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WINDOWS



Participants wave the Tricolour during the march-past ceremony at the inaugural function of 2nd Khelo India National Winter Games, at the ski resort of Gulmarg on Friday

UN welcomes India, Pak ceasefire agreement



UNITED NATIONS: United Nations General Assembly President Volkan Bozkır said he welcomes the ceasefire agreement between India and Pakistan that demonstrates the values of UNGA. "I wholeheartedly welcome today's ceasefire agreement between India and Pakistan. Their stated commitment to achieve sustainable peace through addressing each other's core issues and concerns sets an example for other countries and demonstrates UNGA values," said the Bozkır.

Arthur Road jail ready for Nirav



MUMBAI: With a UK court ruling in favour of extradition of fugitive diamond merchant Nirav Modi, wanted in India on charges of fraud and money laundering in Punjab National Bank (PNB) scam case, Mumbai's Arthur Road jail has kept a special cell ready to lodge him, an official said. The jail official said that once Nirav Modi is brought to Mumbai, he will be kept in one of the three cells of barrack number 12, which is a high-security barrack. "Preparations for lodging Nirav Modi in the jail have been completed and the prison cell is ready for him, whenever he is extradited," he said.



Many people don't trust us: Twitter CEO

Says microblogging site day after govt issues social media rules

NEW DELHI

A day after the Centre released regulations for social media and over-the-top (OTT) platforms making it mandatory for Twitter and WhatsApp to identify the source of a post deemed anti-national by authorities, Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey said the microblogging platform is lacking in transparency and it has been evident in the last few years. "... We agree many people don't trust us. Never has this been



more pronounced than the last few years... And we aren't alone; every institution is experiencing a significant trust deficit," he told the analysts. Twitter ran into trouble in India following Republic Day violence



Bloodbath on Dalal Street as Sensex falls 1,939 points

NEW DELHI: Equity indices fell sharply on Friday as a spike in global bond yields stirred up inflation worries and spooked investors across the world. The benchmark BSE Sensex nosedived 1,939 points or 3.80 per cent to close at 49,100; while the broader NSE Nifty tanked 568 points or 3.76 per cent to close at 14,529. Banking and financial stocks witnessed a major hit amid heavy global selloff. Major laggards in the BSE pack included ONGC, Mahindra & Mahindra, PowerGrid, Bajaj Finserv, Axis Bank and Kotak Mahindra Bank with their stocks falling as much as 6.34 per cent.

FULL REPORT P7

ASSEMBLY POLLS IN 5 STATES FROM MARCH 27

- WEST BENGAL TO HAVE MAX 8 PHASES
- ALL POLL DUTY PERSONNEL TO GET COVID JAB
- MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT COMES INTO FORCE

NEW DELHI

THE Assembly elections in four States and one Union Territory will be held from March 27, with West Bengal having the maximum eight phases continuing till April 29, while counting of votes will be held on May 2, the Election Commission said on Friday.

Continued on Page 5

Counting of votes on May 2



Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora (C) with Election Commissioners Sushil Chandra (L) and Rajiv Kumar addresses a press conference in New Delhi on Friday



Assembly polls in 5 States

WEST BENGAL	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
	MAR 27	APR 1	APR 6	APR 10
ASSAM	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Result
	MAR 27	APR 1	APR 6	MAY 2
KERALA	Voting	Result		
	APR 6	MAY 2		
TAMIL NADU	Voting	Result		
	APR 6	MAY 2		
PUDUCHERRY	Voting	Result		
	APR 6	MAY 2		

MAMATA QUESTIONS 8-PHASE POLLS

P6

Centre puts Covid curbs in force till March 31

NEW DELHI

IN view of rising Covid-19 cases in the country, the Union government on Friday extended the coronavirus containment guidelines it had issued earlier to March 31.

"The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) issued an order extending the existing guidelines for surveillance, containment and caution to remain in force up to 31.03.2021," an official release said.

The decision comes as around 16,577 people tested positive for the killer virus across the country in a span of last 24 hours. According to the statement, the MHA has



Passengers being screened for coronavirus tests at the CSMT railway station

asked the States to speed up the coronavirus vaccination drive. While there has been a substantial decline in the active and new coronavirus infections, there is a need to maintain surveillance, con-

tainment, and caution so as to fully overcome the pandemic, it added.

The Centre has also advised taking strict containment measures followed within the containment

zones. States and Union Territories have been advised to speed up the vaccination of the target population so as to break the chain of transmission and overcome the pandemic.

As Covid cases rise again, many States impose curbs

75 per cent cases are from Maha, Kerala

NEW DELHI: With daily cases of Covid-19 showing a surge in some States, various State governments are putting in place restrictions to contain the spread of the virus and prevent a second wave. Nearly 75 per cent of the cases currently are from Maharashtra and Kerala.

In Delhi, all passengers arriving from Maharashtra, Kerala, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and

Punjab are required to show a negative RT-PCR test report to enter the city from Friday to March 21. Only those arriving by public transport — flight, train or bus — will have to produce a negative test report.

Those travelling by private vehicles are exempt. In Maharashtra, restrictions on all political & religious gatherings have been imposed.

Thief digs tunnel but fails to rob bank

GURUGRAM

A thief dug a 5-feet long and 4-feet deep tunnel and barged into a Canara bank branch in Lakhua village in Sohna block in the early hours on Thursday, however his heist attempt failed as he could not open the safe of the bank, the police said on Friday. The incident came to light on Thursday morning when the employees found the opening of the tunnel after entering the bank and informed the police about it.

The police said that the tunnel was dug from the back side of the bank and the entire incident was captured in the CCTV camera installed inside the bank.

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Womenia

TWEET PATROL



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Bringing those #friyayvibes to life with a pop of colour #friyay #weekendvibes #VacaySun #ColourOfLife #gratitude #blessed



Sustainable, fashionable and simplistic clothing

ANI clothing is for women of all ages looking to embrace young style. Founded by Shivani Aggarwal, a senior student at Parsons School of Design New York, Ani is derived from the second half of her name, also translating to 'new changes are coming'.

TEJAL SINHA

Hemming from a family majorly consisting of manufacturers & exporters of multi-million-dollar foreign clothing brands like Inditex, Shivani realised how a majority of companies launch their new collections in international countries first and then in India.

Irrespective of the clothes being manufactured and majority designed in India, the country is last to receive the collections, thereby forcing Indian customers to spend more by shopping from international websites and paying heavy duties. Majoring in womenswear fashion design and the change of fashion systems and society, she also works towards bringing sustainable fashion to the forefront.

ANI works with excess stock fabrics which are considered a 'waste' in the market. Every shipment has a provision of a certain excess fabric which eventually goes into textile burning of leftover fabric. It works with export houses requesting them for access to those fabrics instead of throwing them out.

Speaking about the brand, Shivani Aggarwal says, "Indian customers have an impression of being the 'trend followers' in western clothing which really bothered me since our locals are the ones who spend hours sewing production pieces and shipments for those trendsetting brands. It's pronounced as 'AANI' last 3 letters of my name - Shivani, in Hindi the three letters would mean that 'it's coming' - change is coming in the industry and new things 'AANI Hai'.

The social responsibility

They solely work with organic fabrics, cotton licence from the Better cotton initiative and other fabrics from Global recyclable standards. With deep-rooted no wastage values, the brand samples via a digital platform- CLO3D to save fabric.

ANI also plants one tree for every product sold! The brand works with excess stock fabrics which are considered a 'waste' in the market. Every shipment has a provision of a certain excess fabric which eventually goes into textile burning of leftover fabric.

Sharing about the same, Shivani says, "ANI works with export houses requesting them access to those fabrics instead of throwing them out. We also strive to give our artisans, the backbone of the label, their well-deserved dues. Our brand is youthful yet befitting for every age group and we strive to bring forth the 'Make in India' essence, showing them how home-grown can be equally appealing."



Shivani Aggarwal



"I believe it's never too early or late to wear trendy clothes, so- anigirl/ aniwoman can wear aniwear, says Shivani"

The Pandemic

The pandemic set productivity high for Shivani giving her the opportunity to launch her own label.

"We are one of the first brands to launch the now in high trend, lounge sets in the month of July. They're still one of our bestselling garments. With export houses having excessive fabrics due to cancelled shipments, we bought those from factories- thereby giving birth to our sustainable venture, ANI. In the next 2 years, the brand aims to uplift labour who works tirelessly in order to bring designs to life. ANI dreams to make them earn much more than their current income, as they are the driving forces behind the brand. The brand also sees itself adopting more sustainable practices, while convincing Indian that their homeland can curate the finest quality of clothes, embedded with the same foreign trends they have grown to love," concludes Shivani.

Maternity fashion; the celebrity way

PUJA GUPTA

Maternity clothes should be oversized, baggy and loose? Myth! Fashion while you're pregnant can be fun, experimental and chic, there's no rule which says you can't be glamorous. Raising the fashion bar and nailing maternity fashion, these celebs lead the way forward and inspire you to look fashionably pregnant.

Kareena Kapoor Khan

It was during Kareena's first pregnancy that she inspired a generation of women to proudly flaunt their baby bump. Now, second time around, Kareena is making sure women stay

fit and healthy as she poses in sports gear and talks about how women should maintain an exercise routine while expecting. "Practicing mind- body wellness, especially while you are pregnant is extremely essential. Yoga has helped me develop heightened awareness of my body and to be honest, I just feel so much better when I do yoga" says the actress. Khan's recent looks for an ad in which she donned a pair of yoga tights, a sportswear and a jacket went viral. The pink monochrome look a light pink coloured had everyone talking.

Anushka Sharma

Anushka's photoshoot for a fashion glossy made headlines. Of the many looks she donned, an olive dress with fringes at the bottom was a great example of comfort chic. Anushka, recently gave birth to a girl, and revealed her current favourite accessory is a burp cloth.

Amrita Rao

Actress Amrita Rao flaunts her bump in a

white shift dress, seeing that summer has come early this year, this looks shows you how to dress for the summer while expecting.



If you're expecting and don't know what to wear, follow these leads for some style inspiration

white shift dress, seeing that summer has come early this year, this looks shows you how to dress for the summer while expecting.

Rooney Mara

Sometimes all you need is a pair of sweatpants and a good old fashion T-shirt, and if you're Rooney Mara, even this looks fab! Often choosing comfort over glamour Rooney's look makes all of us feel better about being laid-back and chill.

Gigi Hadid

The supermodel and beau Zayn malik gave birth to a baby girl recently; Gigi sports a sheer gown for a maternity photo shoot. Follow her Instagram handle to get inspirations for glamorous styles to dungarees, whether it's the girl next door or a red-carpet diva, there's plenty of looks to learn from.

Sophie Turner

Keeping it real, Sophie reminds you to get a good dose of Vitamin D and have some fun while you soak up the sun. As they say happy girls are the prettiest!

Nicki Minaj

Nicki has always made heads turn with her fashion choices. For the more is more trend, follow her style code, at a recent maternity shoot through which she announced her pregnancy, the singer wore a studded floral mesh string bikini and silver platform high heels with yellow hair. She heavily accessorised the look with layered neckpiece, rings and bracelets.

Katy Perry

One can always trust Perry to make a statement with fashion choices. Here the singer makes boho chic look effortless as wears a tie and dye kaftan dress in blue and orange with fringes. Gazing out to the desert she looks forward to a new phase in life. A neat pony tail, and completed the brown flats is all she needs as she moves forward.

Michelle Williams

Michelle's elegant off-shoulder orange dress at the Golden Globe Awards is a great choice when it comes to occasion-wear for all moms-to-be. Instead of the silhouette let the colour make the statement.

Meghan Markle

If you want to always be camera ready then try The Duchess of Sussex's style which is both famine and sophisticated. Feminine dresses, flirty patterns and classic silhouettes are her go to options.



Grace Rhodes wishes to play item girl roles

British actor, dancer and pop singer Grace Rhodes who was seen in Street Dancer 3D as a dancer with Dharmesh is passionate about Indian films and wants to mark a debut in Bollywood and perform item numbers.

On talking about her first experience in Bollywood in Street Dancer 3D she shares, "This was my first Bollywood experience and working in the Hindi film industry. It was such a nice unit, everyone was extremely talented and the energy was amazing. Working with Remo Sir was an absolute pleasure. It was from there on I was approached for other work and new projects within the industry, so I will be forever grateful for this."

She says she would love to do item numbers and talks about the kind of roles she wants to play in Bollywood.

She says, "I'm really open minded, as I've had professional training in all areas of performance there is really no limit with what I love to do. I'm an artist and performer, I sing, dance and act. So would want to do all three. I would like to do some traditional styles also as well as modern. A few goals of mine is I definitely would love to work with platforms such as Tseries on "Item girl" roles and also, who knows you may see a collaboration with an Indian Singer where I can do both, the singing and dance."

Grace is a trained professional in musical theatre; Acting, Singing, and Dancing.

She adds, "I've always had an insight to the oppor-

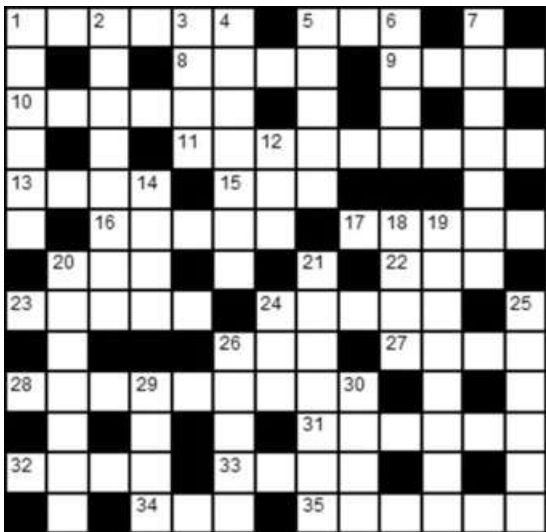
tunities I could get if I really pushed myself. I started working within the music industry when I was just graduating from college. It was from this moment I was fortunate enough to see new parts of the world and it really made me want to learn more about different cultures, especially India. I would feel really proud to represent my home country (the UK) exploring these ventures, whilst also be very grateful to be able to work in a foreign industry embracing the art-form. I think working and pushing yourself to do new things really help you grow as a person."

On talking about her favourite actors with whom she wants to work Rhodes says that from what she has seen so far the men, Tiger shroff is a great dancer and also Ranveer Singh is a power house.

"I think Katrina Kaif, Shaddha Kapoor, Nora Fatehi and Jacqueline Fernandez. I would love to work with Bhushan Kumar, Karan Johar and Farah Khan. There are many actors and actresses I would love to work alongside can't possibly name one. And some great singers from India from Arijit Singh to Guru Randhawa, Raftaar. List goes on," adds the British actor.

Currently and in the near future, she is releasing a lot of new music. She was working internationally with Kondzilla, a similar platform to Tseries, but in Brazil.

"I was doing a funk-based project. Since then, I've been doing music in the UK and US focusing on Pop/ mainstream sound. I've also just finished filming some acting projects which I will be able to speak about soon. As soon as it's possible I will be coming to India to work on various things, which I'm very excited about. I've been wanting to visit and work out there for a while," ends the



SOLUTION TO FEBRUARY 26

CROSSWORD

Across

- Author ____ C. Chaudhuri (5)
- Weird or frightening (5)
- Golf iron (7)
- David's weapon (5)
- Determined upon (3,2)
- Weaves wool (5)
- Feeling jealous (7)
- Faucet (3)
- Bustles or fuss (4)
- Prestigious statuettes (6)
- Energetic (5)
- Occurrences (6)
- Close up (4)
- Grief stricken (3)
- Hanoi is it's capital ? (7)
- Of the upper hipbone (5)
- Narrow valley (5)
- Admit (3,2)
- Transfixes on stakes (7)
- Bunch on TV once (5)
- Churchillian gesture (1-4)

Down

- Upcountry (6)
- Bugs (6)

- Delve (3)
- Throw or toss (5)
- Rapturous delight (7)
- Supplements (4)
- Weather map line (6)
- Leg joints (5)
- Relaxes (5)
- Chose by election (5)
- ____ for a ride : fooled or deceived ? (5)
- Sacred song (5)
- Relating to sight (5)
- Early Greek astronomer (7)
- Great bravery (6)
- Emphasise (6)
- Exclaiming in amazement, joy, or surprise (6)
- Pertaining to a vague nerve (5)
- Footnote abbr. (4)
- Monetary unit of Bulgaria (3)

SUDOKU



SOLUTION TO FEBRUARY 26

NEWS ROUNDUP

Monica Dogra: Have said no to item numbers many times

Actress Monica Dogra made her mark with her Bollywood debut film, Kiran Rao's Dhoobi Ghat, in 2011. However, despite a few other releases, she never really managed to find a foothold in the industry.

After being seen in a couple of films such as David (2013) and Teraa Surroor (2016), Monica will be back in action in the web series, The Married Woman.

On her part, Monica says she has never liked the way women are objectified in Bollywood films and has especially steered clear of dance numbers. "Item song is a no-no for me. I have said no many times. I am personally not interested in representing a woman as an object. I think we are so much more than that. I just wouldn't do an item song," she says. Her upcoming series is an urban relationship drama showcasing the conditions levied on a woman by society. It is about women and the choices they make. Talking about the show, Monica says she was on board with the idea instantly, as the story really appealed to her.

"The initial meeting with the producers and the writers were brilliant. The way they described the characters excited me to play someone so dynamic and layered. The show is so relevant for today," she says.

Monica shares a kiss with co-star Riddhi Dogra in the show. Ask her if she feels the Indian audience will accept and appreciate such a plot, she says, "I don't go into something thinking whether people will accept it or not. I was aware of the obstacle. I think it is wisdom that teaches you to be aware of that. Personally, I am someone who feels passionately about the transformative power of art. Art and artists have the responsibility to be the change and inspire people. I did not have apprehensions, I was so excited to tell a story which was this honest knowing that there was no way that this story won't open people's hearts and transform the way they feel and view love, religion and politics."

The series has been directed by Sahir Raza and will air on ALTBalaji and ZEE5.



Man connives with doc to slay wife for ₹50 lakh insurance money

MEERUT

A man connived with a doctor to eliminate his wife, a government school teacher, in an attempt to claim an insurance amount of Rs 50 lakh.

They gave the wife sleeping pills, smothered her with a pillow and stored the body in a freezer for a day.

An image of the doctor choking his wife with a pillow has now sent the duo behind the bars. The image was apparently clicked by the man himself.

According to the police, the incident took place on February



20 in Meerut where Sanjay Luthra, 42, a businessman, had hatched a plot to eliminate his

wife Chanda, 40, and connived with a doctor named Rajat Bhardwaj who owed Rs 1.35 lakh

to Luthra.

Luthra allegedly agreed to waive off the debt if Bhardwaj killed his wife.

Inspector Ram Sanjeevan of crime branch, whose team was investigating the case, said, "Though he was given a clean chit by the local Nauchandi Thana, we continued the probe and took custody of Sanjay Luthra's mobile phone and recovered a few deleted pictures - one of which showed a woman being smothered with a pillow."

During questioning, it came to light that Luthra had actually shot the photograph of Bhard-

waj and deleted it when the doctor confronted him.

Meanwhile, Chanda's family had sensed foul play since the beginning.

Her mother Sunita Devi said, "Sanjay was trying to get rid of Chanda for some time and had even taken the divorce route. But Chanda did not agree to the divorce. She had visited a relative at 11 p.m. on Saturday, and was killed on the same night. We tried to convince police at Nauchandi, but they failed to take any action."

The post mortem report of the victim was "inconclusive".

Baby beheaded, mother found dead

BULANDSHAHR

A mentally challenged mother allegedly beheaded her 13-month-old baby and then apparently ended her own life in a village in Bulandshahr district of Uttar Pradesh. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Santosh Kumar Singh said the woman, Jitendri, 23, was mentally challenged and her husband works as a tailor in Rajasthan. Jitendri allegedly beheaded her infant son and jumped off the roof of her home in Vijay Nagla.

The sisters-in-law of Jitendri said she heard someone jump off the roof. When they did not see Jitendri and her son in the room, they reached upstairs, where they found the beheaded baby.

R-DAY VIOLENCE

'Farmer who died had no gunshot wounds'

NEW DELHI

THE 25-year-old farmer, who died after his tractor overturned during the protesting farmers' tractor rally on Republic Day, did not suffer any gunshot wounds, the police of Delhi and Uttar Pradesh have told the Delhi High Court.

The police of the two states have made the submission relying upon the post-mortem and x-ray reports, given by the District Hospital at Rampur in UP, which prima facie state that "there was no gunshot injury in the body of the deceased".

Delhi Police has said that according to the post-mortem report the young farmer died due to a head injury as a result of the accident and all his injuries were possible in a road accident. The submissions have been made in response to a plea by the deceased's grandfather -- Hardeep Singh -- claiming that the victim suffered gunshot injuries to his head.



The petition, filed through advocates Vrinda Grover and Soutik Banerjee, has sought a court-monitored SIT probe into the death of the young farmer. The high court on Friday listed the matter for further hearing on March 4. The Delhi Police, represented by Delhi government standing counsel Rahul Mehra and advocate Chaitanya Gosain, has also relied upon the footage collected from CCTV cameras lo-

cated at the site -- Deen Dayal Upadhyay marg -- where the young farmer died and said that he was driving the tractor at high speed and the vehicle overturned after hitting the barricades.

It said that the footage also shows that the police personnel were running away for safety from the speeding tractor and that none of them fired upon the vehicle or the driver. The Delhi Police has also said that CCTV

footage further indicates that the protestors did not take the injured Navreet Singh to any nearby hospital and instead they attacked the ambulances that reached the site after hearing about the accident.

It said that the protestors instead of taking him to the hospital immediately, kept his body on the road for five hours and then spread rumours that he was killed in police firing. The UP police, in its status report, has stated that no FIR has been registered by it in connection with the death as claimed by the petitioner. "It is further submitted that there is no provision of giving the videography of the post-mortem or original X-ray plates which are medico-legal documents to the family of the deceased by the medical department," it has said in its report. Grover, on the last date of hearing, had told the court that the way Delhi Police has conducted itself in the matter "does not inspire a shred of confidence".

Uttarakhand disaster death toll climbs to 71

GOPESHWAR

ONE more body was recovered from the banks of Alaknanda river in Kaleshwar on Friday taking the toll in the recent avalanche in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district to 71, officials said. So far, 71 bodies and 30 human body parts have been recovered from different places in the avalanche hit areas out of which 40 bodies and one human body part have been identified, Chamoli district police said.

DNA samples of bodies which have not been identified are being preserved. Missing reports of 205 persons have been registered at Joshimath police station so far, the district police said. DNA samples of 110 kin, 58 bodies and 28 human body parts have been sent to Forensic Science Laboratory in Dehradun for matching, it said.

Special Covid vaccination drive for women in UP

LUCKNOW

THE Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh will launch a special Covid-19 vaccination drive for women above the age of 60 years on the occasion of International Women's Day on March 8. This was announced by additional chief secretary (ACS) home, Avanish Kumar Awasthi on Friday during a high-level meeting with of UP Women's Commission chairperson Vimala Batham.

The official, during the meeting with Women's Commission chairperson, discussed measures to provide a safer environment to women, strengthening the peace, effectively curbing crime and providing cent percent benefit of government-run schemes under



the state government's Mission Shakti campaign. Awasthi said, "As per directives from chief minister Yogi Adityanath, effective action should be taken to make women economically independent so that the benefits of government-run schemes can be made available to women on priority."

He also directed the officers to pay special attention to the programmes run under the Mission Shakti campaign. ACS Home also announced that the state government will facilitate women entrepreneurs on March 10 in Lucknow.

NIA chargesheets ISI agent in espionage case

NEW DELHI

THE National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Friday said that it has filed a supplementary chargesheet against a Gujarat-based resident Rajakbhai Kumbhar, who worked as an ISI agent, in connection with its probe into the espionage case of Uttar Pradesh. An NIA official said that a supplementary chargesheet against Kumbhar was filed under several sections of the IPC and the UA(P) Act.

The official said that Kumbhar was arrested on September 30, last year and during investigation it was revealed that he had visited Pakistan twice on legal documents.

"During his return in the course of second visit, Kumbhar had come in contact with Pakistani ISI operatives Hamid aka Asim and Mohammad Rashid and joined the conspiracy. He transferred funds to accused for the information he had provided to the ISI operatives in Pakistan," the official said.

The NIA case is based on the FIR registered by Uttar Pradesh Police in which accused Rashid, a resident of Chandoli was arrested on January 19 last year for sending sensitive information, photos and videos of vital installations of strategic importance to ISI operatives based in Pakistan. The NIA registered the case on April 6, last year.

Man stabbed to death over stolen underwear

KANPUR

A stolen underwear led to a murder when a man stabbed his co-worker to death just because the latter had stolen the garment and worn it, police said.

The incident took place in Kanpur Dehat in a factory premises on Thursday where the deceased, identified as Vivek, and Ajay, the accused, shared a room. According to reports, Ajay was apparently enraged when Vivek wore his underwear. Circle officer, Akbarpur, Sandeep Singh, said, "Co-workers said Ajay entered into a heated argument with Vivek on the issue. Later, he picked a vegetable knife and repeatedly stabbed Vivek, leaving him critically injured. Ajay then fled."

His co-workers rushed him to the district hospital from where he was referred to Lala Lajpat Rai hospital in Kanpur. Here doctors declared him dead on ar-



rival. Police said that Vivek's family members have been apprised about his death and they have arrived in Kanpur Dehat. The body has been shifted to a mortuary for autopsy. "Following a complaint, we have lodged an FIR against Ajay under relevant sections of IPC and separate teams have been formed and dispatched to possible hideouts of the accused," he added. Police are questioning the factory owner and co-workers over what exactly happened that triggered a violent altercation leading to murder.

Plans to develop Chota Kailash as major pilgrimage site

PITHORAGARH

WITH no clarity on whether the Kailash-Mansarovar Yatra will be held this year, the Kumaon Mandal Vikas Nigam proposes to develop Chota Kailash, the original abode of Lord Shiva on the Indian side of the border with China, as a major pilgrimage site.

"Chota Kailash, also called Adi Kailash is considered the original abode of Lord Shiva and can be the best pilgrimage site to visit for Shiva devotees from across the country," KMVN Chairperson Kedar Joshi said.

Connectivity to Chota Kailash has also improved with the BRO connecting Vyas valley with a motor road in June last year making it much more convenient for pilgrims to reach the site, he said.

KMVN is the nodal agency for the annual Kailash-Mansarovar Yatra which was not held last year due to the coronavirus pandemic and is not likely to be held this year as well with the preparatory meetings not held so



far. The meetings are held in the first week of February by the Ministry of External Affairs. The KMVN Chairperson said he is planning to visit Chota Kailash himself in April to take stock of the infrastructure on way to the pilgrimage site. Though well known among Shiva devotees, infrastructure around Chota Kailash needs to be upgraded to attract more and more pilgrims on the lines of the chardham yatra, he said.

"For instance we want construction of a civilian helipad at Jolingkong for the convenience

of Chota Kailash bound pilgrims," Joshi said. At present around 1000 pilgrims visit Chota Kailash each year beginning from the month of June. "I will be accompanied by Nigam officials who will find possibilities of connecting Vyas Gufa, situated on the eastern corner of Vyas with Chota Kailash that is situated on its western corner," Joshi said. He said KMVN wants to extend an invitation to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to visit Chota Kailash which will go a long way in promoting it as a destination for religious tourism.

UP court orders FIR into encounter of murder accused

LUCKNOW

A Lucknow court has ordered a probe and filing of an FIR into an alleged encounter death of a man, who was accused of a murder.

Chief Judicial Magistrate Sushil Kumari has directed the Hazratganj police to lodge an FIR over the alleged encounter death of Girdhari Vishwakarma on February 15, after his remand to the police custody by her court, following his arrest.

Girdhari a.k.a 'Doctor' was arrested for allegedly gunning down a gangster Ajit Singh in the city's posh Gomti Nagar area on January 6.

CJM Sushila Kumari on Thursday ordered a probe into Girdhari's death on a plea by advocate Sarvejit Yadav, who had earlier represented Girdhari as his defence counsel.

"There are clear guidelines of the Supreme Court that in a case of a police encounter, an FIR should be registered and the entire incident be probed to find



out the truth," the court said while ordering the probe on the advocate's plea made under section 156 (3) of the Criminal Procedure Code.

"It is a matter of investigation as to whether the police team shot Girdhari in self-defence or the team exceeded its power of self-defence," the court said.

The court gave the order taking note of the presence of Deputy Commissioner of Police, Sanjeev Suman, and Vibhuti Khad police station in-charge, Chandra Shekhar Singh, at the

spot of the encounter.

In her order, the CJM said though the police lodged two FIRs over Girdhari's bid to run away from the police custody and opening of fire by him at the police, no FIR was registered to probe the incident of his death.

Earlier, in his application, advocate Yadav alleged that SHO Chandra Shekhar Singh and other policemen killed Girdhari under fool-proof conspiracy and prepared false documents to suppress evidence in the case.

This all happened when Gird-

hari was in police custody on the basis of an order passed by the CJM herself.

Girdhari was killed in an encounter with the police on February 15. He was arrested for allegedly gunning down Ajit Singh in the posh Gomti Nagar area in Lucknow on January 6.

Following Girdhari's encounter death, Lucknow Police Commissioner D.K. Thakur had said three policemen too were injured in the incident.

"Around 3.00 a.m., Girdhari Vishwakarma was taken to Kharagpur crossing along with the weapon used in the crime. When sub-inspector Akhtar Usmani was getting down from the vehicle with him, the accused hit him on his nose. The officer fell on the ground and the accused snatched his pistol and started running. The sub-inspector followed him but Girdhari hid behind bushes and started firing, after which the police also opened fire which led to his death," Joint Commissioner of Police (Crime) Nilabha Choudhury had said.

Tread with caution on digital media

AMIDST growing concerns around lack of transparency, accountability and rights of users related to digital media and after elaborate consultation with the public and stakeholders, the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules 2021 has been framed in exercise of powers under Section 87 (2) of the Information Technology Act, 2000 and in supersession of the earlier Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines) Rules 2011.

While finalising these Rules, both the Ministries of Electronics and Information Technology and Ministry of Information and Broadcasting reportedly undertook elaborate consultations among themselves in order to have a harmonious, soft-touch oversight mechanism in relation to social media platforms as well as digital media and OTT platforms etc. Part- II of these

Rules shall be administered by the Ministry of Electronics and IT, while Part-III relating to Code of Ethics and procedure and safeguard.

However, already apprehensions are being aired about the intentions of the government. A section of people has started raising concerns over the control that the government wants to wield over free speech and related Rights. The Digital India programme has now become a movement which is empowering common Indians with the power of technology. The extensive spread of mobile phones, Internet etc. has also enabled many social media platforms to expand their footprints in India. Common people are also using these platforms in a very significant way.

Some portals, which publish analysis about social media platforms and which have not been disputed, have reported the following numbers as user

base of major social media platforms in India: WhatsApp users: 53 Crore, YouTube users: 44.8 Crore, Facebook users: 41 Crore, Instagram users: 21 Crore and Twitter users: 1.75 Crore. These social platforms have enabled common Indians to show their creativity, ask questions, be informed and freely share their views, including criticism of the Government and its functionaries.

The Government says it acknowledges and respects the right of every Indian to criticize and disagree as an essential element of democracy. India is the world's largest open Internet society and the Government welcomes social media companies to operate in India, do business and also earn profits. However, they will have to be accountable to the Constitution and laws of India.

But the curbs imposed on social me-

dia platforms and on individuals at various intervals and over controversies have become major concerns of the country now. Disha Ravi case is the latest in which it is alleged that the authorities have crossed the line. In the past too, oversensitive governments imposed curbs on people and jailed those questioning the government. Proliferation of social media, on one hand empowers the citizens then on the other hand gives rise to some serious concerns and consequences which have grown manifold in recent years.

However, all these should not lead to the harassment of well-meaning citizens in the name of additional safeguards. No doubt, a check is needed on the persistent spread of fake news. Over the years, the increasing instances of misuse of social media by criminals, anti-national elements have brought new challenges for law enforcement agencies. As stated, if the government keeps its words in protecting the fundamental rights while being vigilant over the misuse it would be alright.



THE FLIP SIDE OF CROWDFUNDING

ANOJ VISWANATHAN

RECENTLY, two youngsters from Hyderabad were arrested over an alleged crowdfunding fraud. The duo had started a Facebook page in order to help people collect funds for medical emergencies. Later, it was found that a post that had gone viral on the page had managed to raise over three times the required funds. Moreover, the two owners of the page and the relative whose bank account was shared for donations had split the funds among themselves, scamming people of an amount of over Rs.30 Lakh.

The act of giving directly to a beneficiary in need may seem like the safest way while offering help online, but the absence of a third party may make your kindness more vulnerable to exploitation than you think. Crowdfunding platforms exist in order to address this gap in giving. Most platforms today make the fundraising process as organised, democratised and transparent as possible, and ensure funds collected are transferred only for the said cause, against valid documents and bills. Here are a few things to watch out in order to keep your trust safe while giving to people online:

Fund transfer: Emergencies are tough situations that often come with a lot of associated costs. For a family in the heart of crises, it would be all the more difficult to keep stock of money coming in and going out. This, with the added hassle of managing ancillary expenses like

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commute, food, lodging and additional medications could be an extra burden on them. A verified third party could act as a custodian of funds, disbursing amounts as per requirement, against valid documents helps account for each penny. A great practice followed by most crowdfunding platforms today is that of transferring funds directly to the hospital against bills. This way, the patient and their family can be spared of the extra burden.

Live status of funds raised: In case of the Hyderabad page, the funds collected were over thrice the funds actually needed. Unfortunately, there was no way for donors to know about this. A live ticker showing the funds required and the amount collected so far keep the process transparent, letting people know when they can stop contributing to a said cause.

Ability to report the fundraiser: Most good crowdfunding platforms would give you an ability to report/flag a fundraiser that you believe is suspicious. In case a fundraiser is reported for a genuine cause/concern, it undergoes an additional layer of verification. It has been observed that for any fundraiser to perform well online, it must receive strong support from the closest circle/network of the campaign organizer (CO). Incidentally, this is also the best network to vouch for the legitimacy of a need. This is also a feature that makes any platform's verification process absolutely water-tight: by relying on the intelligence of the crowd.

Updates: Another great practice followed by trusted platforms today is that they mandate sharing an update with donors, particularly at the time of each withdrawal. Despite the withdrawals being verified through invoices and bills. This means that you are donating, not only because you trust the third party to be accountable, but also because you are actually in the loop of the amount collected and spent at all times.

Fixed and transparent pricing and structure: Crowdfunding platforms have transparent and fixed pricing and processes in place for each activity. There would never be a commission or a system of splitting any amount with the beneficiaries. In most cases, there is a nominal fee (recently waived off to 0% in Milaap's case) for using the platform, and fixed additional percentage charges/rates for additional services from their end. In any case, the greatest thing to watch out for while approaching a third party platform to help you fundraise is overall transparency. All information must be public and shared with donors, beneficiaries and CO's alike. There is never a separate deal/understanding created between any two parties, isolating the third. The will to help a person in need is precious, but so is the trust of the giver. This makes it critical to have a system in place to protect this trust. Platforms like Milaap exist to make this world a place where kindness can flow as rapidly and smoothly while keeping up with the pace of our digital lives.

(The author is the president and co-founder of South Asia's largest crowdfunding platform Milaap.)

Centre has to rethink on VSP privatisation



ANDHRA Pradesh has been losing heavily and this process began with the hasty, clumsy and unscientific division of the State. It led to deep sense of hurt and betrayal and the Congress was dumped and the BJP which had argued in favour of certain special benefits in lieu of the losses the residuary state would suffer proved no better once it got into the driver's seat. Over six years down the lane, the process of inflicting hurt does not seem to end. It is being repeated as the Centre is going ahead with its decision to privatise Vizag Steel Plant notwithstanding the protests and without considering the sentiments of the people.

With bifurcation, it lost the economic powerhouse. Most of the promises have remained only on paper. The promises made by the then government were either not implemented or were partly implemented. Financial assistance to bridge the deficit gap, special incentives for promotion of industries, building a new capital city still have not been implemented fully.

Whether it is the State governments which have been in power since 2014 or the Centre, they seem to be more concerned about remaining glued to the seat of power rather than put the state in fast-track growth mode.

The Centre blames the State government for not complying with the necessary formalities to derive the benefits. The State government alleges that the Centre was delaying release of funds due to it. Things do not move beyond this. If the Centre and State governments believe in true federalism, then the Centre could always take the initiative and tell the government of the day as to why the funds could not be released and what it needs to be done. The State govern-

ment too could accord high priority in fulfilling the requirements of Centre and get the funds released. But unfortunately, that did not happen during last six years.

Ironically, such issues hardly figure in the Parliament. Parliament unfortunately is used more for political speeches and not for ensuring devolution of funds or put pressure on the centre to get the due share of the state. Notwithstanding the claims and counter claims that the interests of the people were paramount for the ruling party and the opposition parties including the State BJP, the progress on various fronts including infrastructure projects was going on at snail's pace.

Added to this, the people of the State are once again in for a deep sense of hurt and betrayal as the Centre has decided to privatise the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant. Some agitations opposing the Centre's move is on but then they appear to be more of a competition between the political parties without proper strategy and seem to be lacking seriousness. Writing letters to Centre or passing resolution in State Assembly does not really help in putting any kind of pressure.

As things are unfolding in the form of the replies given in Parliament it is clear that decision was not taken overnight. The process of consultations was over a year old and our public representatives and the government must have been well aware of it. Why no one raised their voice and why things were kept under wraps is something which needs to be given a serious thought.

The State has lost precious time but no political party including the state BJP is willing to accept this fact. The appeals to the Centre, the representations and resolutions appears to be an act of playing to the gallery. These words may sound harsh but then that is the reality. There are also people who say that things cannot be static. If country must progress certain hard decision have to be taken. Well if that is the case why not demolish heritage buildings and go in for commercial establishments?



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Why do we oppose any move to touch them even when most part of those buildings have collapsed? That is because they have vast history to be talked about and they speak about the culture and diversity attached to it. We preserve them as historic buildings as they are physical links to our past. It's not just about saving bricks, but about saving the layers and layers of information about our lives and those of our ancestors. Without that, we'd erase the stories of our past, as if the people who came before us never existed.

Similarly, there is need to protect certain companies like the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant which has a history. The past story cannot be allowed to be erased. It was the product of long drawn struggle and Andhra succeeded in getting the first major production unit amidst tough political competition from other States.

On certain issues one should not go merely by logic. This reminds me of these few lines of Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev. He said, "Moments of extreme logic are moments of suicide. If you look at the experiences of your life, it may mean the world to you. But when you apply total logic to your life, everything in your life is

meaningless. Logically, it may not be the business of the government to be in business. But that does not mean that you sell off all your assets particularly when it is not a loss-making one like the VSP.

The logic of the Centre while making a strong case for privatisation of public sector units that it was necessary because it burdens the taxpayer, and stating that government was working towards the mantra of "monetise or modernise" to benefit citizens, in general is a welcome statement. But there can be and should be exceptions.

It is not always correct to say that when government engages in business, it leads to losses. If the government lacks courage to take bold commercial decisions, it reflects the weakness of the government. It only shows that it does not have the courage to evolve a system to run the businesses.

"It is government's duty to support enterprises and businesses. But it is not essential that it should own and run enterprises." Agreed but at the same time, it is also not essential to privatise profit making units. Going ahead with its decision and asking for a list of assets and liabilities of VSP from RINL amounts

to saying we care two hoots for the sentiment of the people.

The logic of Prime Minister that governments should be in a position to take bold decisions applies to politics as well. The parties need to be in a position to take bold decisions. But whether it is special category status or privatisation of Vizag Steel Plant, the state BJP has not been able to openly say, we are opposed to Centre's decision or they should have had the courage to say we agree with the centre.

When the UPA government said it would give special category status to Andhra Pradesh for five years, the BJP insisted that it should be for ten years and speaker after speaker said that if UPA fails they would implement it after it comes to power. We have seen how it was dumped saying that the 14th finance commission had objected. Then they brought in the concept of special package.

BJP leaders maintained that the Centre was committed to granting the monetary equivalent of a special status to Andhra and would bear 90 per cent of the share of schemes sponsored by the Centre. But the package remains to be unwrapped. On this issue too, we have seen duel stance of the state BJP.

Similarly, capital city which is important for any state has also become a victim of politics and the responsibility for this must be shared by the centre as well as the past and present state governments.

The unfortunate aspect in Indian politics is all successive governments whether it be in states or at centre keep blaming their predecessors for not implementing the promises. The government of the day should understand that they are in power because of the clumsy implementation of policies and programmes by their predecessors.

It's time to stop saying "If the previous government had done this..." Well they are dumped in dustbin only because they failed. If you keep brooding over the past and do nothing, in what way are you different? If you are not different how can there be difference in governance? Its time our leaders ponder over.

LETTERS

What's in a name?

UNNECESSARY hullabaloo is being made regarding the renaming of the Motera stadium to Narendra Modi stadium. Those who make a hue and cry will have to realise that this is not for the first time in India that an international stadium has been named after a leader . So many stadiums in India are named after leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi and so on. Even airports and railway stations have been named after great historical rulers and heroes, actors and leaders and there is nothing new in naming a stadium after a leader who during his stint as CM of Gujarat changed the state into a highly developed one . It was Modi's dream then, as president of Gujarat cricket Association, to create a stadium of global standard with state of the art facilities and was instrumental in the redevelopment of the entire sports facility and what we have now is a big dream come true- the largest most modern cricket stadium in the world.

Let us understand that renaming the stadium to Narendra Modi stadium has in no way belittled or insulted the earlier name - Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel stadium - as the name of the Iron man of India is kept in tact for the present new stadium is just but a part of an upcoming sports enclave, located in Gujarat's Motera, named after the great leader .

The Gujarat Cricket Association, in a mammoth project, has now expanded the erstwhile stadium into a huge sports enclave. The sports enclave will be henceforth known as the 'Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Sports Enclave'.

The newly built sports facility in addition to its ownership of the world's largest cricket ground will have an Olympic-sized swimming pool, an indoor cricket academy, badminton, tennis courts, a squash arena, a table tennis area, football, hockey, basketball, a 3D projector theatre, and a clubhouse.

The 'Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Sports Enclave' can even host mega sports events like the Asian Games , Common wealth games and even the Olympics in future. The stadium, which has a seating capacity of 1,10,000 and furnished with the latest and most modern amenities has the capacity to host the semi and even the finals of World Cup cricket . The sports enclave no doubt will be a global sports hub of high reputation and definitely take the name of our nation to be reckoned in the international sports field.

M Pradyu, Kannur

Unethical move by Patanjali

IT is unbecoming of anyone to encash the suffocating situation of the people world over and so in India which is marked by plight for life and livelihood. A corporate company with false claims



launches a traditional medicine. There is a set norm to introduce a medicine. It is introduced to the professionals with all details like pharmacodynamics and pharmacokinetics of the product, trial results, adverse effects etc. Professionals again try such medicines with their patients to satisfy themselves before taking it up for regular prescription.

Patanjali has chosen to launch its product through a grand press meet as if it was launching a consumer durable product. It claims the medicine to be effective in prevention, treatment and post infection management in Covid 19. It claims the Drug authority and even the World Health Organisation have offered clearance for the product to be used in the treatment protocol for Covid 19. Both the claims are found to be false. Indian Medical Association immediately reacts with so many objections. The entire pop-

ulation including the professionals, authorities and ailing patients are plunged in shock by the way the product is introduced and the tall claims made about the product as if the concerned authorities and global institution having cleared its introduction.

The World Health Organisation has immediately responded by making it clear that the claim was false. The CEO of the corporate management is said to have made unpleasant comment about the other system of treatment also. The height of all these wrong doings is that the launch of the product was attended by two Ministers and one among them being the Minister of Health and Family Welfare. A minister who is given the responsibility of ensuring proper functioning of the entire health related organs being a mute witness to all such arbitrary wrong doings of this corporate

management is now raising too many questions.

The Minister is a qualified and registered medical practitioner well versed with the entire systems involved in the process. Why he has allowed such false claims to be made is confusing one and all. The Minister knows how a medicine is launched. Why did he allow the said medicine to be launched in a press meet? Why he had been a part of it? Why did he speak in appreciation instead of condemning the atrocious deviations?

India has given a number of traditional systems of treatment and every system has its superiority and benefits, which are respected by one and all. But the way this corporate management has chosen to launch its medicine involving unethical means and wrongful claims has the potentiality of people being driven away from the very traditional system instead of bringing more in its ambit. The entire episode raises a predominant question in the minds of many, 'Is corporate dominance allowed to assume the position of dictating the Government?'

A G Rajmohan, Anantapur

Record-breaking Test

INDIA took a giant leap to secure a place in the World Test Championship final, outsmarting England by 10 wickets at Ahmedabad. The match incredibly fin-

ished before drinks on the last session of day two, making it the shortest completed Test in terms of balls bowled since 1935 and the seventh shortest of all time. Spinners on both sides had a ball taking 28 of the 30 wickets that fell, while unbelievably English speed merchants Anderson and Broad, with over 1100 wickets between them, failed to get a scalp.

N J Ravi Chander, Bengaluru

Reining in OTT

THIS refers to the report 'Tough rules to rein in social media, OT' (The Hans India, Page 1, February 26, 2021). The government's step towards a constant vigilance on the contents of the Over The Top (OTT) platforms and digital media have been taken in right direction.

The OTT platforms now a days have been hugely banking on violence, bloodshed and barbarism. Sexual violence, objectification of women, brutalisation of female characters, rapes and male gaze occupy a major chunk of the screentime on their contents to cater the adrenaline rush of the consumers, specifically the youth but in fact are tarnishing their minds. The social media on the other hand has become a tool to breach the peace and harmony of the country. One hopes that the new stringent guidelines will make some difference.

Tushar Anand, Patna

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REACHING MEDICARE FOR POOR GHMC plans 50 more Basti Dawakhnas



- These Dawakhnas have been receiving a good response and providing denizens with free treatment
- They offer over 50 services including free tests like OPD consultation, basic lab diagnosis and provision of free medicines
- They were started in 2018. At present, there are 224 Basti Dawakhnas operating from 9am to 4 pm every day
- Each facility has a staff of doctor, nurse and medical assistant, apart from technicians in the pathology lab

UDAY PULLURI
HYDERABAD

GHMC is planning to extend the health services of Basti Dawakhnas to new areas and adding 50 more to its already existing 224 State-run clinics.

Each day around 22,000 beneficiaries have been utilising the services of Basti Dawakhnas under GHMC limits and with 50 more such clinics, the authorities are hopeful of extending services in new areas.

According to officials, on an average each Basti Dawakhana receives about 90 to 100 out-patients every day for treatment, medical assistance and diagnostic tests. Since the Basti Dawakhnas are receiving good response helping denizens undergo free treatment, the GHMC has decided to extend the services to areas which lack such facility.

Presently, these clinics are offering more than 50 kinds of services including free tests like OPD consultation, basic lab diagnosis and provision of free medicines. "We are planning to increase the number of Basti Dawakhnas in the city to fulfill the medical needs of the denizens," an official at GHMC said.

Basti Dawakhnas were started in 2018 and now there were 224 basti dawakhans giving the best services to the people starting from 9am to 4pm every day in the GHMC limits. Each facility has a staff of doctor, nurse and medical assistant, apart from technicians in the pathology lab.

The Chief Medical Officer of GHMC, Dr K Padmaja, said that these Basti Dawakhnas have proved to be most useful for the public. "The public should avail these services which were being rendered free of cost. If there was any problem in the Dawakhnas they can call the toll free number 040-2111111 and complain about the services," she added.

Delhi industrialist donates ₹10 cr to TTD

- Sanjay Passi of PASCO company hands over the DD for the amount to Addl EO Dharma Reddy
- Of the amount, Rs 9 cr will be for SVBC trust and Rs 1 cr for SV Sarvashtreyas (Balamandir) Trust

TIRUMALA

Donations poured in to various TTD trusts which netted a total revenue of Rs 10 crore on a single day on Friday. New Delhi-based PASCO company chief executive officer (CEO) Sanjay Passi had donated Rs 10 crore in which Rs 9 crores towards SVBC Trust and Rs 1 crore to SV Sarvashtreyas (Balamandir) Trust of TTD. He handed over the DD to TTD additional EO and SVBC MD A V Dharma Reddy at Ran-



PASCO company CEO Sanjay Passi and his wife Shalini handing over demand draft for Rs 10 crore to Addl EO of TTD at Tirumala temple on Friday

ganayakula Mandapam at Tirumala temple. Later, speaking to the media along with his spouse Shalini Passi, he said he had been visiting Tirumala since 2004 and has darshan twice a year. He said he was very much impressed to see the various charitable activities taken up by TTD through the trusts it floated to take up various social services activities for health, education, promotion of Vedas, Anandanam (free food) etc. and wanted to contribute his mite to support TTD vigorously continue the service activi-

ties. Meanwhile, with this whopping donation of Rs 9 crore to TTD, the total donations to SVBC Trust have crossed Rs 25 crore strengthening the TTD channel financially. It is pertinent to note that, TTD in response to devotees at large resolved to make SVBC an ad free channel which naturally makes TTD incur a huge amount for running the channel against the backdrop TTD set up SVBC trust to seek donations to make a self-sufficient channel or at least reduce the burden on TTD to some extent.

LAWYER COUPLE MURDER

Cong leaders knock at Guv's door, seek CBI probe

TPCC chief Uttam Kumar Reddy alleges that the accused persons in the double murder case are reportedly close to Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

TELANGANA Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) President & MP N Uttam Kumar Reddy, a delegation of Congress party met Governor Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan at Raj Bhavan on Friday and requested her to direct for a court monitored CBI investigation into the brutal murder of lawyer couple, Gattu Vaman Rao and PV Nagamani.

G Vaman Rao and his wife PV Nagamani were hanged to death by TRS activists in broad daylight at Ramgiri on February 17. They lawyer couple, appearing as counsels in different cases, had filed a PIL about the alleged custodial



death of a Dalit, Seelam Rangaiah, in Manthani police station of Ramagundam Police Commissionerate. During a recent hearing of the matter in the High Court, Vaman Rao, who was appearing as counsel in the PIL plea filed by his wife stated that they were being harassed with false cases and threatening calls from the police and others," Uttam Kumar Reddy informed the Governor in the representation.

Uttam said that we or the general public do not believe that the local police would carry out a fair or neutral investigation into the double murder,"

Speaking to media persons later, Uttam alleged that the accused persons in

the double murder case were reportedly close to Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao. He also alleged that the local police were trying to shield the TRS leaders who were involved in the brutal murders. He said there was a larger conspiracy behind the murders which needs to be exposed. "The lawyer couple's murder is directly linked to Manthani's custodial death which is again linked to sand mafia backed by top TRS leaders. However, local police are trying to suppress the facts to protect the TRS leaders who are involved in the murders," he alleged adding that Police Commissioner Satyanarayana was acting like an agent of TRS leaders.

Parties in a quandary over slew of independents in Council poll fray

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

THE political parties are now worried of the large number of independent candidates in fray in the Council election under graduates quota to be held on March 14 as there are as many as 135 independent candidates in the two Graduates constituencies apart from the recognised political parties.

With the last day of withdrawal ending on Friday, the number of candidates in both the Graduates constituencies are 164 including 93 in Mahabubnagar-Ranga Reddy-Hyderabad and 71 in Nalgonda-Warangal-Khammam constituency. According to the Election Commission, five candidates withdrew their nomination papers on Friday. Among those who withdrew the nominations include former MLC and Rashtriya Lok Dal leader Kapilvai Dileep from Mahabubnagar-Ranga Reddy-Hyderabad Graduates constituency. Other four candidates include two each from the two Graduates constituencies.

The leaders are worried that these

With the last day of withdrawal ending on Friday, the number of candidates in both the Graduates constituencies are 164 including 93 in Mahabubnagar-Ranga Reddy-Hyderabad and 71 in Nalgonda-Warangal-Khammam constituency



many candidates would eat away their vote share and this would impact their chances in the election.

This is not the first time that these many nominations were filed by the independents. Huge number of independents and the turmeric farmers had filed nominations during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections in Nizamabad. These candidates not only collectively received over a lakh votes but also ensured defeat of

TRS leader Kalvakuntla Kavitha. In another election, the victims in the Polepally village filed nominations protesting against the SEZ.

According to the political analysts, most of the independents do not hope to win the election but want to upset the appeal of the mainstream political parties. They tend to give a message that they cannot take their votes for granted.

The parties try to persuade these independents to withdraw. The BJP has ensured that the Rashtriya Lok Dal candidate Dileep withdrew the nomination. Party leaders said that Dileep had withdrawn in support of N Ramchander Rao.

CM MOOTS AGENCY FOR LIVELIHOOD PROGRAMMES

AMARAVATI

CHIEF Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy reviewed the progress of YSR Cheyutha, YSR Aasara, Jagananna Thodu, MGNREGS and volunteers' felicitation at camp office here on Friday.

On the implementation of livelihood programmes opted by women beneficiaries under YSR Cheyutha and Aasara schemes, the Chief Minister said the bankers and officials should work in tandem to support the beneficiaries and directed appointment of an agency for proper implementation of livelihood programmes opted.

The officials said options were received to set up 66,702 retail outlets under Cheyutha and Aasara schemes, of which 98 per cent of the outlets were established and added that they also have set up a call centre to provide immediate help. They said there are about 16.25 lakh people who have opted for small businesses, textiles, handicrafts, food products, jewellery and chemicals apart from retail outlets and added that they had also prepared plans to support them in their business. They said they will provide employment opportunities in these fields with partnership of reputed companies.

With regard to Jagananna Jeevakranti, the officials said goats and sheep will be distributed to another 70,719 people by December 2021 and added that they were being distributed to 5,000 people every month.

Detailing on Jagananna Palavelluva, the officials said another 1,06,376 units of goats and sheep will be delivered by December 2021.

The Chief Minister said the distribution of sheep, goats and



Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy reviewing implementation of livelihood schemes and criteria for felicitation of volunteers at his camp office in Tadepalli on Friday

■ Reviews progress in YSR Cheyutha, YSR Aasara, Jagananna Thodu and job guarantee scheme

■ Asks officials and banks to work in coordination for proper implementation of livelihood schemes selected by beneficiaries

■ Volunteers will be selected in 3 categories for felicitation with cash prizes and awards

dairy cattle should be expedited and completed before the implementation of second phase of Cheyutha and Aasara schemes. The Chief Minister directed the bankers to ensure immediate disbursement of loans for pending applications under Jagananna Thodu.

The bankers said steps were being taken to sanction loans to remaining people through a special drive and added that Andhra Pradesh is far ahead compared to other states in the implementation of schemes.

The officials briefed the Chief Minister on felicitating volunteers across the state. Volunteers will be selected into three categories according to their qualifications. Volunteers who have served continuously for one year will be considered in Level 1, five people from every mandal or town will be considered in level 2 and five volunteers in every

constituency will be considered in level 3 for felicitation.

For Level 1 volunteers, a cash incentive of Rs 10,000, badge along with Seva Mitra award, for level 2 volunteers, a cash incentive of Rs 20,000, special badge along with Seva Ratna award, for level 3 volunteers, a cash incentive of Rs 30,000, special badge, medal along with Seva Vajra award will be given, the officials said.

They have set the qualifications for the selection of volunteers for the awards. The officials have considered modesty, distribution of pensions within three days, attendance, use of apps, participation in implementation of Navaratna, Covid-19 survey, etc., as criteria for selection of volunteers for the awards. This programme would start from Ugadi and the Chief Minister will be attending events at three venues in three places of

the state.

Reviewing on MGNREGS, the officials said the state government has logged 2,328 lakh working days in 2020-21, which was highest since the programme was started and added that the highest number of working days was in June with 798 lakh working days. The Chief Minister directed the officials to expedite the construction works of Rythu Bharosa Kendras and village clinics.

Panchayat raj minister Peddireddi Ramachandra Reddy, panchayat raj principal secretary Gopal Krishna Dwivedi, animal husbandry special chief secretary Poonam Malakondaiah, village and ward secretariats principal secretary Ajay Jain, labour principal secretary Udayalakshmi, panchayat Raj commissioner Girija Sankar, finance secretary Gulzar, and other senior officials were present.

Assembly polls in 5 States from March 27

Continued from P1

Assam Assembly polls will be conducted in three phases on March 27, April 1 and April 6, while polling in Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry will take place in a single phase on April 6.

Elections for the West Bengal Assembly will be held in eight phases, up from seven last time, beginning with polling for 30 seats on March 27, Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora said while announcing the poll schedule.

The second phase of West Bengal elections has been scheduled on April 1 and will cover 30 constituencies, followed by the third phase on April 6 for 31 seats, fourth phase on April 10 for 44 constituencies, fifth phase on April 17 for 45 seats, sixth phase for 43 seats on April 22, seventh phase on April 26 for 36 seats and last and eighth phase

on April 29 for 35 seats, Arora said.

The current Assam Assembly's term ends on May 31; Tamil Nadu's on May 4; West Bengal's on May 31; Kerala's on June 1, and Puducherry's on June 8. Assam has 126 seats, Tamil Nadu 234, West Bengal 294, Kerala 140 and Puducherry has 30 seats.

Model Code of Conduct comes into force as soon as the elections are announced.

Arora said that the Bihar Assembly elections were a litmus test for election authorities, coming as it did in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Some 18.86 crore voters will vote for 824 Assembly seats, the Election Commissioner said. There will be 2.7 lakh polling stations, he said.

All election officers will be vaccinated. Door-to-door campaigning will be

restricted to five people because of Covid-19.

"Adequate CRPF troops have been despatched to all five states and UT," he said. "Adequate CAPFs deployment will be ensured during elections. All critical and vulnerable polling stations identified and an adequate number of CAPFs will be deployed," he said.

Political roadshows will be allowed with a limit of five vehicles. "Everyone on election duty for the upcoming polls for five Assemblies will be vaccinated against Covid-19 before polling day," Arora said.

Arrangements will be put in place for candidates to file their nominations online for the five assembly polls. Voting will be allowed for an additional hour, keeping in mind Covid-19 safety guidelines, he said.

Also, webcasting

arrangements will be in place at polling stations in critical and vulnerable areas, while adequate CAPF (Central Armed Police Forces) deployment will be ensured for the assembly polls, Arora said. All critical and vulnerable areas have been identified and advance teams have been already deployed across all four states and one union territory Puducherry going to the polls, he added.

Arora said the nationwide vaccination drive has made the situation more conducive for conducting elections and the Health Ministry has declared everyone on poll duty as frontline workers for the vaccine purpose. "Keeping in view different sensitivities in different states, the commission has appointed two special police observers to West Bengal and two expenditure observers in Tamil Nadu," he said.

Indo-Pak pact on ceasefire rekindles hope for peaceful future

‘We have suffered a lot due to Pak shelling, education of kids affected, houses damaged’

ANIL BHATT
JAMMU

THE announcement by India and Pakistan to strictly observe all agreements on ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC) and other sectors has rekindled hope for a peaceful future among border residents in Jammu and Kashmir who have been living under constant fear of firing and shelling.

"We are joyous over the news of a fresh agreement between the two countries to observe complete cease-

fire along the borderline. It has rekindled hope among us," Kadal-resident Mohammad Isaaq said. Isaaq hoped that Pakistan would keep its promise of complete observance of the ceasefire agreement. "We hope Pakistan keeps the promise of not firing on us. We do not feel that they will religiously observe ceasefire. They have made such promises in the past as well, only to violate them," he said. For the past few years, Pakistan has engaged in shelling and firing along the LoC and the International Border (IB) resulting in casualties, damage to



A damaged house due to Pakistan shelling

houses, schools, health centres and religious places. "We have suffered a lot to due Pakistani firing and shelling.... Education of kids was affected. Houses were damaged. There were casualties. The fresh agreement of maintaining complete ceasefire is a happy news for us. Hope it stays," Sarpanch Bhawani in Rajouri district Sunil Kumar said. Subash Chander, a Panch, said although they are very happy over the news, but it is difficult to trust Pakistan. Similar apprehension was raised by Kerni-resident Mohammad Ashraf who welcomed the

fresh agreement but raised question over the intention of Pakistan. Kiran Kumar, a Kathua District Development Council (DDC) member, says that it is a happy news for border residents. "We thank the central government for this decision. We want Pakistan to behave as a good neighbour by ensuring zero firing from their side. Farmers will fearlessly cultivate their lands on border. Life will be better," he said. India and Pakistan on Thursday announced that they have agreed to strictly observe all agreements on ceasefire along the Line of Control

(LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir and other sectors. A joint statement issued in Islamabad and New Delhi said the Director Generals of Military Operations of the two countries held discussions over the established mechanism of hotline contact and reviewed the situation along the LoC and all other sectors in a "free, frank and cordial" atmosphere. India and Pakistan signed a ceasefire agreement in 2003, but it has hardly been followed in letter and spirit over past several years with more violations than observance of the pact.

Threat letter found in car parked near Ambani home

MUMBAI

A letter found in the vehicle with explosives parked near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's house in Mumbai said it was only a "glimpse" of things to come, the police said on Friday.

A Scorpio van with gelatin sticks and a fake number plate was found parked on Thursday on Carmichael Road near 'Antilia', the multi-storey residence of Ambani, chairman of Reliance Industries, in South Mumbai.

The letter found in the car was in Hindi but written in English script and was purportedly addressed to Ambani, his wife and the family, a police official said.

This was only a "glimpse" (glimpse) but the next time the "saamaan" (explosives) will be fully assembled, it said.

The letter was in a blue bag next to the driver's seat, while the gelatin sticks were kept in a packet with the name of its manufacturer.

Also, a bag with 'Mumbai Indians' printed on it was found in the car.

There was no assembled explosive device, the police had said earlier.

Investigators also found at least four number plates in the Scorpio and one of them matched with that of a car in Ambani's security detail, the police had said.

The Scorpio had been stolen last week and its owner had even lodged a complaint about it, the police said on Friday.



Court approved tigress Avni's killing, says SC; clears official

NEW DELHI

THE Supreme Court on Friday closed the case seeking contempt action against senior Maharashtra officials for rewarding people who had killed an alleged 'man-eater' tigress 'Avni' in Yavatmal district in 2018 after it was informed that the killing was approved by the top court.

A bench of Chief Justice Bobde and Justices AS Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian, which had earlier issued notice for initiating contempt action Maharashtra principal secretary Vikas Kharge and eight others, permitted the animal rights activist Sangeeta Dogra to withdraw her plea. During the hearing conducted through video conferencing, the bench told Dogra that the state government in its reply has said that the decision to kill the man eating tigress was approved by this Court. "We cannot say that the tigress was not a man eater and review the earlier decision of the court," the bench said, adding that if the villagers celebrated that they were relieved by the killing then how it can be taken note of by the authorities. Dogra, appearing in person, said that correct facts were not put before the court.

WEST BENGAL, TN CMs' SPRINT TO WOO VOTERS

SOPS SHOWERED, JUST IN TIME

Palaniswami announces waiver on gold loans of up to six sovereigns
Political violence has reached a new high under TMC Govt: Rajnath

KOLKATA

HOURS before the Election Commission announced the schedule for Assembly polls in five states, West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee showered sops for the people of Bengal in a bid to garner their support.

"I am pleased to announce a hike in the wages of daily wage workers under West Bengal Urban Employment Scheme: It has been increased to Rs 202 per day from Rs 144 earlier for unskilled labour, to Rs 303 from Rs 172 earlier for semi-skilled and Rs 404 for skilled labour - a new category that has been introduced," Banerjee Tweeted.

The CM further said that a total of 56,500 workers (40,500 unskilled, 8000 semi-skilled, 8000 skilled) will benefit from this.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister E Palaniswami announced a gold loan waiver.

The state government announced a waiver on gold loans of up to six sovereigns given by cooperative banks to farmers and the poor.

Senior BJP leader Rajnath Singh said political violence has reached a "new



Experts demonstrate the working of EVM and VVPAT during a training programme ahead of the West Bengal Assembly elections 2021, at Suri in Birbhum district of West Bengal

high" under the TMC dispensation while West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee looks the other way. Speaking at a public meeting here in Dakshin Dinajpur district, Singh said, people do not want a government which cannot ensure their security.

"If the BJP is elected to power in the State polls, political violence will come to an end. "The Trinamool Congress (TMC) had come to power with 'Maa Mati Manush' slogan. But what happened later? The slogan has been trampled for all practical purpose.

Are poll dates as per suggestions of Modi, Shah?

KOLKATA

QUESTIONING the eight-phase assembly elections in West Bengal, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said on Friday that she suspects that the dates were announced as per the suggestions of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah for better management of the BJP's poll campaign. Addressing a press conference at her residence in Kalighat, Banerjee said the Election Commission should not look at the state "through the eyes of the saffron color" -- a reference to the BJP. "With all due respect to the Election Commission, I want to say that questions are being raised on why elections will be held in so many phases in Bengal while other states will be voting in one phase. If EC doesn't provide justice to the people, where will the people go," she said. Banerjee said that despite "all these tricks", she will win the elections. "I have information from my sources that the poll dates are similar to the ones BJP wanted."



Students banned from driving 2-wheelers to school in Goa

PANAJI

THE Goa Education Department on Friday banned students from driving two-wheelers to school.

According to an order issued by Director of Education Santosh Amonkar, the reason behind banning school students from driving on two-wheelers stems from complaints of reckless driving by students.

"It is informed that many students are seen using two wheelers and riding in a reckless manner violating traffic rules," Amonkar said in his order.

Amonkar has also urged heads of all educational institutions to address the issue of reckless driving by students with their respective Parents Teachers Associations, while also urging them to ensure that no student should drive two wheelers to the school campus.

"It is once again enjoined upon all heads of institutions to address this issue in PTA meeting and ensure that no students will drive two wheelers to the schools," the order states.

AAP eyes on 2022 Guj Assembly polls

SURAT

BUYOEY by the Aam Aadmi Party's good performance in the recently-held Surat civic polls, party chief Arvind Kejriwal has now set his eyes on the 2022 Gujarat Assembly polls. Kejriwal, who arrived in Surat on Friday, said that AAP would seek votes from the people of the state in the next Assembly polls based on the performance of the party's 27 newly-elected corporators in the city. Polls to six civic bodies in Gujarat, including in Surat, were held on Sunday. While the BJP retained power in the Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC) by winning 93 seats, the AAP bagged the remaining 27 seats.

The Congress failed to win even a single seat. During his address to the party corporators here, Kejriwal said, "The people of Gujarat are watching you with great hope. In our first attempt, AAP won 28 Assembly seats in Delhi and came to power. People trusted us because they knew that we are true patriots, as we were associated with Anna Hazare's agitation." "In the 49 days of our rule, we did a lot of pro-people work. As a result, the people of Delhi gave us 67 seats in the second election. Now, six crore people of Gujarat will observe the work of 27 AAP corporators. If you perform well, I am sure there will be a huge revolution in 2022," the Delhi chief minister added. Fearing a "poaching attempt", Kejriwal warned the elected representatives to inform the party leaders if "anyone from the BJP" contacts them over phone and gives an offer to switch sides.



Trucks are parked at a terminal during a nationwide strike to protest against rising fuel prices and Goods and Service Tax (GST) rules, in Mumbai on Friday

Mixed response to Bharat bandh

PURNA SINGH
NEW DELHI

THE Bharat Vyapar Bandh called by Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) on Friday to protest against the Goods and Service Tax (GST) laws and rising petrol prices has had a mixed impact across the country. The Bandh successful in Punjab, Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Maharashtra. It has limited impact in other states. There is no effect of the Bharat Bandh in Delhi, the capital of the country. Most business institutions remained open throughout the day. The movement of vehicles on the roads also remained normal. It is believed that the Bharat Bandh has not been widely affected by the shutdown of the Bharatiya Janata Party-backed traders, many trade organisations and transport organisations.

However, CAIT in a statement said the shutdown was a "grand success" as more than 8 crore small businesses belonging to about 40,000 trade associations across the country kept their shutters down and no trading activity took place in any commercial

market.

Brijesh Goyal, president of Chamber of Trade and Industry (CTI), said most of the markets in Delhi were open but the association extended its support to the nationwide business shutdown.

"Around 98 per cent markets, hotels, restaurants and industrial areas were open except in some parts of Chawri Bazaar and Karol Bagh. However, they have extended their support. We also held a protest at Kashmiri Gate around 12.30 pm," Goyal said.

Although various market bodies said they support the cause for the Bandh, they could not shut down their shops or outlets due to multiple reasons.

The Bandh was not enforced at Connaught Place market.

"We are completely in support of the cause. However, it was not practically feasible to enforce the "Bandh" in the market this time. The traders are already reeling under the losses they incurred during the lockdown and they have heavy burden of rents. We completely support the cause and feel the demands are right," said Atul Bhargava, President, New Delhi Traders Association.

Labour activist Naudeep granted bail

CHANDIGARH

AROUND six weeks after her arrest in a criminal case filed under several charges including attempt to murder, labour rights activist Naudeep Kaur was on Friday granted bail by the Punjab and Haryana High Court. "The court accepted the bail application of Naudeep Kaur.

She has been granted bail by the high court," her counsel Arshdeep Singh Cheema said here.

Kaur was arrested in Haryana's Sonapat for allegedly gheraoing an industrial unit and demanding money from a company on January 12. Police had claimed that a team of cops was allegedly attacked with sticks, resulting in injuries to seven policemen in the incident.

A case under several sections of the Indian Penal Code including 307 (attempt to murder), 384 (punishment for extortion), 148 (rioting), 353 (assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty) and 379 B (snatching and use of force) was registered by the Sonapat police.

Kaur's bail plea came up for hearing on Friday.

Saudi Crown Prince implicated in Khashoggi's murder

Mohammed has denied any involvement in the killing, but says he accepts symbolic responsibility

WASHINGTON

A US intelligence report expected to be de-classified as soon as Friday implicates Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in approving the killing of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi, according to a person familiar with the findings.

The report builds on classified intelligence from the CIA and other intelligence agencies after Khashoggi's murder in October 2018 inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, according to the person, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the report hasn't yet been

released. It wasn't immediately clear how much detail the declassified version of the report will provide about Prince Mohammed's role in the killing.

The decision to release the report, compiled by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, reflects the Biden administration's determination to recalibrate relations with Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter, amid tensions over its human rights record.

In advance of the report's publication, President Joe Biden held a call on Thursday with Saudi Arabia's King Salman. Biden discussed regional security and the renewed U.S. and United Nations effort to end the war in Yemen, and he "affirmed the importance the United



States places on universal human rights and the rule of law," the White House said in a statement.

Prince Mohammed has denied any involvement in the killing, while saying he accepts symbolic responsibility for it as the country's de facto ruler. Saudi officials have said the murder was carried out by rogue agents who have since been prosecuted.

State Department spokesman Ned Price declined to comment when asked about the report Thursday but suggested that the U.S. was looking at other ways to hold the perpetrators of the killing responsible for their actions. Among the options may be cutting back arms sales to Saudi Arabia and imposing sanctions.

"I expect that we will be in a position before long to speak to steps to promote accountability going forward for this horrific crime," Price told reporters in Washington. "Transparency, as it often is, is an element of accountability. I wouldn't expect the accountability to stop there, however." The decision to release the report, which was withheld by the Trump administration, reflects the difference in attitudes toward Saudi Arabia, and human rights issues, under Biden. Former President Donald Trump dismissed concerns about whether the crown prince approved the killing -- "Maybe he did, maybe he didn't," he said -- citing the economic rewards of selling arms to the Saudis.

TODAY'S QUOTE

NEP will make India knowledge capital

“The focus that National Education Policy (NEP) has given to innovation, entrepreneurship, skill development and the urge to expand education to knowledge, this new thrust and thinking will make India the knowledge capital of the world. The policy allows students to be more creative in their chosen fields.


— Piyush Goyal, Union Minister



BORROWING

Vedanta Resources raises \$1.2 bn

VEDANTA Resources has raised \$1.2 billion in a bond offering that saw strong investor interest, banking sources said on Friday. Vedanta is looking to buy as many as 37.17 crore or 10 per cent of its India unit, at Rs 160 per share. At that price, the total consideration of the deal would be about Rs 5,948 crore.

FOREX (buy rates in ₹)			
US Dollar	77.67	South	
Euro	93.32	African Rand	5.64
UAE Dirham	21.94	Hong Kong Dollar	10.86
Thai Baht	2.78	Japanese Yen	0.79
British Pound	106.27	New Zealand Dollar	56.43
Australian Dollar	60.18	Saudi Riyal	21.48
Canadian Dollar	60.99	Swedish Krona	10.12
Swiss Franc	84.35	Singapore Dollar	57.96

—VISAKHAPATNAM SATURDAY 27 FEBRUARY 2021

BIZ BRIEFS

Dineout starts GIRF

DINEOUT, a restaurant tech solutions and dining-out platform, started its 6th edition of Great Indian Restaurant Festival (GIRF) from February 26 to March 31. The platform gives a guaranteed flat 50 per cent off on membership and assured cashback. Popular chains participating in this festival are JW Marriott, Radisson, Airlive, Mad Over Donuts, Pizza Hut, Burger King, Barbeque Nation, Cafe Delhi Heights & many more. “In the age of on-line sales where brands often use big per cent discounts and not mean them, customers lose trust. We reduce that gap and further enables the trust in users with the end result being more footfall & business for restaurants,” said Ankit Mehrotra, CEO and co-founder, Dineout.

Muthoot extends shopping fest

MUTHOOT Fin Corp has further expanded its successful ‘MuthootFinCorp Shopping Dhamakka’ across the southern States as part of the recently launched its ‘Restart India’ campaign with an aim to empower small-time retailers. The shopping festival started in August 2020 in Kerala, which commenced again on January 18 and would continue till the end of February. In order to help small retailers’ overcome the sluggishness of the business caused by the outbreak, Muthoot FinCorp’s Restart India initiative strives to help these retailers ride the Covid-19 wave by making it their mission to help to restart the Indian small businesses. The shopping dhamakka had directly benefited more than 25,000 Covid-stricken shopkeepers in Kerala. Nearly 15 lakh customers took part in the shopping festival.

The Market Bloodbath

Sensex sinks 1,940 points; bears tighten grip amid global meltdown

MUMBAI

THE benchmark BSE Sensex crashed ahead of the third quarter GDP data release, besides keeping an eye on simmering geopolitical tensions between the US and Syria.

At the day’s close, the 30-share BSE Sensex settled 1,939.32 points or 3.80 per cent lower at 49,099.99 – its worst one-day fall since May 4 last year. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty plunged 568.20 points or 3.76 per cent to close the session at 14,529.15 – the biggest single-day drop since March 23 last year. On the Sensex chart, all 30 constituents ended in the

FRIDAY FREEFALL

- Biggest single-day fall for Sensex in 10 months
- Global selloffs triggered by panic in bond mkts

- Investors turns cautious ahead of Q3 GDP data

red, with eight scrips logging over 5 per cent drop. Sectorally, banking index suffered the maximum loss with over 4.8 per cent drop. Financial and telecom indices too fell sharply by 4.9 per cent and 3.85 per cent, respectively. “Panic in global bond markets led to sharp rise in yields which spooked investors amid fears of interest rate cycle reversal,” said Hemang Jani, Head of Equity Strategy, Broking & Distribution, Motilal Oswal. Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said, “Domestic markets tumbled in line with global trend triggered by a sharp rise in bond yields. Increasing

geopolitical tension between the US and Syria aggravated the selling.” Although negative, mid and small caps outperformed their larger indices showing investor confidence, he said, adding the market will gain momentum as the global market is expected to stabilise supported by maintaining accommodative monetary policy and a growing economy.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses closed with heavy losses due to a rout in global bond markets. Stock exchanges in Europe were also trading with losses in mid-session deals. Most global markets traded lower after Wall

Investors lose ₹5.3L cr

INVESTOR wealth slumped by a whopping Rs 5.3 lakh crore on Friday as the benchmark BSE Sensex posted its biggest single-day fall in nearly ten months.

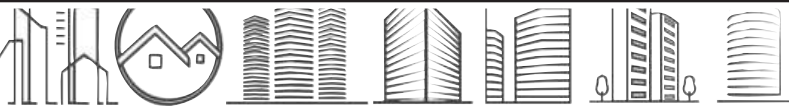
At the close of trade, the total market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies eroded by Rs 5,37,375.94 crore to Rs 2,00,81,095.73 crore. The total market capitalisation of these companies stood at Rs 2,06,18,471.67 crore on February 25. It was the biggest single-day drop since March 23 last year.

Street’s main indexes tumbled, following a steep rise in benchmark US Treasury yields.

Rupee dives 104 paise against \$

MUMBAI

THE Indian rupee on Friday posted its biggest single-day fall in nearly 19 months, tumbling 104 paise to close at 73.47 against the US dollar as a rout in global bond markets weighed on investor sentiments. At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened at 72.43 against the greenback, then lost further ground to touch an intra-day low of 73.51. It finally ended at 73.47 against the American currency, registering a massive fall of 104 paise over its previous close – the biggest single-day fall for the rupee since August 5, 2019. On Thursday, the rupee had settled at 72.43 against the American currency. On a weekly basis, the rupee has tumbled 82 paise against the US dollar. The dollar index, which gauges the greenback’s strength against a basket of six currencies, advanced 0.43 per cent to 90.52. “US bond yields have surged on worries about inflationary pressures due to unprecedented liquidity infusion in the system,” Sugandha Sachdeva, VP-Metals, Energy & Currency Research, Religare Broking, said.



REAL CORNER



K-shaped recovery for realty; smaller players lagging

Gradual unlocking of the economy and pent-up demand has been supporting housing sales. Moreover, the repo-linked lending rate (RLLR) for home loans has touched a historical low.

A “K-shaped recovery” is underway in the realty sector, where access to credit and demand consolidation has helped large players grow handsomely even as their smaller sized rivals struggle, a report said on Monday.

The smaller sized real estate companies’ woes will “weigh heavily” on the sector as a whole, domestic rating agency Icrs said in its report, adding such players hold an 80 per cent market share.

The agency said the top-10 listed companies witnessed a 61 per cent growth in the December quarter, even as the broader market remained 24 per cent below the pre-Covid levels. A “K-shaped recovery” is representative of inherent inequalities, where the rich get richer, even as the marginalised slide down. The phrase has been used a lot by observers in the aftermath of the pandemic, which has hurt the most for the poor and migrant populations.

“Residential real estate is witnessing a K-shaped recovery on account of accelerated consolidation,” the agency said, pointing out that the large, listed players almost doubled their market share in the current year to above 21 per cent in the first nine months of the financial year 2021 (FY21) as against the financial year 2020 (FY20). In terms of launches as well, the market share of large developers has increased from 11 per cent in FY20 to 22 per cent in the first nine months of FY21, it said, adding larger developers have been benefitting from demand consolidation and better credit availability.



“Home-buyers had been leaning towards developers with an established track record of on-time and quality project completion even prior to the onset of the pandemic. This had resulted in large, listed players reporting healthy sales and collections in recent years, despite the prevailing liquidity crisis and unfavourable supply-demand dynamics,” Shubham Jain, senior vice president at the agency, said.

For the broader market, Covid-19 triggered one of the worst demand crashes in recorded history, with housing sales volumes witnessing a Y decline of 62 per cent during Q1FY21 across the top eight cities of the country, which

came down to 24 per cent by Q3.

Overall operating cash flows for most developers, including the listed players, are expected to witness moderation in the current financial year, resulting in increased reliance on available liquidity and/or refinancing to meet committed outflows, the agency said.

However, the larger, organised players have maintained considerable liquidity buffers, and have low levels of leverage, together with high financial flexibility.

These aspects have provided significant support in managing event-related shocks. Thus, most large organised players with established brands, low leveraged balance sheets and adequate liquidity are benefitting from the acceleration in consolidation in the residential real estate segment, it said. Gradual unlocking of the economy and pent-up demand has been supporting housing sales. Moreover, the repo-linked lending rate (RLLR) for home loans has touched a historical low.

This has resulted in improved affordability and has been stimulating house purchases, at least from larger, reputed developers with a strong track record of timely project completion and quality construction, it said.

Office space use likely to grow 12-18% next fiscal

NET leasing of commercial office space across the country will grow 12-18 per cent to 25-30 million square feet (msf) next fiscal, riding on a low base of the current fiscal, gradual return of tenants to offices, and improvement in the macroeconomic situation, a Cricil analysis showed on Thursday.

Despite this, net leasing next fiscal will be below pre-pandemic levels as the impact of work-from-home will continue to weigh on leasing decisions of corporates. The credit profiles of commercial real estate owners are expected to resist the hiccups due to pandemic.

A study of Cricil Ratings’ rated universe of 37 companies owning 86 assets, with debt of around Rs 30,000 crore and total leasable area of around 100 msf (20 per cent of the entire operational stock in top six cities) suggests healthy cushion in debt servicing can withstand the marginal build-up of vacancy or pressure on rental rates. Between fiscal 2018 and 2020, net leasing of commercial office space clocked a healthy compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 15-20 per cent, with Hyderabad, NCR, and MMR accounting for the bulk of the pie. This was driven by healthy pace of employee addition (6-7 per cent CAGR in the past 3-4 years) in the IT/ITes and BFSI sectors.

The trend has reversed this fiscal due to the demand destruc-



tion and heightened uncertainty brought by the pandemic, with corporate revenues taking a hit and most companies adopting a work-from-home policy.

Employee additions, especially in the IT segment, wilted to 80,000 during April-December 2020 compared with two lakh annually before the pandemic, partially restricting incremental leasing. A few large deals, especially in the e-commerce, BFSI, and technology sectors in cities such as Bengaluru and Hyderabad, did nevertheless, provide some support to leasing. Overall, net leasing is estimated to decline 35-45 per cent on-year this fiscal to 20-25 msf in top six cities.

Isha Chaudhary, Director, Cricil Research, said: “Despite limited expansion by corporates this fiscal, rationalisation of supply and deferment of a few projects to the next year have re-

stricted vacancy build-up.

However, next fiscal, with 35 msf of supply estimated to be completed, vacancy levels are likely to rise by 200-300 bps across the top six cities. Also, rental rates will remain constrained next fiscal after witnessing decline of an estimated 3 per cent this fiscal.”

Cricil Rating’s rated universe though saw a comparatively lower impact due to the pandemic. This sample includes some marquee names, as well as assets under various REITs. Occupancy levels for the sample decreased only marginally to 92.2 per cent in September 2020 (vs 93.7 per cent in March 2020).

The contracted rental rates are still below the market rental rates for 90 per cent of the tenants and thus has not led to any downward revision in the rentals yet.

MOTERA MAYHEM

ENGLISH MEDIA BLAMES TEAM, PITCH

LONDON

THE British media lambasted its cricket team's abject surrender to India in the pink-ball Test, holding the much-debated rotation policy and technical failures of its batsmen responsible for the humiliation even as the Motera pitch also drew some flak.

England on Thursday suffered an embarrassing 10-wicket defeat in the third Test against India on a spin-friendly Motera track to go down 1-2 in the four-match series. The match ended under two days with the pitch drawing flak from some former players like Michael Vaughan, who called it "not ideal" for Test cricket. But 'The Guardian' newspaper focussed on England's own shoddy display. "Inquest into England's two-day thrashing will yield no easy answers," read the headline of its report. "It is hard to work out what to blame for the disastrous third Test defeat against India when so many things went wrong.

The newspaper went on to pin the blame on the rotation policy, which led to resting of key players during the series, the failure to read the conditions, and "the hangover from the heavy defeat in Chennai last week." "Then the batsmen's inability to press their advantage when they were 74 for two in the first innings, the systematic lack of exposure to spin



bowling caused by the skewed priorities of the ECB, the pink ball, the extreme nature of the pitch and the plain fact that they were up against a better team," the article further read.

'The Sun' called England "inept" and criticised the visitors' selection policy. "Inept England humiliated in India on an Ahmedabad bunsen-burner with one spinner and four No.11 batsmen," the paper wrote in a column by Dave Kidd. 'Wisden' summed up the defeat saying: "Never in the history of Test

matches in this country has English cricket been made to look quite so poor."

But there were a few newspapers and experts, who squarely blamed the Motera pitch for turning the Test into a two-day contest. Andy Bunn in his column in 'The Mirror' wrote: "India close to crossing boundaries of sportsmanship with pitch - it was NOT Test cricket" "Making the most of home advantage is fair enough but this was not a pitch fit for a blue riband, five-day match after England lost to India

in the shortest Test match for nearly 90 years."

According to renowned cricket writer Syld Berry of 'The Telegraph': "This unfit pitch was no advert for Test cricket - India should be docked World Championship points." Berry called on the ICC to ban the newly-built Narendra Modi cricket stadium for producing, what according to him, was a sub-standard wicket. But he fears that world body would not be brave enough to do so as the ground has been re-named after India's Prime Minister.

England looked like startled rabbits: Hussain

LONDON

ENGLAND have lost their batting rhythm after playing on two difficult surfaces and looked like "startled rabbits" in the second innings of the third Test against India, according to former skipper Nasser Hussain. Hussain said it's all about mentality now and the tourists need to find a way to draw the series, which will be a good result for them. England on Thursday suffered a 10-wicket defeat in the third Test against India inside two days to hand India an unassailable 2-1 lead. Joe Root and his men struggled on the spin-friendly Motera pitch, managing 112 and 81 in their two innings respectively. "I don't think it was an 81 all out pitch but this was a much tougher pitch than Chennai", Hussain said.

The 52-year-old, who represented England in 96 Tests, feels England need to get a good score in the first innings to have a chance at winning the next Test. "It is all about the mentality of that side now and to be fair to

carrot is there, 2-2 with India will not be a bad result at all. "Although I know that is a long way away when England haven't reached 200 in five innings. They have to get a score in the first innings," he added.



Hussain feels the scheduling, that sees English players play 17 Test, a World T20 while also participating in the IPL, is ridiculous and the selectors shouldn't be blamed for implementing the rotation policy. "The fault is not with the selectors or the players, it is with the schedule. Seventeen Tests, including part of an Ashes series, two IPLs, and a World T20 during a year in a global pandemic is ridiculous." "You cannot cope with that as an international cricketer and the selectors are trying to do their best. So, I can't say that and then go off on one when England lose." (PTI)

them a lot of the chat about the pitches and umpires has come from outside the dressing room. I have not heard a single England player say these conditions are unfair," said Hussain. "They have to find a way and Zak Crawley's first-innings fifty was a positive. The

Wearing shoes with rubber sole: Azharuddin's mantra to thrive on rank turners

NEW DELHI

WEARING shoes with rubber soles, assured footwork and proper shot-selection are the keys to success for batsmen on a "rank turner" like the Motera pitch, feels Mohammed Azharuddin, a former India captain and one of the finest players of spin. Azharuddin made the interest-

ing observation in a series of tweets after India crushed England inside two days in the third Test. The 58-year-old suggested that wearing shoes with rubber soles could be a better option than the ones having spikes. "It makes little sense to wear spikes when batting. Rubber soles don't hamper ability of batsmen. I have seen some amazing Test knocks being played on tough



surfaces by batsmen who wore shoes with rubber soles." Azharuddin tweeted. "The argument that batsmen can slip when running between wickets is countered by the fact that in Wimbledon, all tennis players wear shoes with rubber soles. "And the ones that come to mind are not just Indians like Sunil Gavaskar Mohinder Amarnath and Dilip Vengsarkar but also many a visiting batsman like Sir Vivian Richards, Mike Gatting Allan Border, Clive Lloyd and several others." Azharuddin, who played 99 Tests and 334 ODIs between 1985 and 2000, was disappointed with the batsmen's abject surrender. (PTI)

India can win against odds in all conditions: Hayden

C SHYAM SUNDAR

CHENNAI: Indian team has all the makings of a great side as it can not only fight it out but win against the odds in all conditions, former Australia opener Matthew Hayden said. India had recently defeated Australia 2-1 Down Under in a four-Test series. Virat Kohli's men then took an unassailable 2-1 lead over England following the 10-wicket win in the third Test at Ahmedabad on Thursday. "India



have shown that they are a modern team who can not only fight it out but win against the odds in all conditions. This is a mark of all the great

teams in history - the ability to win both at home and away," Hayden told PTI in an e-mail interaction.

"England after their fantastic win in the first Test at the M A Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai they failed to capitalise in the 2nd Test match for exactly the same reason Australia lost momentum against the tourists in Oz. Failure to post a huge first innings total," said Hayden. "England specifically reached an insurmountable total of 578 in the first

innings of the first test in Chennai through great batsmanship of skipper Joe Root reaching 218. "Conversely, Australia in Australia was unable to post match winning totals in the first innings of any Test, unable to convert starts into big totals." Hayden, who smashed a double ton in Chennai albeit in a losing cause in the memorable 2001 Test series in India, felt South Africa's AB de Villiers was the best exponent of the sweep shot in modern day cricket. (PTI)

Records that fell in the third Test

AHMEDABAD

- It was the shortest Test match in terms of balls (842) since the Second World War.
- Both teams scored a cumulative 387 runs -- the lowest in a Test match in Asia, surpassing the 422 scored by Pakistan and Australia in Sharjah in 2002.
- England's second innings' 81 is the second-lowest by any visiting team in India.
- England's total of 193 runs in the two innings is the lowest ever for any team in India.
- India's 145 is the lowest first innings total since 1909 by a team that went on to win the match by 10 wickets.
- Left-arm spinner Axar Patel's match haul of 11/70 is the best match figures in a day-night Test, surpassing

Australian Pat Cummins's 10/62 against Sri Lanka in Brisbane in January 2019.

- Patel's 11/70 are also the cheapest 10-wicket haul by an Indian in Test cricket, surpassing Ashwin's 12/85 against New Zealand in Hyderabad in 2012.
- Patel is the fourth Indian to take five-wicket hauls in three or more consecutive Test matches.
- Ashwin is the fourth Indian after Anil Kumble (619), Kapil Dev (434) and Harbhajan Singh (417) to take 400 Test wickets.
- Ashwin is the second fastest, in terms of matches, to reach 400 Test wickets (77 matches) after Muttiah Muralitharan (72).
- England's aggregate of 193 runs in this Test is their lowest in a Test since 175 (93 and 82) scored against New Zealand in Christchurch in 1983/84.

Padikkal cracks second successive ton as K'taka thrash Kerala

BENGALURU

YOUNG opener Devdutt Padikkal continued his sensational form, smashing a second successive century to lead defending champions Karnataka to a nine-wicket win over Kerala in the Vijay Hazare Trophy here on Friday.

Chasing Kerala's 278, Karnataka cantered home with 27 balls to spare with the Royal Challengers Bangalore opener hitting 13 fours and two sixes in an unbeaten knock of 126 from 138 balls. He got a fine support from Krishnamurthy Siddharth (84-ball 86 not out; 5x4, 3x6) as they toyed with the Kerala attack in their match-winning 180-run undefeated stand. Fresh from his 152 against Odisha, Padikkal carried on from where he left and put on a 99-run opening stand with skipper Ravikumar Samarth (62). The 20-year-old, who also has two half-centuries, now leads the Vijay Hazare



run chart with 427 runs from four matches at an astounding average of 142.33. The big win took Karnataka to the top of the Group E table ahead of Uttar Pradesh and Kerala on net run-rate. Earlier, Abhimanyu Mithun (5/52) and Prasidh Krishna (2/65) shared seven wickets to restrict Kerala to 277 for eight after Karnataka opted to bowl at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium here.

Baroda continue winning streak, beat Chhattisgarh

SURAT: SKIPPER Krunal Pandya's unbeaten 133 formed the cornerstone of Baroda's 13-run win over Chhattisgarh in an Elite Group A game of the Vijay Hazare Trophy here on Friday, even as Atit Sheth blazed away to a 16-ball 51. Opting to bat, Baroda rode on Pandya's hundred and Sheth's big-hitting to post 332/6 after a top-order failure, and then restricted the opposition to 319/9 to record their fourth win on the trot.

TN PIPS JHARKHAND

INDORE: Tamil Nadu on Friday ended Jharkhand's three-match winning streak with a convincing 67-run win in a Group B match of the Vijay Hazare Trophy here.

In other matches, Punjab chased down a target of 291 against Vidarbha for a four-wicket win, while Madhya Pradesh handed Andhra a 98-run defeat. Jharkhand is on

top of the standings with 12 points, followed by Punjab, Andhra, Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh with eight points. Vidarbha lies in last place with 4 points.

ICC BOARD MEET

BCCI opposes policy for global meets

KUSHAN SARKAR
NEW DELHI

THE Indian cricket board has expressed its reservations about ICC's policy of inviting bidders (Expression of Interest) for hosting global tournaments during the next eight year cycle between 2023-2031. During an ICC board meet on Thursday, the BCCI made it clear that they are completely against the idea of the global body issuing EOIs and demanding money from any potential hosting nation.

"The BCCI brass has made their displeasure clear about this EOI concept for the next cycle during yesterday's board meet," a senior BCCI official privy to the development, said. "In fact, we are confident of getting good support from Eng-

land and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) and Cricket Australia (CA)."

The Expression of Interest concept has blessings of ICC Chief Executive Manu Sawhney who had the support of boards like Pakistan and Sri Lanka. "Even some of the smaller boards like Oman and Emirates Cricket board along with Malaysia and Singapore are among those who have submitted combined EOI for hosting global meets," the source said.

It is believed that there has been around 93 Expressions of Interest for 28 flagship events (men, women and U19) during the 2023-31 cycle but this push to demand money for awarding hosting rights have met a roadblock from world's richest board which in principle is against such a policy. (PTI)

EAST BENGAL AND ODISHA LOOK TO END SEASON ON A HIGH

HANS NEWS SERVICE
GOA

BOTH SC East Bengal and Odisha FC will look to end their Hero Indian Super League seasons on a high when they face each other at the GMC Stadium in Bambolim, here on Saturday.

Neither team have had campaigns to write home about. While Odisha lie at the very bottom of the table, East Bengal haven't fared much better and are ninth. However, ending the season with a convincing win could give some relief to both sets of long-suffering supporters. Robbie Fowler's side were always pegged down by the inability of their forwards to convert possession into goals. Bright Enobakhare remains the only one of their strikers to have netted this season and SCEB lie at the very bottom of the goals scored list. The club was also let down by the failure of their Indian forwards to fire. Despite boasting big names like Jeje Lalpekhlu, CK Vineeth and Balwant Singh, Fowler managed to get zero shots on target from the trio.

Odisha has had similar woes throughout the season. Except for Diego Mauricio, no



other player stepped up in the goalscoring department. Mauricio was responsible for 57 percent of the goals that his team scored all season. Odisha coach Steven Dias though believes that his team will learn from their mistakes and come back stronger in the next season. "When you have a bad season there is always good to learn so many things out of this bad season. That's what we are all doing. This season isn't that good for us but there are so many things to learn from this season

so we can get better next season," he said.

Odisha's winless run now stands at ten games and they have also lost the most games and kept the least clean sheets. But despite the match featuring two teams who have nothing to play for but pride, Dias feels that both sets of players will not be short of motivation. "They also didn't have a good season like us," Dias said. "I think they will also come to win this match, we also want to win this match so we can end on a better note.

Hima inducted as DSP in Assam

GUWAHATI

STAR sprinter Hima Das was on Friday inducted as Deputy Superintendent of Assam Police in the presence of chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal and described the moment as a childhood dream coming true.

Hima was handed the appointment letter by Sonowal, also a former Union Sports Minister, at a ceremony attended by the top functionaries of the state government as well as from the police department, including the Director General of police.

Addressing the gathering after her induction as DSP, the 21-year-old Hima revealed that she had dreamt of becoming a police officer when she was young. "People here know and I am not going to say anything different. Since my early school days, I harboured a wish to become a police officer one day and my mother also wished that. "She would buy a gun (toy) during Durga Puja (a norm among kids in this part of the world during the festival), my mother would tell me to work in Assam police, serve the people and become a good person." The Asian Games silver-medallist and junior world champion said she will continue to strive for excellence in her sport alongside her job in state police.