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Suu Kyi in court 1st time since coup

KOLKATA: Myanmar's tallest leader Aung San Suu Kyi, denied a second tenure in power by a military takeover on February 1, faced court on Monday through a video link, her lawyer Khin Maung Zaw said. Zaw said that he had seen his client for the first time since a military coup exactly one month ago, after which the country has plunged into huge and ceaseless protests. Suu Kyi's court appearance came on a day when protesters again hit the streets, despite a bloody Sunday.



IRREGULAR by MANJUL

He is in toilet, mom. In fact, he spends all his time there only trying to extract cooking gas from the sewage

Many return without vaccine jab in Delhi

Sr citizens express anger over govt hospitals' functioning

NEW DELHI

THE vaccination drive against coronavirus for people above 60 years of age and those over 45 years with comorbidities began on Monday with many facing a tough time at several government hospitals in the city. Senior citizens who turned up to get vaccinated at the centres without prior registration expressed their anger as many of them had to return without getting vaccinated.

Similarly, many frontline Covid-19 warriors, including security forces personnel who came to Lok Nayak Jai Prakash (LNJP) hospital had to return as there was no alternate plan for immediate registration process.

N D Jhariyat, a Delhi police personnel, talking to IANS said, "Three days back I received a message re-

garding vaccination and when I came here (LNJP), I was informed that there is some technical fault in the system and I had to wait."

Devender Singh, a senior



who is a resident of Laxmi Nagar, was seen moving from one room to another to get vaccinated. However, the retired medical official had to return without receiving a vaccination shot. He said, "I am 85 years old and as I came to know that senior

citizens would be vaccinated, I came here at 10 a.m. Those who came after me were given vaccination shots and whenever I approached the doctors they would ask me to just wait. How long should I keep waiting when there is no clarity in their system?"

A senior doctor at LNJP said that a total of 200 registrations were done, including senior citizens and other categories for the first day. However, the problem arose after many people came for vaccination whose names were not registered. "We started the vaccination process a little later due to technical failure in the registration process. Apart from senior citizens and other beneficiaries of vaccination, many have come for their second shot of vaccination," the doctor who was part of the Covid-19 vaccination team, said requesting not to be named.

GOVT CLARIFICATION

Register on Co-WIN portal not on App

NEW DELHI

AMIDST reports of a glitch on the Co-WIN App, the Union Health Ministry on Monday clarified that those who are eligible for the jab in Phase 2 of the Covid-19 vaccination drive that began on March 1 should register themselves on the Co-WIN2.0 portal, not App.

Registration opened at 9 am on Monday at www.cowin.gov.in. All citizens that are aged, or will attain the age of 60 or more as on January 1, 2022, can register themselves, besides all such citizens who are aged, or will attain the age of 45 to 59 years as on January 1, 2022, and have any of the 20 comorbidities specified by the Health Ministry. Earlier in the day, many people took to social media to point out that the Co-WIN app is not sending the One-Time Password (OTP) to their mobile numbers, hence hindering the self-registration process.

However, the Health Ministry took to Twitter to clear the air. "There is NO #CoWIN App for beneficiary registration. The App on Play Store is for administrators only," tweeted the ministry.

It also said: "Registration and booking for appointment for #COVID19 Vaccination is to be done through #CoWIN Portal: <http://cowin.gov.in>."

Those who are eligible to get vaccination in this phase can register themselves at the Co-WIN 2.0 portal through their mobile number following a step-by-step process. After registration, the portal will present the list of government and private hospitals designated as Covid Vaccination Centres (CVC) with the date and time of the available schedules.

LET'S MAKE INDIA COVID-FREE: MODI

Modi administered Covaxin at AIIMS by Sister Nivedita from Puducherry

NEW DELHI

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi took his first dose of the coronavirus vaccine at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) on Monday. He was administered Bharat Biotech's Covaxin by Sister Nivedita from Puducherry.

The Prime Minister tweeted, "Took my first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine at AIIMS. Remarkable how our doctors and scientists have worked quick in time to strengthen the fight against Covid-19. I appeal to all those who are eligible to take the vaccine. Together let's make India Covid-19 free!"

The second phase of the government's massive vaccination drive is all set to begin from March 1. Those above 60 years of age, people in the 45-59 age bracket with comorbidities, armed forces personnel, police personnel and vulnerable groups will be included in this stage. It also includes those healthcare and frontline workers who missed getting vaccinated in the first phase.

While the vaccine will be given free of cost at government hospitals, the Centre has capped the price of Covid-19 vaccination at Rs 250 (Rs 150 per dose of vaccine plus Rs 100 service charge) at private hospitals.

PM gets first dose of vaccine



Thick needle for thick-skinned netas!

Modi jokes while getting vaccinated

NEW DELHI

WHEN Prime Minister Narendra Modi walked into the Covid-19 vaccination centre at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in New Delhi at 6.30 am, the medical staff present there was perhaps a bit struck by the situation. Realising this, Modi instantly struck a conversation with them asking them about their names and places of origin to put them at ease.

To further lighten up the atmosphere, the PM

cracked a joke. He asked nurse Nivedita, who was given the task to inoculate him, whether she would use a needle meant for veterinary purposes. The nurse said no but didn't fully understand the question. He then explained that politicians are known to be very thick-skinned and hence were they planning to use a special thick needle for him. On hearing this, the nurse not only laughed but was also put at ease.

CHINESE CYBERATTACK THAT CAUSED 2020 MUMBAI BLACKOUT

A 'warning shot'

NEW YORK

CHINA had launched a cyberattack against India's power grid targeting Mumbai on October 13 last year, in a warning message after the tension at the Ladakh border.

A report in The New York Times has claimed China has been targeting Indian utilities and infrastructure using cyberattacks to possibly coerce New Delhi on the border issue.

As per the report, when the Indian soldiers were locked in a tense standoff with China along the Line of Control (LoC), Beijing injected malware into the electrical supply of the country.

The malware tracing was done by Recorded



A woman and her daughter light a candle inside their house after a power outage in Mumbai

The Chinese Red Echo firm has been held responsible for the Mumbai power outage in October 2020

Future, which is a cybersecurity company founded in

2009 with headquarters in Massachusetts. The company claims that most of the malware was not activated.

It may mean that a small proportion of malware was used during the Mumbai power outage. A Chinese state-sponsored group Red Echo has been held responsible for the Mumbai power outage. Stuart Solomon, Recorded Future's chief operating officer, said that the Chinese state-sponsored group Red Echo, "has been seen to systematically utilize advanced cyber intrusion techniques to quietly gain a foothold in nearly a dozen critical nodes across the Indian power generation and transmission infrastructure."

No data breach, says Power ministry

NEW DELHI

FOLLOWING reports that China may have targeted Indian power facilities through cyberattacks, India has denied any data breach or any impact due to the attack that was aimed at the

country's power grid system.

The report published in the New York Times had indicated that the mega-power outage that happened in Mumbai last year as a result of a cyber-attack following the tensions between

India and China on border areas. The flow of malware was detected by US-based Recorded Future. As per the report, China-linked group Red Echo may have planted malware in key power plants in India.

SC: Can sexual intimacy between a live-in couple be called rape?

NEW DELHI

WHILE examining the issue of consent for sexual relationship between a couple living together, the Supreme Court on Monday queried whether sexual intercourse between them can be termed as rape.

A bench headed by Chief Justice S.A. Bobde and comprising Justices A.S. Bopanna and V. Ramasubramanian said: "If a couple is living together as man and wife...the husband may be brutal, but could the sexual intercourse between the couple, who are living together, can be termed as rape?"

The observations from the top court came while hearing a plea of a person accused of rape by a woman, who had been in a live-in relationship with him for over two years. The woman had filed an FIR for rape after the man married another woman.

Senior advocate Vibha Dutta Makhija, representing the accused, submitted before the bench that the couple used to work together, and they were in a live-in relationship for over two years. The bench noted that making a false promise for marriage is wrong.

According to the complainant, who was represented by advocate Aditya Vashisth, the couple was in a romantic relationship, but she had clearly refused getting into a sexual intimacy before marriage.

Miss India Delhi Mansi joins AAP

PURNA SINGH
NEW DELHI

FORMER Miss India Delhi Mansi Sehgal joined the Aam Aadmi Party in the presence of party leader Raghav Chadha, the AAP said in a statement on Monday.

Speaking on the occasion, Sehgal, Miss India Delhi 2019, said she was "inspired by the honest governance of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal" and therefore chose to join the AAP. For any nation to prosper, health and education are the two main pillars and there has been a "tremendous change" in these fields in the last few years under the leadership of Kejriwal, she said.



"Inspired by the honest governance of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and hardwork of MLA Raghav Chadha, I chose to join the Aam Aadmi Party, and I feel that through clean politics, we

can bring about a substantial change in the world that we live in," Sehgal stated. Chadha inducted Sehgal into the AAP at Naraina Vihar Club in the presence of several residents.

"I am delighted that the Aam Aadmi Party and Arvind Kejriwal instill confidence in young people to join politics and serve the people, and the AAP family is growing leaps and bounds with each passing day. I welcome Mansi into the AAP family," Chadha said. Sehgal is also a TedX speaker, trained engineer and an entrepreneur with her own startup, the party statement said. Calling upon youth and women to be an active part of politics and to join the AAP, Sehgal said, "I would urge our youth and particularly our women to come and join us, and bring about the change that we all wish to see."

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TWEET PATROL



NEHA DHUPIA
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#mondaymood ... Me trying to get out of bed #justcannot @mehrdhupiabedi @Imangadbedi



String art makes a comeback



TEJAL SINHA

String art has been around for a while, it was popular in the 70s, but it is enjoying a comeback as a simple and fun way to make your own art work.

String arts have been known and practiced by many, one amongst them is Prakya, a Hyderabad based self taught string artist, who is an event designer by profession.

Prakya shares, "I found this art in the quarantine to add some magic to my room. After which, I started posting it in Instagram, after seeing the response people have started asking me to sell. So I have started selling them on Instagram and easy platform in the name of 'prakya crafts'. I learned the basic string art

Allenki Prakya found the love of art during the quarantine days and started hand string arts



Allenki Prakya

There is no rhyme or reason to this process," adds Prakya. In order to do the string art, simply go from side to side, top to bottom and corner to corner, varying the lengths and order randomly. Hammering can be noisy for a while but spending 90min of your time will be totally worth it.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Use solid plywood to offer a hard surface to secure the nails in one place
- Avoid panels with melamine coating
- Keep your images as simple as you can
- Avoid fancy or complicated images that have detailed parts
- Use 25mm long brass or linoleum nails with a head
- Don't place nails too close

through YouTube and felt to create various shapes in this. At the starting it was fun, then after I started creating complex designs like logos it took time of 24hours to complete one art."

String art is weaving colored string, wool, wire, or yarn between hammered nails to make geometric patterns. Artists use lines of thread to create curved patterns that can form various desirable shapes.

This organic idea to use thread and nails to form angles has grown from an educational

tool to an art form like no other.

"This craft requires very few materials like nails, wood, Embroidery floss and inexpensive way to add some personality to your walls then after I started selling them on Instagram and easy platform in the name of 'prakya crafts' It's an excellent project for beginners, too, because it doesn't require any special skills. It isn't difficult to achieve an impressive finished product using this technique, especially if you choose a shape that has simple outlines.



Conducted by mindfulness and meditation app, ThinkRight.me, the survey also finds Indians turning to meditation for better sleep

Meditation for happiness, peace goes up as one ages: Survey

SIDDHI JAIN

What makes Indians meditate? According to a recent survey by meditation and mindfulness app ThinkRight.me, it is the pursuit of happiness, peace, and personal growth that keeps most Indians going in the meditation sphere. Spanning 1,000 individuals between the age group of 18 years to 60 years, across Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, and Pune, the survey also cites stress management and better sleep as other key areas where meditation has helped individuals. From an app data perspective, almost 40 per cent of the users of ThinkRight.me meditated daily in 2020, spending a total of 2.64 billion minutes on the app in the entire year.

The survey also revealed how meditation helps different age groups differently. The peace and happiness tops the charts across all age groups – and goes up as one grows older, as one in two people aged between 36-45 meditate for peace and happiness compared to

1 in 5 among the 18-25 age group.

The age bracket of 18-25 years and 46-55 years showed similar patterns; the quest for peace and happiness was followed by better sleep, personal growth, and stress management, in that order.

When it comes to city-specific analysis, most women in Mumbai meditate to seek peace and personal growth, while Pune and people in Bengaluru are in search of peace and happiness.

Delhiites turn to meditation for better sleep and stress management.

As per Rajan Navani, Vice Chairman and Managing Director of JetSynthesys, the company which owns the app says, "India often tops the charts when it comes to studies on stress and anxiety. We launched ThinkRight.me two years back to make the benefits of meditation accessible to all. We are big believers of the power of thinking right, therefore the name, because our thoughts do guide how our day and life pan out. All the daily affirmations and guided

meditation sessions on ThinkRight.me are born out of this core belief, and we hope to use these survey findings to make TRM an even more compelling proposition. With time, we also hope more people take to meditation and a more mindful way of life so collectively there's a positive change in people's overall mental and emotional well-being."

The onset of 2020 brought with it COVID-19, a global pandemic which has been harsh on most individuals and the app data is proof of that reality.

According to this platform with over 2 million downloads, the maximum traffic seen on the app was during the months of April 2020 to June 2020, during the COVID-19 induced lockdown, with daily active users increasing by 50 per cent coupled with a significant increase in subscriptions too. The daily positive affirmations followed by guided meditation offerings top the charts for what helped app users the most in 2020.

LFW & FDCI to present joint Fashion Week

LAKMÉ FASHION WEEK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE FASHION DESIGN COUNCIL OF INDIA WILL RELEASE THE SCHEDULE SHORTLY

Seems like the good old days of Indian fashion are back,, after more than a decade-and-a-half, Lakmé Fashion Week (LFW) and the Fashion Design Council of India (FDCI) will present a joint fashion week scheduled to take place from 16-21 March 2021.

The Phygitall Fashion Week ushers in an era of positivity to drive growth in the industry in the post-pandemic world. Leaders of the industry- FDCI, Lakmé and RISE Worldwide make history with this event, kickstarting of an era of effective co-operation and meaningful initiatives.

Combining forces Lakmé Fashion

Week jointly organised by Lakmé & RISE Worldwide (formerly IMG Reliance) and FDCI will present a joint schedule this season at Lakmé Fashion Week. The event will have a special "unity logo" designed to mark this occasion.

The event will feature the best of curation and designers from Delhi, Mumbai and across India. FDCI & LFW will jointly present the Opening Show on 16th March and will culminate with the Lakmé Absolute Grand Finale on 21st March. The event will also feature talent discovery programme GenNext for designers as well as promote modelling talent through FDCI's #GetNoticed Model Hunt besides other innovations. Both

FDCI and LFW will continue their buyer programmes launched last season as well.

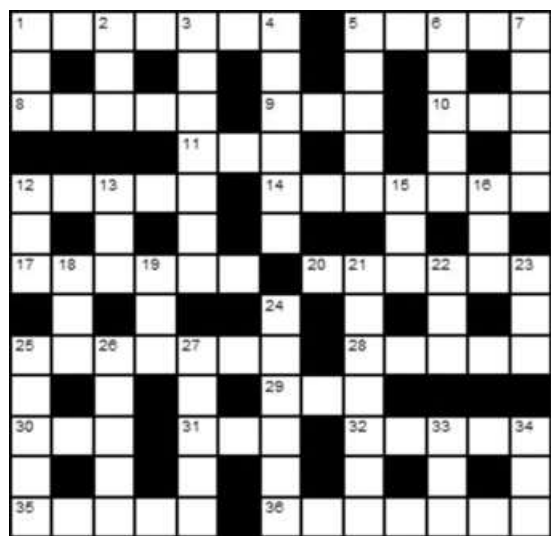
Sunil Sethi, Chairman FDCI commented, "The Fashion Design Council of India for decades has tirelessly worked to make the design industry lead from the front and leave a global footprint.

The pandemic has darkened the clouds, this will add a silver lining to the business of fashion and help sharpen the needs of the fast changing world. Lakmé, RISE Worldwide and FDCI will now have a shared purpose and belonging as we both reinvent the wheel in uncertain times. We are delighted to present this fashion week together."

Ashwath Swaminathan, Head of

Innovations at Lakmé said, "Our association with the Indian fashion industry runs deep as Lakmé has been a key driver of its growth for the past 20 years. We look forward to this partnership opening up new avenues of growth for all stakeholders. We continue to remain true to the pillars of the Lakmé Fashion week which are discoverability, sustainability and talkability as we present the best in Indian fashion & beauty this season to a global audience."

Jaspreet Chandok, Head – Lifestyle Businesses at RISE Worldwide said, that RISE Worldwide's ultimate goal is the development of eco-systems that they operate in and feel this partnership will help elevate the fashion industry to new heights. We are glad to partner with the FDCI and look forward to jointly present Lakmé Fashion Week this season, as we RISE as one."



SOLUTION TO MARCH 1

CROSSWORD

Across

- Put out again (7)
- Provide proof (5)
- Japanese dish (5)
- Night bird (3)
- Express publicity (3)
- Catch (3)
- Formed into a compact mass ? (5)
- Expelled (7)
- Purloined or pilfered (6)
- Inclined to be snobbish (6)
- Violent whirlwind (7)
- Sudden or unawares (5)
- Method (3)
- ___ de plume (3)
- Pounds per sq inch (3)
- Light downy particles (5)
- Doubter (5)
- Exhibit hall (7)

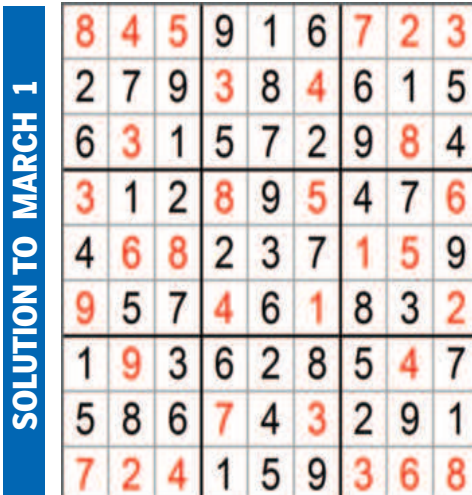
Down

- Legal thing (3)
- Uncertainties (3)

Across

- Axle rod (7)
- Acted poorly (6)
- Worth (5)
- Not appropriate (5)
- Biblical king (5)
- Lettuce variety (3)
- Colourful Japanese carp (3)
- Policeman (3)
- Newt (3)
- Court (3)
- A play on words (3)
- Sportive (7)
- Irish Republican Army, acronym (3)
- Talk at length (3)
- Acknowledging applause (6)
- Restorative (5)
- Cow's stomach (5)
- A savoury jelly (5)
- Employ (3)
- Sprite (3)

SUDOKU



SOLUTION TO MARCH 1

NEWS ROUNDUP

Kriti Sanon gets nostalgic as 'Luka Chuppi' turns 2

Actress Kriti Sanon played the character of a journalist in the social comedy "Luka Chuppi", which released two years ago on this day. Looking back at the film, Kriti says she connected with her character Rashmi Trivedi on a personal level.

The film, which also starred Kartik Aaryan in the lead, revolved around live-in-relationships and was directed by Laxman Utekar. "Rashmi was a great blend of modern thinking and rooted core, much like me. She was spunky, independent, impulsive, believed in taking her own life decisions and still had an emotional core. I had a lot of fun playing her and was overwhelmed with the love that she got," Kriti said.

The actress is right now busy shooting for her upcoming horror comedy, "Bhediya", with Varun Dhawan. She also has Vikas Bahl's "Ganapath" opposite Tiger Shroff and Laxman Utekar's "Mimi" in her kitty, besides Akshay Kumar-starrer "Bachchan Pandey".



Girl knocks court's doors after tolerating child marriage torture for 12 yrs

JAIPUR

AFTER suffering for 12 long years subsequent to marriage at the tender age of seven, 18-year-old Mansi Gurjar has finally summoned courage to initiate steps to annul her child marriage.

A resident of Paladi village of Rajasthan's Bhilwara district, Mansi knocked the doors of Bhilwara's Family Court and filed the case for annulment of her child marriage on which

Family Court Judge Mukesh Bhargava has issued summons to her so-called 'husband'.

Manasi elicited the support of Dr. Kriti Bharti, Managing Trustee and Rehabilitation Psychologist of Sarathi Trust, Jodhpur, in her quest to break free from child marriage. Dr. Bharti, known for launching a campaign that facilitates annulment of child marriages, said that Mansi, 18, was married at the age of seven in 2009 to a young man from Banera tehsil.



The child bride is busy pursuing her first year of graduation. Her marriage took place in 2009 under social pressure. All of seven years, old, Mansi realised what had happened only a few years ago.

After Mansi became an adult, she refused to accept the marriage. Since then, her in-laws have been putting pressure on her family and Mansi. They've even threatened the family with dire consequences. Certain caste panchs have also been

threatening the family of penalty and social boycott if the child marriage was annulled.

Mansi and her family became depressed for a long time owing to pressure and personal fear of caste panchayats. Now, with help from Dr. Kriti Bharti of Saarthi Trust, Mansi has shown courage to annul the child marriage.

Dr. Bharti helped Mansi file a child marriage annulment case in the family court of Bhilwara District. In the petition, Dr.

Bharti pleaded on behalf of Mansi and presented the facts related to her age and other facts in the court.

Family Court Judge Mukesh Bhargava showed enormous sensitivity in the case of child marriage annulment and immediately issued summons to the so-called husband.

Judge Mukesh Bhargava said that swift and serious action will have to be taken at all levels to end the practice of child marriage.

INTERIM BAIL GRANTED AMID COVID-19

SC asks 2,318 undertrials to surrender within 15 days

NEW DELHI

THE Supreme Court Monday directed 2,318 undertrial prisoners, who were granted interim bail by the trial courts here amid the COVID-19 pandemic, to surrender in jail within 15 days.

The apex court said that 356 prisoners, who were earlier granted interim bail by the Delhi High Court in view of the pandemic, would also surrender in jail within 15 days from Monday.

A bench comprising Justices L. Nageswara Rao and S. Ravindra Bhat passed the directions while hearing the pleas, including an appeal filed by 'National Forum on Prison Reforms' (NFPR) against the October 20 last year direction of the Delhi High Court which had said that its blanket order extending all interim stays and bails granted prior to and during the COVID-19 lockdown would not remain in effect after October 31, 2020.

Advocate Gaurav Agrawal, who is assisting the top court as an amicus curiae in a separate matter related to inhuman conditions in prisons, told the bench that he would submit a report on



the issue of overcrowding in jails. One of the lawyers appearing in the matter said that around 17,000 inmates are lodged in jail in Delhi while the capacity is of 10,000 only.

The bench has listed the matter for further hearing in April. The apex court had on October 29, 2020 stayed the high court direction asking all undertrial prisoners, whose bail period was ex-

tended due to the pandemic, to surrender in a phased manner between November 2 and 13 last year.

The apex court had also issued notices to the Delhi government and others seeking their replies on the appeal filed by NFPR. The NFPR has claimed that the high court direction was completely against the spirit of March 23, 2020 order passed by it, brushing

aside, without even perusing, the eight recommendations/orders of its own High-Powered Committee (HPC) appointed by the top court.

The plea has alleged that high court order was passed by grossly misunderstanding the data presented to it and wrongly concluding that only three coronavirus cases existed among the 16,000 inmates.

UP girls to train in self-defence

LUCKNOW

UNDER the ongoing Mission Shakti programme, girl students in more than 40,000 upper primary schools will learn self-defence techniques between March 1 and 31.

According to Vijay Kiran Anand, Director-General of School Education, "These classes will help rural students boost their self-confidence and self-esteem. It is time for the girls of class 6 to 8 to learn self-defence techniques. Participants will also be given certificates."

He further said that the education department has 10,748 physical education instructors who have been given the responsibility to train girl students.

The department has made a provision of Rs 3,000 per school for the purpose.

The trainers will train girls in their own school and a nearby schools as well, said the official.

He said that the main purpose of self-defence training is that is to make the girls physically and mentally self-dependent so that they can face any situation.

Man held for attacking Delhi police constable

NEW DELHI

A 40-year-old man was arrested for allegedly attacking a Delhi Police constable when he went to apprehend him for harassing a woman, police said on Monday. Shivram, a resident of Sangam Vihar in south Delhi, was accused by a woman of abusing, molesting and misbehaving with her, they said.

The woman had filed a complaint against the man at K M Pur police station on Saturday. She had alleged that he abused, molested and misbehaved with her, police said.

The accused also threatened her of dire consequences and forced her to meet him, they added. After receiving the complaint, Sub Inspectors Komal and Sandeep Yadav and Constable Nehru rushed to the spot near INA circle where the accused had called the woman to meet him, a senior police officer said. When Shivram spotted the presence of a po-

lice team, he ran away and jumped into a drain.

Constable Nehru chased him and Shivram hit him with a brick on his forehead, he said. The accused was overpowered and both he and Nehru were taken to AIIMS for treatment, the officer said. A case was registered against Shivram and he was subsequently arrested, Atul

Kumar Thakur, Deputy Commissioner of Police (South), said.

"During investigation, it was



revealed that accused Shivram used to work in Civil Defence and he was harassing the woman by stalking her with an intent to outrage her modesty. He also used abusive and filthy language against the complainant, threatening her of dire consequences. When police team reached to apprehend the accused, he attacked Constable Nehru on his head with a brick," he said. The accused was sent to judicial custody and investigation is in progress, Thakur said.

HC grants time to Centre to examine WhatsApp's new privacy policy

NEW DELHI

THE Centre on Monday told the Delhi High Court that WhatsApp's new privacy policy, which is scheduled to come into effect from May 15, was being examined at the highest level and they were seeking some clarification from the instant messaging platform on the issue.

Taking note of the submission, Justice Sanjeev Sachdeva granted three weeks time to the Centre for the purpose and asked it to file a status report while listing the matter for further hearing on April 19. The court was hearing a petition by a lawyer against the new privacy policy of Facebook-owned WhatsApp on the ground that it violates users right to pri-



vacy under the Constitution.

Central government standing counsel Kirtiman Singh said they are in the process of gathering more clarity on the issue and are seeking clarifications from the instant messaging platform. He said the matter is being examined at the highest level and sought three weeks time to file the status report. The Centre had earlier informed the high court that WhatsApp was treating Indian users differently from Europeans over

opting out of its new privacy policy which was a matter of concern for the government and it was looking into the issue.

It had also said it was also a matter of concern that Indian users were being "unilaterally" subjected to the change in privacy policy by the instant messaging platform. The high court had earlier observed that WhatsApp was a private app and it was optional whether to download it or not. The Centre had said the government was already looking into the issue and has sent a communication to WhatsApp seeking certain information. WhatsApp's counsel had told the court that the communication has been received from the Centre and will be responded to.

89-year-old couple who survived Covid-19 get jabs

KUNAL DUTT
NEW DELHI

AN old couple, both of whom would soon turn 90, and four elderly family members who survived COVID-19 were among the senior citizens who got vaccinated in Delhi on Monday. The four people, all aged between 60-70 years who had successfully battled the coronavirus infection last November, included a man and his wife, her brother and his spouse.

The second phase of the COVID-19 vaccination drive began, with jabs being given to citizens aged 60 and above, and those in 45-59 age bracket with comorbidities. Chander Sain Malhotra, 89, a tall man, came to a vaccination site at the National Heart Institute (NHI) in south-east Delhi, accompanied by his



wife, also 89, and his son and daughter-in-law.

Sporting a bright blue t-shirt, he got his blood pressure measured at the starting point of the vaccination centre, located on the third floor of the facility's annex building, and moved on for formalities, before waiting for his turn to get the jab. His wife, San-

tosh Malhotra, was brought to the centre in a wheelchair, with her son and daughter-in-law by their sides.

"She has arthritic pain in her leg, but we wanted to get her vaccinated. And, so all four of us have come for it," said son Rakesh Malhotra, a 63-year-old businessman. Residents of Laj-

pat Nagar in south Delhi, the Malhotras were very keen to get vaccinated. However, his blood pressure was showing a bit over the normal level, so he waited in the corridor, while his wife and parents, queued up for their turns to receive the Covishield vaccine.

"My dad retired as a senior officer from Air India and still has keenness to go for a brisk walk in the morning, which he has stopped now due to COVID," Rakesh Malhotra told PTI. He said his 1932-born father had migrated to India from the Pakistan side after the Partition. "He survived that and we all have been safe from COVID so far. And, vaccination will further help now. Our PM today led from the front and got the shot himself. It will motivate others to get vaccinated," the son said.

Interfaith couple's marriage put on hold endlessly in Bareilly

BAREILLY

FOUR months ago, a 27-year-old Muslim man had allegedly 'eloped' with a girl from another faith to get married, which had created a lot of sensation. The man was later caught and jailed for over a month.

The couple has since been waiting for permission from the sub-divisional magistrate (SDM) to get 'legally' married but has been asked to wait for another month.

The couple has an Allahabad high court order, giving them freedom to get married and an exemption from notice period under special circumstances by the marriage officer.

SDM Sadar area, Vishu Raja, said, "The law favours the couple, but they would have to wait for a police report to ensure there is no law-and-order issue. The couple had come with their friends who agreed to sign as witnesses on Saturday but the girl's family is still against the marriage."



The SDM said that the couple represented themselves personally, as well as through their legal counsels, for the application of marriage under the special act. They produced an Allahabad high court order which stated that days of notice period can be exempted under special circumstances by the marriage officer.

"The judgement favours them. However, we are seeking a verification report on 12

points to ensure that neither of the persons is already married, their actual place of residence, possibility of law-and-order issue, etc. Police report is crucial here as well. This proceeding may take less than 30 days to complete and the permission would be granted to the couple for marriage after that," said the SDM.

In January, the Allahabad high court had held that the requirement of publication of no-

tice of intended marriage under Section 6 and inviting/entering objections under Section 7 of the Special Marriage Act is not mandatory.

Justice Vivek Chaudhary had observed that making such publication mandatory would invade the fundamental rights of liberty and privacy.

The couple, it may be recalled, had eloped on October 17. A few days later, scores of members of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) held a protest and vandalised the Quila police station, alleging inaction on 'love jihad'.

The couple was later tracked to Rajasthan and the man was put in jail. He was later released on bail. Bareilly's Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Rohit Singh Sajwan told reporters, "Police do not have any objection to the marriage. We may even provide them security in case they are threatened by their family or relatives."

MLA's supporters assault toll plaza staff

PRAYAGRAJ

THE security personnel and supporters of an Apna Dal MLA allegedly assaulted toll plaza employees on Prayagraj-Pratapgarh border.

The video clip went viral on social media after which district police authorities have stated investigations into the case. Superintendent of Police (Trans-Ganga) Dhawal Jaiswal told reporters that police have been making investigations into the incident.

He further added that statements of the toll plaza employees have been recorded and police have been verifying the facts as well as the series of incidents. He also claimed that police have also been scanning the CCTV footage regarding the incident.

According to reports, the security staff and supporters of the Apna Dal MLA, R.K. Verma had allegedly assaulted the toll plaza staff at Ramphalnari toll plaza on Pratapgarh-Prayagraj border on Saturday evening when the toll plaza employees asked them to show the pass.

UP primary schools reopen with Covid protocol

LUCKNOW

PRIMARY schools in Uttar Pradesh reopened on Monday after almost a year.

While children came in limited numbers, their enthusiasm brimmed with life and laughter.

Schools had been gaily decorated to welcome the students and children were offered sweets and flowers by their teachers.

Classes in Lucknow schools will be conducted in shifts. It is mandatory for the schools to fol-

low coronavirus guidelines. Schools will be sanitized on a regular basis and students will have to arrive wearing masks.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath made a surprise inspection of a primary school in the Narhi locality where he interacted with the children.

Schools across the country were shut due to the Covid-19 situation since March 2020. Several exams were postponed and cancelled and classes were conducted online within this period of time.



Ignoring vaccination could be risky

SEVERAL States in the country continue to report an increased number of daily new cases. Six States, Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat, have shown a surge in new cases in the last 24 hours. In all, 15,510 new cases were registered in the last 24 hours. Maharashtra continues to report the highest daily new cases at 8,293. It is followed by Kerala with 3,254 while Punjab has reported 579 new cases. A total of 87.25 per cent of the new cases are from these six States.

The Centre is continuously engaging with the States and UTs manifesting a higher caseload of active cases and those reporting a rise in the daily new Covid cases. States and UTs have been advised to maintain a continued rigorous vigil for containing the spread of Covid-19. Need for effective testing, comprehensive tracking, prompt isolation of positive cases and quick quarantine of close contacts are strongly emphasised. Eight states are displaying an upward trajectory in the daily new cases India's total active caseload is 1,68,627 today.

India's present active caseload now stands at 1.52 per cent of India's total positive cases. Five States account for 84 per cent of total active cases in the country. Maharashtra alone accounts for 46.39 per cent of India's total active cases, followed by Kerala with 29.49 per cent. 21 States/UTs have reported less than 1,000 active cases. Arunachal Pradesh has reported no active cases in the last 24 hours. 15 States/UTs have registered more than 1,000 active cases. Kerala and Maharashtra are the two states with more than 10,000 active cases, while the rest of the 13 States/UTs have between 1,000-10,000 active cases.

So far, a total of 1,43,01,266 vaccine doses have been administered to beneficiaries through 2,92,312 sessions. These include first dose of 66,69,985 Health Care Workers (HCWs), second dose of 24,56,191 HCWs and 51,75,090 FLWs who have taken the first dose. The next phase of Covid-19 vaccination has commenced from March 1 for those who are over 60 years of age and for people aged 45 and above with

specific comorbid conditions. A simplified process of registration has been set up, whereby potential beneficiaries can have the option of advance self-registration, on-site registration or facilitated cohort registration.

Beneficiaries are advised to refer to this user guide for any information on registration and appointment for vaccination. It is unfortunate that there is a section in this country which advises against vaccination. It does so for two reasons. One of the reasons could be out of ignorance. This could be pardoned. But, some of the vocal opponents of the vaccination do so due to their political preferences. They read politics into the vaccination of the nation too.

Either they don't understand the implications of non-vaccination or it is just that they don't care about the nation. The likes of Akhilesh Yadav should be ashamed of their politics as they have given a call for boycott of the vaccines. A few voices went ahead and called these Modi's vaccines. It is imperative that the whole country gets vaccinated and gets so at the earliest. We can hardly afford lockdowns. Fools abound in this world and we cannot help it. But we can surely help ourselves by getting vaccinated.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION NOT ABSOLUTE

Gogoi's criticism of judiciary and comedian's contempt



Madabhushi Sridhar Acharyulu

ATTORNEY General KK Venugopal did not agree or praise the remarks of former Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi but rightly analysed those comments on the point whether they constitute contempt of court or not.

According to Section 15 of the Contempt of Court Act, the consent of the Attorney General is essential for initiating prosecution of any person for contempt of court. In response to such request for initiating process of contempt against Justice Gogoi the AG said that his "statements were indeed "very strong", but it was said for the "good of the institution" and would not "in any manner scandalise the court or lower its authority in the eyes of the public". "The statements apparently reflect his deep frustration with the ills that undoubtedly beset the justice delivery system," Venugopal explained.

The attorney General is an independent authority to decide on permission to lodge contempt cases, without anybody's advice. He must decide on his own. The present AG is a well-read legal luminary, who can find out what is scandalous and what is not.

Comedian and contempt

He gave second consent recently to Advocate from Prayagraj, Anuj Singh to initiate contempt proceedings against a stand-up comic artist Kunal Kamra for his November 18 tweet, considering that it was "grossly vulgar and obnoxious" and tended to lower the authority of the Supreme Court. Kamra in his earlier tweets also allegedly criticised the apex court, which AG considered to be in "bad taste". Based on AG's first consent a petition was filed in the Supreme Court on November 13 seeking initiation of criminal contempt proceedings against Kamra for his alleged "scandalous tweets" against the apex court.

When SC granted interim bail to Arnab Goswami in the 2018 abetment to suicide case. On November 11, Kamra published various tweets and thereby scandalised the apex court, it was alleged. The AG while granting consent earlier, said today people believe that they can "boldly and brazenly condemn" the Supreme Court

of India and its judges by exercising their freedom of speech, but under the Constitution, the freedom of speech is subject to the law of contempt. He said that the comments "clearly cross the line between humour and contempt of the court."

Kunal has allegedly compared a SC judge with a 'flight attendant serving champagne to first-class passengers and called apex court as a 'Supreme Joke'. He has also allegedly caused a grave insult of Justice DY Chandrachud and Justice Indira Banerjee and addressing senior advocate Harish Salve by mocking him in the most unscrupulous manner.

The complainant in this case sought action under section 228 (Intentional insult or interruption to public servant sitting in the judicial proceeding), 503 (Criminal intimidation), 504 (Intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of the peace), 505 (creating or promoting enmity), 506 (punishment for criminal intimidation of the Indian Penal Code, Section 12 (contempt of court) of the Contempt of Court Act and various sections of the IT Act.

Gogoi on judiciary

Ranjan Gogoi's criticism of judicial functioning is totally different from the comments of the comedian Kunal. In fact, Gogoi spoke truth about the present-day plight of cases in courts of law. But some wanted to drag him to court for these statements. When an MP criticised him, some wanted to bring privileges motion against her. Even during the Corona pandemic 60 lakh people approached the courts seeking justice. That is the credibility of the institution in spite of efforts by some to blame it. A public-spirited person sought the consent of the Attorney General of India K K Venugopal to prosecute Ranjan Gogoi for contempt of court, which he refused on February 26.

When the productivity of all institutions and organisations went down in 2020 due to the pandemic, the judiciary "succeeded" in adding its case arrears, he said with a tone of sarcasm. He said 60 lakh cases were added at the subordinate level, three lakh in High Court and nearly 7,000 in the Supreme Court in the pandemic-affected year.

It is very interesting that lakhs of people look at the court as a final resort of justice, but the former Chief Justice asks: "Who goes to the court? You go to the court and regret. It is those who can afford to take



chances, like the big corporates, who approach the courts..."If you go to the Court, you would be washing your dirty linen in the Court. You will not get a verdict".

It is the gospel truth of the present situation. It came out from none other than former Chief Justice of India. Justice Ranjan Gogoi was the CJI just before the present CJI. He is now people's representative in Rajya Sabha, nominated by the President on the recommendation of the present Government in March 2020 after his retirement in November 2019.

He said: "You want a 5 trillion-dollar economy but you have a ramshackled judiciary...System has not worked. If you want a thriving economy, you must have a forum to decide commercial disputes. Nobody is going to invest unless you have a robust system. Where is the mechanism? Commercial Courts Act has brought within its purview every conceivable commercial disputes. But who is applying the law? The same judge doing the normal work."

Speaking about arbitration - "the award passed by the CJI is questioned before a district judge. What does the poor fellow do? He sits on it. Then there is an appeal to HC, appeal to SC. So the whole thing of arbitration not going to court not working". "The road map is...have the right man for the job. You do not appoint judges as you appoint officers in the government. To judge is a full-time commitment. It is a passion. There are no working hours. It is a 24/7 job. You wake up at 2 o'clock in the morning, remember a point, and jot it down. That is how a judge works. How many people understand this?", he said.

Justice Gogoi surprised the people say-

ing that even he won't go to the courts. This was in reply to a question by an anchor whether he would take legal action against Mahua Moitra MP over her statements in the Lok Sabha that Gogoi discredited the judiciary by deciding the sexual harassment allegations against him. Without naming Moitra, Gogoi said that the 'lady politician' did not have her facts right as he did not decide the case against him. Gogoi said that he had handed over the file to Justice Bobde, who was the next senior judge then, who in turn constituted the enquiry panel as per the in-house procedure.

Gogoi refuted the allegation that his nomination to the Rajya Sabha was a quid pro quo for delivering judgments favouring the BJP government's position in Rafale and Ayodhya cases. If there was such a bargain actually, would anyone settle for a Rajya Sabha seat, he asked rhetorically. "I thought I will do some constructive work in the Rajya Sabha. If I were to look for something, would I look for a Rajya Sabha seat?"

Give this much credit to a man who has written these judgments that if he wants to bargain, he will make a good bargain. Give me this much credit. Rajya Sabha is not a good bargain. If there had been a bargain, there would have been something bigger, not the Rajya Sabha seat", he claimed, adding that this was a "worthless topic".

When the anchor asked how he will tackle the growing perception that his nomination to the Upper House was a return favour, Gogoi made an appeal to his own conscience. "I don't have to tackle anything. I have to tackle only my conscience. My conscience is clear. No amount of what others perceive bothers me".

He added that he has not taken even a single penny from the Parliament and has given in writing that he will not draw any remuneration for his Rajya Sabha term. He commented that media outlets and web portals attempted to "cow down" judges and that judges succumbing to such attacks was a "real threat". "What is this attack, does a judge or a former judge get cowed down by attacks? Will he ever be able to function if he is afraid of being attacked while in office or after office?", he added.

(The writer is Professor of Law, Bennett University and former Central Information Commissioner)



Climate change, greatest challenge to mankind: Bill Gates

ASAD MIRZA

IN his new book on climate change and its adverse impact in the future, Bill Gates urges everyone to remember two things: Net Zero and 2050.

It seems as if, after having grappled with malaria, HIV, Ebola and Covid-19, the billionaire philanthropist and Microsoft co-founder has a new passion now, to solve another intractable global problem: climate change.

Since the start of 2021, Gates had been trying to focus everyone's attention on the greatest challenge to the humankind i.e. climate change in the backdrop of the continuing Covid-19 pandemic. Gates in his new book "How To Avoid A Climate Disaster: The Solutions We Have And The Breakthroughs We Need", released in February, argues for establishing new laws and putting practices in place, to ensure that the globe will be carbon free by 2050.

His book provides advice from sources as diverse as climate scientists, like Vaclav Smil and Ken Caldeira, to John D. Cox, author of "Weather For Dummies". Gates avers that writing the book was an ambition to "cut through the noise" and give consumers better tools for understanding what works.

The book repeatedly points at two figures: 51 billion and 2050. First one is the amount of greenhouse gases, in tons, which we emit annually, and the second is the year by which we have to become net zero or emitting zero amount of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, if we want the earth to survive. Gates argues that setting a goal to reduce our emissions won't do it. The only sensible goal is to attain zero.

In a virtual session at the Jaipur Literature Festival (JLF) last week, Gates said that climate change is too big a problem and it cannot be tackled without governments driving the mitigation efforts. Gates urged people to use their political voice to do so, and apply their purchasing power with a conscience, besides pushing the companies they work for to do the same.

Gates mentioned Prime Minister Narendra Modi's name twice for having strongly supported emissions reductions. He explained, "in terms of future emissions and future suffering, India is paradigmatic. If we don't help them and get them involved, then this whole thing doesn't go well".

Speaking about US President Joe Biden and his administration prioritising climate change and enlisting climate activists to help create policies, Gates said political parties need to prioritise the issue. Meanwhile, the new US administration decided to return to the 2015 Paris Agreement last Friday.

In his address gates applauded the younger generation for raising the issue more coherently and continuously at the international forums, recently. He also expressed his admiration for Greta Thunberg and said that we need such attention to intensify and stay very, very high for all thirty years.

In an interview with Emma Brockes for The Guardian, Gates points out the extremely difficult problem of how to further global development while reducing emissions. This comes in addition to the political challenge or in other words changing our priorities.

Gates enumerates a list of culprits, which are more well-known, such as the transport industry or the electricity generation plants, in addition to cement and steel producing industries globally, which emit more harmful gases into the atmosphere as compared to well known culprits.

The way forward

In his book Gates avers that the small decline in emissions in 2019, in the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic-which forced global industrial shutdown to a large scale, is proof that we cannot get to zero simply, or even mostly, by flying and driving less. He says just as we needed new tests, treatments and vaccines for the coronavirus, similarly we need new tools for fighting climate change: zero-carbon ways to produce electricity, make things, grow food, keep our buildings cool or warm, and move people and goods around the world.

Highlighting the vital and urgent need for innovation in reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, he further argues that, if we don't get to zero by 2050, the temperature rise will be so damaging that life will actually get worse for humans and most of the natural ecosystems. So, he urges everyone to innovate.

To achieve this, Gates underlines that we need international cooperation, first. When governments, researchers, and pharmaceutical companies worked together on Covid-19, the world made remarkable progress, for example, developing and testing vaccines in record time. He goes on to argue that the same is true for climate change. If rich countries worry only about lowering their own emissions and don't consider that clean technologies need to be practical for everyone, we'll never get to zero. In that sense, helping others is not just an act of altruism, it's also in our self-interest. We all have reasons to get to zero and help others do it too. Temperatures will not stop rising in Texas unless emissions stop rising in India, he says.

Second he says, we need to let science, engineering, physics, environmental science, economics, and other related specialties to be innovative in their fields and also work collaboratively to achieve and guide our efforts to achieve net zero. As everyone can't continue to work in silos and no country should preach others, but all should work collectively, as was evident appreciably during the pandemic.

Third, Gates says our solutions should meet the needs of the people who are hardest hit. The solution, he says, is to make clean energy sources such as wind and solar so cheap that every country will choose it over climate-warming fossil fuels.

In his efforts Gates is counting on a new generation of entrepreneurs who will drive economic growth through clean energy, regardless of climate-change deniers holding on for dear life in government. This is not pie-in-the-sky fantasy, he insists, and the figures back him up. According to reports, in 2019, for the first time in the US, renewable energy consumption surpassed coal consumption, despite all the incentives the Trump administration introduced for the fossil fuel industry.

In the book's final chapter, Gates lays out specific actions that each individual can take to help mitigate climate change, from being a more engaged citizen to being a more informed consumer, with specific advice on reducing household emissions, switching to an electric vehicle, and setting up an internal carbon tax for businesses.

Gates includes an afterword on Covid-19 also, making the case that many of the lessons we have learned from the pandemic, the need for international cooperation, the importance of letting science guide our actions, the understanding that solutions should be designed to meet the needs of those who suffer most, also apply to climate change.

We are at a critical juncture, he rightly argues, and must commit to investing in new policies, market structures, and technologies over the next decade if we are to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. "It's hard to think of a better response to a miserable 2020 than spending the next ten years dedicating us to this ambitious goal," he concludes.

Indeed, such sagacious advice can only come from an individual who is committed to ameliorate the life of his fellow citizens, and if we don't wake even now, we'll have no else to blame but ourselves in 2050.

LETTERS

AP should challenge the Centre

THE words of wisdom expressed in the editorial commentary on "Political opportunism at its best in AP" (1 March) truly reflects the majority public opinion in the state. Regrettably there is a strong feeling that certain political parties have not performed their legitimate duty and fallen short of the expectations of the people in these bad days. However, the people are optimistic and ready to fight against the anti-people policies of the insensitive Centre. Hence all the political parties, forgetting their selfish interest, should come to a common platform under the leadership of our dynamic CM, to fight unitedly for the three burning issues - special category status, fuel price rise and jobs and restoration of VSP in the interest of Andhra Pradesh.

Sharada Beri, Kurnool

Take note of the dissenting G-23

THE dissenting senior leaders of the Congress veterans, like Ghulam Nabi Azad, Kapil Sibal, Anand Sharma among others, who met in Jammu to send a clear message to Congress high command on the need for more openness in the party functioning and for inclusion of more youngsters to lead the party, without any rigid hold by the Nehru-Gandhi family to be always at the helm in calling the shots.

The writing on the wall is clear as the 'pagdi' colour indicates on the head of senior leaders at the meeting.

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But, one wonders, why did these prudent leaders take this long to realise that Congress was slipping down the slope, who always supported and defended any nonsense uttered by Rahul Gandhi on the floor of the Parliament.

Thanks to 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' and 'Make in India' concept that ensured meaningful production of advanced armour and missiles within the country with production facilities that were itching to innovate and improve. The inclusion of private partnership in the defence production and equipment had its advantage as a qualitative jump and efficiency could be witnessed in the country. What more is needed to cite as a crowning glory, than the Corona vaccines which are manufactured in the country being administered to people, in a systematic way. The fact China agreeing to back out from the Galwan Valley finger points and Pakistan consenting for a durable ceasefire agreement are definitely as a result of India becoming a more powerful military over the past several years.

K V Raghuram, Wayanad

Privatisation of banks no panacea

PROPOS Dr Bharat Jhunjhunwala's article 'Hail public sector bank privatisation', the article is full of half-truths. The author had sought to oversimplify the issues to hail private banks and nail PSBs. He undermines nationalisation of private banks, unmindful of the vast benefits that accrued to vast sections of public in areas of agriculture, SSI, small business and industry. As a professor he doesn't have the ringside view of the reality.

As a banker I have witnessed how the public sector banks have spread across the length and breadth of the country and succeeded in helping the last man in the line. The conditions in 1970s were totally different. Private banks catered only to the needs of rich and elite.

Nepotism and favoritism was rampant. Jobs also were mainly given to friends and relatives of directors and senior personnel. Poor and downtrodden had no entry into the banks back then. Bank nationalisation revolutionised the concept of banking and took it to the door of poor and needy. Over the years if we have achieved a strong economy, it is in no small measure due to the dynamic contribution made by PSBs.

Having reached a better position economically and socially, it is not fair to denounce the contribution made by PSBs because of the surge of NPAs in the last few years. It is actually the new generation private banks that have spoiled the loan culture. They thrust the loans aggressively on the prospective borrowers and PSBs had to follow suit to withstand competition.

The borrower was made to feel he was doing a favour to the bank by taking loan and the problem we see today is because of reversal of positions. Banker requesting and borrower obliging. As regards giving away loans to sister concerns, there exists a system of checks and balances in PSBs. It is not that a minister makes a phone call and loan is given. The PSBs have toiled for years and they have a robust network and well established practices. It is not wise to privatise them to meet the current needs. Privatisation is not a panacea for all ills. They suffer from many maladies.

Whatever wrongs are there with PSBs, they are there with private banks as well. We need to have a strong central banking system for effective monitoring and public sector banks can sail safely earning profits and also meeting social objectives. The author's urgent call to FM to rush into the act is grossly misplaced. Sitting in his armchair, he had ignored the harsh realities and carried away more by desire to praise the government rather than sound reasoning.

Vinay Bhushan B, Hyderabad

Hyd temp likely to soar to 37 deg C

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

THE day temperatures in Hyderabad on March 2 and 3 would be 36 degrees Celsius each, point six degrees more than the previous day, the IMD bulletin said on Monday. The city temperature would touch 37 deg C on the next four days of March 4 to 7. The corresponding night temperatures would be 20, 20, 19, 20 and 20 deg C respectively. The outlook would be haze/mist. During the last 24 hours ending at 8.30 am the day/night temperatures were 36.6 and 22.2 deg Celsius respectively.

According to the bulletin, the highest maximum temperature of 39.2 deg C was recorded in Bhadrachalam, while the lowest minimum of 17.8 deg C was registered in Medak. It said there was an appreciable rise in the night temperatures ranging from 2.1 to 4 degrees Celsius in some parts. they rose markedly by 4.1 deg C or more in some others.

On jobs front, BJP's answer is 'NDA': KTR

HYDERABAD

THE political war of words between the ruling Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) and the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Congress continued over the former's claim that the state government had created 1.32 lakh jobs in the last six years.

Two days after Congress leader Sravan Dasoju challenged the Telangana Industry Minister KT Rama Rao for a debate at the Gun Park, BJP leader N Ramchandra Rao reached the Osmania University and dared the TRS minister to come there for an open debate. Ramchandra Rao, who is a BJP candidate for the March 14 election to the Hyderabad-Rangareddy-Mahabubnagar graduates' constituency of Legislative Council, took to Twitter to ask him to come to

Arts College on Osmania University campus. "I am here at Arts College. Where are you, Mr. KTR," asked the BJP leader. He asked why KTR was not coming to debate openly on the 1.35 lakhs of jobs offered to people in the state. If that is true KTR should come up with details, the BJP leader asked.

In his regular style of words, Rama Rao tweeted that he was busy searching for the details of the jobs and money offered by the Modi's NDA rule. "No Data Available with regard to the jobs and Rs 15 lakh once promised by Narendra Modi to people. Did the Modi government give 12 cr jobs in six years and put Rs 15 lakhs of stashed black money into the accounts of the people of our country," the minister thundered. He sought to know why the BJP was resorting to false charges and campaigning on the government

He taunts the saffron party, saying what he meant by NDA: N for No, D for Data, A for available



of Telangana which is focusing on welfare and development. He ridiculed that the Modi regime failed to keep its promise of 2

crore jobs every year and Rs 15 lakhs in peoples' Jan Dhan accounts. Did the NDA regime of Modi offer jobs and money to the

youth and people respectively?" he questioned. The minister said: "NDA is the answer so far N - No D - Data A - Available. Please share if you have any answers."

The BJP leader, however, tweeted again that he is ready to give answers. "I'm here to give answers, out in the open at Arts College. Why are you hiding behind the veil of Twitter, Dear KTR Garu? Afraid to face the public?"

AICC spokesperson Sravan Dasoju had on February 26 asked KTR to come to the Telangana Martyrs Memorial at Gun Park for debate. "We will not believe in your false statement. Come with your team and the

figures on the recruitment and current vacancies," he had said after KTR stated that 1.32 lakh jobs were given in the government sector in the last six years. The TRS leader had also dared the opposition parties for a debate on the jobs created. He also wrote an open letter reiterating that the government filled 1,32,899 posts in various department during the last six years. He provided figures of department-wise vacancies filled. The Congress leader said KTR ran away from open debate after throwing a challenge. "Though I was ready for a debate and asked him to come to Gun Park, he did not turn up," he said.

The war of words has increased the political heat ahead of March 14 elections to two seats of Legislative Council and ensuing by-polls to Nagarjuna Sagar Assembly seat.

TRS, BJP betrayed Telangana, says Uttam

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

TELANGANA Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) President and Nalgonda MP N Uttam Kumar Reddy has alleged that both TRS and BJP have betrayed Telangana State by sabotaging its economy and ruining the careers of lakhs of youth.

Addressing a meeting of the leaders of all frontal, departments and cells of TPCC at Gandhi Bhavan on Monday in connection with MLC elections, Reddy said that both TRS and BJP have done utter injustice with Telangana State ever since they came to power in 2014. Both the parties have turned Telangana into a 'crisis state' so as to extract political benefits.

Reddy said that more than 30 lakh youth in Telangana, including over 19 lakh qualified youth who have registered themselves with the Telangana State Public Service Commission (TSPSC), are jobless.

He said that non-judicious spending of public money has pushed



Telangana State into a huge debt trap with the State now having debts of nearly Rs 3.5 lakh crore. "On an average, TRS government borrowed loans of Rs 50,000 crore every year at very high interest rates. This money was spent on projects that could fetch commission/kickbacks for TRS leaders," he alleged adding that the future generations of Telangana would be forced to repay these loans and high interest for the next two decades. He said that TRS has misused the resources of Telangana to benefit the family of Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar Rao.

Similarly, the BJP at the Centre has aggravated the situation by not releasing adequate funds for Telangana. The neglect of BJP and financial recklessness of TRS has turned Telangana into a bankrupt State.

He also said that the situation could be changed only if Congress regains power in Telangana. He said the victory of Congress party in both the MLC Graduates constituencies and Nagarjunasagar by-elections would force TRS and BJP to mend their approach towards the people of Telangana.

AIMIM to contest in TN Assembly polls

HYDERABAD

THE All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) will contest Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu, informed party Chief Asaduddin Owaisi on Monday. "We will contest Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu. Some of our candidates won in Gujarat local body polls. I'll be going to Rajasthan today to review and speak with party members. Our party workers are also working hard in Uttar Pradesh," he said.

The Tamil Nadu assembly elections will be held in a single phase on April 6 and the counting of votes will be done on May 2.



State Election Commissioner N Ramesh Kumar holds a meeting with leaders of various political parties on municipal polls at his chamber in Vijayawada on Monday

SEC holds all-party meet on municipal elections

- TDP's Varla Ramaiah accuses SEC of ignoring their complaints of threats and attacks by YSRCP on their party candidates

- YSRCP objects to his order asking ward volunteers to deposit their mobile phones ahead of elections
- Parties request the commission to make arrangements for transport of physically-challenged voters to exercise their franchise

SEC allows fresh nominations by some candidates

The Commissioner issues orders after receiving the reports from District Collectors concerned over forcible withdrawals

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

THE State Election Commission (SEC) on Monday issued orders providing an opportunity to the candidates to file nominations in case of forcible withdrawals. The commission received reports from district collectors and issued orders to this effect.

The SEC permitted D Vimala, R Sadasiva, C N Saravana, A Munemma, G Suryakumari, A Chandramohan of Tirupati Municipal Corporation, S Munni, C Geethamma and B Chandrakala of Punganur Municipality, Kotte Venkatachalapati and Kayanur Abdul Rahiman of Rayachoti municipality to file papers again. These candidates can file nomination up to March 2 and scrutiny of nominations will be held on March 2 after 3 pm and withdrawals will be allowed on March 3 up to 3 pm. The SEC also issued orders reviving the candidature of some persons including Madduru Hariprasad Reddy, Shaik Rahamatulla and Manjula Divya Dharani of Yerraguntla Nagar panchayat of Kadapa district. It may be noted that the SEC stated that it will use its extraordinary powers to permit the candidates in forcible withdrawal cases.

TDP chief stages sit-in at airport

- The nine-hour long high tension drama ends only after two SPs and Joint Collector meet him
- Resenting police restrictions, he sits on the floor without taking any food for the whole day
- Naidu planned to stage a dharna at Chittoor and Tirupati in protest against the ruling party's atrocities in civic polls
- Police deny permission for protests citing Covid norms and Model Code of Conduct, prevent him from leaving the airport

HANS NEWS SERVICE
TIRUPATI

HIGH tension prevailed at Tirupati Airport since morning on Monday as police foiled the plans of TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu to protest against the ruling party's alleged atrocities in the civic polls.

As the police obstructed him from going out of the airport, he instantly started a sit-in protest on the floor at the lounge itself without taking food or drinks since morning much to the embarrassment of police sleuths. Later, they brought a chair for



TDP national president and former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu stages a sit-in at Tirupati airport after being prevented from visiting Tirupati and Chittoor cities on Monday

him which he refused to take.

The nine-hour long sit-on finally ended at about 7 pm after joint collector (development) V Veerabrahmam and Chittoor SP Senthil Kumar met him at the airport. Earlier, Tirupati urban SP Ch Venkata Appala Naidu and RDO V Kanaka Narasa Reddy tried to persuade him to go back to Hyderabad which yielded no results.

After the joint collector reached the airport, it was learnt that Naidu made all points clear to the joint collector on the atrocities being done by the ruling party leaders to frighten TDP candidates after which he agreed to take the flight at 7.15 pm to Hyderabad.

It may be recalled that Naidu decided to stage protests at

Gandhi statues both in Chittoor and Tirupati on Monday. However, police officials have refused to give permission citing Covid norms and model code of conduct.

As police decided not to allow Naidu to go as per his plans to Chittoor and later to Tirupati, several TDP leaders were house arrested on Monday morning itself. Unfazed by these developments Naidu reached Tirupati airport according to his original plans at 10 am where Renigunta police served him notices stating that he would be arrested if he did not stick to the police orders.

When police tried to persuade him to go back to Hyderabad an angry Naidu went into argument with them. "It is outrageous. Am I going to do a murder? I have served as Chief Minister for 14 years and now I am opposition leader. Don't I have fundamental rights to meet Collector and SP? Elections are being held and political parties are taking out rallies. About 55-60,000 people are visiting Tirumala daily. Still, why do you impose restrictions on me?", he asked them.

He was even not allowed to talk to the media. When police requested Naidu that they will let the collector and SP to come there and they have respect towards him, he replied, "They need not come here. I am not a great man. You have shown enough respect to me by deploying so many police personnel". The police even seized the mobile phone of Naidu and his associates.

He sat there itself till evening and reportedly refused to take lunch. Police made futile efforts to send him back to Hyderabad in two flights.

Meanwhile, party spokesperson K Pattabhi Ram reached Tirupati in the afternoon but was denied permission to meet Naidu. Due to the developments that grabbed all the attention, eight DSPs and 100 police personnel including airport's CISF personnel faced tense moments in persuading Naidu on one hand and controlling the party workers on the other.

'BJP keen on fulfilling its assurances'

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VISAKHAPATNAM

RAJYA Sabha member GVL Narasimha Rao said Prime Minister Narendra Modi accorded top priority to Andhra Pradesh in the country.

Addressing a meeting organised by senior railway union leaders here on Monday, he expressed dissatisfaction over the state government that it is not giving due recognition to the Union government while implementing several Centre-run schemes in the state.

Narasimha Rao said that Visakhapatnam-Chennai industrial corridor will provide employment to 1.50 crore people in the State in near future. He said the state's GDP would increase six times because of the move.



Rajya Sabha member G V L Narasimha Rao speaking at a party meeting in Visakhapatnam on Monday

Referring to the Visakhapatnam railway zone issue, the MP said the BJP government

had fulfilled the decade-long dream of Visakhapatnam people. He assured that the division level issues pertaining to the new railway zone will be taken to the notice of the Centre and work towards resolving them. He laid emphasis on the Central government's commitment towards fulfilling its assurances.

MLC P V N Madhav said the BJP leaders worked hard for the establishment of a new railway zone with Visakhapatnam as headquarters. He also assured that the Railway Recruitment Board in Visakhapatnam will certainly be sanctioned. Madhav said it was sad that the state is not recognising the BJP's efforts made in AP. He said the Centre is unbiased in focusing on development of the states.

HANS NEWS SERVICE
TIRUPATI

MINISTER for panchayat raja and rural development PeddiReddi Ramachandra Reddy criticised former chief minister and TDP national president N Chandrababu Naidu for "enacting a political drama" for publicity in media. Addressing the media here on Monday, the minister said that police explained in writing the Model Code of Conduct rules which were in force in view of urban local bodies elections to him and denied the permission to him to enter the city to participate in protest in view of Act 30 as well as Section 144 of CrPC. He said the police had requested Naidu to sit in VIP lounge, but he refused and sat on the floor as part of political drama for publicity.

Ramachandra Reddy reminded an episode during the TDP rule when their party chief Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy was sent back to Hyderabad from Vizag airport runway "without any courtesy". But he claimed that circumstances were

- Says TDP chief may be resorting to theatrics as he is frustrated or for publicity in media
- States circumstances are different from episode of Jagan 'unceremoniously' sent back from Vizag airport runway



Panchayat Raj Minister Peddireddi Ramachandra Reddy addressing the media in Tirupati on Monday

"cheap politics" to get a hype in media which supports him.

Are you willing to marry rape victim? SC asks accused

The accused was willing to marry the girl but she had refused and he married to someone else: Lawyer

NEW DELHI

"ARE you willing to marry her," was the question posed to a public servant, who is accused of repeatedly raping a minor girl but when the Supreme Court on Monday was told that he is already married he was asked to seek regular bail from the concerned court. A bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde was hearing a plea filed by the accused who is serving as a technician in Maharashtra State Electricity Production Company Ltd and has moved the apex court against the Bombay High Court February 5 order which had cancelled the anticipatory bail granted to him in the case. When the hearing commenced,

the bench also comprising Justices A S Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian, asked the accused "Are you willing to marry her?"

"If you are willing to marry her then we can consider it, otherwise you will go to jail," observed the bench adding "We are not forcing you to marry."

After taking instructions on the query posed by the bench, the counsel appearing for the petitioner, said the accused was ini-



tially willing to marry the girl but she had refused and now he was married to someone else. As the counsel said that the accused is a public servant, the bench said, "You should have thought this before seducing and raping the girl. You knew that you are a government servant". The counsel said that charges in the case are yet to be framed. "You apply for regular bail. We will stay arrest," the bench said. The apex court granted the accused

protection from arrest for four weeks. The top court was hearing a plea filed by the accused against the Bombay High Court's February 5 order cancelling the anticipatory bail granted to him by the trial court in January last year. He has also been accused of offences punishable under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. In his plea filed in the top court, he has referred to the Maharashtra Civil Services Rules 1979 and said it pointed out that if a government servant is detained in police custody under criminal charges for a period of 48 hours, then he shall be deemed to have been placed under suspension by an order of appointing authority.

Fraudulent inducement essential ingredient for cheating, says SC

Fraudulent or dishonest inducement is an essential ingredient under penal provision and a person who dishonestly induced any person to deliver any property is liable for the offence of cheating, said the Supreme Court Monday. A bench comprising Justices D Y Chandrachud and M R Shah said as per section 415 of Indian Penal Code, which deals with cheating, a person who was induced should be intentionally induced to deliver any property to any person. "Thus, a fraudulent or dishonest inducement is an essential ingredient of the offence under Section 415 IPC. A person who dishonestly induced any person to deliver any property is liable for the offence of cheating," the bench said. The judgement came on an appeal filed by a woman Archana Rana challenging Allahabad High Court order dismissing her plea for quashing of charge sheet under sections 419, 420, 323 (punishment for voluntary causing hurt) 504 and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code. A complainant lodged an FIR against her and her husband for the offences under Sections 419, 420, 323, 504 (intentional insult) and 506 IPC alleging that her husband had taken a sum of Rs.5,00,000 from him for getting his son employed.

LPG price hiked again by ₹25

Prices have gone up by ₹125 per 14.2-kg cylinder since beginning of Feb

Maharashtra government can cut taxes, reduce fuel prices, says Fadnavis

NEW DELHI

COOKING gas LPG price was on Monday hiked by Rs 25 per cylinder across all categories, including subsidised fuel and those availed by Ujjwala scheme beneficiaries - the fourth increase in rates in a month's time.

LPG prices have gone up by Rs 125 per 14.2-kg cylinder since the beginning of February, price data from state-owned oil marketing companies showed.

Also, jet fuel prices were hiked by a steep 6.5 per cent on the back of a rally in international oil prices.

A 14.2-kg cylinder in Delhi now costs Rs 819 as against Rs 794 at which they were supplied on Sunday.

The increase is applicable across all categories, including subsidised and non-subsidised users. LPG is available only at one rate, market price, across the country. The government, however, gives a small subsidy to select customers. However, this subsidy has been eliminated in metros and major cities through successive price increases over the past couple of years.

So, in places like Delhi, there is no subsidy paid to customers since May 2020 and all LPG users pay the market price, which currently is Rs 819. An oil company



Trinamool Congress activists symbolically pull an auto-rickshaw during a protest rally against fuel price hike, in Kolkata on Monday

official said a small subsidy is paid to customers in remote and far-flung areas to make up for the higher price arising from freight charges.

LPG prices were hiked first by Rs 25 per cylinder on February 4, followed by a Rs 50 per cylinder increase on February

15 and Rs 25 raise on February 25. Prices have been on the rise since December and rates have cumulatively gone up by Rs 175 per cylinder.

Simultaneously, aviation turbine fuel or ATF price was hiked by Rs 3,663 per kilolitre, or 6.5 per cent, to Rs 59,400.91

per kl in the national capital, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers.

This is the third increase in jet fuel prices since February. Rates were increased by 3.6 per cent on February 16, and by Rs 3,246.75 per kl on February 1.

The increase in rates will add to the margin woes of airlines who continue to operate flights at less than capacity, amid pandemic-driven travel restrictions.

The new fares for CNG-run auto-rickshaws and taxis, envisaging an increase of Rs 3 each in minimum rates, came into force in Mumbai on Monday, officials said. The Mumbai Metropolitan Region has around 60,000 taxis and 4.6 lakh auto-rickshaws, including some petrol-run vehicles.

The minimum fare for a distance of 1.5 km for taxis has increased from Rs 22 to Rs 25, while for the auto-rickshaws it has gone up from Rs 18 to Rs 21.

Maharashtra BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis on Monday said the MVA government in the state was misleading people on fuel price hikes as it can cut taxes and provide relief. He said taxes imposed by the Centre on per litre of petrol come up to Rs 70, which are paid to states in various way, while the amount charged by the state is Rs 27.

Expect sultry, sweltering summer, says IMD

NEW DELHI

DAY temperatures are likely to be above normal in north, northeast, parts of east and west India, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said Monday in its summer forecast for March to May.

However, it has forecast a likelihood of below normal temperatures in south and adjoining central India. "During the upcoming hot weather season (March to May), above normal seasonal maximum (day) temperatures are likely over most of the subdivisions of north, northwest and northeast India, few subdivisions from eastern and western parts of central India and few coastal subdivisions of north peninsular India," the forecast said.

There is a probability forecast for above maximum temperatures in Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Gujarat, coastal Maharashtra, Goa and coastal Andhra Pradesh. "However, below normal seasonal maximum temperatures are likely over most of the subdivisions of

south peninsula and adjoining central India," it added. It said above normal seasonal minimum (night) temperatures are likely over most of the of north India along the foot hills of Himalayas, northeast India, western part of central India and southern part of peninsular India. "However, below

normal season minimum temperatures are likely over most of the subdivisions of eastern part of the central India and few subdivisions of extreme northern part of the country," the IMD added. The IMD added that moderate La Niña

conditions are prevailing over the equatorial Pacific and sea surface temperatures (SSTs) are below normal over the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean. The latest model forecast indicates that La Niña conditions are likely to sustain during the upcoming hot weather season (March to May), it added. La Nina is associated with the cooling of the Pacific waters and El Nino is its antithesis. The phenomenon has an impact on the weather of the Indian sub-continent.



Sarkozy sentenced to jail for corruption

PARIS

A Paris court on Monday found French former President Nicolas Sarkozy guilty of corruption and influence peddling and sentenced him to one year in prison and a two-year suspended sentence. The 66-year-old politician, who was president from 2007 to 2012, was convicted for having tried to illegally obtain information from a senior magistrate in 2014 about a legal action in which he was involved.

The court said Sarkozy is entitled to request to be detained at home with an electronic bracelet. This is the first time in France's modern history that a former president has been convicted of corruption. Sarkozy's co-defendants — his lawyer and longtime friend Thierry Herzog, 65, and now-retired magistrate Gilbert Azibert, 74 — were also found guilty and given the same sentence as the politician.

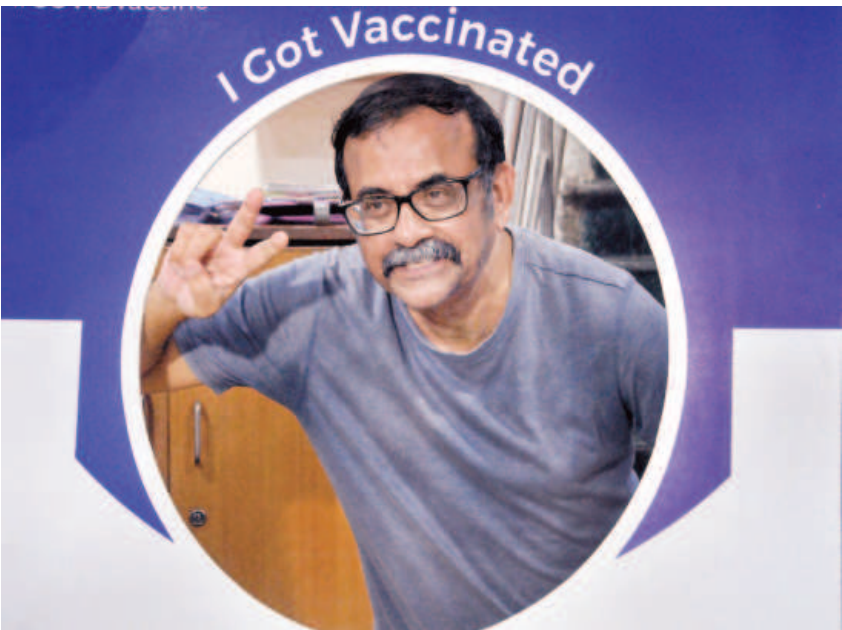
BJP keeps mum on implementing CAA in Assam: Priyanka

LAKHIMPUR

CONGRESS general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Monday claimed that BJP leaders talk about implementing the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in various parts of the country, but lack the courage to mention it in Assam. The state witnessed violent protests against the CAA in 2019 and five persons lost their lives.



The protesters saw the law as a threat to their cultural identity and livelihood. The grand alliance of the Congress and six other parties will form the government in Assam after the election as people are fed up with the false promises made by the BJP, she said. She was clad in a hand-woven traditional Assamese 'mekhla chador', with designs typical of its Mising tribe. "The BJP makes tall promises before elections but during the next five years, they do nothing to fulfil them and people have realised it," the Congress leader told reporters after addressing a meeting of party workers at Lakhimpur. BJP leaders move around the country talking about implementing the CAA but they are silent about it when they come to Assam, Gandhi said. Indicating that there is more than one power centre in the BJP-led government in Assam, she said, "We are confused on how many chief ministers the state has -- one, two or many. Or is it remote-controlled from outside?" Beginning and ending her speech with "Joi Aai Asom" (Hail, Mother Assam), the Congress leader said, "You are not fighting for the party or your seat but Assam's identity and your motherland".



An elderly person flashes victory sign while posing for pictures with an 'I Got Vaccinated' cut-out after he was administered the first dose of COVID-19, in the second phase of the nationwide inoculation drive that include senior citizens and people of age 45-59 years with comorbidities, in Kolkata on Monday

Govt's silence indicates it is planning steps against farmers' stir: Tikait

BIJNOR

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

He also stressed that it is the government that will have to come forward with a proposal for talks to resume with the protesting farmers. Before leaving for Uttarakhand's Udhampur Singh Nagar on Sunday night, the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) leader told reporters in Bijnor's Afzalgarh, "The government's silence for the past 15-20 days is indicating that something is going to happen. The government is planning some steps against the agitation." However, Tikait said farmers will not step back till a solution is found. "The farmer is also ready. He will look after his crop

as well as the agitation. Let the government hold talks when it has the time," he said. Tikait also said farmers' "mahapanchayats" will be held at several places in the country till March 24. When asked about the violence during a tractor parade on the Republic Day in New Delhi, he alleged that the government created the trouble.

On the issue of farmers destroying their standing crop at different places, Tikait said the BKU has told farmers that the time for such action has not come yet.

"But why is the government not appealing to farmers not to take such a step," he asked. Tikait said farmers will intensify their agitation if the wheat crop is not sold on the minimum support price (MSP) in Uttar Pradesh and they will hold dharnas outside district headquarters across the state.

Guj woman records msg on phone, jumps into river, dies

AHMEDABAD

A woman allegedly committed suicide by jumping into the Sabarmati river in Ahmedabad in Gujarat soon after recording a video on her mobile phone, leading to her husband being booked for abetment to suicide, police said on Monday.

The incident took place on February 25 and police identified the victim as Ayesha Khan (23) who also spoke to her husband and parents before taking the extreme step, an official said.

According to the FIR lodged by her father Liyakatali Makrani at Sabarmati Riverfront (West) police station a day later, Ayesha's husband Arif Babukhan inflicted mental torture on her and told her "die if you want to, and send me a video".

In the video, which went viral on social media, Ayesha can be heard saying she is not taking the step under any pressure.

As per police, she told her parents she did not want her husband in her life anymore and that she was tired of life.

Whistleblower prof's student gets PhD from IIT after 6 years

Kumar was hailed as 'unsung hero' by SC in 2011 for his efforts to reform the IIT Joint Entrance Exam

NEW DELHI

A six years struggle for IIT Kharagpur scholar Mahesh Shirole ended recently when he was awarded a PhD degree after repeated rejections of his doctorate thesis since January 2015, his supervisor said.

Shirole and Professor Rajeev Kumar had been approaching different authorities, including the office of the President of India, against the denial of PhD. The president is the Visitor to the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kharagpur among other central institutes. "I am happy that Mahesh Shirole has got a PhD degree after six years of battle with the IIT Kharagpur and the Ministry of Education," Kumar, who is Shirole's supervisor and is now a professor in the JNU, said. Kumar, a former professor of the computer science and engineering department at IIT Kharagpur, said that Shirole could get his hard-earned degree only due to the intervention of the Visitor and direction from the education ministry.

"It is better to be late than never," he told PTI. Shirole was awarded PhD in the 66th convocation of the institute, which was held virtually on Tuesday last week. Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivered the convocation address as the chief guest. Shirole had submitted his thesis in 2014 for the award of PhD, which was accepted by an Indian examiner, but rejected by an NRI one, Kumar



said, adding that as per the laid down practice, it was never sent to the third examiner.

Instead, the IIT kept on directing the student to revise the thesis and it was sent to the same NRI examiner thrice, who rejected it with new comments every time, he said. Kumar, who had been fighting for justice for his student, had claimed that the denial was the result of the institution's "vindictive attitude" towards him. "IIT Kharagpur's denial of PhD to the student is an extension of its vindictive attitude against me. IIT Kharagpur has been vindictive to me, as I disclosed arbitrariness and irregularities in IITs admissions in 2006 onwards, and contributed significantly in reforming IITs admissions and

academic processes," he had said in his multiple appeals to authorities. IIT Kharagpur had in May 2011 suspended Kumar on charges of misconduct. He was accused of damaging its reputation by levelling allegations of irregularities in admissions, purchase of laptops and rampant copying by students in exams. Then, the IIT imposed a penalty of his compulsory retirement in 2014, which was set-aside in 2017 by then president Pranab Mukherjee. At that time, Kumar was appointed and joined JNU in 2015 during his legal fight over the issue. Kumar was hailed as an "unsung hero" by the Supreme Court in 2011 for his efforts to reform the IIT Joint Entrance Examination (JEE), which has since been re-christened as JEE-Advanced.

TODAY'S QUOTE

Highways construction touches 33 km/day

“We have built 11,035 km of highways till date this year. This comes to 32.85 km a day of highway building, which is a record, by March 31, it may reach 40 km a day. The achievement was remarkable as it could be achieved despite constraints posed by the Covid-19 pandemic.”


— Nitin Gadkari, Union Minister



COVID-19

Bharat Biotech hails PM for taking vax

THE personal example set by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in taking the first dose of Covid-19 vaccine would give a huge boost to the immunization campaign against the pandemic, city-based vaccine maker Bharat Biotech said. Modi was administered Covaxin, developed by Bharat Biotech, at the AIIMS in Delhi on Monday.

FOREX (buy rates in ₹)			
US Dollar	77.69	South	
Euro	92.86	African Rand	5.59
UAE Dirham	21.95	Hong Kong Dollar	10.86
Thai Baht	2.78	Japanese Yen	0.79
British Pound	106.42	New Zealand Dollar	55.95
Australian Dollar	59.61	Saudi Riyal	21.48
Canadian Dollar	60.59	Swedish Krona	10
Swiss Franc	83.77	Singapore Dollar	57.85

DELHI TUESDAY 2 MARCH 2021

BIZ BRIEFS

FASTag saves ₹20k cr

Mandatory FASTag for highways will help to save Rs 20,000 crore per annum on fuel and boost the revenue by at least Rs 10,000 crore, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said on Monday. Launching a live monitoring system to assess the live condition at toll plazas pan India and releasing a rating system for highways here, the Road Transport and Highways Minister said this was a step towards achieving perfection in terms of highway use, construction and quality. Following the mandatory payment of user fee through FASTag at toll plazas from February 16, 2021, toll collection has seen consistent growth, and the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) said its daily toll collection through FASTag has reached about Rs 104 crore.

Fino becomes scheduled bank

FINO Payments Bank has received RBI approval as a scheduled commercial bank. The scheduled commercial bank status will allow the payment bank to enhance its banking position in the treasury and participation in liquidity adjustment facility as per the RBI rules. It also helps the bank strengthen its business proposition on liabilities generation. Mandates pertaining to pensions, provident funds and various welfare schemes under direct benefit transfer (DBT) will help enhance Fino's footprint in the financial inclusion space. "It provides strategic impetus for Fino to enhance its scope on balance sheet management and explore additional avenues for business. We are keen to capitalise on the growth opportunities that exist within the regulatory guidelines," said Rishi Gupta, Managing Director and CEO, Fino Payments Bank.

Hyundai i20 wins award

HYUNDAI Motor India's 'the hall-new i20' car won the most coveted & prestigious Indian Car of the Year 2021 (ICOTY) award. With this award Hyundai Motor India has won 7 ICOTY awards for its products. The i20 car has been crowned with the highly coveted ICOTY award on its new generation debut for the second time. Envisioned as the most progressive premium hatchback, the all-new i20 has been designed to meet and exceed the aspirations of new age millennial customers. "We are honoured to win this most prestigious automotive award - ICOTY for the all-new i20. It has once again redefined standards in the premium hatchback segment and today depicts strong expression of progressive spirit of the new age Indian customers," said SS Kim, Managing Director and CEO, Hyundai Motor India.

Poor offtake hits Coal India output

COAL India's production and offtake remained subdued in February amid lower demand and robust pithead stock of 78 million tonnes, sources said on Monday. The mining major is likely to report provisional dry fuel production of 61.8 million tonnes in February as against 66.26 million tonnes in the corresponding month last year, a decline of 6.6 per cent, they said. On a monthly basis, the production fall was sharper in February compared to January, when it reported a drop of 4.1 per cent. Offtake is likely to be around 51.2 million tonnes during the reporting month compared to 54.9 million tonnes in the year-ago period, the sources said. "Demand is not picking up as envisaged. Even after a discount offered by Bharat Coking Coal of 24 per cent to dilute its stock, movement is not that attractive," one of the sources told.

PMI MONTHLY SURVEY

Cos upbeat over rise in production, purchase

Optimistic growth projections reflected forecasts of an improvement in economic conditions and the lifting of restrictions as the vaccination programme expands

NEW DELHI

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

The seasonally-adjusted IHS Markit India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) fell marginally to 57.5 in February from 57.7 in January, indicating that even though the pace of growth eased from January it remained sharp in the context of historical data. The headline figure for February remained above its long-run average of 53.6, the survey noted.

In PMI parlance, a print above 50 means expansion while a score below 50 denotes contraction. "Indian goods producers reported a healthy inflow of new orders in February, a situation that underpinned a further upturn in output and quantity of purchases," Pollyanna De Lima, Economics Associate Director at IHS Markit, said. Lima noted that production growth could have been stronger if firms had appropriate resources to handle their workloads. "This was evident from a quicker rise in outstanding business and another decline in inven-



ories of finished goods," Lima said. However, employment decreased further amid Covid-19 restrictions related to shift work. "However, many hope that such controls will shortly be removed as the vaccination programme widens. Once larger parts of the population are immunised against Covid-19 and restrictions start to be lifted, companies expect a gradual improvement in economic conditions which they hope will translate into output growth," Lima said. Meanwhile, goods producers expect output to increase over the coming 12 months. Optimistic growth projections reflected forecasts of an im-

provement in economic conditions and the lifting of restrictions as the vaccination programme expands, as per the survey.

"The upbeat mood supported the fastest increase in input buying for almost a decade as companies focused on rebuilding their input stocks to fulfil demand growth. February data showed the sharpest monthly rise in pre-production inventories in the survey history," Lima said. On the prices front, the survey said strengthening demand for raw materials and semi-finished items exerted upward pressure on input cost inflation, which picked up to a 32-month high.

Strive for seamless digital payments: FM

NEW DELHI

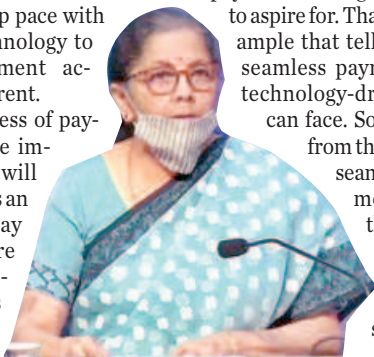
FINANCE Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday asked civil accounts officers to have a clear roadmap for seamless digital payments, saying there are lessons to be learnt from the "technology-driven glitch" that happened at National Stock Exchange.

Addressing the 45th Civil Accounts Day she said the Controller General of Accounts (CGA), who is the bookkeeper of government accounts, has adopted great systemic reforms. Sitharaman said that to keep government accounts transparent, the CGA will have to adapt and keep pace with changing technology to keep government account transparent.

"Seamlessness of payments is more important.... I will bring it here as an example to say even where complete fool-proof systems are laid, you

There are lessons to be learnt from the technology-driven glitch that happened at National Stock Exchange: Sitharaman

find in NSE a couple of days ago when there was a glitch, a kind of technology-driven glitch, which nobody could have anticipated, but that glitch has caused us immensely and lessons are being learnt. "Maybe that was an issue of interoperability between the two exchanges, but that is the kind of thing where seamless digital payment is the goal that we have to aspire for. That was also an example that tells us about how seamless payment modes or technology-driven platforms can face. So, taking lessons from that, I would think seamless digital payments is something you have to clearly have a roadmap for," Sitharaman said.



Market soars as investors cheer Q3 GDP data

MUMBAI

BENCHMARK BSE Sensex surged nearly 750 points and NSE Nifty rallied over 232 points on Monday as investors cheered the domestic economy returning to positive territory after two quarters of contraction. The 30-share BSE index briefly traded above the 50,000-mark in day trade before closing at 49,849.84, showing a rise of 749.85 points or 1.53 per cent.

Of the Sensex constituents, 29 closed with gains. Likewise, the NSE barometer Nifty settled with a gain of 232.40 points or 1.60 per cent at 14,761.55. Top performers were PowerGrid, ONGC, Ultratech Cement, Asian Paint, Kotak Bank and Titan - rising as much as 5.94 per cent. "Positive global cues and US yields retreating from highs led to a strong opening today with Indices sustaining gains throughout the day. The broader

Sensex surges 750 pts, Nifty rallies 232 pts; 29 Sensex constituents closed with gains

markets saw energetic buying momentum across PSU basket and sectors like Paints & Speciality Chemicals," S Ranganathan, Head of Research at LKP Securities said. After two consecutive quarters of contraction, the Indian economy has finally entered an expansionary path. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew 0.4 per cent in the October-December 2020 period compared with the same period a year back, data released by the National Statistics Office on Friday showed.

High-frequency indicators were pointing towards the fact that the domestic economy is slowly entering the recovery path. Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services said, "Domestic markets kick-started the month on a strong footing with increased optimism led by GDP reaching positive numbers, improving auto numbers and steady PMI manufacturing data." The auto sector was in focus as sales numbers for February were in favour of manufacturers. All of the 19 sectoral indices except telecom ended in the green. Auto, private banks and metals indices witnessed sharp rally ranging from 1.5 per cent to 2.5 per cent. Notably, volatility index softened by over 8 per cent, which offers comfort, Binod Modi, Head - Strategy at Reliance Securities.



SBI reduces home loan rates to 6.70%

MUMBAI

THE country's largest lender State Bank of India on Monday said it has reduced interest rates on home loans by up to 10 basis points (bps) and is offering loans starting from 6.70 per cent rate. The new rates are based on loan amount and CIBIL score of the borrower, and are available till March 31, 2021, according to a statement. The bank said the home loan interest rates will start from 6.70 per cent for loans up to Rs 75 lakh and 6.75 per cent for loans in the range of Rs 75 lakh-Rs 5 crore. The bank's Deputy Managing Director (Retail Business) Saloni Narayan said, "We want to take advantage of the festive season, especially Holi. This being the last month of the year, we are looking at a good number." The lender is also giving a 100 per cent waiver on processing fees. Customers can also apply for home loans using Yono app to get an additional interest concession of 5 bps, the bank said. It is also offering a special 5 bps concession to woman borrowers on the eve of International Women's Day.

TOOLS FOR ALL

Taparia Tools enjoys 75% market share

HYDERABAD

MUMBAI-BASED Taparia Tools Limited (TTL), a hand tools manufacturing company, in its 50 years of existence, has deployed every known right method to market its products across the country. This was necessary to survive the competition, mainly from tool manufactures in the un-organized sector and other Indian companies. TTL today commands almost 70-75 per cent market share in the organized sector. "Marketing a high quality hand tool is quite a task," says Harnarayan Taparia, the Chairman and Managing Director of the Rs 500-crore company.

Taparia believes that hand tool is an extension of a human hand. Based on this thought process, the company had carved out such tools that every mechanic or a household craves to possess. Known for its quality, Taparia



Harnarayan Taparia

brand tools are well received and appreciated by all. The company presently has large network of distributors all over India. Its tools are exported to a number of countries including the USA and UK.

The company has launched a variety of home tool kits for housewives and kids and utility sets for vehicles in tune with the trend - "do-it-yourself." "We see a huge market for these products in an evolving market," Taparia says.

Spectrum auctions get underway

NEW DELHI

SPECTRUM auction in India began on Monday, with 2,251.25 megahertz (MHz) radiowaves valued at Rs 3.92 lakh crore up for bidding.

The auction entailing seven frequency bands for mobile services - 700 MHz, 800 MHz, 900 MHz, 1800 MHz, 2100 MHz, 2300 MHz and 2500 MHz bands - is currently underway, industry sources said. The current auction does not include frequencies in 3,300-3,600 MHz bands that were identified for 5G services, which will happen later. Successful bidders can pay entire bid amount in one go (upfront), or exercise an option to pay a certain amount (25 per cent for spectrum won in 700 MHz, 800 MHz, 900 MHz bands or 50 per cent for spectrum won in 1800 MHz, 2100 MHz, 2300 MHz, 2500 MHz bands) upfront with the remaining amount in a maximum up to 16 EMIs, after a moratorium of two years. Spectrum will be offered for assignment for a validity period of



TELECOM

20 years. Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea had submitted a total earnest money deposit (EMD) of Rs 13,475 crore for the spectrum auctions. India's largest telecom company Reliance Jio with a network of Rs 1.79 lakh crore had submitted EMD of Rs 10,000 crore for the auctions, the highest among the three private telcos. Market watchers had said that Jio's EMD amount indicated its healthy appetite for spectrum in the auctions,

particularly on the back of its swelling subscriber base. Bharti Airtel with a network of Rs 71,303 crore has submitted EMD of Rs 3,000 crore and Vodafone Idea with a negative network of Rs 43,474 crore has submitted EMD of Rs 475 crore. Analysts expect the auctions this time to be a low-key affair, and see bids in the range of Rs 30,000 crore-Rs 50,000 crore for the radiowaves valued at around Rs 3.92 lakh crore at base price.

Radiowaves valued at ₹3.92 lakh cr up for bidding

₹77,146 cr bids on Day 1

INDIA's first auction of spectrum in five years attracted Rs 77,146 crore of bids on the opening day on Monday with Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea putting in bids. Over 2,250 MHz of spectrum, that carry telecom signals, in seven bands worth nearly Rs 4 lakh crore at reserve or start price, was offered for bidding in the auction that began on Monday. Telecom Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said Rs 77,146 crore worth of spectrum was bid on the first day but there were no takers for the airwaves in the premium 700 and 2500 MHz bands. The auction, he said, will continue on Tuesday. Bids were received in 800 MHz, 900 MHz, 1800 MHz, 2100 MHz and 2300 MHz bands. About one-third of the spectrum being auctioned is in the 700 MHz band, which was completely unsold during the 2016 auctions.

This, analysts said, was mostly because operators are unlikely to diversify into a new spectrum band that would require incremental investment in equipment, when other sub-GHz bands are available at lower prices.

Sindhu, Saina likely to clash in semis; all eyes on Chirag-Satwik

BASEL (SWITZERLAND)

REIGNING world champion P V Sindhu will be eager to return to the podium as former winner Saina Nehwal looks to regain her touch in the season-opening Swiss Open tournament beginning here on Tuesday.

Indian men's singles players, too, have tasted success in this tournament with Sameer Verma, HS Prannoy and Kidambi Srikanth emerging victorious in 2018, 2016 and 2015 respectively and B Sai Praneeth finishing runners-up in the last edition.

All four will be looking to relive the moments and extend India's good run at the USD 140,000 event which will also resume the extended Olympic qualifying period.

It was here at St. Jakobshalle venue that Olympic silver medalist Sindhu had claimed the world championship gold in 2019, her last title before the COVID-19 pandemic disruption. The 25-year-old from Hyderabad, seeded second, will look to go the distance again as she opens her campaign against Turkey's Neslihan Yigit.

Sindhu didn't have a good outing in the three events in Thailand recently but the road to the quarterfinal here looks smooth for the Indian where she is likely to confront fifth seed Thai Busanan Ongbamrunphan, an opponent she had beaten at the Toyota Thailand Open in January.

Two-time former winner Saina, too, is in the same half but the senior pro will have to overcome players like Korea's sixth seed Sung Ji Hyun and fourth seeded Danish Mia Blichfeldt -- whom she is likely to meet -- to set up a



semifinal face-off with Sindhu.

Former world number one Saina, who turns 31 this month, is at the fag end of an illustrious career, having slipped to 19 in the BWF rankings but she still has the hunger to make it to another Olympics.

The London bronze medalist will hope to make a positive start when she opens against Thailand's Phittayaporn Chaiwan, a former world junior championships bronze medalist. All eyes will also be on world number 10 men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty after their semifinal finish at Toyota Thailand Open.

The Indian pair, seeded second, would look to stretch its good run, especially after a month-long training session under new doubles coach Mathias Boe of Denmark. The Indian duo will face Scotland's Christopher Grimley and Matthew Grimley in the opening round.

Expectations will be high from Satwik and Ashwini Ponnappa as well after their last-four finish at the previous event. But it will be an uphill climb for the duo as it faces second seeds Indonesians Hafiz Faizal and Gloria Emanuelle Widjaja first up.

In the men's singles, it will be an all-Indian show when Sameer takes on former world number one Kidambi Srikanth in the opening round. While Sameer looked good at Toyoya Thailand

Srikanth too seemed to have found his rhythm at the World Tour Finals in January. It will be a battle of nerves

as both have lost a lot of matches from winning positions in their career.

Former world number eight HS Prannoy will open against Mark Calijouw of the Netherlands, while Sourabh Verma takes on Switzerland's Christian Kirchmayr. Ajay Jayaram will meet Thailand's Sithikom Thammasin and Parupalli Kashyap will square off against Spain's Pablo Abian.

Olympic hopeful Pra-neeth, who was forced to withdraw from the last event in Thailand after returning positive for COVID-19, will hope to shine when he clashes with Israel's Misha Zilberman. Young Lakshya Sen, who missed the Thailand events due to an injury, too will be rearing to go when he opens against Thailand's Tanongsak Saensomboonsuk.

Among other Indians in the fray, Pranaav Jerry Chopra, who had tested positive for COVID late last year, will be back in action after a long hiatus when he pairs up with N Sikki Reddy and takes on third seeded English pair of Marcus Ellis and Lauren Smith in the mixed doubles.

Young men's doubles pair of MR Arjun and Dhruv Kapila too will look to put up a show when the Indians face Russia's seventh seeds Vladimir Ivanov and Ivan Sozonov.

The Super 300 event will be crucial for the Olympic hopefuls with the BWF extending the qualification period for the Tokyo Games till

as both have lost



Kapur, Malvika win titles at Uganda International

KAMPALA

INDIAN shuttlers Varun Kapur and Malvika Bansod emerged champions at the 2021 Uganda International in Kampala on Monday.

The junior world No 2 Kapur registered a hard-fought 21-18, 16-21, 21-17 win over seventh seeded compatriot Sankar Muthusamy to lift his maiden senior international men's singles title while second-seed Malvika had to work hard during her come-from-behind 17-21, 25-23, 21-10 victory against compatriot Anupama Upadhyaya in the women's singles category.

The 17-year-old Kapur, who has been a consistent performer on the junior circuit and clinched his sixth title earlier this year, won the first game convincingly before losing the second.

However, he looked in complete control in the decider and wrapped up the match comfortably in his favour.

Meanwhile in the women singles summit clash, Haryana girl Anupama started off well to take an early lead by winnin2g the first game. However, the



19-year-old Malvika recovered well in time and was rewarded for her never give up attitude as the Nagpur girl worked hard to win the next two games as well as the gold medal.

Sankar and Anupama settled for silver medals in the four-day tournament which saw participation of athletes from India, Germany alongside African countries. (ANS)

Hogg bats for Ashwin's return to ODI squad

NEW DELHI

FORMER Australia spinner Brad Hogg on Monday said that India should select Ravichandran Ashwin for their upcoming ODI series against England. Hogg said in a tweet that the 34-year-old off-spinner adds depth to the batting lineup apart from being a wicket-taking option.

"@ibrahim_3337 I think it is a great option, gives the batting line up extra depth allowing the top order to be more aggressive at the top and he is a wicket taking option with the ball, as well as economical. Get him back in. #INDvENG #Cricket," Hogg tweeted in reply to a fan asking if India should get Ashwin back into the ODI squad.

Although he remains an integral part of the Indian Test team and is a regular in the Indian Premier League, Ashwin has been out of In-

dia's limited overs sides since July 2017. His last ODI and T20I appearances for India came during their 2017 tour of West Indies. Ashwin has 150 wickets to his name in 111 ODI matches and 52 wickets in 46 T20Is.

Ashwin became the fourth Indian to take 400 Test wickets during their 10-wicket win over England in the third Test in Ahmedabad in February. Before that, he took eight wickets and scored a century in the second Test in Chennai. Ashwin also played an

integral role with bat and ball in India's 2-1 Test series win over Australia in January.

The fourth and final Test between India and England is scheduled to start on March 4 after which the two teams will face each other in five T20I matches between March 12 and March 20 in Ahmedabad. They then play a three-match ODI series between March 23 and 28 in Pune. (ANS)



Viv slams critics of Indian pitch; says 'I am confused about moaning, groaning'

NEW DELHI

FORMER West Indies captain and batting legend Vivian Richards threw his support behind the spin-friendly conditions that were on offer during the second and third Test between India and England in Chennai and Ahmedabad, respectively.

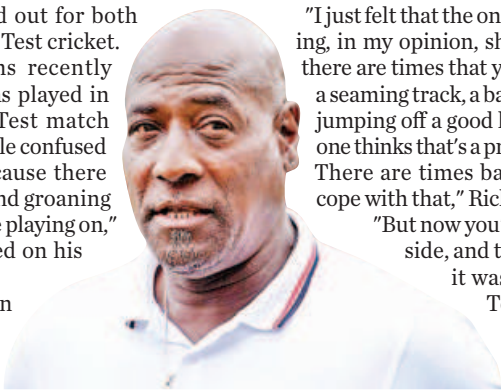
The match, which was the only day-night Test in the series, got over in less than two days with only two out of the 30 wickets that fell during the match going to fast bowlers.

Earlier, England lost the second Test in Chennai by 317 runs. A number of former players said

that pitches that were dished out for both matches were not suitable for Test cricket.

"I've been asked questions recently about the Test match that was played in India the second and third Test match against England. And I am a little confused about the question really because there seems to be a lot of moaning and groaning about the wicket that they were playing on," said Richards in a video posted on his Facebook page.

Richards said that playing on spin-friendly conditions is only the "other side" of Test cricket.



"I just felt that the ones who are moaning, in my opinion, should realise that there are times that you're going to get a seaming track, a ball that is basically jumping off a good length and everyone thinks that's a problem for batters. There are times batters sometimes cope with that," Richards said.

"But now you've seen the other side, and this is why I think it was given the name Test match cricket, because of the test of the

You don't give anything to anyone. They should earn -- runs as batsmen, wickets as bowlers. I used to think on these lines and would not listen. I don't want to compare with what is going on at present. But that is how I would try and prepare the pitch
—Dhiraj Parsana
Former India left-arm spinner

mind and will and everything else that goes with it when you're competing.

"And the complaints have been that the wicket is spinning too much and all that sorts of stuff. This is another side of the coin guys.

"People seem to forget that if you're going to India, you should expect that. You are going to spin land. You should basically prepare yourself to know what you're going to encounter," he further said. England wicketkeeper-batsman Ben Foakes on Sunday said that the visitors were expecting more of the same in the fourth and final Test that would be played at the same venue from March 4.

VIJAY HAZARE TROPHY

Mumbai trounce Himachal by 200 runs, remain unbeaten in league stage

JAIPUR

DOMESTIC giants Mumbai trounced Himachal Pradesh by 200 runs in their final Elite Group D game here on Monday to remain unbeaten in the league stage of the Vijay Hazare Trophy. Mumbai had won their first four matches against Delhi, Maharashtra, Puducherry and Rajasthan.

Opting to bat at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium, Mumbai posted an imposing 321/9, courtesy Shardul Thakur's 92, Suryakumar Yadav's 91 and Aditya Tare's 83 after a top-order failure. Himachal were then bundled out for a meagre 121, with leg-spinner Prashant Solanki (4/31) shining with the ball.

Mumbai were Teetering at 8/3 after losing openers Yashasvi Jaiswal (2), Prithvi Shaw (2) and Shreyas Iyer (2) cheaply. While Jaiswal was caught by Praveen Thakur off Rishi Dhawan (4/84), Shaw holed out to Mayank Dagar off Vaibhav Arora.

Dhawan trapped Iyer in front of wicket as Mumbai got off to a horrendous start. It soon became 49/4, after Sarfaraz Khan (11) failed to convert his start. Then began the rescue act with the prolific Suryakumar, who toyed with the Himachal attack, striking 15 boundaries on his way to a 75-ball 91.

He found an able ally in the experienced Tare (83 off 98 balls; 6x4; 1x6) who played the perfect second fiddle as the duo forged a 99-run fifth wicket stand to rally the innings. After Suryakumar fell in the 31st over, Tare and Shardul added 112 runs for the sixth wicket, as they tackled the Himachal attack with ease.

Shardul, one of the heroes of the Brisbane Test against Australia, hammered six boundaries and as many sixes, as he cantered to 92 in just 57 balls. Thanks to Shardul's hitting, Mumbai crossed the 300-run mark, but Tare's patient knock was equally important as he anchored the innings and supported the aggressors.

Chasing 322, Himachal were reeling at 4/3 after losing openers Ravi Thakur (3), Prashant Chopra (1) and Nikhil Gangta (0) cheaply, as pacers Dhawal Kulkarni (2/8) and Mohit Awasthi (1/19) wreaked havoc. While Thakur edged to wicket-keeper Tare off Kulkarni, Chopra was cleaned up by Awasthi and Gangta holed out to Sarfaraz to give Kulkarni his second. Ekant Sen, who made run-a-ball 21, was dismissed by spinner Shams Mulani (3/42) in the ninth over, as the team slipped to 40/4. In the other two Elite Group D league games, Maharashtra thrashed Puducherry by 137 runs, while Delhi defeated Rajasthan by eight wickets.

BRIEF SCORES

Group D

Mumbai 321/9 (Shardul Thakur 92, Suryakumar Yadav 91, Aditya Tare 83; Rishi Dhawan 4/84, Pankaj Jaswal 3/65) beat Himachal Pradesh 121 (Mayank Dagar 38 not out, Prashant Solanki 4/31, Shams Mulani 3/42) by 200 runs. At Jaipuria Vidhyalaya ground: Rajasthan 294 (Ajit Gupta 78, Manender Singh 73; Simarjeet Singh 4/36, Pradeep Sangwan 3/62) lost to Delhi 296/2 (Himmat Singh 117 not out, Nitish Rana 88 not out; Shubham Sharma 1/54) by eight wickets. At KL Saini Stadium: Maharashtra 333/4 (Yash Nahar 119, AR Bawane 110; Sagar Udeshi 2/49, S Ashwath 2/82) beat Puducherry 196 (Sagar Trivedi 79 not out, Sheldon Jackson 45; Rajvardhan Hangargekar 4/45; Satyajeeet Bachhav 2/32) by 137 runs.

Group E

At Eden Gardens: Bengal 177 all out in 45.1 overs (Su-vankar Bal 54; Sanjay Pahar 3/32, Jayant Yadav 2/31, Ashok Sandhu 2/33, Ajit Chahal 2/49) lost to Haryana 178/5; 43.3 overs (Shubham Rohilla 50; Shahbaz Ahmed 3/35) by five wickets. At JU Second Campus, Saltlake: Chandigarh 241 allout; 48.3 overs (Manan Vohra 54, Ankit Kaushik 44; Parvez Rasool 3/27, Umar Nazir Mir 3/68) lost to Jammu & Kashmir 245/2; 34 overs (Kamal Singh 119, Henan Nazir 110 not out) by eight wickets. At 22 Yards Academy, Saltlake: Services 301/7; 50 overs (Rahul Singh 158, Devender Lochab 64, Pulkit Narang 43 not out; Jaydev Unadkat 3/51) b Saurashtra 233 allout; 43.1 overs (Chirag Jani 68, Snell Patel 43; Rahul Singh 4/45, Varun Choudhary 3/62) by 68 runs.

Plate Group

Assam 342 for 8 in 50 overs (Saahil Jain 86, Denish Das 85, Sibsankar Roy 56; Pratik Desai 3/63) beat Mizoram 160 all out in 43.5 overs (Taruwar Kohli 68, K B Pawan 33; Mukhtar Hussain 4/20, Gokul Sharma 3/21) by 182 runs. Meghalaya 303 for 8 in 50 overs (Abhay Negi 56, Sanjay Yadav 46, D B Ravi Teja 45, Rohit Shah 44) beat Manipur 220 all out in 48.4 overs (Langlonyamba Meitan Kshangbam 83, Narsingh Yadav 36; Sanjay Yadav 4/20) by 83 runs. Uttarakhand 306 for 8 in 50 overs (Kamal Singh 119, Jay Bista 54, Mayank Mishra 32 not out; Varun Sood 3/41) beat Sikkim 161 for 6 in 50 overs (Nilesh Lamichaney 58, Ashish Thapa 38) by 145 runs. Arunachal Pradesh 285 for 9 in 50 overs (Rahul Dalal 138 not out, Vipin Dhaka 56; Shrikant Mundhe 4/64) lost to Nagaland 287 for 3 in 42.1 overs (Rongsen Jonathan 113, Shrikant Mundhe 102, Stuart Binny 55 not out) by seven wickets. (PTI)

Fascinated by how locals celebrate cricket in India: Waugh

NEW DELHI

FORMER Australia captain Steve Waugh said that he had a culture shock when he came to Mumbai for the first time.

Waugh said that he has always been fascinated with how locals in India celebrated cricket.

"Landing in Bombay or Mumbai, as it is now, was a total culture shock, there were just people everywhere, there were cars and bikes and animals and rats and cats running along the footpath and it was just like, where am I? I am in a different world which was just a total shock and a bombardment of the senses," said Waugh in the documentary



'Capturing Cricket: Steve Waugh in India' that is currently streaming on Discovery Plus.

Waugh's first visit to the country for cricket was during Australia's 1986/87 tour of India. He played as an all-rounder at the time and had meagre returns of 59 runs and two wickets in the three Tests he played.

"Capturing Cricket is especially very near to my heart as it covers two of my passions that is cricket and photography. Since, my first visit to India in 1986, I

was always fascinated by how the locals celebrated the sport of cricket. My recent journey visiting Taj Mahal, Chinnaswamy Stadium, the Maharajah Lakshmi Vilas Palace, HPCA Stadium, Oval Maidan, as well as locations around Delhi and Kolkata, gave me stories and lifetime memories. I am positive that when the fans in India watch the documentary, they will be able to feel the very emotion of the journey," said Waugh at the launch of the documentary. (ANS)

MI announce tie-up with DHL

MUMBAI: Indian Premier League (IPL) champions Mumbai Indians (MI) on Monday announced its partnership with DHL Express. The international express service provider has joined MI as a principal sponsor and official logistics partner ahead of the 2021 season of the IPL. This is DHL Express's first cricket sponsorship. It has previously been involved with Rugby Sevens Series, ESL One, MotoGP and Formula 1 along with being involved with Premier League giants Man United.

Cricket C'ship for deaf till March 5

NEW DELHI: The second ODI National Zone Cricket Championship League for the deaf will be held here from March 1 to 5, the Indian Deaf Cricket Association said on Monday. The 50-over tournament will be held at the MCG 2 & 3, Ghevra Cricket Ground, Kanjhwala here and will witness cricketing talent from across the country for the c'ship title. The performance of the players in the event can secure them a spot in the team for the Deaf ICC World Cup 2022. The champs will get a cash reward of Rs 1,00,001 while the runner-up team will be given a cash prize of Rs 50,001.

I-League: Churchill extend lead

KOLKATA: Churchill Brothers squeezed past a last-minute scare to beat 10-man Gokulam Kerala FC 3-2 at the Kishore Bharati Kriangan in Kolkata on Monday, and extended their lead at the top of the I-League table to five points. Luka Majcen's brace and Kingslee Fernandes' goal helped Santiago Valera's side win. Gokulam Kerala made a dominant start to the game, and created a couple of chances in the opening three minutes, but Vincy Barretto and Philip Adjah were unable to get their shots away from inside the area.

Paddlers Desai, Batra off to winning starts in Doha

DOHA: Ace Indian paddlers Manika Batra and Harmeet Desai made an impressive return to the international circuit by registering straight-game victories in their respective qualifying round-2 matches at the World Table Tennis (WTT) Contender series here on Monday.

Batra, the 2018 Commonwealth Games gold-medallist, registered a 12-10 12-11 8-victory over Spain's Sofia-Xuan Zhang in women's singles, while world no. 73 Desai notched up an easy 11-5 12-10 11-6 win over compatriot Anthony Amalraj to progress to the third round of the men's singles qualifiers.

The season-opener is also the first international tournament Indian players are participating in after the long coronavirus-forced break. However, Sutirtha Mukherjee, Mudit Dani and Diya Chitale suffered defeats in their respective singles qualifying round matches.

Two-time national champion Mukherjee failed to get the better of Ukraine's Tetyana Bilenko 5-11 3-11 12-10 9-11 while Dani, who is ranked 200, went down 8-11, 6-11 11-8 6-11 against world no. 85 Olah Benedek of Finland.

Chitale started off well against Romania's Irina Ciobanu with a game's lead, but she couldn't capitalise on the momentum and lost the match 11-8 9-11 3-11 8-11 against the world no. 98. Achanta Sharath Kamal and Sathyan Gnanasekaran have received direct entries into the men's singles main draw, while 10 other Indians are playing in the qualifiers at the event. (PTI)