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#### **Get vehicle FASTag** now, or else pay double the toll

NEW DELHI: Vehicles passing through toll plazas on a National Highway must have a FASTag as the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) on Sunday decided to make all the lanes in the fee plazas on NH as 'FASTag lane' from the midnight of February 15-16. In an order, the Ministry said vehicles without a FASTag passing through the NH toll

plazas will have to pay double amount of the toll charge. Earlier, the Central government made FASTag mandatory for vehicles from January 1 this year. However, the dead-

line for motorists to get FASTag on their vehicles was later extended till February 14. FASTag, the electronic toll collection system is not applicable for two-wheelers.

This tag, a sticker featuring an imprinted Radio Frequency Identification barcode, should be on the windshield of a vehicle. With the help of this tag, a motorist can pay the toll fee at the NH plazas through an electronic system.

#### **₹92.26 for litre** petrol in Hyd



HYDERABAD: The petrol price in Hyderabad touched a new record of Rs 92.26 after oil marketing firms raised fuel prices by almost 30-34 paise, while the diesel price in the town was Rs 86.23. The petrol and diesel price stayed stable for four days in the first week of February and on February 8, they were increased to Rs 90.42

and Rs 84.14, respectively.



**Global cues** to dictate mkt trend ahead



## **14 PILGRIMS KILLED IN KURNOOL ACCIDENT**

All are pilgrims from Madanapalle going to Ajmer dargah ■ Modi, Jagan express sorrow over loss of life

HANS NEWS SERVICE KURNOOL

TRAGEDY struck a group of pilgrims on their way to Ajmer dargah in Rajasthan as 14 of them, including eight women and a child, were killed and four injured in a road mishap in Kurnool district in Andhra Pradesh early on Sunday, according to police.

The accident occurred when a minibus in which the pilgrims, all relatives and hailing from Madanapalle in Chittoor district, were travelling collided with a lorry at Madapuram around 4 am, Kurnool District Superintendent of Police K Fakirappa said. The passengers were on their way to the Ajmer Sharif dargah in Rajasthan, he said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy were among those who expressed sorrow over the loss of lives. Reddy announced an ex gratia of Rs 2 lakh each to the kin of the deceased and Rs 1 lakh to the injured.

Preliminary investigation suggested that the



Police inspecting the accident site at Madapuram in Kurnool district on Sunday

CM announces ex gratia of Rs 2 lakh each to the kin of the deceased 4 children survived the crash with severe injuries; Admitted to hospital

driver apparently lost control and the bus first crashed into the road median, rolled to the other side and hit the lorry. Only four children survived the crash and all had been admitted to a hospital where the condition of one of them was stated to be critical.

The accident might have been due to over speeding of the mini bus or its driver might have been drowsy. Fourteen persons died on the spot and another four (injured) were shifted to hospital. One

of the children is said to be in a critical condition," a police official said. Kurnool Collector G Veerapandian said administration would also examine if there was any defect in the vehicle. A tweet posted on PMO India handle said: "The road accident in Andhra Pradesh Kurnool district is saddening. In this hour of sadness, my thoughts are with those who lost their loved ones. I hope that the injured recover at the ear-

#### **Glacier blast:** 12 more bodies recovered

NEW DELHI: Twelve more bodies were recovered on Sunday, including five from the slush of the Tapovan tunnel, six from Raini villlage and one in Rudraprayag in Uttarakhand, where rescue operations have been underway since February 7. The toll has now reached 50. Around 160 people are still missing after glacier burst in the area last Sunday.

"Recovered 2 bodies from the slush of the main tunnel at Tapovan where rescue operation was going on since February 7. Uttarakhand police, SDRF and NDRF jawans are taking out the bodies," DGP Kumar had

# PM hands over Arjun battle tank to Army

#### Modi kicks off several projects in TN

CHENNAI

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday handed over the indigenously developed Arjun Main Battle Tank Mark 1A to the Indian Army here and said India believes in peace but will protect its sovereignty at all costs.

Modi handed over the tank to Army Chief General M M Naravane.

The PM accepted a salute by the state-of-the-art tank, indigenously designed, developed and manufactured by the Defence Research and Development Organisation's Combat Vehicles Research and Development



over the indigenously developed Arjun Main Battle Tank (Mark 1A) tanks to the army, in Chennai. (R) Handing over a replica of Arjun Tank to Army Chief Gen M M Naravane

Establishment here. Fifteen academic institutions, eight labs and several MSMEs were also involved

in the project. The Defence

Ministry had recently cleared the induction of 118 Arjun Mark 1A tanks into the Indian Army, costing around Rs 8,400 crore.

#### **REFORMS TO BE A REALITY SOON**

## Govt finalises rules under 4 labour codes

New Delhi

 $THE\,Ministry\,of\,Labour\,and$ Employment has finalised the rules under four labour codes paving the way for making reforms a reality by notifying those for implementation soon.

The four broad codes on wages, industrial relations, social security and occupational safety, health & working conditions (OSH) have already been notified after



getting the President's asneed to be notified. sent. But for implementing these four codes, the rules completed the process of

Now the ministry has

consultation on draft rules on the four codes and firmed up those for notifi-

Explaining this, Labour Secretary Apurva Chandra said, "We have finalised the rules under the four codes which are required to implement the four labour codes. We are ready to notify these rules. The states are doing their work to firm up rules under the four

### Trump indicates active public life after second impeachment acquittal

WASHINGTON

DONALD Trump has told millions of his supporters that he is ready for yet another phase of active public life after the US Senate acquitted him in his second impeachment trial.

Following four days of the impeachment trial, the 100-member Senate voted to impeach the former US president by 57-43 votes, 10 votes short of the twothirds majority

needed for convic-

Trump, a Republican, is the first-ever president to have been impeached twice and the first president to have faced impeachment after

leaving office. Trump, 74, faced the charge of incitement of insurrection over the deadly January 6 assault of the US Capitol by his supporters. "Our historic, patriotic and beautiful movement to Make America Great Again has only just begun. In the months ahead I have

much to share with you, and I look forward to continuing our incredible journey together to achieve American greatness for all of our people. There has never been anything like it!" Trump said in a statement.

"We have so much work ahead of us, and soon we will emerge with



a vision for a bright, radiant, and limitless American future," Trump, who received 74 million votes in the November 3 presidential election, higher than that of any president

before him. While Trump has remained quiet on his postpresidency life, speculation has been rife that he might run for the presidency in 2024 or encourage someone from his family to fight out a battle for the White House.

#### **Hindus not** safe in BJP rule: Raghav

liest: PM.

New Delhi

ATTACKING the Bharatiya Janata Party over the death of a youth Rinku Sharma, Aam Aadmi Party MLA Raghav Chadha on Sunday remarked that Hindus are not safe in BJP's rule.

Addressing a press conference in New Delhi, Chadha said, "The family of Rinku Sharma is saying that he was killed because of raising Jai Shri Ram slogans.

"It should be thoroughly investigated and the culprits should be punished. Is raising the Jai Shri Ram slogans not safe now? In BJP's rule, Hindus are not safe." Slamming the BJP-led

central government, the AAP MLA said, "The BJP holds the responsibility for law and order in Delhi, all seven MPs belong to them, home ministry belongs to BJP. Is it the result this government is made for?""I ask the Union Home Minister, why has he not visited Rinku Sharma's family? Law and order is under him. Does it suit him to campaign in Bengal while such an incident occurred in Delhi? Why did the police commissioner not visit Sharma's family?" he questioned.

### **UTTARAKHAND FLASH FLOODS**

## Water supply may be affected in parts of Delhi, says DJB

New Delhi

FLASH floods in Uttarakhand's Chamoli have increased turbidity of raw water fetched by Delhi from Upper Ganga Canal to "unprecedented levels" which is likely to hit water supply in many parts of the national capital, DJB vice chairman Raghav Chadha said on Sunday.

In a series of tweets, Chadha said the Sonia Vihar and Bhagirathi water treatment plants were functioning at reduced capacity.

He said the supply is likely to be affected in south, east and northeast Delhi and urged people to use water judiciously.

"In the aftermath of #UttarakhandDisaster, turbidity in raw water fetched by Delhi from Upper Ganga Canal has increased to unprecedented levels (8000 NTU). As a result, @DelhiJalBoard's Sonia



Vihar & Bhagirathi Water Treatment Plants currently operating at reduced capacity," tweeted Chadha, who is also an Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLA.

The DJB is deploying water tankers in adequate numbers and all possible efforts are being made to reduce turbidity in water, he said.

"Turbidity is the measure of relative clarity of a liquid. Turbidity is measured in Nephelometric Turbidity Units (NTU). High turbidity can be caused by debris, silt, mud, algae, plant pieces, melting glaciers, sawdust, wood ashes or chemicals in the water," he tweeted.

Following a break in a glacier in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand, flash floods in Dhauliganga and Alaknanda rivers caused massive destruction of lives and property, last week.

## dog searches for her puppies

ARUN SHARMA CHAMOLI

IT stands at a distance watching soundlessly as multiple teams work to reach those buried under mounds of debris and is sometimes heard breaking into howls of anguish -- a canine sentinel watching over the rescue mission in its search for her missing puppies.

The hours have stretched into days of endless waiting and clinging on to the tenuous hope that those buried when flash floods devastated the Alaknanda river system exactly a week ago will be rescued alive. As scores of villagers and relatives keep vigil in villages and at the two hydel power projects that were damaged extensively, so does the nameless brown dog.

Since the morning of the disaster, when a portion of a glacier possibly broke off triggering massive floods, the dog has been at the Rishi Ganga power plant near Raini village, say rescuers

Villagers add that it had about three or four puppies, which were buried when the waters came rushing in that fateful February 7 Sunday morning. The dog can be seen sniffing through the site, now awash with silt and sludge, standing on the side watchfully as men from multiple agencies rush around frantically from one end to the other and machines are deployed in the



A dog walks near the damaged Tapovan tunnel as army personnel carry out rescue and restoration work

rescue effort. And then, as the shadows lengthen and darkness falls, it stays on, determined as it were not to move till its pup-

pies are found. Sometimes, it moves to the river and other times to the top of the hill to look down at the ravaged landscape as the lights from villages nearby shine like beacons in the gathering dark. Villagers have told rescuers that the dog has not eaten anything since that morning. They have tried to feed

it several times but it has always turned away. It can be heard crying, whimpering and also howling, day and night since that morning.

Digambar, a resident of Raini village, is also searching for his brother, hoping against hope that he is still alive. Along with him are scores of others, some from the area and some from other parts of the country. And the dog. Human and animal bonded in their grief. Their wait continues.

#### Registration of e-autos soon: Gahlot the benefits of switching to electric vehi-

THE Delhi government will soon start facilitating registration of e-autos that can save up to Rs 29,000 as compared to their CNG equivalents, Delhi Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot said on Sunday.

Under its 'Switch Delhi' campaign, the Delhi government will now focus on adoption of electric three-wheelers, including e-autos, e-rickshaws, and e-carts.

"The Delhi government has led the way in promoting e-rickshaws for the last few years by giving subsidy of Rs 30,000. After the EV policy, the same subsidy has been extended to e-carts and e-autos. Scrapping incentives of up to Rs 7,500 are also

available on it," Gahlot said. Under Delhi's electric vehicle policy, 177 three-wheeler models are available and el-



igible for purchase and scrapping incentives. The Switch Delhi campaign is an eight-week electric vehicle mass awareness campaign to sensitise Delhiites about

cles. The second week of the campaign focuses on the outreach for electric threewheelers and aims to sensitise, inform. and encourage Delhiites to adopt electric three-wheelers in the national capital, said a Delhi government statement. Three-wheelers are one of the major contributors to vehicular emissions in Delhi and the policy lays special focus on incentivising the transition of this segment to electric. "Two and three-wheelers contribute to two-thirds of the pollution in Delhi. Three wheelers run on the road for 12-16 hours everyday. The focus of Delhi EV policy on this segment to enable their transition to electric will greatly benefit Delhi's air quality," Gahlot said on the occasion of launching the next leg of the Switch Delhi campaign.



**PRIYANKA** @PRIYANKACHOPRA

Movies are universal. How do you think they have the power to connect people? #GlobalMovieDay @TheAcademy



#### **NEWS ROUNDUP**

### Adaa Khan: Doing a music video takes me to a different zone

 $T^{\text{elevision actress Adaa Khan,}}_{\text{who was recently in}}$ Rishikesh for the shoot of a new music video, says that working in a music video takes her to a different zone.

While the title of the music video is yet to be finalized, Adaa says, "Whenever I have done a music video. it's been a very fulfilling experience, for the time being, you actually get to a different zone.

The song is sung by 'Hud hud dabangg' fame singer Divya Kumar. The actress is very happy with the way the music video is coming along.

"This song has a beautiful story of a girl who gives up everything and searching for the love of her life which I can't reveal now. One should wait and watch the music video," shares the ac-

Adaa is very fond of travelling and shooting in Rishikesh for this music video gave her many

"Shooting in the freezing Rishikesh was so much fun, I had a great time. While shooting, we had been to places like Laxmanjhula, by the Ganga river, local cafes and visiting these places was wonderful. And the weather made the experience even more memorable," she added.

Unfortunately, when Adaa was there a glacier broke in the state. But, luckily, it wasn't close to the area where Adaa was.

She shares, "I was eating breakfast when I suddenly started getting calls from my family and friends if I am okay are not. Fortunately, we were all safe, though I could see there were police vans and sirens were on to alert people.'



# **FASHIONISTA TO HEALTH ENTREPRENEUR**

TEJAL SINHA

rarna Arora was always interested in lifestyle and fashion and started a successful venture of custom-tailored dresses from the year 2001 to 2012. Due to her health problems, she had to give up with the existing venture and took a break to find what actually was her true purpose.

Vedic Vitals is a modern age Ayurvedic Company that follows the ideology of 'Prevention is better than cure'. The remedies by Vedic vitals are made from natural herbs which are safe to consume and do not leave any side effect on the human body.

Sharing about what inspired

her to start Vedic vitals, Prarna shares, "I have seen many ups and downs in my life including the demise of my husband at the age of 46. This turned me towards the direction of providing basic healthcare to the nation and what pushed me even more and that was when I started facing health issues myself due to the real problems of India, Lack of sanitation and basic health. Today, consumption of tobacco, liquor, fast food and exposure to pollution is a common part of our daily life. This unhealthy lifestyle has fur-

ther impacted our bodies and become the root cause of many health problems. I wished to do something which could prevent and help cure diseases and working in this direction I thought of a variety of products which could help prevent such lifestyle diseases.

For Prarna, Vedic Vitals was not a one-day game, a lot of hard work, sleepless nights and research of highly qualified doctors was required in the initial days. After working for almost 8 months, they launched Vedic Vitals in the COVID-19 era, which itself was a big challenge for an early day start-up.

The main concern was the movement of supply chain. India was in lockdown and deliveries of the products were also impacted to a great extent. But with time, things are getting normal and we are also constantly working on challenges and solving them.

She adds, "COVID-19 turned out to be a lesson for the whole world, and we are part of it. We began this venture during COVID therefore, we had an idea of the obstacles we might face and were as prepared for them as could be. Though, COVID did not only have a negative impact. The one good

thing happened at this time was that people started thinking of their health. This also opened a window for Vedic Vitals to make a place in the healthcare industry.'

According to her, Vedic Vitals is different from its competitors in more than one way. While most of their competitors focus on pre-existing conditions that their remedies cure, they believe in preventing these conditions from even coming into existence in the human body.

Our remedies not only prevent diseases from happening but also cleanse from within, ensuring release of all toxins. Tar Free is a scientific ayurvedic formulation backed with high quality herbs to detox your lungs from the tar accumulated by consumption of tobacco & pollution. It removes harmful toxins from lungs responsible for lung cancer, removes congestion in lungs & helps to breathe freely and improves stamina and allows you to perform physical work without breathlessness."



## How to balance the well-being of employees and their strengths

Leadership is the key to set the right way of doing things in any organisation. It helps build a positive and healthy environment among the people we work with and gives a path to follow along in the future course of actions

ABHISHEK JOSHHI

trength-based development can prove to be commendsons. First, the approach itself works on positive psychology that encourages individuals to feel their strengths help the organisation grow.

Second- it breaks the awkward communication and inculcates an uplifting thought process that appreciates a person's ability and gives a sense of belongingness by their leaders.

It effortlessly makes an individual perceive themselves as adding value just by being themselves.

In a nutshell, the strength-

based approach can bring bene-

employees • Ownership would increase among individuals • Overall business outcomes would increase

• Will boost productivity at the

• Build a culture of responsible

workplace instantly

Role of a leader in implementing a strengths-

## based approach

Any piece of advice automatically puts in more weightage when it comes from an experienced or a seasoned person.

When considering the po tive business outcomes for organisational culture, only a leader can contribute the most and drive changes within the employees or the mentees.

Believe it or not, Leadership is the key to set the right way of doing things in any organisation. It helps build a positive and healthy environment among the people we work with and gives a path to follow along in the future course of actions.

A leader can give insights into identifying our core strengths and working on refining them to



drive excellence. Strengths science which was invented by Don Clifton, Father of Strengths Psychology strongly suggests looking at what an individual does correctly and maximises its im-

Some studies done by Gallup show that people who learn to use their strengths every day have 7.8% greater productivity than people focusing only on the flaws. Also, teams who receive positive feedback bring 8.9 greater profitability to the organisation.

#### How to leverage strength-based leadership for employees welfare

By this time, we hope you have a fair understanding of how giving maximum importance to strengths drives better results both on a personal as well as on your professional fronts.

Now let's see how you can use your powers to leverage the most

#### **Step-1:** Discover your strengths

Discover your strengths with help of a scientific tool, find out what works for you, and hone

them. Because 90% of the time in our day-to-day behavior, we naturally tend to use them.

#### Step-2: Learn to apply your strengths on a daily basis

If you fail to use your strengths on a routine basis naturally, then it might impact you to bring in change. And that is where Strengths-based tools come to your assistance.

#### Step-3: Approach with what suits your natural instincts

As each individual has a personal way of making or dealing with change, they create their own strategies instead of prescribing anything.

#### **Final words**

SUDOKU

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Strengths seek importance enough importance to keep it sustained and only proffer with time. So there should be no reason not to pay enough attention to it. It's time to extend our celebrations and enjoy the victories resulting from our strengths rather than worrying about the misery that arises from our weaknesses.

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# Become a successful super woman

 ${f B}^{
m eing}$  a mompreneur (mom entrepreneur) is one of the most challenging jobs in the world. It requires balancing two very demanding roles: a mom and an entrepreneur. Being a mompreneur might require more effort than being a career woman, but it gives you more flexibility and control over your schedule. As you can earn while taking care of your family, the fruits of your labor will be sweeter too.

#### Here are a few tips to be a successful mompreneur aka superwoman: Focus on what you know and love

A smart business idea blended with something that you love and know is the best formula for a successful venture. It is easier to offer products or services that have provided solu-

tions for you, based on your personal experience. Many successful mompreneur have started a business selling baby-related items, such as breastfeeding aids and baby care supplies. Apart from your expertise in that field, you get to interact with and help fellow moms and moms-to-be.

#### Good planning and time management skills

Being a mompreneur requires that you function at maximum efficiency, as you cannot afford wasted time and effort. Having a structured daily schedule will help you keep track of all your tasks and to allot your time based on the importance of each one. Be realistic when planning your day though. It is advisable to set aside a free one hour per day. That one hour will help you catch up on your lag and allow you some breath-

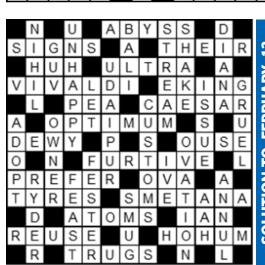
#### Allow time for yourself

No matter how busy you are, do not forget to find time for yourself. Do not feel guilty about taking a break once in a while- it will not make you a bad mom. On the contrary, having some "me" time to recharge, refresh and feel more beautiful will make you better as a mom and an entrepreneur. Take time to have a relaxing bath, to go out or to be pampered at the parlor or spa- you deserve it!

#### Support system

Even Superwoman needs a team to help her, or else, she will burn out. Your family is your number one source of support. If you have a team working with you, that will also help you divide the stress in your business. You might also want to connect with other mompreneur or fellow moms. Keep in touch with your friends who have their own kids to share your experiences and concerns with. There are also many online mom groups or community parent organizations you can take part in.





#### Across

- 1 Whip to a froth (5)
- A punctuation mark indicating a break or series (5)
- Notion (7)
- 10 Seaport in SW Spain (5)
- 11 A red dye "noise" anagram? (5)
- 12 Foolish (5)
- 13 Judging (7)
- 15 Path for Confucians (3)
- 17 "Orinoco Flow" singer (4)
- 18 Medical (6)
- 19 Civilian dress (5)
- 20 Newspaper man (6)
- 22 Poker stake (4)
- 24 Apiary insect (3) 25 A horse-drawn
- vehicle (7) 26 Excessive interest (5) 27 Capital of Egypt (5)
- 28 Cart (5)
- 29 Exacted revenge (3,4)
- 30 Foreign (5)

### 31 US state (5)

- 2
- Frequency unit (3)

- 13 Star in Cygnus (5)

- 21 Wreck (6)
- 23 Japanese car manufacturer (6)
- 25 Sadistic (5)

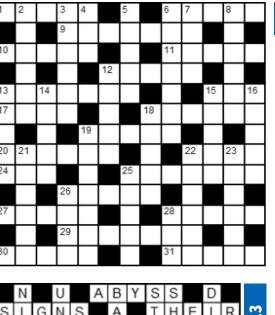
# 3 **SOLUTION TO**

## **CROSSWORD**

#### Do

- 3
- 5 Regretting (5)
- 7 Siouan Indian (4)

- 15 Singer Lopez (5)
- 19 Rainy season (7)
- 22 Esoteric (6)
- 28 Damp or moist (3)



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Mark of infamy (6)
Frequency unit (3)

6 Capital of Tamil Nadu (7)

8 Cocktail-bar order (3,3) 12 Become liable to (5)

14 Eagle's nest (5)

16 Group of eight (5) 18 Needing to scratch (5)

26 Encourage (4)

# Common cold can't be termed as sign of coronavirus: AIIMS

New Delhi

A while ago, a group of general physicians in the UK claimed that common cold symptoms should not be taken for granted, instead treated as a sign of coronavirus. But there is a divergent view, the President of AIIMS, Bhopal and Jammu, Y.K. Gupta told IANS that cough, fever and common cold cannot be 100 per cent termed as signs of coronavirus.

Reportedly, 140 east London general practitioners (GPs) and

health care professionals had written and signed an open letter to chief medical officer Chris Whitty and Susan Hopkins of Public Health England, claiming that patients usually experience typical symptoms of common cold like sore throat, a runny nose and headaches before testing positive for coronavirus. Gupta, who was former Dean (Academics), and ex-Head, Department of Pharmacology, AIIMS New Delhi, said: "Common cold cannot be 100 per cent sign of coronavirus. Most com-



mon cold viral infections are on that people should drop their decline, but that does not mean

guard. It is essential to wear

mask and maintain social distancing."

As the spurt of Covid cases begins to taper, Gupta cautioned though there has been a decline in the Covid cases recently, but this does not mean that danger is over. He stressed the factors contributing towards the decline in cases and deaths could be the ongoing vaccination drive and the intrinsic immunity of people in the country. "A large population has already been infected, which sub clinically may contribute to decline. The pathogenicity of this is decreasing maybe", he said. On the aspect of increasing numbers in western countries and consistent decline in cases in India. Gupta indicated that this is perhaps due to a higher immunity of the Indian population towards the virus than western population, but there is not sufficient data to establish this.

People who got vaccinated after contracting Covid-19 have developed some health issues. Does it have a potential to become a lasting health problem? Gupta replied that it may be a residual health problem and not vaccine residual side-effect, in fact after vaccination allergic reaction does not last for more than two days.

When queried, has he come across any safety issues associated with Covaxin in any particular age group, especially senior citizen, or people with comorbidities so far, Gupta said nothing so far, because data is not fully available and added that data regarding the Phase 3 trial of Covaxin may be available by March end, which would establish its efficacy.

# Yogi to withdraw 2.5 lakh lockdown violation cases

LUCKNOW

UTTAR Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has decided to withdraw nearly 2.5 lakh cases, lodged for violating lockdown rules following the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic.

A state government spokesperson said common people and businessmen, who have been running around to police stations and courts over the cases, will now be given relief.

"The government will drop cases lodged under IPC section 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant)," the spokesperson said.

Uttar Pradesh Law Minister Brijesh Pathak said cases lodged



for violation of Section 188 will be withdrawn automatically as also cases under Section 3 of Epidemic Diseases Act.

"People booked under cases during lockdown will not have to submit any application. The process in this regard has started," said Pathak.

Recently, the state government had announced that it will withdraw cases lodged against traders

in the state during the lockdown. "The state government feels that common people will suffer due to the cases lodged against them during the pandemic,"

added the spokesperson. Uttar Pradesh has become the first state in the country to announce withdrawal of cases against traders and common peo-

The spokesman said that after traders met Law Minister Pathak in January, apprising him of cases lodged against them for minor offences, including keeping establishments open beyond prescribed hours or opening shops for non-trade purposes during lockdown, they were asked to compile a list of such cases.

# Army personnel killed by unidentified men

AN Army personnel, on a visit to his home, was attacked and killed by unidentified miscreants.

His body was found on Saturday with severe head injuries in his car from the Neem Sarai area

Police have registered an FIR against unidentified assailants and a woman, who was with the army man in his car at the time of the incident.

Police have detained the woman and are also looking into her allegation that she was gangraped by the assailants.

Reports said the army havildar's blood-stained body was found by his family members on the information given by the woman.

They rushed him to the Military Hospital in Prayagraj, where the doctors declared him dead.

Superintendent of Police (City) Dinesh Kumar Singh said, "The 38year-old victim, identified as Ashutosh Kumar Singh, was a resident of Mahendra Nagar under Dhumanganj police station. He was working

on the post of hav-

leave a few weeks

ildar in the Indian Army and was posted at Udhampur Jammu Kashmir. He had come home on

back and was set to return back soon." His father Ashok Kumar Singh

### **Tutor held for giving injections** to students to improve memory

New Delhi

A 20-year-old tutor has been arrested by Delhi Police for administering NS solution to his students through injections. The police arrested the accused Sandeep, a BA 2nd year student who gives free classes to students of classes 6 to 9 in east Delhi's Mandawali.

The police said the matter came to light after one of the student's parents saw their child taking injection at home and informed police. The inquiry revealed that the children were given NS (normal saline) solution by their tutor.

"Sandeep said that he saw on



YouTube that the memory of the children improves if NS solution is administered to them. An FIR has been registered in Mandawali police station," said Deepak Yadav, DCP East Delhi.

A case under section 336 of IPC (endangering human life by negligent act) has been registered. The students are being examined and more details are being gath-

informed the police that Ashutosh left home on Friday night on some errand. Later that night, Ashutosh's wife received a call on her mobile phone from a woman who informed her that Ashutosh was seriously injured and that his car was parked at a ground in Neem Sarai area. The family members soon rushed to the site and found him with severe injuries.

#### **After failed** rape bid, girl thrown off the terrace

**P**ILIBHIT

A 16-year-old girl was allegedly thrown off a terrace after a failed rape attempt by two of her neighbours, police said on Sunday.

The two pushed the girl down when they saw her father enter the house, alleged the family.

The girl has suffered several fractures and internal injuries, said her father while lodging a complaint with the police in Jahanabad area.

Harish Vardhan Singh, Station House Officer (SHO), said the accused, identified as Arvind and Mahendra, have been booked under IPC section 354 (applying force to a woman with intent to outrage her modesty), 504 (intentional insult) and 323 (causing hurt), besides provisions of the SC/ST Act and the POCSO Act.

The police have set up teams to arrest the two youths who are now absconding. The minor's father alleged that he found his daughter missing from her room. On searching, he discovered the mobile phone of the key accused, a 21-year-old youth who re-

sides in the neighbourhood. He went to the youth's house to enquire about the whereabouts of his daughter. He claimed he was just in time to prevent them from sexually assaulting his daughter.



# At Delhi zoo, govt making all efforts to keep bird flu at bay

THE National Zoological Park in Delhi is fully vigilant to prevent any further spread of bird flu cases in the zoo located on Mathura Road near the Purana Qila.

The recent spate of Avian Flu outbreak has so far affected several states in India, including Delhi. The other affetcted state are — Kerala, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttarakhand and Chhattisgarh. Going by the past instances of the disease outbreak in 2016, no leniency can be afforded this time around.

When contacted, the Director of the National Zoological Park, Ramesh Kumar Pandey, said that all standard operating pro-

meticulously put into place after the first case was reported in India. Speaking to IANS, Pandey said, "Seven serological samples of droppings of birds collected from four different points in the zoo were sent for testing to the Bhopal-based National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases (NIHSAD) on February 3."

"Even the Sanjay Lake in East Delhi had reported a few positive cases of bird flu. But overall, there is no serious threat as of now, according to the officials.

"We are using disinfectants like sodium hypochlorite which is a very good oxidative disinfectant," Pandey told IANS.

The Delhi zoo has formed various teams to monitor the health of all the birds and animals in order to keep a check on the situation. Pandey also told IANS that a strict surveillance protocol is being adhered to by the various teams formed to check and contain Avian Flu.

These teams are also ensuring that the enclosures of birds and animals are properly and regularly sanitised. The infection spreads primarily through nasal drops and respiratory track. "We are keeping an eye on both poultry and non-poultry birds in the zoo. Any bird which is unwell is immediately taken care of by the team," Pandey said.

In addition to this, authorities in the Delhi zoo are also spraying disinfectants like Virkon and lime powder twice a day to contain the spread of the viral influenza. Delhi zoo officials assuredly claimed that the health of captive and migratory birds in the zoo has been taken care of by the zoo authority.

#### **Police announce** ₹1 lakh reward for info on **Lakha Sidhana**

NEW DELHI

WITH Delhi Police continuing with its investigations in the January 26 violence during the 'tractor march' in Delhi, it has announced a cash reward of Rs 1 lakh for information leading to the arrest of another key accused Lakhbir Singh alias Lakha Sidhana.

Delhi Police Crime Branch and Special Cell are conducting raids in Punjab, Haryana and Delhi-NCR in search of the gangster turned activist Sidhana, who has been in hiding since the violence on January 26. However, he has been posting videos on the social

Following the violence, Delhi Police had announced cash reward of Rs 1 lakh each for the arrest of Deep Sidhu, Jugraj Singh, Gurjot Singh and Gurjant Singh, and Rs 50,000 each for Jagbir Singh, Buta Singh, Sukhdev Singh and Ikbal Singh for their alleged involvement in the violence that saw at least one death and injuries to scores of persons, including policemen.



## Police seize half-burnt bodies of couple from pyre

SANT KABIR NAGAR

POLICE have seized half-burnt bodies of a young couple who had died under mysterious circumstances in Mudadih village in Uttar Pradesh's Sant Kabir Nagar.

The couple, according reports, had announced their marriage on Friday when the girl, Kanchan, reached Sagar's house and Sagar applied vermillion on her forehead. A day later, on Saturday, the couple reportedly died and their families were hurriedly cremating them on the banks of Kuano river when the police reached the spot and took away the half-burnt bodies from the funeral pyre. The family members of both fled when police reached.

Sant Kabir Nagar SP, Kaus-

tubh, said, "We got information that bodies of a couple were being burnt by family members. Our team reached the spot and seized the half-burnt bodies from the pyre. Villagers claimed the couple got married on Friday and consumed poison.

We have started investigation and are questioning villagers. We have sent the bodies for postmortem." Sources said that the family members of Sagar and Kanchan strongly disapproved of their marriage and started assaulting them after they claimed to be married.

Local villagers said the couple consumed poison after their families opposed the marriage. The families did not inform police about the deaths.

#### Lucknow University students form blood donors' group

Lucknow

SIX students of B.A. (Hons) final year in Lucknow University (LU) have launched 'Mission Zindagi' an online blood donor group, to extend a helping hand to people

facing medical emergency. The students are creating online database of students, teachers and staff who are regular donors or are keen to donate and coordinate to make donors available to the needy.

Group coordinator, Devansh Krishna Srivastava, said: "We have created a link, 'Mission Zindagi', on the website where interested people may register themselves by providing their

details and suitable time for donation. A registered donor closest to the patient's location will be alerted for help."

"Any resident who requires blood may go to the Lucknow University website where contact numbers of 'Mission Zindagi' members are available. They can call our team and we will provide help at the earliest," he added. The biggest benefit of the initiative is that it would save time and help save lives.

"Students will receive calls and coordinate blood donation round the clock. More members from all undergraduate and postgraduate courses will be added later," he said.

### Hundreds of artisans to showcase products at Hunar Haat said. Lakhs of people had vis-

THE Ministry of Minority Affairs will organise the 26th edition of 'Hunar Haat' that will bring together indigenous artisans and craftsmen from across the country at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium here from February 20 to March 1.

Its theme will be 'vocal for local' and more than 600 artisans and craftsmen, including a large number of woman artisans, from more than 31 states and UTs will participate in this, an official statement said.

Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Dharmendra Pradhan will inaugurate the event on February 21. Minority Affairs



Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said the event will be a perfect platform to promote indigenous

products of artisans and craftsmen from across the country, and asserted that this has pro-

vided employment opportunities to more than five lakh artisans, craftsmen and artists yet.

The Ministry of Minority Affairs will provide employment and employment opportunities to 7.50 lakh artisans and craftsmen through 75 hunar haats, which will be organised as the country celebrates its 75th years of Independence.

Naqvi said the hunar haat will also be available at virtual and online platform http://hunarhaat.org and on GeM Portal where the people of the country and abroad can buy products. It has also proved to be an effective platform to provide national and international market to artisans and craftsmen, he

ited a hunar haat organised at Mysuru in Karnataka from February 6-14. Naqvi said visitors will also enjoy traditional delicacies from every region of the country at the hunar haat in Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium.

Besides, the people will also enjoy different cultural and musical programmes to be presented by renowned artists of the country.

In the coming days, hunar haat will be organised at Goa, Bhopal, Jaipur, Chandigarh, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Ranchi, Surat/Ahmedabad, Guwahati, Bhubaneshwar, Patna, Jammu-Kashmir and other places.

## Cuss words new normal in Indian politics

Every group has its own jargon. For example, clap, sound, pan and fading are some of the words used by filmmakers. Shopkeepers talk about inventory, sales, profit and loss. Politicians till a few years back used to use words like corruption, mother of corruption, red tape, silent majority, lame duck etc. But in the last six years, the evolution of a new political dictionary has taken place at a much faster pace than the progress of the country in any field. The language being used publicly by leaders has become vicious and personal and no political party is an exception to this unfortunate trend. In fact, their rhetoric and the words they use would make Trump's loudmouthed speeches more decent. All this is happening under the garb of local lingo. Having difference of opinion, occasional outburst against political opponents and rebuttal to their criticism is a natural phenomenon. But what is happening now is that decency has been given a go by all including those who are head of political executives. This is happening not only during public meetings but also inside

the Parliament and State legislatures, Many, nay, most of our political leaders are regularly using offensive language and claim that they are speaking the truth. This populist rhetoric is not to enrich the people's thinking but in the narrow political interest of the party. The words are so foulmouthed that the media even finds it difficult to express what the leaders had said during those meetings. What is worse is that these leaders have the audacity to ask the reporters as to why certain words used by them were not reported. Another new trend these days is the advisors to the government don the role of spokespersons of political parties and are even giving lectures on how media should report. This new political culture has opened up a Pandora's box of anger and abuse to the conventional media as well as social media. Some people say that no one can match Prime Minister Narendra Modi in launching personal attack and they cite examples like Modi calling Congress as termites. They must be saying so as they have not been privy to hear the cuss words used by the po-

litical leaders in the two Telugu States. The words used by these politicians would even make the word 'coward' used by Delhi Chief Minister to describe Modi some time back more decent. We have recently seen how protesting women at a public meeting were described as barking dogs by a Chief Minister. We have also seen another Minister saying that the existence of Opposition parties in the State was 'Biksha' of the Chief Minister. Many more stronger words which cannot be reproduced here are used by Ministers, party leaders and their respective social media. It is time these political leaders recall what Jawaharlal Nehru had said in 1939. "In public life, we must presume the bona fides of each other... I trust that all our criticisms will be based on policy and not on personalities." This principle was adhered to by all political leaders till about a decade ago. Though there were ideological difference, no one crossed the limits of decency and that was the reason why democracy in India survived and became stronger. But now the rhetoric has touched a new high. This degradation of values poses serious threat to the secular and democratic fabric of the country and the problem can only be addressed if the political class soon acknowledges the existence of this problem.

# **Covid-19 silences child brides' sobs**

REETIKA REVATHY SUBRAMANIAN

cross 10 villages in Rajasthan's Udaipur district, for two hours every day, open fields are converted into makeshift classrooms. Rows of young boys and girls, children of returnee migrant labourers, are seated two feet apart. Chart papers have been taped on the side walls to serve as a blackboard for the class. It has been nearly four months since government-run schools shut down and turned into quarantine centres. "Ever since the lockdown was announced, the children, particularly the girls, have been largely home-bound," said Yogesh Vaishnav from Vikalp Sansthan, an NGO that has been running these open-air learning centres in its response to the Covid-19 pandemic. "With schools shut down and very poor access to technology (to avail of online classes), we fear that most of these girls will permanently drop out of the education system." Coupled with the economic downturn, loss of livelihoods and reduced access to childcare protection and social support, the district has also been recording a steep increase in cases of violence against girls and women, as well as early and child marriages.

Vaishnav is among the 41 signatories of a pan-India memorandum submitted last week to the task force constituted by the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development to examine and provide recommendations on issues including age of motherhood, maternal health and child mortality in India. The formation of the task force is in line with the statement made by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman during the Budget Speech in February, where she recalled that women's age of marriage was increased from 15 to 18 years in 1978 by amending the Sharda Act of 1929. Thus, as a potential solution to tackling poor maternal health outcomes and child mortality, the 10-member task force is examining whether to raise the legal age of marriage for females from 18 to 21 years. The report is expected to be submitted at the end of this month.

While the government's age-centred move is publicly being lauded as "empowering" and "progressive", frontline workers, child rights activists and advocates (signatories of the memorandum) have advised strict caution against this move, particularly at a time when various state officials and activists have been reporting a spike in child marriages amid the lockdown. "How can this be a moment to add further to the burdens of families struggling for their very survival?" questions the memorandum. "Poverty, not early marriage, is the main cause for the illhealth of mothers and their children." On 9 July, an additional submission was also put forward by members of the National



Coalition Advocating for Adolescent Concerns (NCAAC), a group of civil society organisations, academics and activists in the country. In response, on Friday, the task force participated in an online exchange titled "Youth Voices" with 20 adolescent girls and young women leaders from various states to listen to their firsthand experiences.

Despite legal interventions over the years, India has the largest number of child brides in the world, according to a 2019 report published by the United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF); one-third of the global total. While the National Family Health Survey 4 data indicates a 20 percent decline in the prevalence of the practice in the past decade, the Covid-19 pandemic threatens to reverse the gains made over the years. And the revision of age at marriage, activists believe, could sound the death knell for the girls and young wives.

The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 (PCMA), which mandates the minimum age at marriage, for instance, was framed to replace the Child Marriage Restraint Act to forbid child or underage marriages, appoint Child Marriage Protection Officers to implement the law and penalise those that participate in the act including the adult party to such marriages. Yet, several field-based studies have pointed out the ways in which the Act is used punitively against girls who marry against parental wishes, rather than protecting girls from forced marriage. "While it is true that the law must be aspirational, it won't mean too much on the ground considering very few child marriage cases actually get reported. Even when they do, most of the success that we have achieved is when we stop the wedding before it actually takes place," said Nicole Rangel Menezes, co-founder of Leher, a child protection organisation working closely with women and girls in Bihar's Madhubani district. "Those who

marry off their children underage, traffic child brides are well under the radar of the law enforcement."

In fact, the use of PCMA by parents often leads to the girl being put in shelter homes, and the boy being imprisoned or sent to juvenile homes. The strict lockdown measures, closure of schools and the inability to access mobile phones, have made it additionally difficult for girls trying to prevent or escape a forced marriage. "The girls are unable to seek even informal support from their friends, neighbours and schoolteachers. The accused (a family member), then, is often the girl's only access to justice," said Sherin Bosco, co-founder of NGO Nakshatra that provides counselling and legal support to victims of sexual violence and trafficking across Tamil Nadu. "At such a time, any legal amendment has to be coupled with adequate psycho-social support and enabling measures to empower the children." In fact, Bosco and her team have been receiving most of their tip-offs over the past few months over "missed calls". "It is quite challenging for the children to call and lodge complaints, there is also an increased fear of getting caught," said Bosco, adding that based on the "missed call", the local team of counsellors find

ways to provide support. Advocate Varsha Deshpande from the Dalit Mahila Vikas Mandal (DMVM) said the pandemic has mainly "exposed the existing institutional and policy gaps in state responses". In Maharashtra's drought affected Marathwada region, where DMVM works with migrant sugarcane cutters and brick kiln workers, child marriage has, for years, been a common practice. "When families migrate to the neighbouring states for work, they usually take their sons along for the farm work. The minor girls, who are left behind in the village with the older family members, are at such times, at a very high risk of sexual violence," said Deshpande, adding, "Parents also get their daughters married in the fear that she will fall in love with someone of her own choice in their absence." Given the lack of government-run hostels, safe access to schools and adequate child protection schemes, marriage then becomes the only way out to ensure their safety and security.

The memorandum cites field-based evidence to suggest that child marriage is the consequence, and not the cause of girls dropping out of schools. "Rather than to raise the legal age of marriage, we must ensure that the right to free and compulsory education is extended beyond 14 years," said Nishit Kumar from the Centre for Social and Behaviour Change Communication. Even national data shows that the reasons for high drop-out rates amongst girls are a combination of demand and supply side factors, primarily the availability, affordability and quality of schooling. While the Right to Education Act 2009 has led to a significant improvement in the enrolment of girls at primary and elementary levels, the drop-rate at the higher secondary levels remains alarming - from a net enrolment ratio of 91.58 (elementary) to 31.42 (higher secondary). This figure, reported by the National Institute for Educational Planning and Administration, falls by a further 15 percent for girls from Scheduled Tribe, Scheduled Caste and Muslim communities. Amid the current crisis, Kumar added, "To delay girls' age of marriage, it will be far more important to improve overall access to education and also invest in better infrastructure. A legal revision alone cannot solve the problem.'

(The writer is a journalist and a PhD scholar at the University of Cambridge Centre for Gender Studies, UK. She writes on gender, informality and labour migration. This article was first published at www.firstpost.com. Reprinted with their permission)



## NASA rover faces 'seven minutes of terror'

STEVE GORMAN

WHEN NASA's Mars rover Perseverance, a robotic astrobiology lab packed inside a space capsule, hits the final stretch of its seven-month journey from Earth this week, it is set to emit a radio alert as it streaks into the thin Martian atmosphere.

By the time that signal reaches mission managers some 127 million miles (204 million km) away at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) near Los Angeles, Perseverance will already have landed on the Red Planet - hopefully in one piece.

The six-wheeled rover is expected to take seven minutes to descend from the top of the Martian atmosphere to the planet's surface in less time than the 11-minute-plus radio transmission to Earth. Thus, Thursday's final, self-guided descent of the rover spacecraft is set to occur during a white-knuckled interval that JPL engineers affectionately refer to as the "seven minutes of terror."

Al Chen, head of the JPL descent and landing team, called it the

"Perseverance has to do this

all on her own," Chen said.

"We can't help it during this

period." If all goes as planned,

NASA's team would receive a

follow-up radio signal shortly

confirming that Perseverance

landed on Martian soil at the

before 1 p.m. Pacific time

edge of an ancient, long-

vanished river delta and

lakebed. From there, the

nuclear battery-powered

rover, roughly the size of a

small SUV, will embark on the

primary objective of its two-

complex suite of instruments

microbial life that may have

years ago. Advanced power

tools will drill samples from

Martian rock and seal them

eventual return to Earth for

specimens ever collected by

another planet

further analysis - the first such

humankind from the surface of

into cigar-sized tubes for

flourished on Mars billions of

year mission - engaging a

in the search for signs of

most critical and most dangerous part of the \$2.7 billion mission.

"Success is never assured," Chen told a recent news briefing. "And that's especially true when we're trying to land the biggest, heaviest and most complicated rover we've ever built to the most dangerous site we've ever attempted to land at."

Much is riding on the outcome. Building on discoveries of nearly 20 US outings to Mars dating back to Mariner 4's 1965 flyby, Perseverance  $may\,set\,the\,stage\,for\,scientists$ to conclusively show whether life has existed beyond Earth, while paving the way for eventual human missions to the fourth planet from the sun. A safe landing, as always, comes

Success will hinge on a complex sequence of events unfolding without a hitch from inflation of a giant, supersonic parachute to deployment of a jet-powered "sky crane" that will descend to a safe landing spot and hover above the surface while lowering the rover to the ground on a tether.

"Perseverance has to do this all on her own," Chen said. "We can't help it during this period."

If all goes as planned, NASA's team would receive a

follow-up radio signal shortly before 1 p.m. Pacific time confirming that Perseverance landed on Martian soil at the edge of an ancient, long-vanished river delta and lakebed.

From there, the nuclear battery-powered rover, roughly the size of a small SUV, will embark on the primary objective of its two-year mission - engaging a complex suite of instruments in the search for signs of microbial life that may have flourished on Mars billions of years ago.

Advanced power tools will drill samples from Martian rock and seal them into cigar-sized tubes for eventual return to Earth for further analysis - the first such specimens ever collected by humankind from the surface of another planet.

Two future missions to retrieve those samples and fly them back to Earth are in the planning stages by NASA, in collaboration with the European Space Agency.

Perseverance, the fifth and by far most sophisticated rover vehicle NASA has sent to Mars since Sojourner in 1997, also incorporates

several pioneering features not directly related to astrobiology. Among them is a small drone helicopter, nicknamed Ingenuity, that will test surface-to-surface powered flight on another world for the first time. If successful, the four-pound (1.8-kg) whirlybird could pave the way for low-altitude aerial surveillance of Mars during later missions. Another experiment is a device to extract pure oxygen from carbon dioxide in the Martian atmosphere, a tool that could prove invaluable for future human life support on Mars and for producing

rocket propellant to fly astronauts home. The mission's first hurdle after a 293-million-mile (472-millionkm) flight from Earth is delivering the rover intact to the floor of Jerezo Crater, a 28-mile-wide (45-km-wide) expanse that scientists believe may harbour a rich trove of fossilized microorganisms.

"It is a spectacular landing site," project scientist Ken Farley told reporters on a teleconference.

What makes the crater's rugged terrain - deeply carved by longvanished flows of liquid water - so tantalising as a research site also makes it treacherous as a landing zone.

The descent sequence, an upgrade from NASA's last rover mission in 2012, begins as Perseverance, encased in a protective shell, pierces the Martian atmosphere at 12,000 miles per hour (19,300 km per hour), nearly 16 times the speed of sound on Earth.

After a parachute deployment to slow its plunge, the descent capsule's heat shield is set to fall away to release a jet-propelled "sky crane" hovercraft with the rover attached to its belly.

Once the parachute is jettisoned, the sky crane's jet thrusters are set to immediately fire, slowing its descent to walking speed as it nears the crater floor and self-navigates to a smooth landing site, steering clear of boulders, cliffs and sand dunes.

Hovering over the surface, the sky crane is due to lower Perseverance on nylon tethers, sever the chords when the rover's wheels reach the surface, then fly off to crash a safe distance away.

Should everything work, deputy project manager Matthew Wallace said, post-landing exuberance would be on full display at JPL despite COVID-19 safety protocols that have kept close contacts within mission control to a minimum.

"I don't think Covid-19 is going to be able to stop us from jumping up and down and fist-bumping," Wallace said.

# Wary Washington seeks to move forward

JEFF MASON & RICHARD COWAN

 ${f F}^{
m ORMER}$  President Donald Trump's acquittal on charges of inciting a deadly attack on the US Capitol left Democrats and Republicans deeply divided on Sunday even as Washington seeks to move on with Democratic President Joe Biden's political agenda.

The Senate trial concluded on Saturday with a 57-43 vote in favour of convicting the Republican former president, falling short of the two-thirds majority needed to do so. Seven Republicans joined the Senate's 48 Democrats and two independents in favour of conviction.

The trial has left lawmakers and the country they represent in a continued state of political discord. The Capitol building and the White House both remain barricaded from the public.

Biden appealed for unity to "heal this uncivil war and heal the very soul of our nation," saying each American had a duty and a responsibility to defend the truth.

"This sad chapter in our history has reminded us that democracy is fragile. That it must always be defended. That we must be ever vigilant. That violence and extremism has no place in America," he said in a statement. "That is the task ahead. And it's a task we must undertake together. As the United States of America."



Trump, while lauding the acquittal, called the impeachment effort a further "witch hunt." Democratic Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi called Republicans who did not support

conviction "cowardly." Biden, who took office on Jan. 20, has called for unity after the Jan. 6 riot by Trump supporters that left five people dead and forced lawmakers to evacuate congressional chambers in fear for their safety in the middle of the certification process of the November election results.

The end of the trial could make room for momentum on Biden's priorities. The Democrat is eager to pass a \$1.9 trillion pandemic relief bill and get the remaining nominees for his Cabinet confirmed by

"Tragically, Senate Republicans who voted not to convict chose to abandon the

the Senate. But lawmakers' disagreements

over the proceedings are likely to linger.

Constitution, the country and the American people with this vote," Pelosi said. Republican Senators Richard Burr, Bill

Cassidy, Susan Collins, Lisa Murkowski, Mitt Romney, Ben Sasse, and Pat Toomey voted to convict. "I'm sure that there are many Alaskans

that are very dissatisfied with my vote, but I'm sure there are many Alaskans that are proud of my vote," Murkowski told Politico after the trial. Murkowski is the only one of the seven

who is up for re-election in 2022. The other six either are retiring from Congress or their six-year terms do not expire in Trump has repeatedly threatened to go

after Republicans who do not support him by endorsing opponents in their primary elections. On Saturday he indicated he was thinking about his own political future without divulging details. "In the months ahead, I have much to

share with you, and I look forward to continuing our incredible journey together to achieve American greatness for all of our people," he said in a statement.

Trump is the only president in the US history to be impeached twice.

# Spike in child marriages due to pandemic crisis

 NGOs, SHE Teams bring the social evil under control

 Parents in financial crisis married off their daughters

CHAITRA SIDDHARTH
HYDERABAD

PROMPTED by uncertainty during lockdown several parents married off their minors, but the situation is now brought under control. Thanks to the SHE Teams and the voluntary groups which jumped to stop the trend by the end of the 2020, following reports that scores of girls were being married off.

According to SHE Teams, the situation is closely being monitored and the police stopped two child marriages under the Cyberabad limits last month. The victims in recent cases were 16 and 15 years old and after verifying, the officials took the matter and stopped it. "Between (2016-2019), the city officially recorded no such cases. However, the rate of child marriages during pandemic (2020) enormously increased due to financial crisis in



few communities. Now the situation is under control," said Police official of SHE Teams.

Child rights activists in the city have also raised concerns over huge number of cases of child marriages during the pandemic, which were said to be over 200 during the year. There could be more such cases which went unreported.

"In one of the recent cases, the volunteers of NGOs Balala Hakkula Sangham and Aman Vedika rushed to the location along with SHE Teams and police to stop the marriage of 16-year-old girl who was about to be married off to a man who was 8 years

older to her. After witnessing and conversing with the victims of child marriages act, the activist from Aman Vedika, Shobha Naik, who focuses on women and children safety, said "one of the victims of dreams we NGOs re riages took derabad, Nahabubr

In another case, Anitha (name changed), 15, the victim from Hyderabad, said, "I wanted to fulfil my dreams and keep studying and achieve good grades in my school. But unfortunately, I was told to marry a man who hasn't even seen me or known me before. All I knew that he was 37-

tims was forced to marry early as

her parents weren't alive and had

become a burden to her rela-

year-old and I realised all my dreams were being shattered".

NGOs reported that the marriages took place in districts Hyderabad, Nalgonda, Vikarabad, Mahabubnagar, Ranga Reddy, Wanaparthy and other places, where the minors were being offered in marriage, as they felt they were burden.

Even the Global Girlhood Report (2020), warned of 2020 being a year of "irreversible setbacks and lost progress" for girls, predicting that 5 lakh more girls were at risk of being forced into child marriage this year alone and 1 million more expected to become pregnant.

#### Call to strive for securing women's rights

HANS NEWS SERVICE

Hyderabad

THE Telangana 'Rashtra Shramika Mahila Samanvaya' Committee affiliated to CITU on Sunday called for intensified struggles for securing rights of the members, inspired by the International Women's Day celebrations.

The call was given by committee convener S Rama at a meeting chaired by P Vijayalakshmi. She said the issues to be raised during the struggles would be increasing attacks, atrocities, murders, rapes on women, discrimination at work spots/wages and 33 per cent quota for women in legislatures.

The meeting resolved to celebrate the International Women's Day on March 8 at both district and State level. The focus would be on the struggles being conducted by labour organisations against the Narendra Modi government policies, besides that by farmers.

The meeting demanded recognition of women's work in houses (by making payment), equal wages for women, steps to check violence against women, regularisation of 'shramika' women, payment of minimum wages/pension.

The CITU State secretary Paladugu Bhaskar, committee co-convener Padmasri, committee leaders D Kalavati, P Kavita, Yadamma, N Sabita, Andalamma were among those who attended.

# Still some greedy minds fancy treasure hunt

## ART & CULTURAL HERITAGE ALREADY IN RUINS FACING LOOTING & DESTRUCTION

M M Farooqui

THE Hyderabad and surrounding areas with their rich history and heritage are also well-known for valuable antiquities which lure treasure hunters to strike it rich. Despite knowing that it often ends up as a wild goose chase, men from city are losing their prime in their pursuit

Hyderabad was ruled by several dynasties and even before the arrival of Qutub Shahis, the place was an important strategic location. Later Asaf Jahis and their history compel conjure up images of hidden treasures. The last Nizam VII Mir Osman Ali Khan Bahadur who was the richest person of his times stashed away his wealth somewhere, believe the treasure hunters, some of whom still rummage around at places like tombs, palaces, religious structures.

Folklore has it that the Charminar's Tunnel, which was constructed by Sultan Mohammed Quli Qutub Shah connects the icon of Hyderabad to Golconda Fort. If this tunnel is explored, a chest could be discovered, believe some treasure hunters. Likewise, they are also hopeful of finding something at Golconda Fort and King Koti palace (Nizam's residence). At King Koti palace, precious jewelry like diamonds, rubies, sapphires, pearls and gems are stored in steel trunks. It will be quite a quest to hunt the royal palace down, they feel.

According to those in the pursuit for years, they zero in on a place with some abnormal activity. The soil from the site will be taken to the sorcerer and he would confirm if the site has some assets and the hunt begins. "Last time we tried to hunt for treasure 3 years back in Shaheennagar area but failed. One in thousands will get the treasure. If one tries to explore, without following due procedure, the person would lose his life or he may turn mad," says one of the treasure hunters on condition of anonymity.

anonymity.

Historians have acknowledged that there were attempts by those who were after easy wealth. It has been observed that the people in search of antiques and historic treasure are also losing their lives and being

Digging up and

Digging up and plundering historical sites as myths persist about hidden royal treasures in Hyderabad and surrounding areas. Priceless heritage is becoming a victim of their pursuit. They know it's illegal and dangerous to go treasure hunting, but greed gets the better of them

caught the police, but still one can see the flicker of hope is on and so is the hunt. "People who are considered to have magical powers take the responsibility. They identify the site of treasure, but most of the time they fail to retrieve any wealth. Some also lose their lives and most of them usually turn eccentric," said Dr Samad Osmani, a historian. In search of treasure, the people will be digging deep pits and as a part of gift or a donation, they people also sacrifice goats or other animals. Several such incidents came to light in the past, he added. Human sacrifices are very rare, though.

Referring to the ancient books (not to be disclosed), he said "In those times, the royals used to protect their valuable assets by digging pits and place it inside and bury a person alive for safeguarding it. And whenever someone tries to get it, they would fail. It could be a fact or myth, but it's true that treasure hunt cost several people their lives," explained Dr Osmani.

While giving a reference to an incident, Dr Osmani said that in early 90's, at Purani Haveli of Old City a wall collapsed, in which a skeleton was found wearing huge jewelry with a box of assets. As soon as the nearby residents saw, they took jewelry before the police or other authorities came to the site. It was one of the famous incidents of the Old City on treasure in the recent decades," he mentions.

#### **PANCHAYAT POLLS PHASE-2**

# 82% voter turnout victory of democracy, says Naidu

HANS NEWS SERVICE MANGALAGIRI

TDP national president and former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Sunday hailed it as a victory for democracy in villages of Andhra Pradesh as a higher voting percentage of 81.67 per cent was recorded in the 2nd phase of panchayat polls as against 81.66 percent in the first phase.

Naidu asserted that the rural people have fought back against the flagrant poll violations of the ruling YSRCP. The voters should display the same enthusiasm in the third and fourth phases in order to save their villages from slipping into the hands of the ruling party goondas and criminals, he said.

Addressing a press conference at the party headquarters here, the TDP chief said that in the just-concluded 2nd phase counting, their party has won 1,033 out of the total 2,778 panchayats, which came to 37.67 per cent.

 Urges voters to display the same enthusiasm in third and fourth phases to save villages from slipping into the hands of the ruling party goondas and criminals

 Claims that the TDP-backed candidates registered victory in 1,098 out of 2,778 panchayats in the second phase

Others have won 65 panchayats, which came to 2.37 per cent. Overall, the TDP supported candidates won 1,098 seats that came to 39.52 per cent. The TDP would have shown far better performance if the YSRCP and the official machinery did not commit poll irregularities.

Naidu asserted that the credit for creating public faith in democracy would go to the TDP only and the ruling party leaders including Ministers, MPs and MLAs were rejected in their own native villages on a large-scale.

The SEC has ordered setting up of CCTV cameras or videography at all the counting centres. But, the District Collectors, Joint Collectors and the returning officers were not strictly following the SEC orders.

Stating that the YSRCP rowdyism continued despite the SEC steps, Naidu said that the ruling party could win 108 panchayats unanimously in the Piler segment only by resorting to unchecked violations.

The YSRCP leaders have realised that they would have no political survival because of the rising unpopularity of their government. This was why they were violating all the laws in order to win the seats by any means whatsoever.

The TDP chief slammed the State Election Commission (SEC) for not using its powers to ensure a free and fair poll as per the orders of the High Court.

# Move to wind up edn institutions for disabled flayed

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

THE National Platform for Rights of the Disabled (NPRD) which is celebrating completion of a decade on Sunday demanded the Union government to drop a proposal to wind up nine national-level educational institutions and

run only in their place.
At the closing function of the week-long national celebrations in the State office here, NPRD president K Venkat and secretary M Adivayya raised the demand.

They also wanted five per cent of the ensuing State budget allocated to the disabled.

In a press release, the two leaders criticised the Centre for cutting the budget allocation for disabled welfare by 12 per cent. 'This amounted to their neglect'. They called for united efforts and struggle to

secure the rights of the disabled.

Venkat and Adivayya said the State-level week-long celebrations would be on from February 14 to 22. The closing function would be held on Feb 22 in the City.

They listed the NPRD demands as: dropping move to make changes in the Rehabilitation Act, increased pension from Rs.3016 to Rs.5,000, sanction of ration cards, subsidised loans, raised marriage incentive to Rs.1.25 lakh, five per cent allotment in 2 BHK houses, disabled certificates to 21 categories, reservations in the private sector, five per cent quota in welfare schemes, government jobs, besides allotment of house-sites.

Among those who attended the celebrations in the State office during the day were State committee member Mohd Nazia, Hyderabad committee vice-president Satyaranayana and leader Padma.

#### **OPPOSING VSP PRIVATISATION**

# Botcha hints at govt passing resolution in Assembly

- Says soon a delegation of YSRCP MPs will meet PM Modi and urge him to withdraw the move of disinvestment of VSP
- The Minister says the results of panchayat polls indicate that people are happy with CM Jagan's governance

HANS NEWS SERVICE VISAKHAPATNAM

MINISTER for Municipal Administration and Urban Development Botcha Satyanarayana infused confidence among the agitators stating that if required a resolution will be passed in the next Assembly session against privatisation proposal of Visakha-

patnam Steel Plant (VSP). Speaking at a media confer-



Minister for Municipal Administration and Urban Development Botcha Satyanarayana speaking at a press conference in Visakhapatnam on Sunday. MP MVV Satyanarayana is also seen.

ence here on Sunday, Botcha Satyanarayana said Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy had already written a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to allocate own captive mine for the plant and convert the interests paid by the steel plant into equity so that it could tide over the financial crisis.

The Minister mentioned that the YSRCP will extend all the support to the agitators who are against privatisation of the Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (RINL). He also said a 14-member delegation of MPs had met Union Home Minister Amit Shah and submitted a memorandum to withdraw the privatisation decision. He stated the MPs will meet the Prime Minister next.

Speaking on the results of the panchayat elections, Botcha wondered what went wrong with

the calculations made by the TDP chief N Chandrababu

Botcha said the results of panchayat polls indicated that people were satisfied with the YS-RCP's rule. He said people of the State were in favour of Jagan Mohan Reddy as it's visible in the election results declared so far.

The Minister said YSRCP will further improve its winning percentage by another one or two per cent in the next two phases of polling. With the YSRCP emerging victorious in the gram panchayat elections, he said, the responsibility of the government has increased further. Elaborating about the forthcoming municipal elections, the Minister opined that the AP government is ready for it.

"We are ready to conduct polls and extend support to the SEC whenever the State Election Commission announces the date," he added.

Visakhapatnam MP MVV Satyanarayana, among others took part in the conference.

# Contract, outsourced staff JAC demands pay hike

V PRADEEP KUMAR TIRUPATI

THE Joint Action Committee (JAC) of AP contract and outsourcing employees has been demanding the State government for a hike in their salaries which were last increased six years ago.

The State chairman of the JAC K Suman recalled that Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy has assured on various occasions during the run-up for elections that the services of about 55,000 contract staff in the State will be regularised within six months of coming to power.

Speaking to The Hans India on the sidelines of the meeting of leaders of the association in Tirupati on Sunday, he said that they want the implementation of 11th PRC recommendations to all the contract workers as they have been doing more work at very low wages. These staff has been working for 12-18 hours per day and on many times were not allowed to avail their leaves though it is their right. He further said that as Opposition leader Jagan Mohan Reddy has announced that his government will bring in pay parity for all



Chairman of AP Contract and Outsourcing Employees JAC K Suman and other leaders releasing a poster during their meeting in Tirupati on Sunday

outsourced workers. But, even after Jagan Mohan Reddy assumed power, these employees were getting only the old salaries though the government set up APCOS (AP Corporation for Outsourcing).

Out of around 1.90 lakh outsourced employees, only 90,000 were registered in the APCOS and getting salaries directly from the government while the remaining are still working under private agencies. He said that the JAC has been asking to register all the remaining workers under APCOS. Further, all outsourced employees should be made contract employees.

The JAC has been seeking implementation of at least Rs 5 lakh worth accident insurance

and bank loans facility which the government employees are entitled to get. Since they were classified as government employees in the CFMS portal, they were denied any government schemes like Amma Vodi, house pattas etc., though they get only Rs 6000-8000 per month. The JAC wants to correct this and make the contract staff eligible for such schemes based on their actual incomes.

They have decided to represent their demands to the Chief Minister and other officials seeking immediate solutions. Leaders P Gurunath, A Suresh, Ramanjulu, Padmaja and others from various districts took part in the day long deliberations.

# Ramchandani's 'One Rupee' clinic treats the poor in Sambalpur

"I charge one rupee from the poor and underprivileged as I don't want them to feel that they are availing the service free of cost". Ramchandani's wife. Sikha Ramchandani. a dental surgeon. is also helping him

SAMBALPUR

A doctor in Odisha's Sambalpur district has opened a 'One Rupee' clinic to provide treatment to the poor and underprivileged people. Shankar Ramchandani an assistant professor in the department of medicine at Veer Surendra Sai Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (VIMSAR), Burla, has opened the clinic in Burla town where patients have to pay just one Rupee for treatment. Ramchandani said that the one Rupee fee clinic is part of his long standing desire to provide free treatment to the poor and underprivileged beyond duty hour.

"Ligined VIMSAR as a senior resident and senior residents are not allowed to do private practice. Hence, I could not start the 'One-Rupee' clinic. But I

was promoted as assistant professor recently and as an assistant professor, I am allowed to do private practice after my duty hours and hence, I have started the clinic in a rented house now", said the 38-year-old doctor. Asked why he charges one Rupee, Ramchandani said "I charge one Rupee from the poor and underprivileged people as I don't want them to feel that they are availing the service free of cost. They should also think that they have paid some money for their treatment."

The clinic, which has been set up at the Kachha Market area in Burla town remain open from 7 am to 8 am in the morning and 6 pm to 7 pm in the evening. The 'One-Rupee' clinic has provided him with an opportunity to serve the



poor, destitute, unprivileged, elderly persons, physically challenged people and the people who do not have access to proper medical care. "I am a doctor of the masses and not the classes", he said, Ramchandani said hundreds of people regularly come to the OPD of VIMSAR and one can find a long queue of patients to consult doctors.

"I have seen elderly people and people with disabilities waiting for hours for consultation with doctors in OPD. They dont need to wait for hours and suffer at the hospital. They can come to my clinic and get consultation at Rupee 1 only," he added.

Ramchandani's wife, Sikha Ramchandani, a dental surgeon, is also helping him. The clinic

was inaugurated on Friday and 33 patients came to the clinic on the first day, he said.

Ramchandani, who had also hit the headlines when he took a leprosy patient carrying hin his arms and dropped him in his house in 2019, said, "my late father, Brahmanand Ramchandani had told me to set up a nursing home.

But a nursing home requires huge investment and it is not possible to provide treatment to poor people at Rupee 1 in a nursing home.

Hence, I decided to open this 'One-Rupee' clinic." Ramchandani had also drawn the attention of all and received widespread appreciation when he attended a COVID-19 patient beyond his duty hour and also carried the patient to VIMSAR in his car amid the scourge of novel coronavirus in October last year.

# No CAA in Assam: Rahul

'If Assam is divided, then Modi or CM will not be affected' 'Corporates will grab ₹ 80 lakh crore agriculture business'

SIVASAGAR

ACCUSING the BJP and the RSS of "dividing" Assam, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday said his party will protect every principle of the Assam Accord and will not let the Citizenship (Amendment) Act be implemented if voted to power in the upcoming assembly polls.

Sounding the Congress' poll bugle in the state, Gandhi attacked the Modi government repeatedly alleging that it was working with an approach of 'Hum do, Hamare do' -- a term he recently used while speaking in Lok Sabha to claim that the country is being run by only four people.

Gandhi hailed the contribution of former Assam Chief Minister and senior Congress leader Tarun Gogoi, who passed away recently, calling him Assam's soldier who united the state and spent his entire life protecting it. In an apparent reference to former principal secretary to the Prime Minister Nripendra Misra being awarded the Padma Bhushan, the Congress leader, without naming anyone, said that in the same award list which had Tarun Gogoi, there was also the "name of a bureaucrat from PMO and I felt sad that the government of India had insulted Tarun Gogoi and this state".

"If Assam is divided, then Prime Minister Narendra Modi or your Chief Minister (Sarbanand Sonowal) will not be affected, but the people of Assam and the rest of India will be harmed." Underlining the importance of the state, Gandhi said it



was a beautiful flower in India's bouquet. Gandhi claimed that the three new central farm laws will help corporates and rich people grab agribusiness worth Rs 80 lakh crore in India.

#### Withdrawal from **Galwan, Pangong is** surrender: Antony

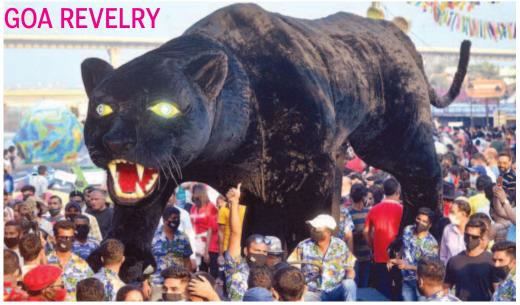
Senior Congress leader and former defence minister A K Antony on Sunday alleged that disengagement in both the Galwan Valley and Pangong Tso Lake areas and the creation of a buffer zone was a 'surrender' of India's rights.

He said that at a time when India was facing multiple challenges at the border and was facing a two-front war-like situation, the increase in defence budget this year is meagre and insignificant and was a 'betrayal' of the country.

Antony said he was sad that the Narendra Modi government was not giving proper priority to national security at a time when China was getting belligerent and Pakistan continued to promote ter-

He said disengagement was good as it reduced tension but it should not be done at the cost of national security.

"We are surrendering our rights," he alleged, noting that Galwan Valley as Indian territory was never a disputed land even in 1962. "Disengagement and buffer zone means surrender of our land at the moment," he alleged, while warning that the government is not understanding the importance of this disengagement and creation of the



Revellers attend the annual Goa Carnival float parade, amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, in Panaji

## **Greta Thunberg toolkit case** 5-day police custody for Disha

New Delhi

A Delhi court on Sunday sent a 21-year-old climate activist to five days police custody in connection with allegedly being involved in sharing a "toolkit" on social media related to the farmers' protest.

Disha Ravi, arrested by a Cyber Cell team of the Delhi Police from Bengaluru on Saturday, was produced before a court here and police sought her seven days' custody. The police said her custody was required to probe an alleged larger conspiracy

against the government of India and to ascertain her alleged role relating to the Khalistan movement. During the hearing, Ravi broke down inside the courtroom and told the judge that she had edited only two lines and that she wanted to support the farmers' protest. Duty Magistrate Dev Saroha allowed the Delhi Police to quiz Ravi for five days. While seeking her custody, the police told the court that the activist had allegedly edited the "toolkit' on February 3 and many other people are involved

#### 80 Shia orphans donate for Ram Temple

LUCKNOW

Over 80 orphans from the Saadatganj orphanage of the All know and people from the minority community donated more than Rs 1.5 lakh for the construction of the Ram tem-

The donations ranged from Rs 1,100 to Rs 10 and Rs

Former chairman of Shia Wagf Board, Wasim Rizvi, said: "Such an initiative will send a message of unity to those who work to divide people in the name of religion."

RSS executive member. Indresh Kumar, said a new chapter of mutual harmony would be written with the construction of the Ram tem-

The Shri Ram Janambhoomi Teerth Kshetra trust is conducting a mass contact and fund-raising campaign from January 15 till February 27 for the construction of the grand temple in Ayodhya.

Shri Ram Janambhoomi Teerth Kshetra Secretary Champat Rai was quoted as saving: "The accounts of the trust in three nationalized banks show an amount of over Rs 1,000 crore.

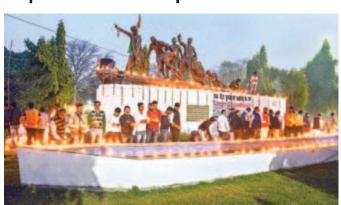
## **Second Pulwama anniversary** Omar, Faroog locked up at home

SRINAGAR

After former Chief Minister Omar Abdullah claimed on Sunday that he and his father Farooq Abdullah have been "locked" up at their residence without any explanation by authorities, J&K Police maintained that VIP protectees were advised against moving out in view of "adverse innuts". Omar posted on Twitter photos of security vehicles stationed outside his residence on the Gupkar Road and said that his sister and her children, who live next doors, have been locked up as well. "This is the 'naya/new J&K' after August 2019. We get locked up in our homes with no explanation. It's bad enough they've locked my father (a sitting MP) and me in our home; they've locked my sister and her kids in their home as well." Omar tweeted. "Chalo, your new model of democracy means that we are kept in our homes without explanation, But on top of that, the staff at the house aren't also not being allowed in and then you are surprised that I'm still angry and bitter."

The police claimed that due to adverse intelligence inputs, the movement of protected persons had been discouraged and all concerned were informed well in advance not to plan their tours on Sunday.

Omar asked the police to share the written communication sent to him and acknowledged by him that called for restricting his movement on the second anniversary of the Pulwama terror attack of 2019.



People light candles to pay tribute to the martyrs of Pulwama attack in Patna on Sunday

#### 7 kg IED recovered

JAMMU: A major tragedy was averted after police recovered a seven-kilogram Improvised Explosive Device (IED) from the Jammu bus stand on Sunday, officials

With this recovery, the police foiled a major plan of the terrorists to set off an explosion on the second anniversary of the 2019 Pulwama attack.

As there were inputs that the terrorists would carry out terror attacks, adequate security measures were taken by the security forces. "It was a huge IED," a senior police official said. The bus stand is a crowded

place in Jammu city thronged by

hundreds of people daily.

#### PM, Vice Prez pay tributes

**NEW DELHI:** Prime Minister

Narendra Modi led the nation in paying tributes to the CRPF jawans killed in the 2019 Pulwama terror attack, while the paramilitary force remembered the bravehearts, saying the country "did not forgive" and "will not forget" their supreme sacrifice. On February 14, 2019, 40 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel were killed in the attack by Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) in Pulwama. Soon after the attack, the Indian Air Force carried out an airstrike in Pakistan's Balakot on February 26 targeting terrorist camps. The CRPF held a wreath laying ceremony at its camp in Lethpora in Jammu and Kashmir.

#### **BJP lost right to** rule: Punjab CM on figures of farmers' deaths

CHANDIGARH

PUNJAB Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Sunday expressed shock over the recent statements of senior BJP leaders, including the Union and Haryana Agriculture Ministers, on the deaths of protesting farmers, saying the party had lost the moral and ethical right to continue to rule at the Centre and in the

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government at the Centre should step down in the interest of the nation, as should the Manohar Lal Khattar government in Haryana, he said, slamming Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Tomar's and state Agriculture Minister J.P. Dalal's statements on the deaths of farmers protesting against the farm laws at the borders of the national capital for more than two months

Punjab alone has paid compensation to families of 102 farmers who have died in these protests, said the Chief Minister, lashing out at Tomar over his "outrageous statement" citing Delhi Police information that only two farmers have died and one has committed suicide.

Even the media has released details of more than 200 farmers (from various states) who have lost their lives in this agitation, Amarinder Singh pointed

## Farmers, Centre should resume talks: Dushyant Chautala

New Delhi

Haryana Deputy Chief Minister Dushvant Chautala on Sunday said all farmer associations and the government should restart talks to find a solution over the three contentious farm laws.

He asserted that there are no threats to the BJP-JJP government in Haryana.

The Deputy Chief Minister said, "The Union government is continuously working to find a solution over the farm laws but it can only be achieved through dialogue."

He said a solution would be achieved only if all the farmer associations agree to resume talks once again with the government. In a controversial remark re-

garding farmers' deaths at protest sites outside the national capital, Haryana agriculture minister J P Dalal said that the farmers who lost their lives during the ongoing protests would have died even if they had stayed back in their fields.

Responding to a reporter's query on the death of "200 farmers", Dalal said, "Had they been at their homes, they would have died there also."

Dalal further said, "Out of one to two lakh people, do 200 people not die in six months? Someone dies of a heart attack, while

#### **Farmer hangs** over inflated power bill

hanged himself after allegedly being slapped by Electricity Department officials and served an inflated power bill, according to the victim's family.

The incident took place at Sunaira village in Atrauli tehsil when the officials turned up at Ramji Lal's house and handed over a power bill of Rs 1,50,000. In protests against the incident, people placed the body in front of the local Electricity Department office and refused to proceed with the last rites until a case is filed against the SDO and iunior engineer.

someone else dies due to some other illness.

Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra will address 'kisan panchayats' in three districts of Uttar Pradesh starting from Monday.

She will be visiting Bijnor on February 15 where she will address kisan panchayat in Chandpur at 12 noon.

The Congress leader will also address kisan panchayats in Mathura on February 19 and in Muzaffarnagar on February 20.

# Allowing ayurveda doctors to perform surgery IMA announces petition movement against Modi govt's move

**New Delhi** 

The IMA on Sunday announced a mass petition movement from February 15-March 31 against a Central Council of Indian Medicine notification that authorises post-graduate practitioners in specified streams of ayurveda to perform general surgical procedures.

The doctors' body also said that this notification will lead to "mixopathy" and demanded its immediate withdrawal. The Indian Medical Association (IMA) had held a pan-India relay hunger strike from February 1-14 on the issue. The "impractical, unscientific and un-

ethical notification" should be immediately withdrawn, it said in a statement, adding that besides the petition movement, it will also spread awareness among the people on the notification. The IMA also said that it will submit a list of 1,000 modern medicine doctors willing to serve in remote areas of the country to counter the "false" claim of lack of doctors.

"All IMA members, all specialty organisations, all modern medicine students, all women doctors across the country will educate people about this retrograde and unscientific mixing of different systems of healthcare. All modern medicine hospitals will promote the importance of scientific ethical surgical expertise,"

cooperation movement "henceforth in which modern medicines surgeons and anesthesiologists shall not cooperate with AYUSH persons training and performing surgery", it said. The doctors' body has been opposing the notification by Central Council of Indian Medicine, a statutory body under the Ministry of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy). The notification authorises post-graduate practitioners in specified streams of Ayurveda to be trained to perform surgical procedures such as excisions of benign tumours, amputation of gangrene, nasal and cataract surgeries. PLB

















## **Precious metals** look up as global

geo-politics improve HC UPADHYAY HYDERABAD

WITH the continued improvement in the geo-political situation all over the world. the precious metals looked up during the week ended Saturday. However, buoyancy also returned to other segments of the market. Consequently, New York gold appreciated and closed at \$1824.30 (per Ounce), while silver followed suit and closed at \$27.35 (per Ounce). Platinum and palladium closed at \$1,246 (per Ounce) and \$2,318 (per Ounce) respectively.

Other economic parameters remained moderate. Brent closed at \$62.43 (per barrel), while Crude MCX oil was quoted at Rs 4,331 (per barrel). While Gold MCX stood at Rs 47,345 (per 10 gms), MCX Silver closed at Rs 69,184 (per kg), Copper MCX closed at Rs 640.35 (per kg). Sensex and Nifty 50 closed at 51,544.30 and 15,163.30 points. Leading foreign currencies' exchange rates were, US \$: Rs 72.59, British Pound: Rs 100.48, Euro: Rs 87.98, Singapore \$: Rs 54.79, Swiss Franc: Rs 81.43, Australian \$: Rs 56.32, Saudi Riyal: Rs 19.35, New Zealand Dollar: Rs 52.54, Kuwaiti Dinar: Rs 239.99, Omani Rial: Rs 188.56,UAE Dirham: Rs 19.76, Japanese Yen: Rs 0.69 and Hong Kong Dollar: Rs 9.36.

According to reliable sources, the government has prepared a blue print to provide boost to the Gold Monetization Scheme. Under the new plan banks including the public sector banks will be required to encourage the investors to avail this scheme. Jewelers will be associated to promote the new plan wherein an investment of as little as 10 gms of gold also will be accepted. According to an estimate India has over 13,000 tons of gold held by private entities including trusts.

In local markets, standard gold (24 carats) appreciated by Rs.240 and closed at Rs 48,300 (per 10 gms). Ornamental gold too, followed the suit and was quoted in the range of Rs 44,160 - 44,260 on the closing day. Silver (0.999) declined by Rs 100 and closed at Rs 73,300 (per kg).

# Global cues to dictate mkt trend ahead

### Stocks are looking pricey, potentially muting future returns even if positive news continues to arrive

**MARKET** 

CHERUKURI KUTUMBA RAO

uoyed by expectations of strong spending on infrastructure by the government, strong corporate earnings and progress in the rollout of Covid-19 vaccines; markets hovered in record territory this week. Extending gains over second consecutive week, the benchmark indices, the Nifty, ended the week at 15,163, up 1.6 per cent and the Sensex surged 1.6 per cent to 51,544. Broader markets relatively outperformed, as the Nifty Midcap, Smallcap gained 2.1 per cent and 3.7 per cent, respectively.

The foreign institutional investors continued to pump money into Indian equities. In January and February this year, they net bought more than Rs 39,400 crore. In contrast, domestic institutional investors were continuous sellers for the past few months. RBI reassurance that monetary policy is likely to continue supporting markets and the economy has given fillip to the markets. Continuing its reformist stance, the GOI has reportedly finalised rules under the four labour codes, paving the way for making reforms a reality by notifying those for implementation soon. Cryptocurrency has been trending for quite some time abroad and also in the country. To take charge of the same, the government indicated that it may bring a Bill to regulate the crypto transaction. FM clarified that the Union Budget proposal of collecting Rs 30,000 crore through Agriculture Infrastructure and Development Cess will go to States so that mandi infrastructure can be improved.

As the corporate earnings season

slowly winds down, investors have been cheered by stronger-than-expected reports. Stock prices tend to follow the direction of corporate profits over time. Markets seem to have factored in all the crucial events and the coming week may witness consolidation. With earnings season largely behind us, global cues will dictate the market trend ahead. After the recent march higher, some investors caution that stocks are looking pricey, potentially muting future returns even if positive news continues to arrive

#### Heard on the street

Recent experience and financial lore have created the impression that the bursting of market bubbles brings economic destruction. But it isn't always so. The excess in today's story stocks surely poses a threat to the wealth of their shareholders. Even if there is a wider bubble, it might not be a catastrophe for the country. The experience of the past few decades suggests the opposite. Japan is still scarred by the 1980s property and stock bubble, the dotcom bubble led to massive losses and the subprime crash created a global crisis. But not all bubbles are equal. The economic dangers of a stock bubble come from people taking on debt to buy shares and from companies overinvesting. When the bubble pops, overextended shareholders have to cut spending or go bankrupt. Companies suddenly faced with investors demanding a return have to lay off workers and slash in-

None of this is an issue for the ob-

vious bubbles under way in the fashionable stocks of the moment. Naukri or Dixon or IndiaMart and many others are valued so highly but would have an insignificant effect on the economy, as their operations are not significant enough to impair the economy. They are mostly equityfinanced, so their failure wouldn't start a domino line of bank failures. And while shareholders would be hurt, there's no reason to think that would lead to a collapse in spending across the country. What if today's excesses aren't just in the speculative story stocks like Tesla or the Big Tech - FAANG stocks in USA or Naukri, IndiaMart or others in India - is a bubble, because high valuations can be broadly justified by very low interest rates blah balh.

But if shares in the highly valued technology and associated sectors did crash, it probably wouldn't be that bad. Sure, investors would lose money. But with a few exceptions these companies aren't borrowing nor issuing new stock to fund new

investments, and their investors aren't all that leveraged. If their share prices halved, it would make no difference to the underlying business. That is different from the dot-coms, which were forced to slash spending when the market

crashed, and they lost the ability to issue expensive new shares. The historical lesson is that stock market crashes don't really cause that much damage. Bubbles funded by banks were the really destructive ones and always are. Black Monday in 1987 is a classic example: harrowing for shareholders, but irrelevant to the

#### Futures & options / sector watch

According to flash figures released by IRDAI the total premium up to January in the current financial year grew by 2.76 per cent at Rs 1,63,670 crore against Rs 1,59,275 crore YoY. Keep an eye on insurance counters. Renewed buying interest was seen in technology counters. Stay invested in Tech Mahindra, HCL Tech, Infosys and Wipro for further gains. In the banking space strong buying was seen in the leading private banks during the later part of the week. Fresh buying is also indicated in NBFC counters. Further gains indicated in Bajaj 'Twins', ICICI Bank, Axis Bank and HDFC Bank. After mild correction auto and auto ancillary stocks are expected to gain further from current levels. Use declines to buy Motherson Sumi and Bharat Forge. Stock futures looking good are Asian Paints, Dabber, IDFC First, ICICI Bank, PEL, Tech Mahindra, Tata Chemicals and Voltas. Stock futures looking weak are Bata India, Bharti, Balkrishna Industries, Coal

India, IOC, RBL Bank and Zee Entertainment.

#### Stock picks

Deccan Cements Limited is engaged in the manufacture of cement in the form of clinker, Portland cement, slag cement and related products. It sells its products under Deccan Cements brand. It also generates thermal, hydro and wind power. It has cement plant at Nalgonda in Telangana, thermal power plant at Nalgonda in Telangana and hydel power plant at Guntur in Andhra Pradesh. Excellent Q3 results make the stock compelling buy at current levels for medium term target of Rs 750.

Suprajit Engineering Limited is engaged in offering automotive cables, speedometers and automotive components/parts. The company is engaged in the manufacture of auto components consisting mainly control cables, speedo cables and other components for automobiles. The company's plants are located at Bengaluru, Karnataka; Manesar, Haryana; Chakan, Maharashtra; Vapi, Gujarat; Pantnagar, Uttarakhand; Haridwar, Uttarakhand; Sanand, Gujarat; Pathredi, Rajasthan, and Chennai, Tamil Nadu. The company supplies its products to OEMs and also exports to various countries. The company caters to a range of automotive and non-automotive cable requirements. The company has an annual production capacity of approximately 225 million cables. Buy on declines for medium term target price of Rs 450.

(The author is a stock market expert. He is former vice chairman of AP Planning Board)

## Worried over all-time highs? here's what to do



he current equity markets' high **▲** and the continued momentum investors. All the while, they've was compounded with higher inenjoyed the higher returns

on their investments but now are concerned about the historical high P/E (price-toearnings) and various other such factors which are at unprecedented highs. This is making many jittery about what could be the future in store and with the anniversary of last fall nearing, experiencing an anchoring bias of sorts.

Just to give you a perspective about market gyrations, even when observing at Nifty 50, the broader benchmark index had 65 all-time highs (ATH) in 2017 on a daily basis, of course during intra-day sessions. That means, the index didn't close at a high but touched a new high during the trading hours. Such instances were reduced to 28 in 2018 and mere 16 in 2019. The ATH of the same index had 28 such instances in 2020, probably the most tumultuous year in our recorded memory. It had already recorded 16

such events in the brief one-anda-half-month old of 2021.

Of course, in early January 2008  $\,$ when the index hit ATH, it had experienced a drastic fall with the onset of the Great Financial Crisis and it didn't bottom i.e. another fall till November of that year. From there to create another ATH, the index took time till early December 2013, that's close to 5 years from the earlier one. This was also the most difficult times for the investors and advisors alike to remain invested in equity markets. This

> A portfolio with diversified assets ensures that you retain the greediness while not having to live with the guilt of not participating in a bull run

flation and India being part of 'Fragile Five' events as markets moved sideways for most of that

Oh. I didn't mention about the crashes or falls which the highest being about 60 per cent from the ATH with sporadic negative 10's, 20's and even 40's. The big fall in less than a year, in March 2020 was over 40 per cent from its high and no one anticipated the spectacular recovery in such a quick time to where we're currently standing at. The most vital inferits full manic. At six o'clock there's a point where logic and balance exist, where valuations make a lot of

ence of the above analysis is the

this is the time to book profits or

when is the right time to book

profits: I brought these statistics

just to present you that it's not an

easy decision. Robert Kirby, an in-

vestment advisor who conceived

the 'coffee can' investing, had

equated the equity markets to a

pendulum. He said that it swings

between three o'clock on one side

and nine o'clock on the other. At

three, fear takes over and its full

panic. At nine, greed takes over and

In my last post, I was arguing if

importance of staying invested.

sense to most rational people. Unfortunately, the pendulum doesn't spend much time at six o'clock, if you've been in this business 40 or 50 years you can probably look back on three or four months - an accumulation of a number of two or three week intervals - where it's six o'clock and prudent men seem to be in control. He further said that at nine o'clock, the best and the brightest of the

minds in the business have focused on finding a rationalisation or an explanation of why the mania of the moment really made sense. The market is screwy most of the time. Today it is particular screwy. This he quoted during April '99 when the dotcom boom was in full swing.

Taking a leaf from Buffet on investing - 'be fearful when others are greedy and be greedy when others are fearful'; one has to exert caution when the pendulum hits 9 o'clock. This is when the stocks are overvalued and the risks are higher with possible future re-

turns lower than the past. While no one is sure of what's in store of future, one could counter these swings through a diversified portfolio. This is like putting a foot at the door for the next opportunity to get off while enjoying the ride for now.

A portfolio could've diversified assets that range from equities, debt and other assets like gold, REIT (Real Estate Investment Trusts) and even crypto currency (mayn't be for the faint hearted, though). This ensures that you retain the greediness while not having to live with the guilt of not participating in a bull run.

The portfolio should, however,

reflect the risk appetite, time-

lines and allocations across the

assets accordingly.

(The author is a co-founder of "Wealocity", a wealth management firm and could be reached at knk@wealocity.com)

Resistance, support levels remain same for  $2^{nd}$  week

Put-Call ratio of OI at 1.48 indicates more Put writing; Bank Nifty-Nifty price ratio may consolidate at 2.38 levels

**Index Futures** 

Stock Futures

Stock Options

## Mkt activity shifts to stock-specific trade

THOVITI BRAHMACHARY

The stock market traded with **⊥** wavering behaviour last week. It opened with a gap up on Monday and traded in a range.

rose by 239.05 points or 1.60 per cent during the last week. The Sensex also up by 1.6 per cent and settled at 51544. The broader indices Nifty Midcap-100 and Smallcap-100 outperformed the benchmarks with 2.18 per cent and 3.85 per cent respectively. The much broader index represents 90 per cent of the market capitalisation Nifty-500 index is up by 1.86 per cent. During the current month, the FIIs bought Rs.19,466.41 crore worth of equities, and the DIIs

sold Rs. 10,354.68 crore. The Nifty formed a small body candle, looks like an evening star or a spinning top. After a euphoric move of ten per cent after the union budget, the market is hesitant to move further highs. The market activity shifted to the stock-specific, particularly small and micro-cap stocks. In the majority of large stocks looks tired, and forming an indecisive or bearish formation. After opening on an enthusiastic note with a gap up on Monday, it filled the Wednesday gap. Reached a new high of 15257 on Tuesday reacted downside sharply for two days. The entire week's movement is limited to these two days range. It is a general phenomenon that,

Nifty continues to be in overstretched zone, as majority of indicators are in overbought condition



after an exuberant move, the price generally consolidates for some before moving further.

The Nifty facing resistance at the channel upper trend line and moving around the line. As the supply is higher, the market failed to close above the channel resistance line. After doubled from the March low, the index is hovering around it. The maior index drivers, SBL and other private sector banks are consolidating. The Pharma, Metals and Auto sector indices formed bearish candles. Only two sectors, PSU Banks and Realty, are in leading quadrant and those two also moving towards weakening quadrant. Interestingly the new sector moved from lagging quadrant directly to the leading quadrant is Auto. This scenario indicates that the sector rotation is perfectly going on.

Technically, the evening star candle at a high is a bearish formation, if the next opens with a gap down and closes in the negative zone on a weekly basis. As in the recent past, such several bearish formations failed

jor downside move or reversal signal, the Nifty must close below the 14977. Nifty continues to be in an overstretched zone. as the majority of the indicators are in an overbought condition. The RSI is above 73 zone, and the signs of negative divergence is emerging. A decline below the 14977 will confirm the divergence implications. The MACD is above the signal line shows the bullish momentum as the price closed higher on a weekly basis. But, on the daily charts, the momentum has declined. For the last three days, the 5 EMA acting as support, and a close below 15087 on Monday, is the first sign of weakness. The next level of support is at, Wednesday's low of 14977. Moving below these levels meant the Nifty might test the 20DMA of 14585. On this upside, moving above 15257 or close above 15190 is a positive signal for the near-term.

(The author is a financial journalist and technical analyst. He can be reached at tbcharv@gmail.com)

# DERIVATIVES OUTLOOK

DASARI SREENIVASA RAO

 $F^{\rm or\, the\, second\, consecutive\, week,}_{\rm the\,\, options\,\, data\,\, from\,\, NSE}$ holds the same resistance and support levels based on the Open Interest (OI) on Calls and Puts. The highest OI is at 16,000CE and 14,000PE after the trading hours on last Friday (February 12, 2021). The highest Call OI concentration is at 16,000CE followed by 15,500, 15,200 and 15,300 strikes. 15.300/15.500/15.800 strikes recorded reasonable Call OI addition.

Coming to the Put side, the 14.000PE has the highest Put OI followed by 14,500, 14,700, 14,800 and 15,100 strikes. Other strikes 15,200/14,800/ 15,000/ 14,500/14,700 witnessed significant addition of Put OI.

"From derivatives front, Call writers were seen adding hefty Open Interest at 15,200 & 15,300 strikes, while Put writers were seen active at 15,000 strikes. The Implied Volatility (IV) of Calls closed at 20.72 per cent, while that for Put options closed at 21.43," said Dhirender Singh Bisht, senior research

analyst (derivatives) at SMC Global

As per the data on ICICI

Securities Ltd.

Direct.com, significant Call option concentration is placed at ATM 15,200 strike for coming weekly settlement followed by 15,500 strikes. Hence, a move above 15,200 may take the index towards 15,500 towards settlement. On the lower side, immediate and major support for the Nifty remains at the 15,000

strike. The Nifty continued in range bound trading amid high intraday volatility. After a gap up opening on Monday, the index consolidated for the rest of the week where 15,000 acted as support on multiple occasions. Broader markets have significantly outperformed benchmarks and small-cap indices gained more than three per cent, while the rest have seen gains of close to one per cent.

For the week ended February 12, 2021, BSE Sensex closed at 51,544.30 points, a net gain of 812.67 points or 1.60 per cent, as against 50,731.63 points. NSE Nifty recovered by 239.05 points or 1.60 per cent and closed at 15,163.30 points from 14,924.25 points. Bisht predicted that "for upcoming sessions,

#### F&O TRADING Premium (Rs/cr) 3,39,530 33,576.78 8,67,686 79,718.62 **Index Options** 1,77,16,746 17,55,685.36 11,706.02 20,65,825 1,90,125.67 4,122.23

we expect markets to remain volatile with some stock-specific action on back of the ongoing result season. However, a decisive below 15,000 levels this time could add further selling pressure in Nifty, while above 15,300 level; Nifty could take a leap towards 15,500 levels as well." Finally, the volatility index India VIX took some breather and consolidated at 22 levels. As

2,09,89,78

major events are over, analysts believe a further decline in volatility would be seen in coming sessions and any surge from these levels can be considered as a sign of caution after sharp upsides."The Nifty VIX for the week closed at 23.05 per cent. Put-Call Ratio of OI for the week closed at 1.48 and it indicates more Put writing than Calls," added Bisht

#### **Bank Nifty**

The NSE's banking index Bank Nifty closed at 36,108.90 points, a net gain of 454.40 points or 1.27 per cent from 35,654.50 points. Once again the major mover remains the banking space, but even the Bank Nifty failed to surpass its Friday's high and remained largely range bound.

"Banking stocks outperform in later part of the week with ICICI Bank, Axis Bank along with HDFC

taking the lead," said Bisht. The Bank Nifty commenced the week with lower option OI base at ATM strike, whereas positions were in far OTM options indicated possible consolidation in next sessions. The 35.500 Put holds the maximum OI whereas the highest Call

base is placed at 37,000 strikes. Analysts predict consolidation in this range for the week. Some outperformance was seen in the Bank Nifty when compared to the broadbased Nifty. However, the current price ratio of Bank Nifty/Nifty may consolidate near 2.38 levels, while resistance for the ratio can be seen near 2.4. Due to this, no major outperformance is expected from banking stocks.

Majority private banking stocks are positive and banks such as Axis Bank, HDFC Bank and Kotak Bank may find support after 2-3 per cent decline, whereas supportive action is expected from other banking stocks. After the RBI policy, the NSE's banking index moved in a range with stock-specific action. PSU banks performed well, whereas no major moves were seen in private banks. Among mid-cap banks, IDFC First Bank and Federal Bank may do well.

# India hold all aces against Engalnd

CHENNA

ACE off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin on Sunday picked his 29th five-wicket Test haul to help India strengthen their position in the ongoing second match against England here at the MA Chidambaram Stadium.

After bowling out England for just 134, India reached 54/1 in their second innings at Stumps on Day Two, thus swelling their lead to 249 runs.

Rohit Sharma, who had scored a brilliant 161 in India's first innings, was unbeaten at the crease on 25 and was accompanied by Cheteshwar Pujara who was batting on 7.

Shubman Gill was the lone wicket to fall in India's second innings as he was out lbw against spinner Jack Leach after scoring 14 runs.

Earlier, Ashwin and debutant Axar Patel made full use of the spin-friendly conditions as India bundled out the visitors inside 60 overs.

Wicketkeeper-batsman Ben Foakes was the lone England batsman who could tackle the Indian bowlers on a wearing 'Chepauk' pitch. He

remained not out on
42 runs for which he consumed 107
balls. The right-handed batsman hit
four boundaries during the course
of his innings.

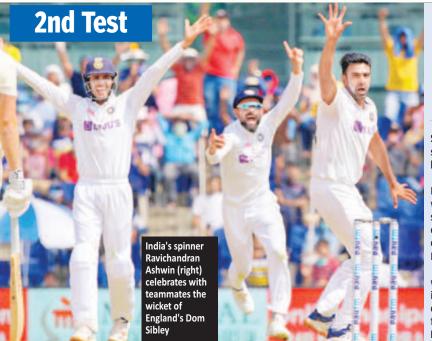
Ollie Pope (22) and Ben Stokes
(18) were the other two batters who
made notable contributions during
the course of the England innings.

Ashwin was the

land innings.
Ashwin was the pick of the bowlers for the hosts as he scalped five wickets, conceding 43 runs. Ishant Sharma and Patel picked two wickets each while Mohammad Siraj scalped one.

In the morning session, India could add just 29 runs before getting bundled out for 329 as Rishabh Pant remained not out on 58 as India's tail could stay long at the crease. Ajinkya Rahane had also contributed with valuable 67.

Pant's wicketkeeping ability takes centre stage with two stunners. The first catch was to dismiss Olie Pope off the very first ball of fast bowler Mohammed Siraj's spell while the second sent back Jack Leach off Ishant Sharma bowling



CHENNAI

ENGLAND on Sunday set a new record for the

highest total without conceding an extra run

by the fielding team in the ongoing second

India were bowled out for 329 runs in the

match. England, who took 95.5 overs to bowl

out India, did not concede even a single run

through an extra. Off-spinner

Moeen Ali took four

wickets, fast bowler Olly Stone claimed

three dismissals, Jack

Leach bagged two

Joe Root also scalped a

wickets while captain

morning session on Day Two of the Test

England's disciplined bowling performance was in

the series opener when the hosts conceded 45 extras,

The previous record belonged to India when they

against Pakistan without giving an extra run in a Test

In 1931, England had conceded 252 runs in 130.4

overs against South Africa in Durban with conceding

England lead the four-match series 1-0, having won

the first Test by 227 runs. (IANS)

conceded 328 runs in the 187.5 overs they bowled

stark contrast to that of India in the first innings of

including 20 no-balls.

match in Lahore in 1955.

Test against India here at the MA Chi-

dambaram Stadium.

Visitors set new

record for highest

**Test total without** 

conceding extras

Ashwin surpasses Bhaji for Test wickets in India, next only to Kumble

CHENNAI

SENIOR off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin on Sunday surpassed Harbhajan Singh to become the second highest wicket-taker in Tests played in India.

Ashwin got past Harbhajan, who took 265 wickets in India at an average of 28.76, by dismissing Ben Stokes with a perfect off-spinner on the second day of the second Test against England here. Ashwin's 266 wickets at home has come at an average of 22.67. Spin legend Anil Kumble is the leading wicket-taker in Tests in India with 350 scalps at an average of 24.88.

Kumble is also India's leading wicket-takers in Tests with 619 scalps to his game. The legendary Kapil Dev is second with 434 wickets. Harbhajan is third in the overall standings with 417 wickets and Ashwin is fourth with 391, having taken a five-wicket haul in England's first innings on Sunday.

#### **SCOREBOARD DAY 2**

owling: Olly Stone 2-0-8-0, Jack Leach 9-2-19-, Moeen Ali 7-2-19-0.

# India finish with 23 medals

World Para Athletics Grand Prix

Dur

TEENAGED high jumpers Praveen Kumar and Nishad Kumar produced personal best jumps to take a gold medal each and set new Asian records as curtains came down on the 12th Fazza World Para Athletics Grand Prix here.

Praveen's and Nishad's gold medal winning efforts were the high points in the final day's action for India who also had three silver and a bronze on Saturday, to end their campaign at the championships with 23 medals.

At the end of the competition, India were among the top finishers in the medal tally with Thailand returning home with 34 medals, while Turkey, Kenya and India finished with 23 medals. The hosts UAE ended with 14 medals, including two silvers, by their paralympic medallist middle-distance racer Mohammed Al Hammadi.

After a stellar show from the Indian javelin throwers on Day 3, expectations were high from the high jumpers and they didn't disappoint.

Eighten-year-old Praveen's 2.05m jump was enough to make a new Asian record and fetch him the gold in men's high jump F42/44/64 event. He finished ahead of former Asian Para Games gold medallist and fellow Indian Sharad Kumar (1.76 m) and Hamada Hassan who also cleared the 1.76m bar.

"I managed a very good jump today. I am very happy that I got my personal best here. After so long I was competing, so I was a bit nervous. But all my hard work paid off here today. Also thanks to my coach Satyapal Sir who has been guiding me in my training," said the 2019 World Junior silver medallist.

"I want to win the gold at Tokyo 2020 Paralympics. I will need to work very hard to achieve my target," he added. This was Praveen's first senior international gold in his Simran wins her second medal - a silver in women's 400m final T13 event

second senior event after the Dubai 2019 Worlds where he had booked a quota with his fourth-place finish.

In one of the last events of the day, Nishad, who already has booked a quota for India with his bronze medal finish at the Dubai 2019 Worlds, leapt to his personal best 2.06 m for the gold and an Asian record in men's high jump T46/47 event.

Congratulating the team, Paralympic Committee of India president Deepa Malik said: "Our para-athletes have made us really very proud. This championship was important in regard to their returning back to shape in the build up to Tokyo 2020 Paralympics, besides giving exposure to a few new faces."

Earlier, Simran won her second medal in the championships -a silver in women's 400m final T13 event crossing the finish line in 1:01.56 minutes. Simran already had a gold in the women's 100m T13.

Bhagyashri Mahavr Jadhav claimed the silver in women's shot put F34 event with a throw of 6.18 m finishing second to Morocco's Saida Amoudi (8.33 m).

Atul Kaushik claimed the bronze in men's discus F57 event clearing a distance of 42.00 m. (ANN)



## Serena cruises into Aus Open quarters

MELBOURNE

TWENTY three-time Grand Slam champion Serena Williams on Sunday entered the quarter-finals of the Australian Open after fending off a stern challenge from No.7 seed Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus.

Williams overcame Sabalenka 6-4, 2-6, 6-4 in a ferocious fourth-round battle at Rod Laver Arena. Williams, in her ongoing quest for a 24th major singles title, fired 30 winners, including nine aces, to quell the charge from Sabalenka. Sabalenka had won 18 of her last 19 matches but it is Williams who moves into the last eight in Melbourne for the 13th time in her career.

"It was obviously real important because I didn't want to be out of the tournament, so it felt good to kind of clutch that in the end and get through that," Williams said after the match as per the WTA website.

The American will face either two-time Grand Slam champion Simona Halep or reigning Roland Garros champion Iga Swiatek for a place in the semi-finals.

Earlier in the day, 2019 champion Naomi Osaka saved two

match points to beat two-time Grand Slam champion Garbine Muguruza 4-6, 6-4, 7-5, to reach the quarterfinals of the Australian Open for the second time in the past three years.

From 5-3, 15-40 down on serve in the final set, Osaka won four straight games to complete an improbable comeback in an exciting fourth-round contest which lasted one hour and 55 minutes.

She will next face Hsieh Suwei of Chinese Taipei for a place in last four of the women's singles event. (IANS)



#### World's largest cricket stadium at Motera gears up to welcome fans

NEW DELHI: Gujarat Cricket Association (GCA) is thrilled to welcome its cricket fans for one of the most riveting series between India and England when it opens the gates of the world's largest cricket stadium at Motera in Ahmedabad after a break of six years.

GCA said the booking for the 3rd test match against England will open at 11.00 am on Sunday, 2021. The authorities have decided to allow 50 per cent spectators of the stadium's capacity during the test matches at GCA's cricket stadium at Motera. England will play two test matches including a day-night test match starting from February 24 and five T-20 Internationals.

Dhanraj Nathwani, vice president of Gujarat Cricket Association, said: "We are honoured to be hosting this series after a hiatus and are excitedly looking forward to entertain gathering of cricket fans at the world's largest cricket stadium at Motera considering social distancing and safety norms. We hope normalcy returns soon and we get to see the stadium packed with fans cheering from all the stands for their teams."

For the pink ball test, the third game in the series, tickets have been priced between Rs 300 and Rs 1,000. (JANS)

## City extend winning run as Liverpool lose again

LONDON: Manchester City defeated Tottenham 3-0 to strengthen their grip at the top of the Premier League in their latest encounter to extend their already record-breaking winning run.

Saturday's game showed how things have changed since Spurs beat City 2-0 on November 21 to go top of the league and left City with 12 points from eight games as Pep Guardiola's side won with ease against a rival that is now struggling to qualify for Europe, reports Xinhua news agency. City's record 16th consecutive win was inspired by Ilkay Gundogan, who won the penalty that allowed Rodri to open the scoring from the penalty spot, before scoring himself in the 50th and 66th minutes to assure what was a very comfortable home win.

Liverpool's title defence continues to fall apart and coach Jurgen Klopp admitted it was over after they suffered their third consecutive defeat 3-1 after looking to be in a winning position against Leicester City. Mohamed Salah put Liverpool ahead in the 67th minute after a good assist from Roberto Firmino, but James Maddison's free kick in the 78th minute was the start of Liverpool's collapse.

