Naidu for his derogatory comments and challenged Naidu to contest from Gudivada constituency and get elected.

Naidu destroyed Vijayawada, Guntur cities, says Perni Nani

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Information and Public Relations Perni Venkataramaiah (Nani) said that TDP leader N Chandrababu Naidu has no moral right to seek votes from the people of Vijayawada and Guntur corporations as the previous TDP government had cheated them by promising development in the name of Amaravati.

Speaking to the media here on Sunday, the Minister said that TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu suffered debacles in 2019 elections and gram panchayat polls because of the wrath of Goddess Kanakadurga who was angered over the plight of farmers and people being deceived in the name of Amravati. TDP suffered a debacle, eventually leaving Naidu with no party members to back him. He questioned Chandrababu Naidu what he had done for Amaravati, except grabbing lands, spending around Rs 3,000 crore on temporary buildings and

investing the looted money in Heritage. The minister questioned how Chandrababu Naidu earned hundreds of crores despite starting his career with only two acres of land. He criticised Naidu for misusing public money during his regime showing no concern for welfare which resulted to rejection in 2019 polls. Stating that it would not have been a problem if the capital was established in Vijayawada or Guntur, he alleged that Chandrababu Naidu had destroyed these cities. He lashed out at Naidu for failing to build a bridge or bypass the road in Vijayawada to ease the traffic issues or bringing IT companies to create jobs for the youngsters. Further, the Minister said that people have given a chance to YS Jaganmohan Reddy as a Chief Minister in 2019 and were witnessing the welfare governance. They are ready to give one more chance to YSRCP candidates in municipal elections, he hoped.

'TDP's win key to stop YSRCP atrocities'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu on Sunday called upon the voters to elect the TDP candidates in the elections to urban local bodies to counter the chaotic and oppressive regime of CM Jaganmohan Reddy. He participated in a series of road shows in Vijayawada Municipal Corporation during election campaign.

Addressing the meeting, Naidu said that a TDP candidate should be elected as the mayor of Vijayawada city in order to put an end to the atrocities of the ruling YSRCP leaders in the city.

The TDP chief claimed that he had the support of the people while the Chief Minister was taking the support of rowdies and criminals.

The TDP constructed Amaravati and Pattiseema to improve the living conditions of people of not just one region but the entire State. The YSRCP has destroyed such great projects. The time has come for the people of Vijayawada to show their pride by teaching a fitting lesson to the YSRCP, he added.

Recalling how farmers offered land to the tune of thousands of acres in response to just one call for the construction of a dream capital, Naidu said that every person in the state had a duty to strengthen the agitation to



save capital city. The agitators should display determination and courage to fight back the vicious plans of the Jagan Reddy regime, he said. The TDP chief deplored that the people of AP were suffering while the younger generations was staring at a bleak future.

Debts have increased manifold in proportion to the unchecked corruption of the YSRCP leaders. "Each Andhra citizen was now carrying more than Rs 1 lakh debt on his or her head and they would have to pay it with interest. Taxes were being levied even on pets, dogs, pigs, etc," he alleged.

Naidu ridiculed that Jaganmohan Reddy was implementing an 'anarchic A, B, C, D policy' to oppress people with politically motivated attacks, unbearable tax burden, mindless corruption and destruction. If the voters don't stop this wholesale demolition, then they would not be able to protect their own property in future, he added.

TDP to launch drive to make urban areas liveable: Galla

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP Lok Sabha member Galla Jayadev on Sunday announced that it would establish a Sundarikarana Mission (beautification programme) to make urban areas most liveable.

Apart from it, the TDP will also ensure garbage-free municipalities and corporations. He said that the TDP was going to emerge victorious in all the urban areas in elections to urban local bodies to be held on March 10.

While the TDP has been striving to make the cities as most liveable, the YSRCP government already made them most livable cities by imposing heavy taxes on the residents, he criticised.

Jayadev ridiculed that the YSRCP government did not install even a single energy efficient LED streetlight in any city in the last 20 months.

He said: "During the TDP regime, Andhra Pradesh was ranked first state in the country for converting all conventional streetlights into LED lights. Around 6.38 lakh LED lights were installed in 110 urban local bodies in the state."

For keeping the cities in the state clean, 2,38,726 toilets were constructed for the poor by



spending hundreds of crore under 'Swachh Andhra Mission' programme between 2014 and 2019 by the then Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu. But, the present YSRCP government is imposing taxes on usage of toilets too, he added.

Three major cities of the state - Vijayawada, Tirupati and Visakhapatnam figured in the top 10 ULBs declared under Swachh Survekshan 2018, during the TDP regime.

However, development done in the urban areas by the previous TDP government has been undone by the present YSRCP government, he alleged.

According to the Ease of Living Index rankings, Vijayawada ranked 41 in 2020, while it ranked 9th in 2018. Similarly, the rank of Tirupati fell from 4th rank in 2018 to 46th rank in 2020, the MP said.



KODANDARAMA RIDES HANUMANTA VAHANA



PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Sri Kalyana Venkateswara Swamy in Sri Kodandarama alankaram was seated majestically on Hanumanta vahana on the sixth day of ongoing annual Brahmotsavams at Srinivas Mangapuram held in Ekantham due to Covid guidelines.

Legends say that Hanuman is an icon of devotional bliss and symbolically stood for pure devotion, complete surrender and absence of ego.

In the place of Vasanthotsavam and Swarna Ratham, Tiruchi and Gaja vahana Seva will be observed in the evening.

Deputy EO Shanti, AEO Dhananjeyulu, Superintendents Ramanaiah, Chengalrayulu and others participated in the event.

Man hacked to death over rivalry

PNS ■ CHITTOOR

A person was hacked to death allegedly due to personal rivalry at MC Palem of Pileru mandal late on Saturday.

The deceased was identified as Venkateshwara Reddy, 44, hailing from Nayinicheruvu village in the district.

According to police, the villagers of MC Palem informed to police when they noticed the body of Venkateshwara Reddy.

The police rushed to the spot and after preliminary investigation, police came to

know that Sidda Reddy of Nayinicheruvu pale had a personal rivalry with the deceased as he had attacked Sidda Reddy some time ago.

As Sidda Reddy was not seen after Reddy's murder, the family members and villagers alleged the role of Sidda Reddy in the murder.

Police launched a manhunt for Sidda Reddy. The deceased also appeared as a witness in an SC, ST atrocity case registered against Sidda Reddy a few days ago.

Police registered a case and the investigation is on.

Two engg students die RTC bus hits their motorbike

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Two engineering students died when a state-run Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (APSRTC) bus hit the motorcycle on which they were travelling on Naidupeta-Puthalapattu National Highway at Ithepalli in Chittoor district on Sunday. The victims were identified as Abhiram hailing from Rajahmundry and Alekhya from Nellore.

According to police, the victims were studying B.Tech at SV University here. Abhiram died on the spot, while Alekhya succumbed to injuries while undergoing treatment at Ruia Government Hospital. Police registered a case and took up investigation.

Two pilgrims killed as lorry rams tractor trailer

PNS ■ ELURU

Two pilgrims, including an 18-month-old girl, died, while 18 others were injured when the tractor trailer on which they were travelling was rammed by a lorry at Srinivasapuram Junction at Jangareddygudem in West Godavari district on Sunday. The victims were identified as Rambabu, 55, and 18-month-old girl Sahasra. Police said that about 20 people belonging to Chittavaram village in Krishna district were going on pilgrimage to Gubbala Mangamma temple located at Buttagudem in WG district. The tractor stopped at a hotel for tea-break. In the mean time, a speeding lorry, heading to Hyderabad from Rajahmundry, rammed the stationary tractor trailer from rear end. The injured were shifted to the government general hospital for treatment. The condition of four of the victims is said to be critical. Under the impact of the collision, the tractor trailer overturned.



Krishna dist Collector bags global Corona Warrior Award

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Recognising the services rendered to people, migrant workers and corona-infected families by District Collector A MD Imtiaz, the Hyderabad-based Vishwa Guru World Records has presented The Corona Warrior International Award to collector Imtiaz here at camp office on Sunday.

Vishwa Guru World Records founder and CMD S Rambabu, committee members Yadaiah Goud, S

Gopalakrishna, Krishna district Co-coordinator Kalyani presented the award to the Collector.

Speaking on the occasion, Rambabu said that the award was given to the Collector for his coordination with the district public representatives, district officials and people during the Covid pandemic and for visiting the corona-affected places and encouraging the victims and their families and building confidence among the infected.

Collector Imtiaz said that he was very happy to receive the award and thanked the organisation for recognising his services and nominating for this award.

The award has made me more responsible, the collector said adding that it would motivate him to serve people better.

Joint collector (welfare) K Mohan Kumar, Project Director Srinivasa Rao, Sridhar, Sudhir Raman, Suresh and others were present.

2 boys drown in Vasistha river

PNS ■ ELURU

Two teenagers drowned in the Vasistha river at Siddantham village in Penugonda mandal in West Godavari district on Sunday. The victims were identified at Bacchala Kalyan, 17, and Patnala Manikantha, 17.

According to police, four students who were studying intermediate at a private college in Tanuku went to the river for a swim. However, two of them drowned the river when they entered into the water. Their bodies were fished out. The police registered a case and shifted the bodies to the government hospital for post-mortem.

WOMEN POWER



Women employees of various departments formed a human chain around a caption "Respect Women" on the occasion of International Women's Day celebrations at Eluru Collectorate grounds (Indoor Stadium) on Sunday. The programme was led by Eluru Joint Collector Himanshu Shukla.

TTD EO offers silk robes to Bhramaramba, Mallikarjuna Swamy

PNS ■ SRISAILAM

As part of the ongoing Brahmotsavams of Sri Bhramaramba Mallikarjuna Swamy at Srisailem, TTD Executive Officer KS Jawahar Reddy, along with his wife, offered silk robes to presiding deities on Sunday.

The EO couple, on their arrival to the temple, was welcomed by Srisailem MLA Silpa Chakrapani Reddy, Temple AEO Haridas and

Temple priests accorded welcome to the EO couple as per temple traditions on their arrival at the temple.

Later, the EO, along with TTD chairman YV Subbareddy and his wife Swarnalatha, and TTD OSD Pala Seshadri had darshan of Lord Mallikarjuna Swamy and Goddess Bhramaramba. They participated in Mallikarjuna Swamy



Mayura vaahana seva in the evening. Speaking to the media on the occasion, Jawahar Reddy said: "TTD will extend complete support for the development of

Srisailem temple. We will renovate the accommodation facilities for the convenience of devotees. We will chalk out an action plan in consultation with the temple EO."

NGOs seek protection for survivors of trafficking

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NGO organisations Help, Vimukti and ILFAT (Indian Leadership Forum Against Trafficking) state chapter have jointly convened a state-level meeting involving nearly 100 survivors of human trafficking and sex workers on the occasion of International Women's Day on Sunday in Vijayawada.

Presiding over the meeting, Vimukti state convener Meharunnisa said that the survivors of trafficking have started Vimukti to prevent human trafficking, besides protecting the rights of the survivors of trafficking and



the sex workers in the state. She criticised both the Central and state governments for deliberately avoiding formulating new policies and programmes to protect

the rights of survivors of trafficking without understanding their pathetic conditions and without consulting them.

She said that the recent pan India survey reveals that

violence against survivors has increased. About 31.9 per cent sex workers are affected by the domestic violence (by temporary husbands or family members), 55.9 per cent sex workers by their customers, 14 per cent by pimps and brokers, 5.9 per cent by brothel owners, 24.7 per cent by truck, auto drivers and goons and 16.2 per cent facing violence by the neighbours, she added.

Vimukti state co-convenor Rajani stated that the reason for increasing violence against sex workers was the perception of the police and officials of various government departments along with the general

public who treat sex workers as criminals.

ILFAT state leader Pushpavathi stated that 1,500 persons have been rescued from human trafficking from 2014 to 2019, but only 2 survivors have been sanctioned money under 'victim compensation scheme'.

She demanded that the government sanction the compensation to rest of the survivors of trafficking immediately.

Help secretary N Ram Mohan and CWC ex-chairperson and Red Cross blood bank state coordinator also participated in the programme.

RAW DEAL TO STATE

KTR fires a salvo at BJP for not questioning Centre

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

There was no need for voices that raised only questions, but need leaders, who could solve problems, said TRS Working President and IT Minister KT Rama Rao.

He was addressing a meeting held in support of PV Vani Devi for the forthcoming Graduates MLC elections. The meeting was witness to the presence of a huge number of Brahmins in support of S Vani Devi, the TRS candidate.

KTR reminded people of what his father KCR did for the Brahmins. He said that Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao had purity in speech and integrity. He said that KCR had set up Brahmana Sadan, especially for the sake of Brahmins when he was an MLA of Siddipet. KTR said that KCR was striving hard for the development of the State. He said that KCR had been constructing the Yadadri temple at an outlay of Rs 1,000 crore. KCR would implement sincerely what he believed in, he exhorted. He reminded that the State government was extending salaries to 6,000 priests from the government treasury. The TRS government had been encouraging the poor



While targeting the BJP MLC candidate N Ramchander Rao, KTR alleged that Ramchander Rao did nothing for the graduates during his tenure as the graduate MLC.

Brahmin students to pursue their education in foreign countries through Overseas Education Scheme, KTR said.

The presence of Brahmins and KTR's speech extolling them made some analysts question whether the Brahmin community had switched their

allegiance to the TRS from the BJP, the party they supported during the last election. In the last elections, the Brahmin community of Hyderabad-Rangareddy-Mahabubnagar extended their full support to N Ramchander Rao, though the then TRS candidate Devi

Prasad was also from the same community. This time, too, analysts expected that the Brahmins would extend their full support to BJP candidate N Ramchander Rao, especially following the murder of Brahmin advocate couple Gattu Vaman Rao and PV Nagamani. However, Vani Devi Coordination Sammelan proved that the expectations of the analysts were misplaced. No need to mention that the TRS candidate S Vani Devi also belongs to the Brahmin community.

While targeting the BJP MLC candidate N Ramchander Rao, KTR alleged that Ramchander Rao did nothing for the graduates during his tenure as the graduate MLC.

KTR said that there was no evidence of Ramchander Rao questioning the Centre even though the Centre was doing injustice to the state. He questioned Ramchander Rao as to why his voice became silent even as the gas price increased. Did Ramchander Rao ever question the Centre for the Tribal University and Navodaya Schools, KTR asked. He called upon the party activists to strive for the victory of TRS candidate S Vani Devi.

KCR making Vani Devi a scapegoat, says Kishan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Continuing his tirade against the TRS, Union Minister of State for Home Affairs G Kishan Reddy alleged that the government had failed on all fronts.

While participating in the election campaign in Vikarabad on Sunday, Kishan Reddy said that the TRS would have got a single digit in GHMC elections if there is no MIM. He alleged that KCR has made S Vani Devi a scapegoat by fielding her as a TRS candidate where she would face defeat. KCR would have sent Vani Devi to the Rajya Sabha if he really wanted to give a post to Vani Devi.

Addressing a gathering in Medchal district, Kishan Reddy said that the unemployed youth and employees are against the TRS.

He reminded that the 350 km Regional Ring Road worth Rs 17,000 crore is a great gift of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the State.

Telangana BJP chief Bandi Sanjay said that the TRS government is implementing all welfare schemes with the funds given by the Centre.

He alleged that the TRS is extending support to independents as TRS candidates in two places are not in a position to win the elections.

Bhatti kick-starts bicycle rally against petrol price hike

PNS ■ BHADRACHALAM

After successfully completion of his 14-days padayatra in support of farmers against the farm laws, in Khannam district in last month, Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu kick started his 213-km long yatra on a bicycle here on Sunday in protest against the skyrocketing prices of petrol, diesel and liquefied petroleum gas (refill of domestic gas cylinder).

The bicycle yatra was also aimed at campaigning for party's tribal candidate Sabavath Ramulu Naik, who is contesting from Nalgonda-Warangal-Khammam Graduates MLC constituency, going to poll on March 14.

After offering prayers at Sri Sitarama Swamy temple here, Bhatti started his six-day cycle tour, which will conclude on March 12, for Congress MLC candidate in erstwhile Khammam district.

Though the yatra was aimed at connecting with the graduate voters, covers six Assembly segments, Bhatti would cover farmers and other people explaining them about rising prices of petrol, diesel and gas, unemployment problem, vacancies not being filled up in the government sector and ill effects of the new farm laws of the Central government.

Addressing the media on the sidelines of yatra, CLP leader said that the youth should teach a lesson to both the TRS



Congress Legislature Party leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka riding a bicycle in Bhadrachalam in protest against the rise in petrol and diesel prices

Though the yatra was aimed at connecting with the graduate voters, covers six Assembly segments, Bhatti would interact with farmers and other people explaining them about unemployment problem and ill effects of the new farm laws of the Central government

and BJP, which have betrayed them on the issues of creating employment opportunities and filling up vacancies in the government sector, he alleged.

Voting to ruling TRS candidate is equivalent to suicide, Bhatti said that PM Modi and Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao are responsible for petrol and diesel hike, as both are imposing heavy taxes on oil.

Due to price rise, the common man is facing unbearable burden, he pointed out.

In the Congress regime, the taxes imposed on petrol and

diesel were rational, he claimed.

It was Congress government, which has developed public sector units and provided employment to the poor and backward classes, but the BJP and TRS are privatising the PSUs and compelling the middle class towards economic backwardness, he alleged.

In upcoming MLC elections, he appealed to the graduates and unemployed youth to vote for Ramulu Naik, who has the ability to raise the voice against the draconian rule in the Legislative Council.

Sravan blames govt for leaving youth in the lurch

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

AICC National Spokesperson Sravan Dasoju on Sunday criticised the government for its failure in providing jobs to the unemployed youth.

Addressing the media at Gandhi Bhavan on Sunday, Sravan blamed the government for the suicide of Ankam Buchiraju, an employee of the electricity department, who had committed suicide.

He demanded an ex-gratia of Rs 50 lakh to Ankam Buchiraju and a job to his wife in the electricity department. Ankam Buchiraju is survived by his wife and a three-year-old daughter. According to the Congress leader, all the 22,637 contract employees working in the TS Genco and Transco, including Buchiraju, has been betrayed by



the government as they were regularised violating the APSEB recruitment service rules. Before their services were regularised, they used to get around Rs 20,000 to Rs 25,000 consolidated salary per month. However, after the regularisation, they are currently placed under Rs 9,000 to 12,000 pay scale per month. After the regularisation and after serving for 10 to 15 years, they were left with lesser salaries than they used to get before the regular-

isation and also without any other fringe benefits that are given to the APSEB employees.

As per the APSEB rules, to regularise any employee's service, the offer should not be inferior to the existing benefits. They are entitled to receive all the benefits, including 240 days of half pay leaves, educational advance, festival advance, house loan advance among others.

Meanwhile, the AICC leader appealed to all the unemployed youth that they should not lose confidence and not resort to extreme steps like suicide and urged them to be confident to fight against the issues. "The Congress will stand by you in fighting against the anti-youth and anti-people policies of the government. But, suicide is not an option to achieve our rights", he said.

'ACHARYA' IN COALMINES



Megastar K Chiranjeevi, who arrived in the Yellandu Singareni opencast area in Bhadradi Kothagudem on Sunday for the shooting of his new film 'Acharya', receives a bouquet from Singareni Yellandu area General Manager PV Satyanarayana

ASP terms Devuni Gutta temple as architectural marvel

PNS ■ MULUGU

ASP P Sai Chaitanya paid a visit to the Devuni Gutta temple located on a hillock near Kothur village in Mulugu mandal in the district on Sunday and termed the temple as an architectural marvel. "The temple resembles the world-famous Angkor Wat temple in Cambodia. The temple needs to be protected," he said. The temple looks like a structure made of bricks but up close, one can see that the blocks are a mixture of sand and stone. The sanctum sanctorum also has several carvings. Historians estimate the age of the temple to be more than 1,500 years, he said. The ASP was accompanied by SI Harikrishna and other police personnel.



Charred body found in Nallamala forest

PNS ■ NAGAR KURNOOL

Villagers found the charred body in the Nallamala forest area two km from Vatavarlapalli village in Amrabad mandal of Nagar Kurnool district on Sunday. Locals, who saw the burnt body, informed the police. On receiving information, police rushed to the spot. Later, doctors belonging to the primary health centre arrived and conducted the post-mortem.

CI Beasanna said a case was registered and further investigation is on.



4 suffer burn injuries in forest fire

PNS ■ NAGAR KURNOOL

The fire broke out in a forest area in the Amrabad area of Nagar Kurnool district on Sunday. Four Chenhu tribals were injured in the fire mishap.

Those who went to collect forest produce were caught in the fire. After receiving the

information, 108 personnel rushed to the spot and shifted the injured to the nearby Achanpeta Hospital for treatment in ambulances. Two ambulances were kept on standby to evacuate the injured from Achanpeta Hospital to the District Hospital if they need better treatment.

CM striving for women's empowerment: Sunitha

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Heaping praises on Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao, State Women's Commission chairperson Vakiti Sunitha Laxma Reddy said that he had given a lot of importance to women in all sectors in the State.

Addressing a gathering after releasing a book 'Empower to Transform' written by writer Neeraja Bandi on the issues of problems being faced by women on the eve of International Women's Day. She later cut the cake, along with the participants.

Speaking on the occasion, Sunitha called upon the women to achieve equal place like their male counterparts. International Women's Day was celebrated to celebrate the achievements of women from across the



State Women's Commission chairperson Vakiti Sunitha Laxma Reddy releasing a book in Hyderabad on Sunday

world. There was a need for the women to achieve progress in their respective fields, she opined.

The State government had recognised the need for the women to achieve success and added that KCR was giving

importance to them and giving several important posts to them, she pointed out. She said that the government formed She Teams and Bharosa centres for the protection of women. She said that she would strive for the development of women.

Collector seeks proposals for setting up veg, non-veg markets

PNS ■ MEDCHAL

Medchal-Malkajgiri Collector Swetha Mohanty instructed officials concerned to submit proposals to set up vegetarian and non-vegetarian markets in several municipalities in the district.

With a team of officers, she visited several locations in the municipalities to ascertain places conducive for these markets.

Later, she instructed them to ensure that the vegetarian and non-vegetarian markets are easily accessible to people. The district administration is keen to set up the markets on find-



Medchal-Malkajgiri Collector Swetha Mohanty inspecting areas in Medchal-Malkajgiri district for setting up veg and non-veg markets

ing places in addition to support existing ones with better facilities.

She sought to know about the existing markets and new ones to come up near residen-

tial areas in Medchal-Malkajgiri district. The Collector asked officials to send proposals for suitable lands for these markets in the municipalities.

The markets have to be people-friendly and nearby residences, she said.

She asked for complete details pertaining to existing markets and the new ones with places identified. She paid a visit to Kompally, Gundla Pochampally, Medchal, Thumkunta, Ghatkesar, Pocharam, Boduppall, Pirjadiguda, Dundigal, Kukatpalky and Nizampet areas.

‘Expedite establishing vegetable, meat markets’

PNS ■ MAHBUBNAGAR

Measures are being taken to expedite the setting up of vegetable and meat markets in all the municipalities across the district for the convenience of residents, disclosed District Collector S Venkat Rao. Orders to this effect were issued to Municipal Commissioners and tahsildars to identify suitable lands for the facilities in Mahabubnagar and Jadcherla Municipalities. The District Collector inspected the site identified for setting up of the markets at Amistapur in Bhootpur municipality limits.

Puvvada on door-to-door campaign in Khammam

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

Minister for Transport Puvvada Ajay Kumar conducted a door-to-door campaign for the Graduate MLC elections in Khammam on Sunday. He called upon the voters to cast their first preferential vote to Palla Rajeshwar Reddy and ensure him a thumping majority. He visited 24th division, 37th division, 42nd division and 44th division in Khammam and appealed to the voters to vote for the TRS candidate, MLCT Lakshminarayana, Deputy Mayor B Murali, corporator T Uma Rani and others participated in the campaign.



Minister for Transport Puvvada Ajay Kumar interacts with a voter during the door-to-door campaign for the Graduate MLC polls in Khammam on Sunday

FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19

Re-invention, resilience and research give India edge

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu on Sunday said resilience, research and re-invention have helped India become a torch-bearer in the global fight against COVID-19.

He also appreciated the efforts and ingenuity of Indian researchers and scientists for finding technological solutions to the challenges thrown by the pandemic.



Addressing the first Graduation Day ceremony of the Employees' State Insurance Corporation Medical College (Faridabad) held in New Delhi, Naidu praised doctors, scientists and policymakers for fight against the virus.

"I salute the entire medical fraternity from doctors to nurses, para-medical staff and sanitary workers, technicians and ASHA workers in villages,

who, as Team India came together as one to fight the pandemic," he said.

Naidu also lauded the Indian industry for ramping up production of essential items such as PPE kits, surgical gloves, face masks, ventilators and vaccines. He also appreciated the medical and paramedical institutes being run by the ESIC for

if you serve humanity with a spirit of selfless dedication, you will derive boundless satisfaction," he told the passing out students.

Referring to the largest vaccination drive in the world against COVID-19 being undertaken in India, the vice president said the worst phase of the pandemic appears to be over.

However, he cautioned people to remain vigilant and continue to take all the necessary precautions till the country defeats the virus decisively.

In his address, Naidu also referred to several other health challenges that need to be addressed such as low doctor-patient ratio, shortage of medical colleges, inadequate infrastructure in rural areas, and low adoption of health insurance.

their role in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the ceremony, the vice president was glad to see that all the medal winners were girls.

He congratulated them and underlined the need to provide equal opportunities to women in every field.

"I have always believed that



Mamata on 'padayatra' to protest LPG price hike

PNS ■ KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee led a 'padayatra' here on Sunday to protest against the steep hike in the price of LPG cylinders. Accompanied by thousands of supporters, Banerjee set off on the protest march from Darjeeling More around 2 pm. Many were seen holding red-coloured cardboard replicas of LPG cylinders at the 'yatra', which was led by the TMC supremo, and joined by her ministerial colleague Chandrima Bhattacharya, and party MPs Mimi Chakraborty and Nusrat Jahan. Claiming that LPG cylinders would soon be beyond the reach of common man, the CM had said on Saturday that massive demonstrations should be held to 'make our voices heard'.

Assam polls: Half of 40 candidates in Congress first list fresh faces

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

Half of the 40 candidates whose names were announced in the Congress' first list for Assam assembly elections are fresh faces, while the party will consult former chief minister Tarun Gogoi's family members before deciding on a nominee for Titabor seat which was held by him for four consecutive terms before his death.

The grand old party late on Saturday night released the first list of 40 candidates for the 47 constituencies that are going to polls in the first phase on March 27.

The list has the names of 20 new faces and six sitting MLAs including Congress Legislature Party leader Debabrata Saikia in Nazira.

The BJP is eyeing the prestigious Titabor seat, which was held by the three-time chief minister who died due to post-COVID complications on November 23 last year, while the Congress is seeking to retain it.

Apart from Titabor, the names of candidates for Tinsukia, Dhakuakhana, Behali, Dhing



and Bokakhat and AIUDF-held Naoboicha are yet to be announced.

A decision regarding these seats will be taken soon. A few of these constituencies will be given to alliance partners, a Congress spokesperson said.

Apart from Saikia, legislators who were renominated are former minister Rakibul Hussain in Samaguri, Md Nurul Huda in Rupohihat, Rupiyoti Kurni in Mariani, Roseline Turkey in Sarupathar and Durga Bhumi in Doomdooma.

Golaghat is witnessing interesting developments as former minister and sitting MLA Ajanta Neog quit Congress to contest the polls on a BJP ticket, while

former AGP candidate Bitupan Saikia, who joined the BJP after being defeated by Neog in the 2016 elections by a narrow margin of 5,213 votes, switched over to the Congress and was given a party ticket.

State Congress chief and Rajya Sabha MP Ripun Bora will contest the Gohpur assembly seat where his wife Monica Bora was defeated by the BJP candidate by nearly 30,000 votes.

The party has also given tickets to 12 candidates, including four women, who had lost by slim margins in the 2016 assembly elections. This includes Rana Goswami in Jorhat, Sushanta Borgohain in Thowra, Suruj Dehingia in Mahmara, Bhupen Kumar Borah in Bihpuria, Pranewar Basumatary in Sootea, Dhruva Gogoi in Duliajan and Etuwa Munda in Tingkhong.

In Majuli seat, the party has renominated Ranaj Kumar Pegu who had represented it for three consecutive terms since 2001 but was defeated by Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal by over 18,000 votes in the 2016 elections.

INDIA CORNER

Kolkata Police recovers over Rs 60 lakh cash in drug case



The Special Task Force (STF) of the Kolkata Police on Sunday seized unaccounted cash of over Rs 60 lakh from an office here in connection with its investigation into a drug peddling case, a senior officer said. Acting on specific inputs given by a drug peddler who was arrested on March 1 from West Bengal's Purba Bardhaman district, the STF sleuths raided the office of a

person in the Jorasanko area and recovered Rs 60.97 lakh cash from there, he said. "The recovered money was sent to the office by the drug peddler through 'hawala'. We are looking for the owner of the office. He seems to have a role in drug peddling," the officer said. The STF personnel had seized over five kg of heroin, worth Rs 25.09 crore in the international market, from the arrested person. A case has been registered against the accused under relevant sections of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, the officer added.

UP: 29 people taken ill after eating 'prasad'



Twenty nine people were admitted to a hospital when they complained of stomach ache after having 'prasada' during a religious function here, police said on Sunday. A 'Bhagwat Khata' was organised at Jukhyata village here on Saturday night after which people ate 'prasada' at a 'Bhandara' following which they complained of

stomach ache and were taken to the district hospital, police said. Their condition was stated to be out of danger, police said. District Magistrate Rakesh Kumar Mishra said all those admitted were fine and a team of doctors has also been sent to the village. Senior district administration officials have also been rushed to the village to keep an eye on the situation. The doctors said those admitted had suffered food poisoning.

Sex ratio among tribals better than general population: Prez



President Ram Nath Kovind on Sunday said people can learn a lot from tribal communities where there was no gender-based discrimination and as a result, the sex ratio among them was better than the general population. Addressing a state-level 'Janjatiya Sammelan (tribal meet)' here in Madhya Pradesh, Kovind said in tribal societies, groups are given importance over individuals and cooperation is encouraged instead of competition. "We can learn a lot from our tribal brothers and sisters. In tribal communities, stress is laid on unity-based societies," he said. "There is no discrimination between men and women, and that is why the sex ratio in these communities was better than the general population," he added. As part of their lifestyle, tribals give the highest respect to nature, Kovind said.

Omar targets BJP leader Suvendhu Adhikari over Kashmir remarks



National Conference leader Omar Abdullah on Sunday hit out at BJP leader Suvendhu Adhikari for his remarks that West Bengal will become like Kashmir if the Trinamool Congress came back to power in the state. "But according to you BJP wallas Kashmir has become paradise after August 2019 so what's wrong with West Bengal becoming Kashmir? Anyway, Bengal's love Kashmir & visit us in large numbers so we forgive you your stupid, tasteless comment," Omar said in a tweet. The former J-K chief minister was reacting to Adhikari's reported statement that West Bengal would become like Kashmir if the TMC returned to power in the assembly elections. Adhikari, a former TMC leader, is contesting against his former boss Mamata Banerjee from the Nandigram seat.

Kumaraswamy hits out at move to bring petroleum under GST

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Former Karnataka Chief Minister H D Kumaraswamy on Sunday said bringing petroleum products within the ambit of GST would be a death knell for the states.

In a series of tweets in Kannada, the JD(S) second-in-command opposed the attempts to include fuel in GST and appealed to Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa not to allow this to happen as it would dry the state's resources.

"The central government is systematically pushing petroleum products into the GST in the hope of lowering prices, using public outrage against the oil price hike as pretext. Subjecting petroleum products to GST would be a death knell for states," the former Chief Minister said.

According to him, cess on petroleum products is one of the major sources of revenue for the states.

The central government levies excessive taxes and collects more revenue than the states. Now, it is the strategy of bringing petroleum into the GST and compromising the revenues of the states, he charged.

The former Chief Minister alleged that the centre has not yet provided the compensation that the states had to receive after the GST was approved, he said.

As thousands of crores have not been remitted by the centre, states have been begging for arrears, he added.

"Now, if the petroleum revenue is handed over to the centre, the states' plight will be miserable," Kumaraswamy said.

According to him, the states will suffer hardships without income and without grants for development work, which would force them to either present a deficit budget or reduce the size of the budget.

The JD(S) leader said it would impede development.

The former Chief Minister said if the centre was concerned about oil prices, let it immediately reduce its tax and then direct the states to reduce taxes.

'Feel at home in W Bengal'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

BJP leader and MP Gautam Gambhir who is likely to join party's campaign in poll-bound West Bengal on Sunday said he always felt at home in the state.

The former top order Indian batsman is likely to begin campaigning in West Bengal from March 22. He will campaign in all eight phases of the assembly polls in the state as well as in three phases of the Assam assembly polls, said an aide of the East Delhi MP.

This will be Gambhir's first full-fledged election campaign for the BJP outside Delhi. Earlier, he had campaigned for former hockey player Sandip Singh in Haryana assembly polls last year. His plans for a visit to Jammu and Kashmir during the district development council (DDC) polls in December 2020 did not materialise.

Gambhir said he felt "sad and dejected" over West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's remarks that the BJP



was a party of "outsiders" and it had no place in the state.

"Not even for a brief moment was I made to feel that I was an outsider and was not born or brought up in Kolkata or anywhere else in Bengal, that I had not attended Presidency College or Jadavpur University or that I did not have egg rolls from Park Street while growing up.

"I always felt like a part of this huge and happy family which showered me with love and blessings every time I visited the state," the former cricketer said. Gambhir, under whose cap-

taincy Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) won two finals of the IPL, has a fan following among the youth of the state where polls for 294 assembly seats will begin on March 27.

The fate of the West Bengal people and the state cannot be decided by bombs and bullets, Gambhir said expressing concern over "incessant and mindless" killings of political workers and violent clashes between parties.

Multiple reports of bomb making factories working in overdrive have surfaced in recent times, he said.

"Intimidation, threats and violence have been made new normal by the Left and the Trinamool Congress for decades and it has now become a part of the political culture of Bengal?," he alleged.

He said the ruling party is willing to go to any extent to silence any opposition in the state. This is not the ethos of Bengal and the voters in the state must make it clear, the BJP leader said.

Six states reporting high daily COVID-19 cases

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Six states including Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab and Gujarat are reporting high daily COVID-19 cases, accounting for 84.71 per cent of the 18,711 new cases, the Union Health Ministry said on Sunday.

Maharashtra continues to report the highest daily new cases at 10,187. It is followed by Kerala with 2,791 while Punjab reported 1,159 new cases.

The Centre is continuously engaging with the states and UTs reporting higher caseload of active cases and those showing a rise in the daily new COVID cases, the ministry said.

It has deputed high-level teams to Maharashtra and Punjab, that are showing steep increase in the daily new cases.

The other states reporting high daily COVID-19 cases are Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

Eight states are displaying an upward trajectory in daily new cases, the ministry highlighted. India's total COVID-9 active

cases increased to 1.84 lakh (1,84,523) which now consists of 1.65 per cent of the total infections.

According to the data, 100 deaths were reported in a span of 24 hours.

Six states account for 87 per cent of the new deaths. Maharashtra saw the maximum casualties (47). Kerala follows with 16 daily deaths. Punjab reported 12 deaths.

In the past two weeks, 10 states have not reported any COVID-19 deaths while 12 states reported between 1 and 10 deaths.

Nineteen states and UTs have not reported any COVID-19 deaths in a span of 24 hours. These are Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Chandigarh, Uttarakhand, Goa, Odisha, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Sikkim, Lakshadweep, Ladakh (UT), Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Daman and Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Tripura, Mizoram, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Arunachal Pradesh.

Will not seek share in power should DMK win: TN Cong

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Congress Committee president K S Alagiri on Sunday said his party did not intend seeking a share in power if the DMK is elected after the April 6 assembly poll.

He expressed joy over the Congress getting 25 seats from the Dravidian partner. His party has, however, sought a Rajya Sabha seat from the DMK, the TNCC leader said.

After signing the seat sharing agreement with DMK chief M K Stalin here, Alagiri, all smiles, told reporters that the conclusion of the deal has given his party huge enthusiasm and joy.

Secularism is the converging point for Congress, DMK and other constituents, he said.

"BJP is a big disease of the country and it is trying to infect others as well," he alleged.

Asked if there was a chance for the Congress to seek a share in power if the DMK was voted into office as there were



'talks' of BJP making such a demand with the AIADMK, he said, "no, we have no such intention."

"No," he said to a question on whether he would contest the assembly election.

During the 2006-11 DMK regime, a Congress chorus of 'share in power' was well-known. However, the Dravidian party, then led by late M Karunanidhi, did not give in to the clamour.

The AIADMK those days had often mocked at the DMK as a 'minority' government for depending on the support of its

allies to survive.

Asked if his party has sought a Rajya Sabha seat from the DMK, Alagiri answered in the affirmative, adding that the DMK has assured them that it would consider the request.

In June 2022, six Rajya Sabha members, four from the ruling AIADMK and two from the main opposition DMK, will retire.

Alagiri denied that his party was currently not giving prominence to its slogan of setting up 'Kamaraj rule' in Tamil Nadu.

The Congress would give a thrust to the slogan after the 2021 Assembly election and work for it as "this is the time to defeat the BJP and not the time to bring about the rule of Kamaraj.

After beating the BJP we will bring Kamaraj's rule," he said.

A Congress icon and freedom fighter, K Kamaraj was a former Chief Minister and is respected by people cutting across party lines for his honesty, good governance and a life dedicated for the people.

Hindu Mahasabha's yatra to hail Godse, Apte

PNS ■ GWALIOR

The Akhil Bharatiya Hindu Mahasabha on Sunday said it would embark on a vehicle rally from here to Delhi on March 14 to inform people about the lives Mahatma Gandhi's assassin Nathuram Godse and co-conspirator Narayan Apte. Notably, in January this year, the right wing group opened a study centre on Godse at its office here in Madhya Pradesh, but closed it two days later following intervention by the district administration.

Risky resolve

Will Mamata's decision to contest Nandigram backfire or bring her back to power?

Electoral politics is a tricky game and, for political parties that are practically a one-person show, it's especially important for the supremo to choose to contest from such an Assembly seat that it sends a strong message among the masses that the leader is attached to the grassroots and doesn't hesitate to take the rivals head on. This has a psychological impact on the voters, not only in the particular constituency the leader contests from but across the State, which helps consolidate the vote bank in that party's favour. TMC chief Mamata Banerjee seems to have hit the right note by deciding to contest from Nandigram, the seat held by her one-time confidant Suwendu Adhikari who dumped the TMC to join the BJP in December. By doing so, Mamata — who is beleaguered by a spate of defections from the TMC in the five months preceding the Assembly elections — has taken the fight to the BJP's camp and tried to project a pro-poor image by returning to her political roots. The Trinamool's sweep of Nandigram in 2007 is one of the key factors that paved the way for her political resurrection and catapulted her to power in 2011. Adhikari, who wields considerable influence in the constituency, had thrown down the gauntlet to Mamata to contest from the seat. Now, Mamata seems to have accepted the challenge and asserted that "this is a smiley election". It might appear to be a case of simple political enmity but

there is no denying that it has deeper political connotations. With almost 40 per cent Muslim voters and a sizeable number of Dalits in the constituency, Mamata might be confident of her win and Adhikari, after all, may not have very bright prospects of defeating her but the contest here will certainly be demanding on her in terms of time, energy and attention to other seats; in other words, a victory in Nandigram might cost Mamata a few other constituencies. At a time when Didi is already licking the wounds inflicted by scores of defectors, her special focus on Nandigram might cost the Trinamool dear in West Bengal. Undoubtedly, Adhikari — who was the architect of the ouster of the Left from Nandigram in 2007 — is the BJP's biggest acquisition but the saffron party's real objective is to oust the TMC from power and not just win the battle of prestige. So, from this viewpoint, Mamata's decision to contest from the constituency might actually serve the BJP which has already launched its "Mission 200+ ". Moreover, Mamata's dropping out of Kolkata's Bhowanipore seat, which she represented for two terms and where her party trailed in the 2019 general elections by a few thousand votes, has given the saffron party ammunition to mock her by saying that it shows her nervousness. Whether it is Didi's apprehensiveness or a bold, calculated move, or the BJP's ploy to make Mamata channelise all her energy and focus on to Nandigram, thus making her a spent force elsewhere, is the moot question which only voters will answer. For now, with the recent turn of events, West Bengal has become a hot spot of politics with the parties doing all that they can to win the elections.



A Japanese macaque soaks in a hot spring in Jigokudani valley in Nagano Prefecture, northwest of Tokyo

Diabolical dowry

A young woman's recent suicide in Ahmedabad must jolt our conscience and nudge us to correct course

We are living in the 21st century but it seems, for a majority of women in India, we are still living in ancient times when a woman's worth was quantified by the amount of dowry she brought along at the time of marriage. What else can explain the shameful fact that when women are going into space, working as scientists and leading countries and global bodies, young women in our country are forced to end their lives because they are unable to bear the harassment meted out by their husbands and in-laws over "inadequate" dowry? The latest in the long line of victims of a despicable and archaic system, which was abolished and criminalised in India in 1961, is a 23-year-old woman from Gujarat who ended her life by jumping into Ahmedabad's Sabarmati river. Before dying, she shot a video and made an impassioned plea to all Muslims for ending the dowry system as "it is illegitimate and forbidden". Though the woman's husband was arrested for abetting her suicide, and many prominent leaders from the community have condemned those who take dowry and asked people to end this social evil, it will not bring the woman back.

Dowry is a blot on our society and country where we worship goddesses and women are considered the incarnation of Lakshmi and Durga. It is a shame that in a nation whose Prime Minister has given a clarion call for "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao", our daughters are either killed or forced to commit suicide over dowry. The National Crime Records Bureau's 2017 report is an indication of the gravity of the situation as India recorded nearly 7,000 dowry-linked deaths. Also, dowry deaths rose from 19 per day in 2001 to 21 per day in 2016. As usual, the fingers will point towards weak law enforcement and non-implementation of laws, but the fact remains that the laws are adequate to end this malaise. The Supreme Court recently made it abundantly clear that it will not tolerate harassment of women for dowry. It is we, the people, who have to change. Parents must educate their daughters and stop seeing them as a burden. If you have a self-reliant daughter with good education and a job, you don't have to pay someone for her upkeep. Women, too, should refuse to marry men who seek dowry. It is only when the parents and women grow a spine that this evil practice will end. Don't expect anyone else to come and help you. This Women's Day, do take a pledge to help yourself.

Exorcising the OROP conundrum

The 'One Rank One Pension' imbroglio is tormenting our Defence personnel and veterans, who continue to lose hope each passing day

One issue that distinguishes the Narendra Modi Government from its earlier iterations is the manner in which it has used the military, quite successfully at that, to portray an apparently muscular foreign policy, not least for the domestic audience. This has allowed it to reap rich dividends at the hustings. Yet ironically, apart from praising the military in public, Modi has done little for them on the ground, displaying little concern for the morale or well-being of its personnel.

Take the issue of welfare of our servicemen. The Government has reduced Canteen facilities, is intent on opening up and monetising Cantonment lands, adding to the insecurity of families of servicemen separated over long periods due to their spouses being deployed either operationally or on training. In addition, he has refused to authorise the Non-Functional Financial Upgrade (NFFU), which is authorised to other Central Government services, including the Central Armed Police Forces, thereby lowering their status and emoluments in comparison to the other services. The plain fact is that the grant of NFFU to bureaucrats allows them to get OROP, through the back door as it were, because nearly all of them now retire in the Apex Grade.

All these little pinpricks rattle and more so this Government's unwillingness to implement OROP in letter and spirit as envisaged by the Parliamentary Committee headed by veteran BJP MP Bhagat Singh Koshyari: A definition that had been accepted by both Houses of Parliament and the then UPA Government in power. What is particularly galling is that Modi used this very issue to galvanise the serving and veteran community during the 2014 general elections.

His sanctioning of a distorted version of what had been promised earlier forced the veterans to launch peaceful protests on June 14, 2015, which contin-



ue to this day. The fact that the Government has done nothing to resolve matters, and instead resorted to issuing misleading statements and even violence against them, is undoubtedly a precursor as to how this Government will handle the farmers' protest in the long run.

At the end of the day, the issue is very simple. All that the veterans demand is a chance to live out their retirement with dignity, feasible only if their pensions are protected from rising inflation as the majority retires relatively young; that this Government is unwilling to do so reeks of hypocrisy.

For example, even while this Government opposes OROP for its military veterans, it lost little time in ensuring that all Members of Parliament receive pensions calculated in much the same manner that military veterans have been demanding. In 2018, it amended Clause 8A of 'The Salary Allowances and Pension of Members Act, 1954', to provide for an increase in the authorised pension every five years on the basis of the Cost Inflation Index, which clearly links pensions for all former members to what is received by the incumbent.

This unfair treatment, espe-

cially the Government's refusal to put in public domain the Justice Reddy Committee (to look into anomalies in OROP) Report, submitted in October 2016, forced the military veterans to approach the Supreme Court. Over four years later, the case has made tardy progress mainly due to the Government's efforts to delay. By not taking cognisance of this issue, the Bench has not been kind to the veterans, who continue to suffer and lose hope as each day passes. What is worse, the Justices hearing the case, now in the final arguments stage, have repeatedly postponed the hearing on the grounds they have not had the requisite time to study and understand the case in detail. The next hearing is in a few days and one hopes the Bench will actually hear the case and not kick it down the road. Oddly enough for the vast majority of us, not particularly conversant with the intricacies of the judicial process, this hearing in itself appears to be completely superfluous. This is because the Supreme Court had on September 9, 2008, in its judgment in the case of Union of India and Maj Gen SPS Vains and Others, ruled: "No Defence personnel senior in rank can get lesser pension

than his junior irrespective of the date of retirement and similarly placed officers of the same rank are to be given the same pension irrespective of the date of retirement." These are directions that the Defence Ministry has yet to fully implement and which in no uncertain terms accede to what the veterans have been demanding.

Interestingly enough in 2014, when the Supreme Court was passing directions to the Government to correct the anomalies in the pensions of High Court Justices, then Chief Justice of India P Sathasivam directed that "one rank one pension must be the norm in respect of a constitutional office", a benefit which Justices of the Supreme Court already enjoyed.

Finally, can it really be the case that in a democracy like ours, the constitutional authorities do not see themselves as mere public servants and believe themselves to be superior to other Government servants and ordinary citizens? (The writer is a military veteran, who is a consultant with the Observer Research Foundation and Senior Visiting Fellow with The Peninsula Foundation, Chennai. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PUNISH THE PROTOCOL VIOLATORS

Sir — The Government must step up its awareness drive with respect to COVID-19 vaccination as many people are still not aware of the importance of getting vaccinated. Most of these people are from villages who don't follow the safety protocols. They neither sanitise their hands regularly nor wear a face mask.

The Government must advertise the list of the centres where jabs are being provided in vernacular newspapers across the nation. It must also announce it on radio and telecast the list on national television. The information will help ensure that senior citizens choose their nearest hospital for immunisation in a hassle-free manner.

Further, just imposing a fine on those who err is not enough. There should be strict punishment for not wearing the mask. It is also seen that police officials often misuse their powers and threaten the poor in the name of not adhering to the guidelines. They extort money from poor vendors who fail to wear mask or who do not wear it properly. The Government needs to disseminate information with respect to Coronavirus vaccination through all mediums of communication. It is also the responsibility of the citizens to maintain social distancing and get themselves vaccinated when their turn comes. Even for those who have taken the jab, precaution is first and foremost. We have no idea how the virus mutates or changes its form and becomes lethal. We must remember that prevention is always better than cure.

Varun Dambal | Bengaluru

GOVT MUST ACT TO END THE PLIGHT OF FARMERS

Sir — The ongoing farmers' protest is the result of the Government's arrogance as it is not ready to agree to the demand of the growers. The farmers are demanding complete repeal of the three contentious farm laws and are not ready to settle for anything less. The Government, on the other hand, is hell-bent to impose these laws as it is in consonance with its agenda of rampant privatisation. It will be a setback to the prevailing Minimum Support Price (MSP) system

Food wastage is a curse



It refers to the editorial 'Blasphemous' (March 6). It is a sin to waste food but the reality is that when people go to restaurants and eateries, they waste food as they order more than they can eat. The rest of the food in their plate is thrown into dustbins. Despite the Government's attempts to provide food security to all, it is still a distant dream.

Thousands die of hunger every year in India and abroad and yet people don't realise the importance of not wasting food. The United

Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) report 2021 showing 50 kg per year per person food wastage is both worrying and disheartening in view of the fact that the wastage accounting for millions of metric tonnes, if saved, can save thousands of lives of the hungry and the malnourished.

We must not forget about the plight of those who go to bed hungry. Thousands of labourers, who were recently forced to leave the big cities and migrate back to their villages during the COVID-19 lockdown, are struggling hard to sustain themselves. We have responsibility towards our poor brethren. It is also seen that people who order food at home too waste much in their plate. While placing an online order, we must take care that we order only the quantity which we can easily consume. There is a lot of wastage of vegetables, fruits and other items like fish, meat and eggs during transportation and due to lack of proper storage facilities.

Azhar A Khan | Rampur

for the crops and will finish off the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) mandis in India.

The 100-day period of protest is a blot on India's democracy and the treatment meted out to the protesters is simply inhumane. However, the Opposition is with the farmers. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi hit out at the Centre over the farmers' protest and said nails were laid at Delhi's borders for those, whose sons risk their lives at the country's borders.

Farmers, mostly from Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh, have been camping at several border points of Delhi, including Tikri, Singhu and Ghazipur, since November 28 last year but farmers across the India are now coming out in their support.

Yash Pal Ralhan | Jalandhar

WHY NEED CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT?

Sir — Companies signing celebrities as the brand ambassadors for their products seems

to be the trend. While the intended purpose of such a move is to push up the sales, when a product has a fair market share, what is the need for brand ambassadors?

Further, when a company can achieve a sizeable market share for a product on its own strength, why should it spend unnecessarily? And naturally, such expenditure will have a bearing on the buyers as product price will go up, for where else will the company find money to meet such heavy expenditures?

To sum up, a product does not need any endorsement if it has a fair share of acceptance in the market. Even if celebrities are roped in, seldom does it help boost the sales, for the people know better about the products than the celebrities. The product must be of such quality that consumers purchase it even if a celebrity doesn't endorse it.

V S Jayaraman | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



DEEPAK SINHA

SOUND BITE

The State Government will ensure piped water in every household in Gujarat, including those in the slums and shanties, by 2022.

Gujarat Chief Minister — Vijay Rupani

By the end of June, we will already be in economic normality. We are going to have greater growth and recovery in industrial activity.

Mexico President — Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador

Abbas-Mustan are like family to me. It's been a 22-year association since Soldier. I have always loved their vision of making movies.

Actor — Bobby Deol

The health of the elite athletes training in the national camp for Olympics is our priority, but we have to follow protocol of the health department.

Union Sports Minister — Kiren Rijiju

The Delhi Cabinet has given approval for constitution of the Delhi Board of School Education.

Delhi Chief Minister — Arvind Kejriwal

FIRST COLUMN

EMPOWERMENT BEGINS AT HOME

Parents have to walk the talk and drive home the point that the girl child is no different from her male sibling



RAVI CHANDER KOCHHAR

Women’s empowerment has often been a buzzword and the central theme of numerous seminars, webinars and panel discussions in the recent past. This is more so as International Women’s Day, which is celebrated on March 8, approaches. At every such forum, it has been emphasised that a woman must have the courage to stand up and make her presence felt to ensure that she gets her due in every walk of life, be it her family, educational institutions or the workplace. All stakeholders, including the Government and society must play their respective role in ensuring women empowerment, for nurturing and effectively taking women on board for nation building.

Here, rather than mere formulation and enactment of various policies and provisions, society has a much more important role to play in achieving the desired outcome. If you study life histories of those who have made a mark in society, they follow a certain pattern with commonalities including their upbringing, education and career profile, further signifying the impactful role societies play in women’s empowerment.



As it is said, “charity begins at home”, the starting point for women’s empowerment is within the family where each sibling must be given equal opportunity all through their formative years. In this regard, parents can play a very important role and both mother and father have to walk the talk and consciously drive home the point among the children that the girl child is no different and doesn’t have to be treated differently.

The second stage which equally influences the mindset of the young generation towards the principles of gender equality and women empowerment is at the educational institutions. It is here that they come out of their homes and join peers of both genders. These children are under the mentorship of their teachers and the onus lies with the schools and colleges to ensure that the girl child is given a fair chance at every level, not only in academics and research but in all other extracurricular activities as well. It is up to the management to ensure an equal opportunity to all. There should be no discrimination in the selection process and every male and female candidate should be given a fair chance. Thereafter, all through their career, it must be ensured that women are given opportunities at par with their male counterparts and assessed on the same parameters for professional appraisal and promotions. It is also the responsibility of the management to create a conducive work environment devoid of any form of discrimination.

Further, considering the special needs of women and the biological differences with men, maternity and other leaves should be granted at the appropriate time. On the other hand, women must not take any undue favour or advantage and must climb the ladder of success on their merit. Be it professional, administrative, or interpersonal relationship, women must move with confidence. They must prove themselves as competent, committed and self-motivated. Moreover, there is a need to change the male mindset and men must understand that in today’s competitive world with the ethos of gender equality at the helm, if any woman is better, they must accept the fact, learn to respect her authority and take orders from a female boss. Remember there are no free lunches and every opportunity comes with a price tag. The question is whether you are ready to pay the price!

(The writer is Group Pro Vice Chancellor, Amity University, Uttar Pradesh. The views expressed are personal.)

Defying norms for better lives

Sadly, in spite of women’s foray into many non-traditional fields, only one-quarter of Indian women, compared to 82 per cent of men, are in the labour market

This year, two women created history by joining the Telangana Southern Power Distribution Corporation Limited (TSSPD-CL) as junior powerline workers and becoming a part of a workforce that has solely comprised men in the State. The women did so after qualifying tests, including climbing up an electric pole. Still the job didn’t come on a platter. The duo had to knock on the High Court’s door, challenging the corporation’s stand that “such posts are reserved for men.”

Nevertheless, despite such occupational segregations and archaic rules, many women dared to storm male bastions. Surely, Delhi’s Mehrunnisha Shokat Ali is one of them. She has been working as a bouncer for the last 15 years, demolishing the notion that women belong to the weaker sex and need men’s protection. “I was always fascinated by people in the Army and the police. But I couldn’t nurture any such ambitions as my highly orthodox father was totally against giving any of his daughters an education. Thankfully, my mother sent us to school”, reminiscences Mehrunnisha. “When I joined the NCC in school, my father got furious and burnt my uniform. Luckily, by that time, I had learnt some basics of judo and boxing. Later, after seeing a posse of well-built men in black suits in the show Indian Idol, I wanted to become one of them”, she recounts.

However, after her father suffered a loss in business, the responsibility of becoming the family’s breadwinner was thrust on her. Luckily she met Arun Rana, who owns a security agency and a restaurant in Hauz Khas, South Delhi. Rana engaged her in his restaurant as he was “looking for women bouncers to put female customers at ease and found her very capable of easing any tension.” Now, in her mid-30s, Mehrunnisha, who maintains a strict workout regime, has earned the experience of working with many high-profile women and men in the world of film, entertainment and business. She looks forward to launching her own security agency with her sister Tarannum, who is also a bouncer.

Unlike the Ali sisters, for 24-year-old Sabina working for a top global brand in Gurugram, the path was less bumpy. Sabina confidently says: “I learnt martial arts in order to become a bouncer. I am not in the profession for money alone, I get a lot of respect in my workplace. I shall marry, only if I am allowed to work.” Now, the vice-president of a security agency with a pan-India clientele, Sabina admits that “there is a growing demand for women security personnel and many clients consider them safe, more disciplined and efficient.”

The security business is not the only glass ceiling that women are breaking. While, in the Indian psyche, alcohol, cocktails, booze are still taboo words and going to a bar is a strict “no, no” for girls, there are many women like Delhi’s Suchana Bera Sharma, who are breaking the barriers here too. A management degree-holder, Suchana is a mixologist and currently the India brand head of a major player in the global spirits industry. A prolific travel, cuisine and lifestyle writer with a huge Instagram following, Suchana explains that “mixology is not only about creating a unique blend, but delving deep into the history and culture of each drink by continuously educating one-



THIS MAJOR GENDER GAP IN EMPLOYMENT CAN ONLY BE REVERSED BY TURNING THE FOCUS ON WOMEN IN ECONOMIC REVIVAL STRATEGIES AND ADOPTING A GENDER-SENSITIVE APPROACH IN A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD. ONLY THEN WILL WE BE ABLE TO CREATE A ‘NEW INDIA’

The writer is former Director-General, Doordarshan, and All India Radio. She was also Press Secretary, President of India. The views expressed are personal.



self, along with hands-on experience.” A young mother, she gives the credit for her success to her parents, husband and two siblings and says “more women are now shaking off inhibitions, coming forward and supporting each other.”

Though women at the steering wheel may not be an uncommon sight, but, choosing it as a vocation is. Notwithstanding age-old biases about women drivers, Delhi’s Anjana, Kolkata’s Manasi and Jaipur’s Ganga are professional drivers. Leaving behind their traumatic past, all of them got their training under the ‘Women at the Wheels’ programme of the Azad Foundation, a multi-city-based NGO. Anjana, who has been driving commercial cabs for the last eight years, now confidently says that, “I enjoy my work. I got my heavy vehicle driving licence in 2020 and am ready for any challenging job.” Trapped in an unhappy marriage with a drunkard husband who had no fixed income, Anjana was desperately looking for a job to feed her two children when Azad Foundation came to her aid. Anjana, now, in her late-30s, says that “my life’s only mission is to fulfil the dreams of my two children. My husband no longer interferes in my life, though the separation suit is still pending in the court.” Manasi, a victim of child marriage, proudly says, “I use my Alto 300 car for commercial rides, which I got under the

West Bengal Government’s Gatidhara scheme in 2019. This way I can feed my family.” She lost her husband even before her first child was born. Manasi was soon thrown out of her in-laws’ house, while, her impoverished father was equally unwilling to bear her burden. In search of a living, she left her father’s home for Kolkata, got a job at a loan financing company for a paltry sum, which enabled her to put her son at a care agency. In her lone struggle, she was duped by an unscrupulous man with false promises of marriage, who deserted her once she became pregnant. The local church came to her rescue and her life got irrevocably changed once she came in touch with the Azad Foundation. Now, her elder son is in a boarding school, the younger one studies in a reputed school in Kolkata and Manasi is saving money for a house of her own.

While, Ganga’s poor father married her off at an early age, and at her in-laws’ place, she faced continuous harassment, initially, for dowry, and later, for giving birth to two girl children. When she came to live with her husband in his workplace at Jaipur, she attempted to commit suicide along with her daughters when she couldn’t bear the mental and physical torture any more. She was rescued from the railway station and given shelter at a welfare home, where she worked for some time,

and put her daughters in an orphanage. Today, her daughters stay with her, study in good schools, and she is the owner of two cars. She drives one herself while the other one is driven by her sister. Ganga says that “I don’t want to look back, and I would like to help more women who suffered like me.”

Amrita Gupta, director, research and advocacy, Azad Foundation says that in order to encourage resource-poor women, who are mostly first generation learners, a flexible training mode is followed, covering technical skills for the licence test, and also transformative aspects like spoken English, self-defence, basic etiquette. On an average, about 300-400 women get training every year and about 50 per cent of them get placements.

Sadly, in spite of women’s foray into many non-traditional fields, only one-quarter of Indian women, compared to 82 per cent of men, are in the labour market, says a World Economic Forum, 2020 report. Worryingly, this is likely to shrink further by 23.5 percentage points in the post-pandemic phase, says Oxfam.

This major gender gap in employment can only be reversed by turning the focus on women in economic revival strategies and adopting a gender-sensitive approach in a post-pandemic world. Only then will we be able to create a ‘New India.’

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

I WILL CONTEST FROM NANDIGRAM AS I STICK TO MY WORDS. THIS IS A SMILEY ELECTION. —WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER MAMATA BANERJEE



WE WANT THE SON OF MIDNAPORE, NOT OUTSIDERS. WE WILL SEE YOU ON THE BATTLEFIELD. ON MAY 2, YOU WILL LOSE AND LEAVE. —BJP LEADER SUVENDU ADHIKARI

When the unsung dare to dream and sing despite all odds

If we look around us, in the communities closest to us, we may find many such women shining beneath the rubble of class, caste and poverty

It is quite customary to see the world applauding women achievers around the time of the International Women’s Day, which is today. Scores of felicitation ceremonies where women trailblazers are recognised for their contribution are organised across the length and breadth of the country and around the world. It is encouraging to see the accolades and to learn about the women who are finally being given their space under the Sun.

But this article is a story about a young woman whom few know and as of now, her public face is limited, to say the least. She is not part of a large organisation. She is the daughter of the woman who helps to keep the wheels of my domestic set-up move smoothly. Her name is Shilpa and she is all of 23.



SWATI PAL

The writer is Principal, Janki Devi Memorial College, University of Delhi. The views expressed are personal.

I first heard about Shilpa when her mother started helping me out at home around six-and-a-half-years ago. She is the eldest of four siblings, all girls. Her mother would often tell me sorrowfully about how she would be taunted by others for not having borne a son and I would pacify her and tell her that I, too, was one of four daughters. It was always wonderful to hear about her daughters and slowly as the anecdotes were narrated, I learnt about Shilpa.

I learnt that she could sing Hindi, English and even Punjabi songs. Soon I was delighted to actually hear her sing and she sang with her father, a man who makes his living by setting up a food stall where he sells the most delicious biryani among other delicacies. The father sang melodiously but Shilpa’s voice

simply held me spell-bound. It was powerful, it was musical and it was like liquid gold. Not a note out of place. And the felicity with which she sang English songs quite took my breath away.

Shilpa was never interested in studies but completed her school education till the 12th standard. Hearing her talk in English and listening to her sing, in three different languages with equal fluency, I understood as never before that the university of life is as educative as actual institutions of repute and concrete.

Shilpa tells me, and I quote her own words, in English, “I did not learn to sing. I used to sing on my own and listen to the songs on radio and TV. I heard a



brother (boy) singing, his name is Vijay. He took me to his NGO named Ideal Youth Health and Welfare Society and when we went there, he told me that we could sing there. That platform became my identity for me.”

As time went by, Shilpa met like-minded people at the NGO, people who nurtured a passion for singing like herself. And with them, she

formed a band, the Savitribai Phule Band. I marveled at the appropriateness of the name: Who better than the great Indian social reformer and educationist, Savitribai Phule often credited as being the mother of Indian feminism, to name one’s band after. The band members are Shivraj, Raja, Aman, Varsha, Neha, Sunil, Rohit and Shilpa herself. Shivraj is the Coordinator. Sunil plays the cohone, Aman and Varsha, the guitar and Neha and Raja form the chorus. Shilpa is the lead singer of the band and is accompanied by Rohit. They have performed professionally at various places in Delhi including the Viswa Yuva Kendra where their performance was hugely appreciated and also at Lucknow and

Chandigarh.

Shilpa is a representative of women who dare to dream, who are powerhouses of talent and creativity, who do not allow their social standing to come between them and the world. If we look around us, in the communities closest to us, we may find many such women, who are precious gemstones, shining beneath the rubble of class, caste and poverty.

The college which I have been a part of for close to three decades has many such students. Students who come from the most underprivileged situations but that did not prevent Aisha from becoming a writer, Smridhi from becoming a police officer and Shweta from becoming a professional photographer (names have been changed). One may have been a Delhi Road Transport bus

driver’s daughter, another may have had a sex worker as her mother and yet another may have a parent who sweeps the road. But they became who they are today, after beating all odds. On the sheer dint of their talent and hard work.

When I asked Shilpa what her dreams and plans for the future are, she answered fearlessly and confidently, “I want to be a very big singer in the future. I want to take my band forward and perform abroad.”

She trains daily. Sings wherever called. Her passion burns bright. She is undaunted by circumstances. Failures never dim her ebullient spirit. So she may have no definitive plan of action but somehow, I know she’s going to make it big, as big as the dreams she has. If she is only allowed to sing, the way she wants.

Global trends, oil price to dictate market trend this week: Analysts

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Stock markets will focus on long term bond yield trends, crude oil prices and macro-economic data this week as investors look for cues amid volatility, according to analysts.

Besides, investments by FPIs (Foreign Portfolio Investors) as well as domestic investors, movement of rupee against the US dollar and developments on the coronavirus front are likely to be closely watched for cues.

"The US 10 Year G-Sec yields have surpassed 1.5 per cent on a closing basis which is somewhat negative for global equities. The Dollar Index has also moved up from 90 to 92 level, which is seen as a negative for emerging market currencies and also equities.

"In the absence of any major domestic trigger Indian markets could take a cue from global developments and the US markets," said Rusmik Oza, Executive Vice President, Head of Fundamental Research at Kotak Securities.



The tone of the market seems to be on the downside, for now, Oza added.

On March 5, benchmark BSE Sensex tumbled over 440 points and the NSE Nifty cracked below the psychological 15,000-level amid relentless sell-off in global equities as US bond market turmoil continued to rattle investors.

The 30-share Sensex plummeted by 440.76 points or 0.87 per cent to close at

50,405.32, continuing its falling trend for the second day on Friday due to concerns over bond yields. The NSE barometer Nifty ended lower by 142.65 points or 0.95 per cent at 14,938.10.

"In the coming week, the market will be mainly focusing on the expectations on whether the Fed, in its upcoming meeting, will maintain its accommodative stance in a rising bond yield

market. Additionally, Fed's measures to maintain low-interest rate and high liquidity will also provide relief to the market sentiments," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

On a weekly basis, the Sensex gained 1,305.33 points or 2.65 per cent.

Analysts, however, believe the broader market is expected to consolidate or correct further amid a bearish mar-

ket sentiment.

"On a weekly basis, despite the market closing in the positive territory the market mood was sluggish. A substantial jump in the long term treasury yields and upward activity in the dollar index towards 92, resulted in weakness across the globe," said Shrikant Chouhan, Executive Vice President, Equity Technical Research at Kotak Securities.

Further, Chouhan noted that "in the coming week, we could see Nifty/ Sensex touching minimum 14,750/ 50,000 or 14,550/ 49,300 levels. On the higher side, 15,150/ 51,200 and 15,280/ 51,600 would be major hurdles. The focus should be on FMCG and auto companies".

Moreover, investors will also track domestic macroeconomic triggers -- CPI, WPI and IIP -- for further cues.

Investors will also track movements in Brent crude prices as rising oil prices is another risk for Indian markets. Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, is currently hovering around USD 69 per barrel.

PVR to invest Rs 150 cr to add 30-40 screens next fiscal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Multiplex major PVR plans to invest Rs 150 crore to open up to 40 screens across the country in the next fiscal.

The company's target of having 1,000 operational screens has been pushed by a year due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic to the end of fiscal 2022-23, a top company official has said.

"We had to push back our plan by exactly a year because of the pandemic ... By the end of the financial year 2022-23, we should be able to reach 1,000 screens," Sanjeev Kumar Bijli, Joint Managing Director, PVR Ltd told PTI.

The company, which added 9 new screens this week in Mysuru and Kanpur, plans to add 30-40 new screens in the next financial year beginning April 1. Bijli said Rs 150 crore would be outlay for the opening of new screens in the next fiscal.

PVR at present operates over 844 screens at 177 properties in 71 cities (India and Sri Lanka). Bijli said a strong content pipeline of star-studded Indian and regional films as well as foreign language films along with an aggressive vac-



cination drive in the country will bring back audiences to the cinema.

"We have had a mixed couple of last months. Not very exciting because no big Hindi movie got released. Hindi movies will start releasing from March 11. We have a strong content pipeline. The year (next fiscal) looks very promising," he added.

When asked if the company is also looking for acquisition opportunities for adding screens, Bijli said the company always looks at the options available.

"There is no one approach for growth. We keep an eye out for all sorts of opportunities as long as they make sense in

terms of numbers, location," he noted. The multiplex industry has been one of the worst impacted segments due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The government allowed cinema halls across the country to operate at full capacity from February 1 with adherence to COVID-19 safety protocols.

Prior to that, multiplexes and cinema halls were operating at 50 per cent sitting capacity in accordance with the Unlock-5 guidelines issued by the government following the pandemic. Multiplexes and cinema halls were closed for almost seven months and opened in October last year.

Jungo TV bets big on market, launches Jungo Plus app

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The US-based streaming media company Jungo TV is betting big on the Indian market and has launched its Jungo Plus app that will deliver free live TV and video-on-demand content.

The app will house content from Hollywood blockbusters to passion-centric content verticals like combat sports, LGBTQ, K-pop, international and Indian traditional music among other categories.

"The unique feature that differentiates us with other players in the market is the fact that we deep dive into verticals that audiences are passionate about like e-sports, international music, Indian music,

LGBTQ, K-Pop, Hollywood movies and others as a part of our content strategy," Jungo TV CEO George Chung told PTI.

All the content on the platform is ad-supported and free to watch for the end-customer, he added.

Founded in 2016 and headquartered in Los Angeles, Jungo TV currently reaches over 800 million viewers worldwide. It has existing strategic and content relationships in India with players like NXT Digital (The Hinduja Group), MX Player, Art and Artistes, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and The Art of Living Global Network, among others.

With the addition of Jungo Plus, along with a proprietary

ad network in partnership with Verizon Media, Jungo TV aims to target audiences in India with its deep-rooted content verticals; a viable business proposition for the brand, content, and platform partners.

"With the diversity of India's population, increased content consumption on mobile phones, and variety of interests, Jungo TV is poised to be India's leading platform to provide audiences with programming that will fuel their passions," Chung said.

He added that the app is available in India on Apple iOS Store and Google Play, and the company is in conversation with other local Indian platforms to expand to other devices.

Demand for campaign merchandise low

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Traders selling election campaign merchandise said that COVID-19 pandemic and strict restrictions by the Election Commission have kept the demand for campaign material for West Bengal Assembly polls this year low compared to earlier elections.

They said most of the demand till now for poll campaign material is from the Trinamool Congress which has already announced its full list of candidates on Friday.

"Demand is on the lower side compared to previous elections due to various factors including COVID-19 and EC's restrictions," traders said. However, they are opti-

mistic that demand will pick-up as poll heat rises with every passing day.

The traders at Burrabazar are hopeful that once the full candidate list of BJP candidates is announced demand will kick-in. The BJP on Saturday announced its first list of 57 candidates for the West Bengal Assembly election.

More than 90 per cent demand is from TMC and their demand is since the last few days even before the candidate list was announced. The demand from Left parties and BJP are around 5 per cent each as of now. Congress is out of sight," SP Textile poll merchandise wholesaler at Burrabazaar Rahul Gambhir told PTI.

Govt proposes to hike in LIC's authorised capital

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government has proposed to significantly increase the authorised capital of LIC to Rs 25,000 crore to facilitate its listing slated for the next fiscal.

Currently, the paid-up capital of the life insurance company with over 29 crore policies is Rs 100 crore. Starting with an initial capital of Rs 5 crore in 1956, LIC has an asset base of Rs 31,96,214.81 crore. The authorised share capital of LIC shall be Rs 25,000 crore divided into 2,500 crore shares of Rs 10 each, as per the amendments proposed in the Life Insurance Corporation Act, 1956.

MONEY MATTERS

NTPC resumes power supply after Sikkim assures payment

NTPC has restored power supply to Sikkim after the state's assurance of paying the outstanding amount of Rs 89-crore in a time-bound manner, a company official said on Sunday. From midnight of March 3, the country's largest power producer NTPC had stopped 105 megawatt (MW) of power supply to Sikkim because of non-payment of Rs 89 crore outstanding dues. Despite the requirement of a Letter of Credit, Sikkim was not maintaining the same. "NTPC Ltd has today (March 7) restored power supply to the state from 00:00 hours," the official said. Sikkim has committed to releasing the outstanding amount within the time frame of six months. It has opened a Letter of Credit (LC) and the state has paid bills for two months to NTPC, the official informed. The power distribution utilities are mandated to open a Letter of Credit for getting power supply from generation firms. NTPC, under the Ministry of Power, is India's largest power producer.



India Inc's overseas investment declines 31 pc to USD 1.85 bn



India Inc's overseas direct investment fell by 31 per cent to USD 1.85 billion in February this year, the RBI data showed. Domestic companies made investments of USD 2.66 billion in their overseas subsidiaries and joint-ventures in the year-ago month, February 2020. Of the total investment made by Indian companies in foreign markets, USD 1.36 billion was in the form of loan; USD 297.37 million comprised as equity investment and the rest of USD 183.82 million was by way of issuance of guarantee, according to the RBI data on outward foreign direct investment (OFDI) - February 2021. However, total OFDI by domestic firms in February was higher than that of USD 1.19 billion in January 2021. Among the major companies who invested in their overseas ventures during the month included Tata Steel (USD 1 billion in its wholly-owned subsidiary in Singapore), and Sun Pharmaceutical Industries -- USD 100 million in a joint venture in the US.

Ministry seeks provision to auction mineral blocks

The Mines Ministry has proposed a clause to enable the central government to auction mineral blocks in case the states face difficulties in sale of such mines. The move aims at ensuring continuous supply of minerals in the country with the auction of more number of mineral blocks on regular basis. Under the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) (MMDR) Act, the states conduct auction of mineral concessions. "To ensure continuous supply of minerals in the country, more number of mineral blocks are required to be brought into auction on regular basis. Any delay in the conduct of auction has substantial impact on the availability as well as prices of minerals. Hence, it is proposed to provide the power to central government to conduct auction in cases where the state governments face challenges in conducting the auction or fail to conduct auction," the mines ministry has said.



50K offline retailers now part of local shops: Amazon India



E-commerce major Amazon on Sunday said more than 50,000 offline retailers and neighbourhood kirana stores across 450 cities in the country are now part of its 'Local Shops' programme. Launched in April this year, 'Local Shops' aims to enable local shopkeepers and kirana store owners to sell online. In October, Amazon India had said the programme had seen participation from over 20,000 retailers in 400 cities. More than 50,000 offline retailers and neighbourhood stores from 450 cities - from metros to tier II and tier III cities like Sangli, Osmanabad, Jamnagar, Gorakhpur, Jabalpur, Ratlam, Bikaner, Tumkur, Jalpaiguri, Kanchipuram and Dehradun have joined the Local Shops on Amazon programme, a statement said on Sunday. They offer customers in their cities a wide range of products including fresh flowers, home and kitchen products, furniture, electronics, books and toys amongst others, it added.

Audi to launch electric e-tron range in next 2-3 months

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

German luxury carmaker Audi will launch its fully electric SUV e-tron and crossover e-tron Sportback in India in the next two to three months to kick off its EV journey in the country, according to a senior company official.

The company, which had earlier planned to launch the e-tron towards the end of the last year, had to alter the plan in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic and is now planning to launch the two EVs under the e-tron range simultaneously as it bets big on electric mobility in India. Globally, Audi had announced a five-year plan under which it would launch 30 electrified vehicles.

Toyota plans to take rural road to realise sales potential of Glanza

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Having established its presence in urban centres, Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM) is now looking to expand its sales network in rural areas in the country as it aims to tap demand for its entry-level products like Glanza and Urban Cruiser in such locations.

The company, a joint venture between Japanese auto major Toyota and Kirloskar Group, plans to ensure that a major part of any future investment on sales network expansion is now directed towards smaller cities and towns.

"We now plan to go into interior parts of the country as we have already established our sales network in the big cities," TKM Senior Vice President Naveen Soni told PTI in an interaction.

The company needs to bolster its presence in smaller cities, towns and rural areas as

the demand for products like Glanza and Urban Cruiser is much stronger in such areas, he added.

"A and B vehicle segments are the primary domain of smaller cities where we do not have adequate presence right now. We are trying to have dealership expansion in such a manner that we can meet the market requirements," Soni noted.

The company currently has around 419 dealers across the country. Last year it opened around 50 outlets of which 70-80 per cent were in the rural areas.

"We are now making a plan for this year. The most important thing that we are proposing now is the focus on smaller townships, the rural India. It is where we are going to focus. It is in such locations where our new products from the alliance partner will be more accepted," Soni said. As per a global collaboration

between Toyota and Suzuki, Maruti Suzuki sells Vitara Brezza to TKM which after making certain design changes sells the model as Urban Cruiser in the domestic market.

TKM also gets MSI's premium hatchback Baleno under the same arrangement and sells it as Glanza in the market.

When asked about future products it expects to get from the alliance partner, Soni said the company would continue to evaluate the market and see which products fit its requirement. He however noted that SUVs continue to dominate sales in the country.

"Already one-third of the passenger vehicle sales are driven by SUVs. That being the case SUVs would play an important role in any automobile company's portfolio," Soni said when asked about the company's plans regarding expanding its SUV portfolio in the country.

Excitel partners with Zee5, eyes 3L users

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Broadband service provider Excitel aims to add about 3 lakh new users this year and is undertaking a series of steps to woo subscribers, including partnering OTT (Over-the-top) players like Zee5, Eros Now and others.

The company, which had about 5 lakh subscribers across 19 cities at the end of 2020, is also aggressively expanding FTTH (fibre to the home) deployment on its network.

"There was a general trend of people moving from broadcast television to more OTT but that got accelerated during COVID. We understand that people subscribe to multiple OTT services and want to make it easier to access these and so, we

are bundling multiple OTT services with our package," Excitel CEO Vivek Raina told PTI.

He added that while the three-month package for its FTTH customers is a pilot, depending on the response, the company will look at expanding the offering as well as partnering with more OTT companies.

The bundled service will allow subscribers to access content from ZEE5, Voot, Eros Now and ShemarooMe for free with Excitel's 300 Mbps for 3 months plan.

Raina said since February, the company is selling only FTTH (or optical fibre) connections and all new customers being onboarded get fibre lines.



Data sharing, cybersecurity top concerns for banks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Data sharing, cybersecurity and data protection have emerged as the top concern areas for the banks as well as customers, according to a Deloitte's report on open banking.

"About 70 per cent survey respondents feel that greater emphasis should be made towards data protection by institutions," said the report 'Open banking: Unleashing the power of data and seizing new opportunities'.

Deloitte said the insights in the paper are supported by extensive research, past work, and credentials, complemented by a survey to understand customer needs with 400 plus respondents across age groups and population codes.

The report further said more than 80 per cent of respondents



are uncomfortable in sharing the transaction history of accounts, hinting towards a need for all financial institutions (FIs) to assure customers that their data is secure.

Observing that not only banks, but even customers are wary of data sharing, it said, "Cybersecurity and data pro-

tection are the top concern areas across all age groups, followed closely by wariness towards third-party access to data and transparency on data usage".

Over the years, the value of data has reached unprecedented levels.

Countries, globally, are

empowering customers with access to institutions of their choice, while jurisdictions are witnessing various approaches to open banking strategy and implementation based on regulatory favourability and industry maturity.

FIs, it said, also have realised that they are now custodians and not owners of data and are trying to move to alternative revenue streams after receiving customer consent.

Sandeep Sonpatki, Partner, Deloitte India said the onset of the pandemic has given a boost to welcome digital and API based banking in India with most salaried respondents already being highly comfortable with digital banking.

"However, 69.3 per cent of respondents in our survey felt that greater emphasis should be placed on data protection by the institutions, which makes

it very crucial for banks embarking on a journey to develop API-enabled products and services, to have a well-defined roadmap to produce demand-driven solutions and to remain ahead of the curve while maintaining the principles of customer-centricity, security, and trust," he said.

The report further said access to data can be leveraged by FIs for lead generation, cross-selling products, risk assessment, pre and post delinquency management, collections strategy, and product development; potentially leading to significant business augmentation, asset quality improvement, operational efficiency, and cost optimisation.

Open banking, the report said, is perceived quite differently across jurisdictions. Some have gone ahead to create a regulator-driven, well-defined

framework such as the UK and Australia; while others have followed a more market-driven approach such as India.

The bottom line, however, is providing customers control over sharing their information and servicing them through a targeted, data-driven approach, it added.

Open banking also offers scope to increase customer onboarding at remote locations through quick, paperless documentation, verification, and alternate credit risk assessments.

With the onset of COVID-19 and the focus towards digitisation, the report said it believes the next 12-24 months will see a significant shift towards open banking amongst Indian FIs. Companies will invest in building core capabilities to address customers' immediate needs.

ALIA, BHANSALI'S GANGUBAI KATHIAWADI IN TROUBLED WATERS

Looks like Sanjay Leela Bhansali can never stop being controversy's favourite child. The filmmaker has faced serious problems, be it shooting for his upcoming films or before their release. In the past, certain sections of people had opposed the making of his films such as *Bajirao Mastani* or *Padmaavat*. And now his latest offering, *Gangubai Kathiawadi*, which stars Alia Bhatt in the lead, has come under the scanner. The residents of Kamathipura have strongly objected to the portrayal of the region as the famous red light area in Mumbai and termed the act as defamatory and shameful. "The new Alia Bhatt-starrer *Gangubai Kathiawadi*, directed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali, is a blatant misrepresentation and an attempt to malign the 200 years of the actual history of Kamathipura. It is defamatory, shameful and has hurt the sentiments of the residents of Kamathipura. The residents



have worked hard to erase the social stigma attached to the name of Kamathipura, and this movie is extremely damaging to the current and future generations of Kamathipura," read the statement. It further said, "Once again a few people are looking to monetize from the suffering of others and this time the residents of Kamathipura are choosing to not suffer in silence. Hundreds of residents of

Kamathipura (Youth, women, children, etc) will be gathering at the centre of Kamathipura to protest against the release of *Gangubai Kathiawadi*. They have also previously met with various decision-makers and registered their complaint on the same." The teaser of *Gangubai Kathiawadi* was launched a couple of weeks ago on Bhansali's birthday. It overflows with Bhansali's trademark of colours as well as bombastic dialogues such as "Gangu chaand thi aur chaand hi rahegi" and "izzat se jeeneka, kisi se darne ka nahi," mouthed by Alia Bhatt, who is seen hurling explicit words and engaging in action, in her role of *Gangubai*, a brothel owner in Mumbai's Kamathipura. Bhansali is known for his larger-than-life sets and opulent costumes, and the teaser promises just as much. The film is slated to release on July 30. The film is pitted against the romantic drama *Radhe Shyam*, starring Prabhas and Pooja Hegde.

part from an actress, a singer, a producer, Priyanka Chopra is also an entrepreneur. And now, the *Aitraaz* actress has added one more feather to her cap. We all know that Priyanka Chopra is a global icon who is ruling the roost in the west too. She imbibed the western culture, yes, but she has not forgotten her roots. And that's what she did. She took her roots with her there. For the unversed, Priyanka Chopra has opened an Indian restaurant in New York City. She has named her restaurant Sona. The actress announced the new venture in a heartfelt post and shared a couple of pictures on her Instagram handle and we also see Nick Jonas. The *Disconnected* singer is seen performing a puja with Priyanka. It is a throwback picture from 2019 when they had bought the space for the restaurant, shared Priyanka. We are so in love with Nick Jonas following every ritual and tradition of Indian so wholeheartedly. The actress captioned the post saying, "I'm thrilled to present to you SONA, a new restaurant in NYC that I poured my love for Indian food into. SONA is the very embodiment of timeless India and the flavours I grew up with. The kitchen is helmed by the incredible Chef @harinayak, a masterful talent, who has created the most delicious and inno-



Priyanka Chopra opens Indian restaurant in New York, calls it Sona

native menu, taking you on a food journey through my amazing country. SONA is opening later this month, and I can't wait to see you there! This endeavour would not have been possible without the leadership of my friends Maneesh Goyal and David Rabin. Thank you to our designer Melissa Bowers and the rest of the team for realizing this vision so clearly. The second and third photos were taken in September 2019 when we performed a small intimate Puja (prayer ceremony) to bless the space that would soon become @sonanewyork Godspeed!" Priyanka Chopra's friend, Maneesh who helped her open the restaurant heaped praises on *The White Tiger* actress saying, "First, my kind friend @priyankachopra, who has been the creative force behind SONA. There is no one who better-and more boldly-personifies "global Indian" than Pri. SONA is so lucky to have her in our corner. From the design, to the menu, to the music, to even the name, Priyanka has her fingerprints all over SONA. Love you dear Pri! Our baby is finally ready for the world to see! We're about to have a lot of fun. See you all soon on 20th St! @sonanewyork #sonanewyork."

KANGANA: Was hired as a director in Hollywood but Queen changed my life

Kangana Ranaut's performance in *Queen*, won her the National Award for Best Actress in 2014. Celebrating seven years of the iconic film, Kangana opened up about how she thought that the film would never release. "After almost a decade long struggle I was told I am too good an actor to be a Bollywood leading lady, curly hair and vulnerable voice made it worse, I signed *Queen* thinking this will never release, signed it for money with that money I

went to film school in New York." Speaking about her journey in the US and how she nearly became a filmmaker there, Kangana added, "In New York, I studied screenwriting, directed a small film in California at the age of 24 which gave me a breakthrough in Hollywood, after seeing my work a big agency hired me as a director, I buried all my acting ambitions, did not have the courage to return to India. Bought a small house in the outskirts of LA in Calabasas, just when I left everything, *Queen* released, changed my life and Indian

Cinema forever marked the Birth of a new leading lady and woman-centric parallel cinema #7yearsofqueen." Celebrating the spirit to *Queen*, Kangana concluded, "*Queen* was kept away from me for 10 long years, everything came all at once, it was overwhelming, I truly believe what is ours no one can take away hang in there you will get your due #7yearsofqueen."



Nicolas Cage confirms he has married Riko Shibata

ace/Off star Nicolas Cage has confirmed that he recently welcomed his fifth marriage, this time to his partner Riko Shibata. A representative for Nicolas confirmed to a news agency that the couple got married last month

(February 16) in Las Vegas, sharing that this particular date holds significant meaning to the couple. "The date was chosen to honour the birthday of the groom's late father," the rep said. Cage also confirmed the news, later adding: "It's true, and we are very happy." The event was described in the representative state-






ment as a very small and intimate wedding that took place in the private courtyard of the Wynn Hotel, being decorated with flowers, candles and fairy lights. Riko wore a handmade Japanese bridal kimono that had three layers and Nicolas was wearing a Tom Ford tuxedo. Riko's entrance music was Winter Song by Kiroro, which is thought to be one of the bride's favourite songs. For the ceremony vows, the couple shared both tradition-





al Catholic and Shinto vows, there was also haiku and poetry from Walt Whitman read during the event. Some of the couple's closest friends and family attended the wedding and Nicolas' representative confirmed that his ex-wife Alice Kim was also in attendance. "After the wedding, the happy couple [were] joined for a small celebration attended by Nicolas' ex-wife, Alice (who he remains very good friends with) and their son Kal."

FUN




ARCHIE





CALVIN AND HOBBS





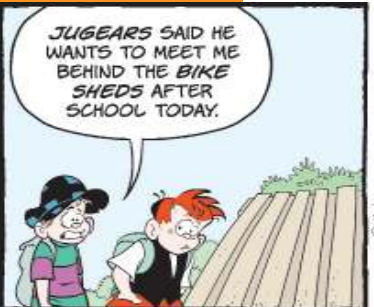
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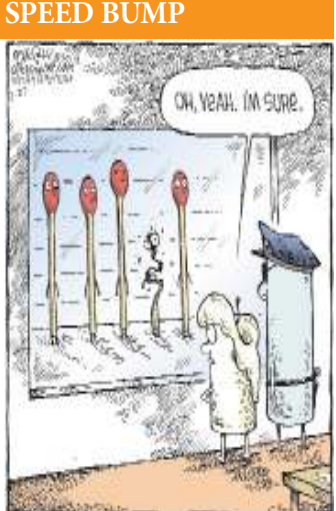

NANCY



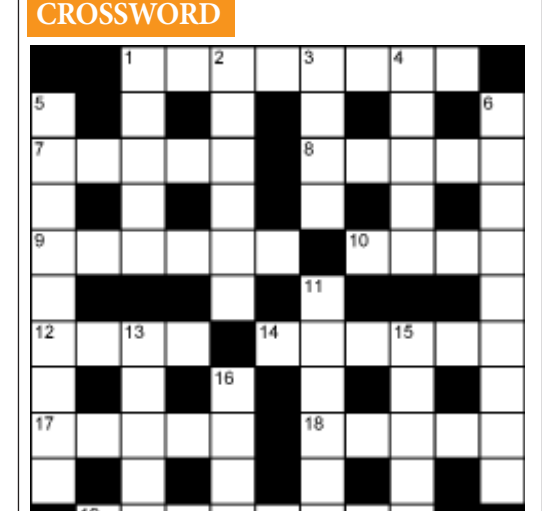
GINGER MEGGS



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD

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

ACROSS

1 Gets better after illness

7 An item of furniture

8 Move

9 Painter or sculptor

10 At this place

12 Pleased

14 A meal outdoors

17 Arrive at

18 A large lifting machine

19 A bird's covering

DOWN

5 People unknown to you

6 Made longer by pulling

11 Ring shape

13 Not asleep

15 Gets closer to

16 Closed

SOLUTION

P	A	T	I	E	N	T
I	T	C	H	E	D	S
C	H	A	S	E	D	S
N	K	E	M	E		
T	A	S	T	E		
I	A	O	T			
N	E	E	D	S		
S	C	H	O	L		
A	L	E	I	E		
T	E	X	A	M	I	N

SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

The sum of all numbers in any row or column must equal 45.

She chose to challenge humankind back in the 1970s and has risen above all odds. Known for launching a range of herbal beauty products worldwide, Shahnaz Husain deserves all the applause for her work and contribution in the field of beauty and skincare industry. She talks to *The Pioneer's* SHIKHA DUGGAL about her journey thus far.

CELEBRATING BEAUTY AND EQUALITY



days, despite the absence of the internet, herbal beauty still did so well. Making you get rid of all the chemical-laden products and taking the all-so natural route, she found nourishing alternatives for every woman out there! And, with herbal beauty booming nowadays too, she responds, "It's an indication that people are beginning to prefer natural care and cure over synthetic treatments. The ancient knowledge of Ayurveda has served as the founding stone of the Shahnaz Husain Empire and I consider myself fortunate that I have been able to play a part in popularising it. It has been my lifelong dream to get people to realise the importance of herbal healing and how it's the only long-term solution for staying healthy and beautiful. It lifts my heart to hear that people are realising this on their own! It can do wonders because Ayurveda in itself is such a powerful ideology that it only needs to be demonstrated for people to understand how valuable it is. There is hardly any ailment of the human body that Ayurveda does not have a solution for, and the best thing is that it has no side-effects! Unlike many synthetic cosmetic products, Ayurvedic products do not treat the symptoms. They treat the ailment — healing the affected organ from the inside-out. After embarking on a journey of Ayurvedic healing, your body becomes

even stronger and more resistant to damage. I think, if we simply demonstrate this to any rational person, they would acknowledge the superior healing powers of Ayurveda right away. That is how we have grown over all these years. We have simply shown the people what Ayurvedic healing can do, and they have responded positively to it too."

Talking about her realm

behind the whole Shahnaz Husain Empire built her free kingdom in the vintage era itself with equal status in the beauty industry. Not asking for any special privileges but only equality, the creator for the herbal beauty care movement isn't someone else's idea of womanhood but herself. Invited by Harvard Business School to speak on her success story for establishing an international

certainly believes that women in India are more financially independent at the moment than they were a few decades ago, although we still have a long way to go!

According to the champ in good looks, the best way to accomplish this is to focus on the education of girls because knowledge is power and it arms you with wings that help you to soar high in the sky. Elaborating further, she adds that it is a great time for aspiring women entrepreneurs too, as the government has launched several schemes like Bharatiya Mahila Bank Business Loan, Stree Shakti Package, Orient Mahila Vikas Yojana, Dena Shakti Scheme, Udyogini Scheme and Cent Kalyani Scheme that are empowering women entrepreneurs and how! With the changing societal mindset, she seeks to witness more women entrepreneurs venture into the business world!

When asked what suggestions she has for the youngsters of today while they are so obsessed with applying make-up, she says, "Your body is a temple and it's up to you to decide how you want to adorn and embellish it. I prefer a bold look — something that brings out your individuality and makes you stand out from the crowd! As far as make-up is concerned, I think it's only natural for people to want to look more beautiful and I don't see anything wrong with that. I only draw the line when those make-up products begin to harm your body. Synthetic make-up products often have ingredients that may have

side-effects and they are almost always harmful in the long run. Instead, we should use natural products that strengthen our skin from the back of your hand and make our loveliness last longer. Make-up indeed is a form of self-expression as it can help you accentuate your beauty in your preferred direction. From incredibly subtle to incredibly bold, make-up allows you to experiment with a whole range of looks and helps you find one that suits your personality, isn't it?" Concluding the interview on a bold note, Shahnaz Husain asks young women to not let anyone else tell them how to dress up, how to behave or what to apply on the face, because living in someone else's shadow is not pointless but making your own choices in the light of your own wisdom is the way to go!

TIPS TO SELF-CARE BY SHAHNAZ:

1. Always stay hydrated and drink plenty of water.
2. Get a healthy amount of sleep and make a conscious effort to sleep on time as the body heals itself the fastest when you're asleep.
3. Avoid using synthetic beauty products! While they may give you momentary satisfaction, they will harm your body in the long run.
4. Learn to invest in your body. Don't expect the changes to be immediate and embark on a self-healing journey with patience.

This year, Women's day is all about focusing on rejoicing a woman's success and raising awareness against gender bias! It is the perfect opportunity to get to know the face behind the marvellous expansion of herbal beauty in the country and the woman who broke all grounds paving way for 'Ayurveda' on an international scale for which she was at first conferred with the fourth highest civilian award in India, the Padma Shri, and then went onto win the title award for 'World's greatest woman entrepreneur'. So, dig up your archives because we are taking a walk down the memory lane.

Beauty back then was full of experimental trends and flashy gimmicks but what remained constant is the trend of herbal beauty cemented by Shahnaz. Quoting every mother's

favourite, Shahnaz Husain with her spectacular feminine energy turns her into a bundle of joy when it comes to professional life. "I never believed in destiny, you're the creator of your own fortune! To be at the receiving end of abundant love and admiration from across the world is so heart-warming. You have to be cautious and watchful of what you do when people start seeing you as their role model. You feel you're not only responsible for your life but also for the lives of all those who wish to follow you. I try to make a conscious effort to return the profuse love that people have showered on me for eternity."

Talking about the changes in the beauty industry, she says, even before the pandemic occurred, procuring cosmetics was as easy as buying groceries! "Most of the cosmetic brands have now gone online, however,

the pandemic has ignited the process for fine and quality ones. Awareness also has an important role to play when it comes to packaged cosmetics and the recent beauty trends on Instagram too, as the public has numerous e-shops to choose from. It's a rightful duty of a brand to elucidate about the product thoroughly online so that people can make a wise decision," she shares.

There is no better way to get lost in reminiscence than swooning over herbal beauty from memories of the past! From shampoos to bottles of sun-kissed tresses, these herbal products set a striking trend in the 70s.

With such simplistic packaging design and boasted range of aroma in it, they would make you so intoxicating. Nowadays, social media has become the breeding ground for beauty trends but back in those

of splendour skincare that she built, even now a woman in today's world is thriving for wider opportunities, however, the title-holder brand without any commercial advertising which went onto become Harvard's one of the case studies in the curriculum too, Shahnaz



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Contrary to popular belief, International Women's Day is not about celebrating women or womanhood, it is about celebrating equality, progress and achievements of the amazing women who help make the world a better place. The super-charged community of women riders in India are living their passion in accordance with the code of a pure motorcycling philosophy. Today, as we celebrate the extraordinary women who play multifaceted roles, across the globe and move towards equality, here are a few Indian women who are breaking the gender stereotypes, one ride at a time.

Manjari Biche and Gargi Biche, Pune

Famous mother-daughter duo Manjari and Gargi Biche, who have been riding for five years now, are an inspiration to many.

In Gargi's words, "My mom started riding in her 20s. She was staying in Talegaon and she was the first lady rider of the town, everyone would look at her in awe, people perceived her as a Policewoman! She has



always been a daredevil and an adventurer! She had the guts to fight with misogynistic people to marry the love of her life! She is also a chairperson of Maharashtra's well-known engineering firm OrbitalElectromech!"

"My mom made sure I learnt how to ride a bike when I was 18! Before teaching me how to ride a moped she taught me the Thunderbird 500. I love these

For as long as one can recall, motorcycling has mostly been associated with men as their passion, hobby, or even career. However, a community that was considered to be a niche a few years ago for women, has grown beyond imagination, in recent times.

The Pioneer's K RAMYA SREE enlists the 'journey' of these women who fought all odds, in terrains and among people, to get to where they are today.

adventurous genes in me. We usually ride to Lonavala, Pawna, Bhore, Mahabaleshwar, Kolhapur, Vashi etc. Royal Enfield Rider mania 2019 was our longest ride together (Pune-Goa). In riding, they love each other's company! Whenever there is a tough road she takes the lead and shows me the way and whenever the road is free she sets me free and lets me take a lower more or less it's how she has raised me in life," she says.

Archana Timmaraju, Bangalore

Bangalore resident Archana Timmaraju, rides with a sticker on her bike that reads: 'Rider is deaf. Failure to cooperate with verbal commands means I am not hearing you'. The 36-year-old arts and metal sculpture teacher at Mallya



Aditi International School, Bangalore, claims to be India's first woman deaf biker. "I'm passionate about motorcycling, which is why I have undertaken various expeditions to raise awareness about sign language and deaf women's empowerment. I'm also the co-founder of a company called Silent Expeditions for bikers with an emphasis on those with disabilities. In 2018, I rode

from Bengaluru to Leh covering 8,400 kilometers in a single shot to spread awareness about sign language and deaf women's empowerment," shares she.

Archana's aim is to motivate future generations to change her life and inspire other women and girls around. A passionate Royal Enfield enthusiast, she turned her passion for travel and riding into her success story. Jesslina is breaking barriers and is up for any adventure.

Jesslina Nayyar, Delhi

Jesslina Nayyar, a model, an influencer and an avid rider is breaking stereotypes to change her life and inspire other women and girls around. A passionate Royal Enfield enthusiast, she turned her passion for travel and riding into her success story. Jesslina is breaking barriers and is up for any adventure.

Jesslina feels riding is still a male dominate space. She says, "Although our society



has linked motorcycling with males, riding is beyond discrimination. It is still a male-dominant space and there is a yawning gap between male and female riders in India."

Sharing about the kind of discrimination women riders face, she says, "Day after day, every day! I was once at a motorcycle shoot and considering the fact that it was for a motorcycle shoot, I assumed

the client has selected me because they knew I ride motorcycles! During the start of our shoot, he was so scared watching me sit on the motorcycle. He thought I was too fragile to handle the bike. As soon as we started shooting, he saw me riding and being in total control of the bike and his jaw dropped. He later came and apologised for being sexist."

Having grown up living all over India since her father was in the Indian Army and is a biker himself, Jesslina's motorcycling journey began at the age of 18, when she got her hands on her father's motorcycle that was completely modified into a whole new café racer. How empowered does she feel getting onto a bike and going places, she shares, "So, many women are constantly told they can't do certain things and some of them end up believing it. I think that riding a bike is one of those few experiences in life that allow you to take the handlebars and define your own path. So here I am, defining my own path along this journey!"

Concluding the conversation with the change she wishes to see among Indians, Jesslina says, "A lot of people only go to watch a film, and some of us get to star in one. Riding a motorcycle is like starring in a film. Everything around you is so real and you can feel things differently! I think oftentimes in life, everyone wants to just play it safe and we don't want to get out of our comfort zone. Honestly, women are hardest on themselves, people are always going to talk, you don't need to prove anything to anyone, you don't need to be the "first" to do anything anymore! You are what you are and that's your power! So you can make your own choice to see where that road is going to take you, and I've always been prone to making a choice where I don't know

where that road is going to take me. Sometimes it's good, sometimes it's not that good but that has created a life for me that I have always dreamed of."

Dr. Aparna Bandodkar, Mumbai

An avid traveller, cyclist, storyteller, trekker, artist, environmentalist, animal, lover, writer, actor, dreamer, Royal Enfield rider by passion and a dentist by profession, Aparna is smashing stereotypes and is an idol for many. In 2018, Aparna, unfortunately, suffered a sudden sciatic nerve injury that numbed her leg. For 3



months she was unable to move. "I picked up yoga during this time and instead of going under the knife healed myself through sheer will and got back to riding," Aparna shares. She carried yoga with her through this time and feels that just like machines and motorcycles, we as humans also need maintenance and self-care.

Kiran Moortha, Hyderabad

Kiran, like most of us, has a regular job. She is a psychologist by profession and a voracious reader who would want to own a mini library at her place. She has a knack for music, dance, and loves playing guitar in her leisure time. Kiran may be a perfect example of how she is breaking stereotypes in this world of

motorcycling predominately spearheaded by men. She recalls her incredible first ride to Kanyakumari to Kashmir which coincided with World Motorcycling Day. She cruised herself up to Kanyakumari through the rains and her eagerness was to reach Kashmir by July 18, as it happened to be her birthday. Speaking of how women are faring in motorcycle riding and the kind of support they receive, Kiran says, "When I say riders, I am referring to those who hold the spirit. Not those who just do occasional 10-20km rides and come for meets. So if we are looking at riders who have done some remarkable rides, they are hardly 1%. Support for female riders could be better."

Kiran covered approx. 14000 km in her maiden ride and became the first woman from Telangana and Andhra Pradesh to have covered Kanyakumari to Kashmir in her first solo trip. Her convenient escape on her Watson (her Royal Enfield Thunderbird motorcycle) are the mountains in Coorg, Madikeri, and the Western Ghats. She rode solo to Khardongla and is the second woman in India to have achieved this feat. She feels that Motorcycling is an art and how riding can be both liberating and meditative.



India Eves suffer heavy loss on return

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Lizelle Lee and Laura Wolvaardt shared the highest opening wicket stand against an under-prepared India to give South Africa an emphatic eight-wicket win in the first ODI of the five match series here on Sunday.

Asked to bat, India never got the momentum it needed and could only manage 177 for nine despite sedate fifty from skipper Mithali Raj (50 off 85) and a quick-fire 40 off 41 balls from her deputy Harmanpreet Kaur.

Lee (83 not out off 122) and Wolvaardt (80 off 110) helped South Africa chased down the target in 40.1 overs with a record 169-run stand.

India would quickly like to forget their first outing in 12 months and come back much stronger in the next game against a side which has come into the series with substantial game time.

The South African opening duo did not look any sort of trouble against the India pacers as well as their highly rated spinners. Lee smashed 11 fours and a six while Wolvaardt collected 12 boundaries.

Veteran India pacer Jhulan Goswami (2/38), playing her first game since November 2019, was the most impressive in an otherwise disappointing bowling effort. Debutant pacer Monica Patel got only four overs in which she conceded 20 runs.

The spin-bowling troika of Rajeshwari Gaekwad, Deepti Sharma and Poonam Yadav failed to provide any breakthroughs that were needed to keep India in the game.

Earlier, the 62-run stand between Raj and Kaur steadied the innings after India lost their first three wickets for 40 runs, including star opener Smriti Mandhana (14 off 20), who looked in sublime touch during her short stay.

Harmanpreet, playing her 100th ODI, looked ominous but played one big shot too many to be caught at long off. She



Need more time to rediscover rhythm: Harman

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Indian women's ODI vice-captain Harmanpreet Kaur on Saturday said the team was lacking match practice and will need time to get back into rhythm after being away from International cricket for a year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"We didn't get any International cricket for a year. Apart from three IPL games we didn't get much time to work as a unit. As a team you need to spend time and get ready for any series," Kaur said at the post-match press conference.

"Nowadays everybody is looking for a big total, every game we want to score more

than 250 but for that you need some time and matches.

"In the past few years we had built a rhythm but we will need time to create that rhythm and next game we will try to do that as a unit," added Kaur, who was playing her 100th ODI.

The Indian team last played on March 8 last year when they lost to Australia in the T20 World Cup final.

Additionally, they got only two days of nets before the series, making it tougher for the players to be at their best from the word go which was visible as India struggled with the bat, managing 177 for nine in the designated 50 overs.

The 31-year-old conceded

that her side was guilty of throwing away their wickets and lacked partnerships with both bat and ball.

"When you are playing after a long time there are chances where you can collapse but they bowled well and we threw our wickets. As a bowling unit, there were no partnership, you need partnership whether it is bowling or batting," she said.

"Today I felt our bowling was also not upto the mark, our spinners are good but it can happen if you are playing after a long time, sometimes things cannot be in your favour. We had a bad day today, whatever we were doing, we couldn't execute it."

BRIEF SCORES

India: 177 for 9 in 50 overs (Mithali Raj 50, Harmanpreet Kaur 40, Deepti Sharma 27; Shabnim Ismail 3/28, N Mlaba 2/41). **South Africa:** 178 for 2 in 40.1 overs (Lizelle Lee 83 not out, Laura Wolvaardt 80; Jhulan Goswami 2/38).

IPL 2021 STARTS APRIL 9

No home games, no crowds at 6 venues including Mumbai

2021 SEASON SCHEDULE

M NO	DAY	DATE	TIME	VENUE	TEAM1	TEAM 2
1	FRI	9-April	7:30 PM	Chennai	Mumbai Indians	Royal Challengers Bangalore
2	SAT	10-April	7:30 PM	Mumbai	Chennai Super Kings	Delhi Capitals
3	SUN	11-April	7:30 PM	Chennai	Sunrisers Hyderabad	Kolkata Knight Riders
4	MON	12-April	7:30 PM	Mumbai	Rajasthan Royals	Punjab Kings
5	TUE	13-April	7:30 PM	Chennai	Kolkata Knight Riders	Mumbai Indians
6	WED	14-April	7:30 PM	Chennai	Sunrisers Hyderabad	Royal Challengers Bangalore
7	THU	15-April	7:30 PM	Mumbai	Rajasthan Royals	Delhi Capitals
8	FRI	16-April	7:30 PM	Mumbai	Punjab Kings	Chennai Super Kings
9	SAT	17-April	7:30 PM	Chennai	Mumbai Indians	Sunrisers Hyderabad
10	SUN	18-April	3:30 PM	Chennai	Royal Challengers Bangalore	Kolkata Knight Riders
11	SUN	18-April	7:30 PM	Mumbai	Delhi Capitals	Punjab Kings
12	MON	19-April	7:30 PM	Mumbai	Chennai Super Kings	Rajasthan Royals
13	TUE	20-April	7:30 PM	Chennai	Delhi Capitals	Mumbai Indians
14	WED	21-April	7:30 PM	Chennai	Punjab Kings	Sunrisers Hyderabad
15	WED	21-April	7:30 PM	Mumbai	Kolkata Knight Riders	Chennai Super Kings
16	THU	22-April	7:30 PM	Mumbai	Royal Challengers Bangalore	Rajasthan Royals
17	FRI	23-April	7:30 PM	Chennai	Punjab Kings	Mumbai Indians
18	SAT	24-April	7:30 PM	Mumbai	Rajasthan Royals	Kolkata Knight Riders
19	SUN	25-April	7:30 PM	Mumbai	Chennai Super Kings	Royal Challengers Bangalore
20	SUN	25-April	7:30 PM	Chennai	Sunrisers Hyderabad	Delhi Capitals
21	MON	26-April	7:30 PM	Ahmedabad	Punjab Kings	Kolkata Knight Riders
22	TUE	27-April	7:30 PM	Ahmedabad	Delhi Capitals	Royal Challengers Bangalore
23	WED	28-April	7:30 PM	Delhi	Chennai Super Kings	Sunrisers Hyderabad
24	THU	29-April	3:30 PM	Delhi	Mumbai Indians	Rajasthan Royals
25	THU	29-April	7:30 PM	Ahmedabad	Delhi Capitals	Kolkata Knight Riders
26	FRI	30-April	7:30 PM	Ahmedabad	Punjab Kings	Royal Challengers Bangalore
27	SAT	1-May	7:30 PM	Delhi	Mumbai Indians	Chennai Super Kings
28	SUN	2-May	3:30 PM	Delhi	Rajasthan Royals	Sunrisers Hyderabad
29	SUN	2-May	7:30 PM	Ahmedabad	Punjab Kings	Delhi Capitals
30	MON	3-May	7:30 PM	Ahmedabad	Kolkata Knight Riders	Royal Challengers Bangalore
31	TUE	4-May	7:30 PM	Delhi	Sunrisers Hyderabad	Mumbai Indians
32	WED	5-May	7:30 PM	Delhi	Rajasthan Royals	Chennai Super Kings
33	THU	6-May	7:30 PM	Ahmedabad	Royal Challengers Bangalore	Punjab Kings
34	FRI	7-May	7:30 PM	Delhi	Sunrisers Hyderabad	Chennai Super Kings
35	SAT	8-May	3:30 PM	Ahmedabad	Kolkata Knight Riders	Delhi Capitals
36	SAT	8-May	7:30 PM	Delhi	Rajasthan Royals	Mumbai Indians
37	SUN	9-May	3:30 PM	Bangalore	Chennai Super Kings	Punjab Kings
38	SUN	9-May	7:30 PM	Kolkata	Royal Challengers Bangalore	Sunrisers Hyderabad
39	MON	10-May	7:30 PM	Bangalore	Mumbai Indians	Kolkata Knight Riders
40	TUE	11-May	7:30 PM	Kolkata	Delhi Capitals	Rajasthan Royals
41	WED	12-May	7:30 PM	Bangalore	Chennai Super Kings	Kolkata Knight Riders
42	THU	13-May	3:30 PM	Bangalore	Mumbai Indians	Punjab Kings
43	THU	13-May	7:30 PM	Kolkata	Sunrisers Hyderabad	Rajasthan Royals
44	FRI	14-May	7:30 PM	Kolkata	Royal Challengers Bangalore	Delhi Capitals
45	SAT	15-May	7:30 PM	Bangalore	Kolkata Knight Riders	Punjab Kings
46	SUN	16-May	3:30 PM	Kolkata	Rajasthan Royals	Royal Challengers Bangalore
47	SUN	16-May	7:30 PM	Bangalore	Chennai Super Kings	Mumbai Indians
48	MON	17-May	7:30 PM	Kolkata	Delhi Capitals	Sunrisers Hyderabad
49	TUE	18-May	7:30 PM	Bangalore	Kolkata Knight Riders	Rajasthan Royals
50	WED	19-May	7:30 PM	Bangalore	Sunrisers Hyderabad	Punjab Kings
51	THU	20-May	7:30 PM	Kolkata	Royal Challengers Bangalore	Mumbai Indians
52	FRI	21-May	3:30 PM	Bangalore	Kolkata Knight Riders	Sunrisers Hyderabad
53	FRI	21-May	7:30 PM	Kolkata	Delhi Capitals	Chennai Super Kings
54	SAT	22-May	7:30 PM	Bangalore	Punjab Kings	Rajasthan Royals
55	SUN	23-May	3:30 PM	Kolkata	Mumbai Indians	Delhi Capitals
56	SUN	23-May	7:30 PM	Kolkata	Royal Challengers Bangalore	Chennai Super Kings

PLAYOFFS				Defending champions Mumbai Indians will face Royal Challengers Bangalore in the tournament opener in Chennai on April 9. The Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad will host the final on May 30 as well as the play-offs.	
57	TUE	25-May	7:30 PM	Ahmedabad	Qualifier 1
58	WED	26-May	7:30 PM	Ahmedabad	Eliminator
59	FRI	28-May	7:30 PM	Ahmedabad	Qualifier 1
60	SUN	30-May	7:30 PM	Ahmedabad	Final

SINGLES



Lionel Messi casts his vote during Barca presidential elections

MILAN WIN TO BOOST TITLE HOPES

VERONA: AC Milan boosted title hopes by winning 2-0 at Hellas Verona in Serie A on Sunday despite being without a number of key players missing through injury. Rade Krunic and Diego Dalot scored for Milan, which moved to within three points of league leader Inter Milan. The Nerazzurri host Atalanta on Monday.

ANKITA STUNS ERRANI IN QUALIFIERS

MEXICO CITY: India No 1 Ankit Raina notched up one of the biggest wins of her career as she stunned Sara Errani in the first round of qualifying at the WTA 250 tournament in Guadalajara in Mexico. The world No 168 fought from a set down to beat the Italian second seed and world No 106 2-6, 6-4, 6-3 in two hours and 6 minutes. She will next play Leonie Kung in an attempt to qualify for the main draw.

LEWA HAT-TRICK TOPS HAALAND DOUBLE

MUNICH: Robert Lewandowski scored a hat-trick to leave him on 31 Bundesliga goals this season and seal Bayern Munich's 4-2 comeback home win over Borussia Dortmund. Dortmund raced into a 2-0 lead as Erling Haaland netted twice in the first nine minutes behind closed doors at the Allianz Arena. However, Lewandowski then struck twice — the second from the penalty spot — to haul Bayern level before the break. Leon Goretzka put Bayern ahead for the first time with two minutes left before the Poland striker completed his hat-trick on 90 minutes.

PSG, LYON CRUISE INTO NEXT ROUND

PARIS: Kylian Mbappe grabbed a pair of goals as holders Paris Saint-Germain eased into the French Cup last 16 on Saturday with a 3-0 victory at Brest, while Ligue 1 title rivals Lyon defeated second-division Sochaux 5-2. Mbappe returned from a one-match ban and fired PSG ahead on nine minutes. Julian Draxler set up Pablo Sarabia for a second goal before half-time. And then Verratti created third, somewhat inadvertently, as he prodded across goal and straight into the chest of Mbappe, wrong-footing Brest goalkeeper Sebastien Cibois.

DELHI IN VIJAY HAZARE QUARTER-FINAL

NEW DELHI: Wicketkeeper-batsman Anuj Rawat smashed a dozen of sixes in his unbeaten 95 off 85 balls as an under-pressure Delhi made a remarkable recovery to beat Uttarakhand by four wickets in the pre-quarter final of the Vijay Hazare Trophy on Sunday. Delhi will meet Uttar Pradesh in their quarter-final match on Monday. Batting first, Uttarakhand posted 287 for 8 in 50 overs. In reply, Delhi surpassed the target in 48.3 overs after being reduced to 146 for 6 in the 33rd over.

LIVERPOOL CRASH AGAIN AT ANFIELD

LIVERPOOL: Mario Lemina condemned troubled Liverpool to a sixth successive home defeat as Fulham earned a shock 1-0 win that left the champions' top four bid in turmoil on Sunday. Jurgen Klopp's side are four points adrift of fourth-placed Chelsea, who can extend that lead to seven if they beat Everton on Monday. That would leave Liverpool with a tough task to qualify for next season's Champions League via a top four finish.

Agencies

Marin beats Sindhu in Swiss final

PTI ■ BASEL

World Champion P V Sindhu finished a distant second best in the Swiss Open final after being completely routed by Olympic Gold medalist Carolina Marin of Spain in a lop-sided women's singles title clash here on Sunday.

The 25-year-old Indian, who had won the coveted World Championship Gold medal here in 2019, couldn't match the speed and accuracy of Marin during her 12-21, 5-21 defeat in the final that lasted only 35 minutes.

It was Sindhu's third successive loss to Marin, who had won both the Super 1000 events



in Thailand in January before finishing runners-up at the HSBC BWF World Tour Finals. Playing her first final in 18 months, Sindhu, ranked 7th in

the world, entered the match with a 5-8 head-to-head record against Marin, having lost her last two matches against the former world No 1.

The world No 7 Indian, who didn't drop a game in the last four matches this week, however, failed to summon her 'A' game under pressure as Marin came up trumps to claim her third title of the year. She seemed completely clueless against a rampaging Marin, who outclassed the Indian with her pace, power and precision during the summit clash.

Sindhu will next compete at the \$850,000 All England Championships to be held from March 17 to 21.

Federer 'pain free' ahead of Qatar Open

AFP ■ DOHA

Roger Federer said retirement was never really an option during his battle with injury, insisting on Sunday the pain is "completely under control" ahead of his return to competitive tennis at this week's Qatar Open.

The 39-year-old hasn't played a match since a semi-final defeat to Novak Djokovic at the Australian Open in January 2020 and acknowledged it was unusual for a player of his age to return after injury.

"I know it's on the rare side for a 40-year-old to come back after a year out," he said at a media briefing in the Qatari capital Doha.

"The important thing is I'm pain free and injury free. I'm very happy to be back playing a tournament — I never thought it was going to take this long."

On his rivalry with Rafael Nadal and Djokovic, who this week overtakes his record of 310 weeks as world number one in men's tennis, Federer said "it's a great debate to have".

"I think what Novak and Rafa have done of late is extraordinary — they're not 25 either," he said with a smile.

"Novak did it in Australia, Rafa did it at the French — they seem at their peak which is great for tennis and for the debate. "My concern is my own health, my own game (more) than the record.

"The guys are unreal, I hope they keep on going and can do everything they possibly want — you want to leave the game with no regrets, and in that respect we all sleep very well at night."

Federer, a 20-time Grand Slam title winner, said that while "expectations are really low" for his campaign in Qatar, he hoped to surprise himself.



Gerrard leads Rangers to league title

AFP ■ GLASGOW

Rangers' first Scottish Premiership title for 10 years was confirmed Sunday after Celtic's drew 0-0 at Dundee United to stand 20 points behind their Glasgow rivals with six games left to play.

Steven Gerrard's men have stormed to the title without losing a game to end Celtic's record-equaling nine consecutive Scottish league titles.

Rangers were not even in the top-flight for four of those seasons after the club was demoted to the fourth tier following liquidation in 2012 due to financial troubles.

"This club has been to hell and back over the past 10 years," said Gerrard after Saturday's 3-0 win over St Mirren put Rangers on the brink of a first major trophy since 2011.

"I've only been part of it for three, but I can certainly relate and I've got that feeling and that affection with the fans and I know what they have been through."

The former England and Liverpool captain never won a league title during his legendary 17-year career at Anfield.

However, Gerrard has transformed Rangers' fortunes, both domestically and in Europe, since taking his first senior managerial role in 2018.

The newly crowned Scottish champions have reached the last 16 of the



Rangers manager Steven Gerrard hangs out the window of the dressing room to cheer with fans gathered outside the stadium

AP

Europa League for the second consecutive season and face Slavia Prague on Thursday.

Rangers were denied the chance to rub salt into Celtic wounds by winning the title at Celtic Park in two weeks' time in their next league fixture.

Celtic dropped points for the 12th time in the league this season with caretaker manager John Kennedy taking charge for just the second time since Neil Lennon resigned last month.

The issues that have dogged Celtic all season cost them at Tannadice as they dominated but failed to find the net with 27 attempts on goal.

"Our objective was to get to 10, but Rangers have been better than us this season," Kennedy told *Sky Sports*. "We've been champions for so long, but we've not been good enough this season."



"I think Washy has far more natural ability than I had," said the veteran of 80 Tests who had close to 4000 runs and 150 plus wickets.

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Ravi Shastri was both Sunil Gavaskar and Kapil Dev's 'go to man' with his all-round abilities during the '80s and India head coach firmly believes that young Washington Sundar could play a similar role in the current Test team.

The left-handed specialist batsman, who also bowls mean off-breaks, scored three half centuries in his four Tests along with six wickets which includes prized scalps of Steve Smith and Joe Root.

Do you see glimpses of you in him?

"He has the ability and he belongs at this level and he can go a long way. If he could focus on his bowling (in Tests), India could have a very good number six for overseas conditions.

"Someone who can get you those 50s, 60s and 70s and then bowl for you 20 overs and can pick up 2-3 wickets. That was my role overseas (during whole of 1980s) and I think he can do that role easily," the head coach said during a virtual press meet on Sunday.

Washington should start batting in the top four for Tamil Nadu across formats, suggested Shastri.

"Definitely, he should be batting in the top four for his state. There is no question about that. I would like to have a word with Tamil Nadu selectors or DK (captain Dinesh Karthik) for that matter. I think he should be batting in the top four," Shastri said.

For Shastri, Sundar's innings of 96, coming in at 153 for 6 was a better effort than his 85 not out in Chennai.

"Washington Sundar, this is unreal. Facing some of the toughest bowlers in the world. I would say this innings was far better as the WTC was on line," he said.



Kiwis win final T20, series

AFP ■ WELLINGTON

A century opening stand by Martin Gupthill and Devon Conway saw New Zealand clinch their T20 series against Australia in Wellington on Sunday after the tourists faltered in the face of an experimental spin attack.

Set a target of 143 for victory, Glenn Phillips hit the winning runs with a six to seal New Zealand's victory by seven wickets and to take the series 3-2.

Gupthill, who had been out of form going into the series, led with a masterful 71, including seven fours and four sixes, while Conway contributed 36 with the pair putting on 106 for the first wicket. New Zealand stumbled slightly when Kane Williamson went first ball but a Gupthill single denied Riley Meredith the hat-trick. Phillips, unbeaten on 34, guided New Zealand home with 27 balls to spare.

With the first four games in the series won by the team batting first, New Zealand captain Kane Williamson needed to be innovative when he lost the toss and was told to bowl.

He put his faith in spin with his slow bowlers sending down 12 overs, the most for New Zealand in a T20 match, and they took four of the eight wickets.

Mosagallu, starring Vishnu Manchu, Kajal Aggarwal, and Sunil Shetty, is all set for a March 19 release. Vishnu Manchu talks about the making of the film, the team, its English release, and more, writes

K RAMYA SREE

'MOSAGALLU' WAS INITIALLY MEANT FOR A STRAIGHT ENGLISH RELEASE'

Vishnu Manchu's first pan-India film *Mosagallu* is gearing up for a release this month. The teaser and songs of the film turned out to be huge hits and the film's trailer, after being released by Megastar Chiranjeevi, has become the talk of the town.

The actor-producer says the film about a real-life incident is going to give viewers a good ride. Billed to be a high octane action thriller, *Mosagallu* is all set to be released in Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada and Hindi languages.

Vishnu, who plays the role of an ordinary guy with exceptional skills in the film, says, "*Mosagallu* is not a film like *Dhee* or any other previous films of mine. People who are going to watch this film, don't expect comedy or a film similar to my previous ones." The film, slated to release on March 19 across India, was initially meant for a straight English release. Vishnu explains, "When we started, we wanted to make an English film. We had no thought of making this film in Telugu. As days passed, the

budget kept going up. When we sat down to discuss the budget, I was told that we will release it in Telugu as well, since I'm starring in it. Unfortunately, because of the lockdown, the film was further delayed. I went beyond my budget, and I hope it'll be a success."

BACK THEN, SAVITRI GARU PLAYED SISTER TO NTR GARU. IN OUR GENERATION, BIG STARS PLAYING SIBLINGS IS NOT CONSIDERED FANCY, WHICH I THINK, MUST CHANGE.

”

The film has some big names like Sunil Shetty, and Kajal Aggarwal, among others, essaying key roles. The main reason for the film to be released in Hindi is because of Sunil Shetty, says Vishnu Manchu.

"Until I spoke to Sunil anna, I never thought of a theatrical release in Hindi. I thought I'd it off to distributors. It was him who made me speak to a few people

there for a theatrical release," shares the *Dhee* actor.

Speaking about his association with Sunil Shetty, the *Denikaina Ready* the actor says, "The minute you think of Sunil anna, you picture him to be a tough man. Anna was a macho man to me when I was a kid. I've grown

"There is an action sequenced between anna and I. So whenever I had to hit him, I move my hand closer to him and stop. It went on for one hour. When he had to hit me, he really punched me. That made me tough at the action sequence."

How did Jeffrey Chin come on board? He shares, "After we penned down the story, I approached two directors here, but they wanted to commercialise it. And I wanted to do something different. I met John Singleton who directed *Fast and Furious 2*, who happens to be one of my very good friends to know if there was anyone who could help us with the film. He referred Jeffrey and he offered to be an executive producer because of the confidence he has in him. The director dealt with the subject quite convincingly. After meeting Jeffrey, we further developed the story."

While the India version of the film is ready, the English version will take another few days.

Speaking of Kajal playing the role of his sister, Vishnu

says, "If we go back, Savitri garu played sister to NTR garu. In our generation, big stars playing siblings is not considered fancy, which I think, must change. Kajal has been very sweet throughout. If we go by order, Kajal plays the key role in the film."

Having spoken about films, Vishnu was one of those actors who kept his fans entertained throughout the lockdown, thanks to the videos he posts on social media.

For Vishnu, kids are his stress busters. He explains, "I love kids in general. Even before I had kids, I would play with every child on sets. During the lockdown, most of the people were depressed. I felt I should share videos of what we do at home just to entertain people. Hence, all those videos of me cooking with my kids and others were put up. When I'm home, it's a strict rule that only I change my kids' diapers. I love to be around my kids all the time."

The actor has more interesting projects lined up this year, gained 9 kg for his next flick, and says he will gain weight further to fit into the role.



Bazaar Rowdy set for a summer release

After making a name for himself in the Telugu film industries with interesting films like *Hrudayakaleyam*, *Kobbarimatta*, *Virus*, and *Singham 123*, actor Sampooranesh Babu is back with his next *Bazaar Rowdy*. The release of the first look and motion poster of the film was a grand affair. The roaring response of the audience at the event and on social media has left makers of the film satisfied.

For a month and a half, *Burning Star* Sampooranesh Babu has been shooting for this comedy entertainer across the city. The shooting of this movie has already been wrapped up and the team of this D Vasantha Nageswara Rao directorial will move onto the post-production front now and the makers are keen on getting it only on the big screen during this summer.

"We have completed the shooting of *Bazaar Rowdy* sooner than expected with the wonderful sup-

port of the producer, Sandireddy Srinivasa Rao. We are busy working with post-production activities right now. Our executive producer Shekhar has been very supportive of all of us with his skilful planning and experience. He provided us with everything we wanted, so the film has such an ensemble cast. Heroine Maheshwari Vaddi has done a spectacular job. We will release the teaser of this movie very soon. *Bazaar Rowdy* will be ready for release this summer," revealed director D Vasantha Nageswara Rao.

Film lovers and the audience are now eagerly waiting for the release of the teaser that will be out very soon.

Besides Sampooranesh Babu, *Bazaar Rowdy* also features Sayaji Shinde, Prudhvi, Nagineedu, Shafi, Sameer, Manichandana, Naveena and Padmavathi in pivotal roles. The film has been bankrolled by Sandireddy Srinivasa Rao under the banner of KS Creations.



Rana's No 1 Yaari's next season on aha

Rana Daggubati is back with another season of the most-iconic Telugu talk show, *No 1 Yaari* — First episode premieres on March 14, on Telugu OTT platform, *aha*. After churning back-to-back blockbusters like *Krack*, *Colour Photo*, alongside the much-loved talk show *Sam Jam* hosted by Samantha Akkineni, *No 1 Yaari* is *aha*'s next big bet!

The much-awaited Season 3 of *No 1 Yaari* is back with Rana Daggubati as the host, and *aha* has bagged the rights to stream it alongside Gemini TV. From unique guests and fun segments, the makers have promised an all-new season of *Yaari*, with triple the friendship, triple the fun. Rana launched the promo on his Twitter handle and fans couldn't wait for another season of celebs' silly banters.

Rana is currently awaiting the release of his film *Aranya* on March 26. The film has been in the making for over two years and the film is finally seeing the light of the day in Tamil, Telugu and Hindi.

Directed by Prabhu Solomon, *Aranya* is about saving the elephants and the effects of deforestation. The three-minute-long trailer addresses forest encroachment and capitalism. Apart from this, the actor also takes care of his newly-launched YouTube channel called South Bay, which is focussed on creating diverse content in regional languages. He's also busy promoting his Hyderabad Football Club that is gearing to compete in the Indian Super League.



Ram Alladi's next, a Sanskrit film

In a unique attempt, Ram Alladi, an award-winning Telugu filmmaker based in New York, is again to team up with the makers of his film *Ra's Metanoia* to present *Nabhamsi*, a feature-length film set a millennium back into India's rich history. *Nabhamsi* is a Sanskrit word, meaning 'skies'. Interestingly, the film will be made in Sanskrit.

"Kannada director GV Iyer

directed the first-ever Sanskrit movie *Aadhi Sankaracharya* followed by *Bhagavadgita*. The audience appreciated them, and that inspired me to do *Nabhamsi*. I learnt Sanskrit for this, dedicatedly. More details will be announced soon," said an excited Ram Alladi.

Ram has previously won plaudits for his documentary, *Chiselled*, and has more recently, in November 2020, released the exceptionally well-received *Ra's Metanoia*, a celebration of

the life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, filmed entirely on digital sets, depicting a range of eras and locations central to Gandhi's life.

As a director, this is his third project, and *Nabhamsi* is the story of one man's journey, over the course of a lifetime, to identify the source of one of his first and most primal memories. *Nabhamsi* is a live-action romance, unique for being written and performed in one of the subcontinent's most

ancient languages, Sanskrit.

The film's pre-production work took close to 5, 6 months and the shooting will kick-start on International Women's Day (March 8). 75 per cent of the shooting is planned in the US and the remaining in India.

The story is accompanied by English open captions and closed captions in many other languages.

Alongside the literature, *Nabhamsi*'s themes will be explored and accentuated

through the use of several forgotten Indian dance art forms to narrate the story, all illustrated with a rich palette of vivid colours which reflect the vibrancy and energy of both the period and the culture of India over one thousand years ago.

AR IT Works banner is bankrolling *Nabhamsi* and V Bharadwaj is composing the soundtrack.

The film is being planned for a 2022 release.