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WINDOWS



Congress candidate Riju Ghoshal (L) exchanges Holi greetings with his rival BJP candidate Jagannath Sarkar while campaigning for Assembly polls, in Santipur, Nadia on Sunday

ORVAKAL PINS ON AIR MAP

First flight lands from Bengaluru, takes off to Vizag



HANS NEWS SERVICE

ORVAKAL: It was an emotional moment for the people of Kurnool as the Orvakal airport became functional on Sunday. Enthusiasm among the staff, local leaders and others was clearly visible at the airport as IndiGo ATR flight (6E 7911) from Bengaluru touched down on the tarmac at 10.10 am with 52 passengers on board. The first flight to depart was IndiGo flight (6E 7912) with 66 passengers for Visakhapatnam.

2 hurt in accident involving DTC bus, 2-wheeler in Delhi

NEW DELHI: Two persons were injured in a road accident involving a DTC bus and a motorcycle in northeast Delhi's Jyoti Nagar area, police said on Sunday. The incident occurred on Saturday night, they added. The injured persons were riding the two-wheeler, a senior police officer said, adding that they were admitted to the GTB hospital. An FIR has been registered in connection with the incident, the officer said, adding that the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) bus has been seized and its driver apprehended.



Lockdown plans in Maharashtra?



Uddhav calls for focus on work from home, institutional quarantine

MUMBAI

AMID soaring cases, Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray has told the administration to plan for a 'lockdown-like situation' as Covid norms are not being followed strictly by the people.

In a meeting held with the Chief Minister, Health Minister Rajesh Tope and other officials, including task force team, expressed apprehension that the State might report 40,000 fresh cases in the next 24 hours, it said.

During the meeting, the CM reviewed health infrastructure, including availability of beds, oxygen, medicines, etc, in the State to treat Covid-19 patients.

The task force then

Daily Covid deaths cross 300 for first time in 2021

NEW DELHI: India reported 62,714 new coronavirus infections in a day, the highest single-day rise so far this year, taking the nationwide Covid-19 tally to 1,19,71,624, while the daily deaths crossed the 300 mark for the first time in 2021, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Sunday. **Cont'd on Page 5**

62,714 NEW CASES

recommended that the State government implement measures like a stricter lockdown to stem the rise in coronavirus cases.

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Covid surge in Bengaluru

470 children below 10 yrs infected with Covid

BENGALURU: Over 470 children below the age of 10 have been infected with Covid-19 since the beginning of this month in Bengaluru as the city is witnessing a spike in infections.

A total of 244 boys and 228 girls have been infected from March 1 to 26, shows the official data. The cases among children were limited to eight to nine daily during the early days of this month but they have steadily risen to 46 on March 26.

According to some experts, unlike in the past children are now vulnerable because they are more exposed to outdoor activities, functions and gatherings, as also schools reopening for a certain age group, which was not the case earlier due to lockdowns. "There is more and more exposure of children because of the opening of schools, also a lot of functions and gatherings. Earlier they used to be protected, but since they are exposed to several of these events, the risk has also gone up considerably," Dr Giridhara R Babu Professor and Head Lifecourse Epidemiology, Public Health Foundation of India said.

CHALLENGE TO FEDERALISM

Rajnath hits out at Kerala govt

Judicial probe against Central agencies 'unfortunate'

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

DEFENCE Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday hit out at the Kerala government for issuing an order to conduct a judicial inquiry against the Central agencies probing the gold smuggling and dollar smuggling cases in the State.

During a press conference in Thiruvananthapuram, Rajnath Singh said, "I came to know that the case is being probed by the ED and then a judicial commission has been appointed against the Central agency. It's very unfortunate."

The senior BJP leader added, "This means the State government is challenging the federal structure of the Constitution. This is 100 per cent against the constitution."

Rajnath Singh's comments came two days after Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan-led Cabi-

net recommended a judicial probe against Central investigation agencies subject to approval from the Election Commission, following an ongoing probe into several cases, including the Kerala gold smuggling case.

The Cabinet has appointed retired judge KV Mohanan as the Commissioner who will consider the controversial audio recording of Swapna Suresh, the prime accused in the gold smuggling case, and a letter written by co-accused PS Sarith.

This is to be noted that the Kerala gold smuggling case,

which is being probed by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) along with the Enforcement Directorate and the customs department, pertains to the smuggling of gold in the State through diplomatic channels. It came to light after 30-kilogram gold worth Rs 14.82 crore, smuggled in a consignment camouflaged as diplomatic baggage, was busted by customs in Thiruvananthapuram on July 5, 2020.



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Police personnel at Tulsi Apartment after killing of criminal Kuldeep Fajja in an encounter, at Rohini in New Delhi on Sunday. (Inset) Kuldeep Maan alias Fajja

around 1.45 am, police said. Kuldeep suffered injuries in the exchange of fire at the

flat in Rohini's sector 14, they said. The Special Cell got a tip-off on Sat-

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Womenia

TWEET PATROL



PARINEETI CHOPRA
@PARINEETICHOPRA

Agree about the BO numbers, but I am grateful that despite releasing our films during the pandemic, we have won the love of critics and audiences in such a hugeee way! Small steps, but the journey back has started



Meet the damsel in digital world

Niharika NM with 1.6 million followers on her Instagram has been the fastest digital creator to get in the million club. She has won hearts of not only her followers but many celebrities as well. Niharika, in conversation with *The Hans India*, shares her journey so far as a content creator in this digital world

TEJAL SINHA

By now you would have definitely been able to hear words like ‘Macha’, ‘Maam’ and ‘Da’. That’s how Niharika has won hearts of millions of people through her incomparable ranting videos.

While the pandemic led to all of us finding a source of entertainment in social media, thanks to Niharika, Youtuber and Content creator who entertained her followers from round the world. While the internet took over India’s entertainment scene during the pandemic, she was the centre of this phenomenon whose Instagram reels have paved the fastest way to one million-followers. She rose to fame during the time when people were low on creativity and couldn’t pull themselves to be productive, Niharika kept churning videos after videos to keep her followers entertained.

Her Instagram reel videos are not loved and relatable even for the Bollywood celebrities like Sonam Kapoor and Arjun Kapoor. It was a big day when one of her video was posted by the former actor and current Minister in the Union Cabinet of India, Smriti Irani resharing her video on her story and tagging Niharika with a caption ‘Everytime...next time I know what to say, Mind-blowing’

Sharing about her journey in this digital world so far, Niharika shares, “It has honestly been an incredibly overwhelming experience so far and I couldn’t be more grateful to everybody that watches and supports my content. I honestly took to content creation as a creative outlet as a college student and it’s still exactly that for me and will always be. I do what I do because I genuinely enjoy it and it makes me happy and I’m definitely going to focus on doing just that for as

“I’m just grateful that I can now use my personality and that excessive energy to do something productive and make a career out of it”
– Niharika NM

long as I possibly can.”

Niharika is presently pursuing her MBA at in California and these crisp 30-second videos are a comedic and relatable take on our everyday life events peppered with accents that serve as a fun reflection on the South Indian way of life. But you might be wondering what ‘NM’ in her name and Instagram handle stands for? NM stands for ‘Nothing Much’, which is even the name of her second Instagram account.

For Niharika, the ideas for the contents come naturally. Sharing about the same, Niharika says, “My rants are literally how my friends and I talk or vent to each other about the silliest things that we experience so I’d like to say it comes very naturally to me and what I do online is just observational comedy that I package with my own spin on it, to make sure my personality comes through in every video as well, along with the content.”

It was definitely not easy for her to stay away from her family during the lockdown but ironically Niharika rose fame during the pandemic.

She adds, “The first few months of lockdown I definitely did not make any type of content because I was already living in a foreign country away from my family and when the pandemic hit, it just got too much for me to

have to deal with but eventually when I started to wrap my head around the fact that this might just be the new normal, I started tapping into my creative outlet to make me happy and I don’t even know how but here we are and I couldn’t be more grateful. Thinking of becoming a viral influencer anytime in your life, I don’t think anyone ever does. It’s one of those things that just happens when you really don’t see it coming but I’m just extremely grateful to have a platform where I can just absolutely be myself.”

After moving to the US to pursue her MBA, Niharika took a long break from content creation, making it difficult for her to balance everything.

However, when the world sort of came to a standstill due to the pandemic, she needed to do something to get her mind off of it. Content creation has always been her creative outlet and that’s what she resorted to. Getting back on YouTube still didn’t feel right at the time for her and so she tried to dip her toes in short format content creation on Instagram.

Niharika’s journey was in short, a speedy road of wining hearts of her million followers. She is one of the top creators who joined the millions club within no time.

Sharing about her journey from 100k to 1.6 million followers, she says, “Honestly, I still cannot believe that any of this is real. I haven’t fully processed it yet. I don’t know if I will ever be able to entirely process it but I’m just incredibly grateful to each and every person that showers me with an overwhelming amount of love. Every little compliment, message or comment I get motivates me to work even harder to deliver quality content to the best of my ability and hopefully make my audience smile at



least a little in the process.”

Niharika has come a long way at a very young age and sharing about the positive and negative side of it, she says that overwhelming is the word that accurately describes how this whole experience has been for her and it is an incredible feeling to be loved for doing what she loves doing and just being herself.

She adds, “I guess I wouldn’t say bad but what can be challenging sometimes on social media is getting addicted to external validation and sort of letting your self-worth or value be defined by it. I just make sure to consciously make an effort to not let any of it be it positive or negative get to my head. The biggest challenge for me is trying to balance academics and content creation which are two completely different things that require me to function in two almost opposite time zones.

She also shares that as a content creator, there’s always the pressure to be consistent with content creation which can

sometimes be a little difficult. For her, the incredible amount of love and appreciation that her audience gives her is more than enough to fuel her to keep going.

“I honestly enjoy making any video where I play a creepy uncle or a dude because I look so ridiculous doing what I do that I can’t stop cracking up whenever I catch my reflection anywhere. I’ve always been an over enthusiastic child that got myself in trouble for talking too much or just being too naughty and my parents always wondered when I would possibly calm down (Spoiler: I never did calm down). I initially started out in the digital space when I was in the second year of engineering and my friends really encouraged me to try out something in the YouTube comedy space,” says the digital icon.

Niharika ends saying that her future plans include a lot more content, a fully running YouTube channel, a MBA degree, some vlog style content and hopefully lots of laughter.

5 must-have natural ingredients to make you Holi ready

PUJA GUPTA

and dullness.

The joy of being drenched in vibrant colours is cherished by all. However, there’s no denying that chemicals used in colours can damage your hair and skin to a great extent giving after-effects like rashes, acne, dryness, paleness, etc. Here are five natural ingredients to keep your skin and hair safe and healthy for pre and post-Holi celebrations, listed by Neha Kant, Founder, Clovia which recently forayed into the personal care range (Clovia Botanika).



Aloe Vera

Aloe Vera gel works wonders for both pre & post-Holi celebrations. It is recommended to apply the gel on your face before stepping out as it helps to keep your skin hydrated and protected from harmful chemicals. Rashes and dryness are a common problem post playing with colours, aloe vera gel further helps to heal the skin gently. Aloe vera is a great ingredient and a must-have for a skincare regime and works majorly for all skin types.

Clay

Clay is one of the essential ingredients for a summer skincare routine. It detoxifies the skin, lightens the complexion, helps in fighting acne, and removes paleness caused by harsh chemicals. Applying a pink clay mask post-Holi can help to replenish and nourish the skin by locking in moisture, drawing out impurities

Coconut Oil

The benefits of coconut oil are innumerable and are considered a go-to ingredient for healing both skin and hair. A gentle massage of coconut oil on your hair and roots can prevent dryness and frizziness after getting exposed to harmful chemicals. Also, it is recommended to apply a layer of oil over your body as it will work like a protective layer and prevent colour from sticking to your skin, and will be easier to rinse off later.

Saffron

Enriched in Vitamins and antioxidants, saffron has a myriad of skin-enhancing & lightening properties. A homemade scrub pack of saffron mixed with milk, honey, and gram flour can work well for tan removal, cure acne & pimples, and boost complexion. This effective scrub will nurture the skin, making it blemish-free and radiant.

WORLD PIANO DAY

If you’re a fan of classical music, then you assuredly know about the famous piano. Used in concerts everywhere, the piano has a long history of bringing music to life with its delicate sound and beautiful resonance.

World Piano Day has been designed to celebrate this incredible instrument, which has brought many of us joy over the years. No matter whether you play the piano yourself or you have an appreciation for this sort of music, we can all appreciate that listening to a quality pianist is a joy.

If you don’t know much about the piano, today is a great day to explore further. The main thing you obviously need to familiarise yourself with is the keys. After all, the keyboard is the most important part of your learning. If you look at the keyboard, you will see white and black keys that run from left to white. They do not alternative white-black-white-black. There is actually a pattern that is made of five black keys and seven white keys in a certain order. An interval is formed from the beginning of one set of keys and the ending, which is at the beginning of the next set. This is called an ‘octave’, which is simply a type of interval; an interval being the musical distance between two sounds.

In addition to this, it is important to note that the highest keys are on the right and the lowest on the left. If you start on the left side, every key is a half step higher than the one before it. Therefore, you need to go up or down two half steps to make a full step. You simply need to practice a bit to get to grips



with these intervals. You should then try other intervals so you can hear the difference in sound.

If you love hearing classical music, then listen to some beautiful classical music on your favorite device. If you’re wanting a fun night out, then attend a concert at your local theater. If you’re really adventurous then take some piano lessons at your local colleges or through online courses. While listening or playing amazing piano music, use the hashtag #worldpiano-day on through your social media devices and let everyone know that this day is all about the beautiful piano.

If you have never played the piano before, you may feel at a little bit of a loss regarding what you should be looking for in an online course. But, don’t fret, as we have some top tips to help you out. The first thing you need to do is make sure that the website providing the piano lessons is right for your level.

Some websites start at the very beginning and are designed for those who don’t have a clue about playing the piano. Therefore, they will teach you how to read music and so on. However, there are other websites that have lessons for those who already have experience and are seeking more advanced lessons so that they have something to aim towards.

Hairstyles to try this Holi

Holi is a festival where you literally drown in colours. But you don’t want your hair to come in your way, especially during the festival of colours and lots of fun, Holi.

Most of us think it’s alright to leave our hair open during the celebrations, but doing this will only damage your hair further.

Here are 5 easy hairstyles that you could pick from to keep your hair safe and in place during Holi.

Standard Braids

It is the best hairstyle to protect your hair. Divide the hair into three equal parts. Cross the right part over the middle part and then left part over it. Do this process until the braid is done.

High Ponytail

A high ponytail can be a simple one or you can alter it in your own way. For instance, after tying your hair into a high ponytail, braid it into a regular plait. To add some more style to this, loosen the braid a little for a ‘bubble’ effect.

Double Buns

As a quirky take on hair buns, a bun on both sides looks cute and serves the purpose too. This hairstyle keeps all your hair in place so you can have all the fun without being too bothered. For this style, part your hair into two equal sections and comb through all the knots. Then, begin with either sides and tie a ponytail, a high or low one, as per your preference. Then wrap your

hair around the hair-tie and tie it up again. Do the same for the other side.

Low Ponytail

A simple way to put away all those tresses is a simple low-tied ponytail. This type of ponytail looks textured on wavy or curly hair and can be put in place with bobby pins just as easily. You could tie it near your nape for that low yet stylish effect.

Top-Knot Bun

If you have long hair and definitely don’t want them open and loose, this top-knot style could be your pick. Begin with tying a high ponytail and then wrap the rest of the hair around the hair tie and you’re done. For a cleaner look, wear hair/head band.



Radhika Apte to star in spy entertainer ‘Mrs. Undercover’

NEWS ROUNDUP

Actress Radhika Apte will be seen playing the role of an undercover agent in upcoming film “Mrs. Undercover”.

The film marks directorial debut of writer Anushree Mehta.

The poster indicates the interesting dichotomous combination of an Indian housewife holding a gun.

Talking about the film, Radhika says, “Anushree came to me with this film some time back and the novelty of the story had me excited.

When I saw this first



look, it was that same excitement I felt and it was not only as someone who is a part of the film but also as a member of the audience. I think we all wanted to show the essence of the film through this first poster and I must say that we have captured it well. Now, I am waiting to see what the audience has to say about this special film of ours.”

The film also stars actor Sumeet Vyas alongside Radhika.

Mehta is happy to direct the film for the first time with Radhika taking the lead as the character.

“It is surreal to take this initial step and share the first look of our film with the world. We believe in giving quality content to the viewers and have tried very hard to achieve that with ‘Mrs. Undercover’. The title, the poster, the imagery is a long-thought process to make people excited.

I am so glad that I found an actor like Radhika Apte to play the titular character,” she says.

“Mrs. Undercover” is produced by Ishan Saksena, Abir Sengupta, Sunil Shah, and Varun Bajaj.

Delhi adds 200 containment zones in two days, total 1,506

NEW DELHI

DELHI has been seeing a sharp increase in new coronavirus cases in the last two weeks, especially since March 23 when the daily tally crossed the 1,000 mark for the first time this year, and the number of containment zones is also seeing a rapid upward trend, with 800 added in less than a week.

While 1,558 cases -- the highest so far in 2021 -- were reported on Saturday, 200 zones were also added in two days till then.

The national capital city had reported 1,101 cases on Tuesday, 1,254 on Wednesday, 1,515 on Thursday, and 1,534 on Friday, as per Delhi Health Department data.

The positivity rate, since the first week of March, has been the highest in the northwest, the southeast and south districts, while east, central and northeast districts have not seen a significant rise. The northwest district recorded the highest - 3 per cent up from 0.69 per cent, while the southeast district was at 2.41 per cent, up from 0.9 per cent.

With increasing number of Covid-19 cases, the city has seen



the number of containment zones, rise to 1,506, out of which around 800 have been added in last one week, and 200 in Friday and Saturday, the Health Department said.

The districts with the maximum containment zones are south (416), north (189) and west (181).

Meanwhile, the Delhi government has also increased testing, with around 90,000 being conducted daily since the last two days.

As per a government report, 91,703 new tests were conducted in last 24 hours as on Saturday.

Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain on Saturday had dismissed the possibility of imposing another lockdown, saying it was not a solution to check the coronavirus surge. He said that his department is following a micro-containment strategy and identifying all clusters from where two or more cases are be-

Covid vaccination centres expanded in Punjab

CHANDIGARH

TO speed up the vaccination drive, Punjab Health Minister Balbir Singh Sidhu on Sunday said the Covid-19 vaccine would be administered at all health and wellness centres and sub-centres, as well as homeopathy and ayurvedic dispensaries.

He said nearly seven lakh people the state have been vaccinated so far.

All civil surgeons have been instructed to implement the guidelines as soon as possible so that the vaccination process can be expedited in such centres and maximum eligible persons be covered under drive, he added.

Sidhu said the Central government has launched two Covid-19 vaccines -- Covishield and Covaxin -- in the country and both are safe.

Till March 27 in Punjab, a total of 296,593 healthcare and frontline workers vaccinated with the first dose and 98,496 with the second dose.

The minister also said that 392,415 persons, above 60 years age and 45 years above with comorbidities, were also administered the vaccine. (IANS)

NHAI committee to probe Dwarka Expressway flyover collapse

GURUGRAM

AFTER a section of an under-construction flyover on the Dwarka Expressway collapsed on Sunday morning, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and Gurugram Police have launched separate probes into the matter.

"A high-level technical committee of the NHAI will probe the incident. The committee members will also visit the spot to take stock of the incident. Till then the construction work has been suspended. We will ensure that such incidents do not happen in the future. The area was cordoned off," said Nirman Jambulkar, Project Director of the NHAI who was present at the spot, adding that three workers received minor injuries, who are undergoing treatment.

Engineers from the Larsen & Toubro (L&T), which was constructing the structure, who were also present at the spot said they too are investigating the matter.

Local residents, who had gathered at the spot, said, "We had noticed that huge machines of the construction company were installed on the damaged sections for a long time and the construction work on the Dwarka Expressway near the Daultabad village Chowk was stopped.

"We feel that this portion of the flyover collapsed due to the heavy loads of the machines as the work on this part of the flyover was stopped, and another reason could be the quality of the concrete used in the crushed segment. There is a need for investigating by an independent agency," said a resident of the area requesting anonymity.

For now, to prevent further problems, officials have cordoned off the area and are plac-



NHAI suspends key personnel of L&T, AECOM

NEW DELHI

THE National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) on Sunday said it has suspended key personnel of developer Larsen & Toubro and supervision consultant AECOM after a portion of an under-construction elevated road on Dwarka expressway collapsed this morning. It said the personnel were suspended pending the outcome of investigation by an expert committee being constituted to probe the incident. A portion of an under-construction elevated road on the Dwarka Expressway collapsed here on Sunday morning, injuring three workers. "Authority has viewed the incident seriously and pending the outcome of the investigation by the committee, the concerned key personnel of the Contractor M/s L&T and Supervision Consultant M/s AECOM have been suspended as per Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) of NHAI," the NHAI said in a statement. Earlier, a team of officials from the National Highways Authority of India, including the regional officer and the project director, also visited the site. Union Road and Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari had earlier this month visited the expressway to inspect progress of the 30-kilometre project which is being built at the cost of Rs 10,000 crore. (PTI)

ing sandbags under the portion that is still suspended to prevent any further collapse. The collapsed stretch and machines will be removed only in the next few days, after a proper method is devised for removing it without any further damage, said the officials.

According to the officials from NHAI, the incident took place

around 7.30 a.m. on Sunday, when 100-meter of concrete slabs on the Expressway collapsed. As there was no work underway at the time and the number of workers was less due to the Holi festival, a major tragedy was averted. NHAI officials said three workers sustained minor injuries.

Covid strikes fourth estate in Lucknow

LUCKNOW

CORONA has struck at the fourth estate in Lucknow in a big way. Pramod Srivastava, 48, member of the UP State Accredited Journalist Committee 2021, elections for which were held on March 21, died on Saturday evening.

Two days ago, he had tested positive and was admitted to KGMU on March 25 in a serious condition. Doctors said he died due to respiratory failure. At least six journalists, who took part in the elections that took place on March 21, have also tested positive, so far. One of them was admitted to SGPGIMS, late on Saturday evening.

The state information department has arranged for a special Covid test camp for journalists on Sunday and has asked all those who participated in the elections, to get themselves tested.

The city has become a hotspot in the state with a steady rise in the number of cases and deaths in the past few days. Out of four Covid-19 deaths in Uttar Pradesh on Saturday, three took place in Lucknow.

Similarly, 25 per cent of the total new infections were in the state capital. In remaining districts, the numbers were below 50.

RSS-police clash: SSP promises probe in the incident

MATHURA (UTTAR PRADESH): A scuffle broke out between supporters of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and police in the Kumbh region of Vrindavan after an RSS member accused the police of assaulting a pracharak. Several policemen were later thrashed in public while a video of the incident went viral. The scuffle took place on Saturday after some policemen allegedly misbehaved with RSS Zila Pracharak Manoj Kumar, while he was taking a bath in Yamuna river



at the Kumbh fair of Vrindavan. Soon after the incident, a video of the alleged incident went viral on social media, purportedly showing some youths entering into an altercation with two or three policemen and one of them hitting a policeman on his back with a helmet. Following the inci-

dent, local Bharatiya Janata Party activists, went on dharna in protest against the alleged misbehaviour of the policemen, necessitating the intervention of senior administrative and police officials in the matter. The RSS activists called off the dharna only after Senior Superintendent of Police Gaurav Grover and District Magistrate Navneet Singh Chahal promised action against the erring policemen. An aide of Manoj Kumar has been booked for assault of four policemen, including a Sub-Inspector. Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) worker Bacchu Singh has demanded legal action against those who assaulted and abused RSS officials in the Kumbh region. (IANS)

36 booked, four held for attacking police team in UP

MUZAFFARNAGAR (UP): A total of 36 people have been booked and four of them arrested for allegedly attacking a police team and freeing a criminal in Uttar Pradesh's Muzaffarnagar district, police said on Sunday. The incident took place in Sherpur village under Kotwali Police Station on Saturday when a police team had gone to arrest Imlakh, who is a history-sheeter. The police spokesman said that as the team took Imlakh into custody, some villagers attacked the police personnel and freed the criminal who remains at large. "Thirty-six people have been identified and four of them have been arrested. The rest of the accused will also be arrested soon," he added. (IANS)

60-foot tall tricolour hoisted in Delhi's Shakur Basti

NEW DELHI

DELHI Health Minister Satyendar Jain on Sunday attended the hoisting ceremony of the 60-feet tall national flag at Brij Vihar in Shakur Basti.

"Attended the flag hoisting ceremony of the newly constructed 60-feet tall national flag at Brij Vihar society in Shakur Basti. Watching our national flag hoisted filled me with immense pride and honour," Jain tweeted after attending the event.

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on March 9 while presenting the annual 'deshbhakti' Budget had proposed to allocate Rs 45 crore to install high masts to hoist the national flag at 500 places in the national capital.

To celebrate the 75th anniversary of India's Independence this year, the Delhi government had also announced that it would or-



ganise programmes promoting patriotism throughout the year, not only in the national capital but also in other states.

In its 'deshbhakti' initiative, the Delhi government has also announced to include a curriculum on patriotism in schools, cultural events on the lives of Bhagat Singh and Babasaheb Ambedkar and yoga instructors

in colony parks. For this purpose the state government has set aside Rs 90 crore.

Calling the tricolour as the greatest symbol of our individual identity, Sisodia had announced that like the one in Connaught Place, Delhi government would install national flags in such a way that at least one is visible every two kilometres. (IANS)

BJP worker found dead in UP, tension prevails

PRATAPGARH (UTTAR PRADESH)

TENSION prevails in Pithapur Malak village in Pratapgarh district after the body of 52-year-old booth president of the Bharatiya Janata Party was found by the roadside.

The body was found on Saturday and sources said that the deceased, Dharendra Bahadur Singh, had tried to intervene in a dispute between two parties and was allegedly beaten to death on Friday night.

Additional SP (east) Surendra Dwivedi and Circle Officer (city) Abhay Pandey rushed to the village with heavy force from five police stations and PAC personnel, but had to face stiff opposition from the kin of the deceased and locals.

After several hours of pacifying the villagers, police finally sent the body for a post-mortem examination.

"We have registered an FIR against two men, both brothers, on the complaint of the deceased's brother-in-law," said circle officer Abhay Pandey.

No arrests have yet been made. The victim, Dharendra Bahadur Singh, was a resident of Pithapur Malak village.

Late on Friday night, two people started cutting sugarcane from the field of a farmer, Rajan Singh, without his permission, which led to an altercation between them.

Dhirendra, who lived close by, reached the spot and snatched the bike keys from the two men. The issue was soon resolved and Rajan and his father Nagendra left for home.

Kohdaur police Station House Officer (SHO) Bachhelal said that Dharendra went missing after the incident and his body, bearing multiple injury marks, was found on the road the following day.

The locals alleged that Dharendra was beaten to death by two brothers, Ranjeet and Vipin Saroj, of the nearby Hatsara Mangapur village after he tried to intervene in their fight.

Additional forces have been deployed in the village to ensure peace. (IANS)

WOMEN IN THE WILD: HOW 284 OFFICERS ARE MAKING STRIDES IN INDIAN FOREST SERVICE

AAKANKSHA KHAJURIA
NEW DELHI

INDIA's forest management marked a conservation milestone when three women officers were inducted into the Indian Forest Service (IFS) in 1980, and since then a traditionally 'all male bastion' is gradually opening to more and more women officers. This has led to the birth of the 'lesser-known Khaki'.

Today, the Indian Forest Service has 284 women officers serving the nation. These women officers are not only doing exemplary work in the field, but they are also highly accomplished academically and are leading the Central and state governments when it comes to policy making.

Three women - Veena Sekhri, C.S. Ramalakshmi and Meera Iqbal - were inducted into the IFS 1980. Sekhri then went on to become the country's top most forest officer. Following their lead, many women have broken the glass ceiling and joined the IFS.

"Women must work in the field if their job requires it, regardless of the difficulties, so that they can prove themselves. However, the forest department must also make necessary provision for women staff, like separate rooms and toilets in the forest area," said Sekhri in a book titled 'The Green Queens of India'.

About 284 women officers of IFS preside as field directors at different na-



tional parks, sanctuaries and various protected areas of the country. The 'Green Queens', as they are called, are known for their technical expertise of wildlife. They closely connect with the nature and

the people, and are efficient managers of the wild life areas.

While some work in the wildlife crime control bureau, others work in zoos and ex-situ conservation, in protected area

management, wildlife research, and human-wildlife conflict management. Few officers also serve in harsh conditions, tough terrains and extreme climates.

The erstwhile male bastion of fighting

with the encroachers and the timber mafia has long been demolished with several young women IFS officers making a mark as territorial district forest officers. From nursery management to encroachment removal, women officers have improved various aspects of forestry with innovative-customised solutions to the local issues.

Women also have the ability to be strict when required. A 1990 Batch Tamil Nadu Cadre officer, Mita Banerjee, posted as the Wild Warden in Chennai, managed four protected areas and booked a variety of wildlife offences and thereafter went on to become the first woman to be posted as Deputy Director in the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau of the Western Region.

Besides the topmost IFS officers, there are over 5,000 women frontline personnel in the forestry. Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar had recently hailed the consistent increase in the number of women officials, saying they bring sincerity and dedication to the service in addition to the merit and requisite skills.

The minister also lauded the proactive role played by women in protecting the forest and wildlife. "All the women associated with forestry - from frontline officers to head of forest forces - have been a significant force in preserving our countries forests and wildlife, and striving for a greener future," he had said. (IANS)

No light at end of tunnel for BJP in AP

THE Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) too, like the Congress, seems to be taking decisions from Delhi without bothering about the ground situation. It seems to be failing in assessing the real situation and taking quick decisions. Like the Congress, it is depending on the State leaders who seem to be giving tailor-made reports to the party Central leadership. If this situation continues, making foray into the two Telugu States - Andhra Pradesh and Telangana - would be a distant dream for the BJP.

This factor became clear from the way the BJP picked up the candidate for the Tirupati Lok Sabha by-polls. The ground report from Tirupati clearly indicates that the fight is going to be between the ruling YSRCP and the TDP. The BJP and the Congress would be vying for third position. Though the BJP national secretary Sunil Deodhar claimed that Tirupati by-election will be the saffron party's first stop to come to power in AP, the indication is that it will be the full stop.

This raises another question. Is the BJP serious about

foraying into AP? The BJP in Andhra has never shown any seriousness on any issue. Whether it be the desecration of idols or torching of temple Ratham at Antarvedi or the issue of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, it has always been dithering in its actions. While the TDP had selected Panabaka Lakshmi as its candidate for the Tirupati by-polls much ahead of others and the YSRCP had decided to field Dr Gurumurthy, the personal physiotherapist of Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy, the BJP went on dragging its feet and announced the name of the former Chief Secretary of Karnataka Ratna Prabha.

In terms of popularity, she is less known person and has never been into active politics. Tirupati has seven Assembly segments and four out of these fall in Nellore district. In 2019 elections, the BJP had got less votes than NOTA. Since then nothing seems to have changed in their favour. The TDP candidate is a former MP and former Union Minister and is known to the electorate. She lost to the YSRCP in the last elections.

Dr Gurumurthy is a known personality from this constituency and is popular with the people. Both the candidates have strong cadre who are sweating it out to ensure the victory of their party candidates. On the contrary, the BJP is yet to take up structured campaign. With some differences between the Jana Sena leader Pavan Kalyan and the State BJP having cropped up, it remains to be seen how actively Pavan would campaign

for the former bureaucrat. The possibility of Jana Sena votes getting transferred to the BJP also seems to be a remote possibility.

Though the Congress had fielded Chinta Mohan, former MP from here, the fight is going to be tough and with the Congress losing its political ground in the last six years, it certainly will be an uphill task for him. If BJP leaders feel bolstered by their success in Dubbaka in Telangana and the GHMC polls in Hyderabad, then they should know that they have miscalculated the situation.

But a deeper analysis indicates that the Central BJP does not want to seriously try to make inroads into Andhra Pradesh. Since last one year, the BJP's politics in Andhra has centred on Tirupati and other temples in the State. The party claimed that there are attacks on Hindu places of worship, including Tirupati. It even questioned Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's faith, when he visited Lord Venkateswara temple at Tirupati recently, but all that was a superficial act.

Though some feel that the BJP is depending more on Balija community and that the State president Somu Veeraraju and Pawan Kalyan who belong to Kapu community will be able to attract the Balija votes, the situation seems to be otherwise. Balijas of Rayalaseema can never find a common ground with Kapus of coastal area. There is a cultural and regional gap between them.

‘VIJAYAN, SYMBOL OF HIGH-HANDEDNESS’

SANU GEORGE

THE poll battle at Vatakara in Kozhikode district has reached a crescendo with K.K.Rema of the Revolutionary Marxist Party (RMP) getting the full support of the Congress-led UDF.

Though pitted against, M. Chandran of the Loktantrik Janata Dal (LJD) an ally of the ruling Left, the real battle is between Rema and none other than Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. Rema is the widow of T.P. Chandrasekharan, the founder of RMP, who was hacked 51 times by assailants in May 4, 2012 when he was returning home on his motorcycle in his hometown near Kozhikode.

In the case, 11 people were given life imprisonment, of which three were mid-level CPI-M leaders and the demand for a probe into the conspiracy behind the murder is still with the court. Rema has time and again taken on Vijayan for calling her husband "a renegade".

Between her busy election campaign schedule she interacted with IANS. Here are the excerpts:



Q: How is the campaign going?
A: The response from the people has been overwhelming. The support from the voters is beyond my expectations. I have the whole-hearted support from people from all walks of life irrespective of political affiliations. So, I am very much certain about my victory.

Kerala has never witnessed a 'ruler' like Pinarayi Vijayan. He is so arrogant and autocratic. He is symbol of high-handedness. We feel that he is a ruler like Hitler and Mussolini. He lacks even an iota of humanity which we expect from a ruler. That is what we can figure out from his body language and the way he conducts himself

Q: Did you expect the Congress-led UDF to extend the support, would you have contested even without the support of the UDF?
A: Of course, we had decided to contest from constituencies where we thought we could win confidently. We wanted to expose the CPI-M-led LDF government's anti-people misrule and campaign against the politics of the CPM. Even if we had not received the support from the Congress-led UDF, we would have contested in the elections.

Q: You did say that on May 2, Pinarayi Vijayan would know who was TP Chandrasekharan. Can you elaborate?
A: T.P. Chandrasekharan advocated a certain brand of politics, a politics that cannot be defeated by his rivals. He was killed with the intention of annihilating that brand of politics with which he sought to dissent and express his dissenting voice. The CPI-M and Pinarayi Vijayan mistakenly thought that by killing T.P. Chandrasekharan, his brand of politics will end once and for all. But, after he was murdered, thousands of Chandrasekharans emerged espousing his brand of politics. Both LDF and Pinarayi Vijayan will realize this on May 2.

Q: How would you rate Pinarayi Vijayan as a Chief Minister?
A: Kerala has never witnessed a 'ruler' like Pinarayi Vijayan. He is so arrogant and autocratic. He is symbol of high-handedness. We feel that he is a ruler like Hitler and Mussolini. He lacks even an iota of humanity which we expect from a ruler.

That is what we can figure out from his body language and the way he conducts himself. Even after Chandrasekharan's death, Vijayan used extremely heinous word to address him. Only a person like Pinarayi Vijayan can do that.

Q: Most pre-poll surveys have predicted the Vijayan will retain power, what do you have to say?
A: I don't trust all these pre-poll surveys. They lack credibility and are the handiwork of event management companies. We have seen how pre-poll surveys in the past were damp squibs. In the last Lok Sabha elections, pre-poll surveys predicted that Shashi Tharoor and Sreekantan will not win. Such surveys are paid exercises. They cannot reflect what is really going in the minds of the people.

Q: This is the first time that Vijayan is leading an election campaign how do you think he is faring?
A: During the last Lok Sabha elections, Pinarayi Vijayan was the chief minister of Kerala. But his images were not used anywhere for the campaign. This time they are going to taste defeat by putting Vijayan as the central figure of the campaign. Earlier the CPI-M used V.S. Achuthanadan for election campaign. Both V.S. and Pinarayi represent different brands of politics. Pinarayi Vijayan represents a politics that's dominated by bourgeois and capitalist forces. There is no doubt that people will defeat his brand of politics. Ordinary people don't like this kind of politics being carried out by Pinarayi.

Q: If you win the election, what would be your priorities?
A: There has not been proper development in the Vatakara constituency for past four decades. Another problem is the severe drinking water shortage in the coastal areas. People in these areas face the hardships of rough sea. Ordinary people here don't get the true benefits of Vatakara district hospital. They have to rely on private hospital for better treatment. My aim is to raise the standards of this hospital. We need a complete overhaul in all sectors. I will ensure the participation of people in the overall development of Vatakara.

Continuing threats to the economy



THE WAY AHEAD The second wave of coronavirus is further threatening the economy. There is a need to review the Budget proposals in the light of this development.

The challenge today is to restart the cycle of fast economic growth and employment generation that has been hit by demonetisation, GST and lockdowns. These actions have hit the small industries in particular. These same small industries were creating most of the employment. Thus, employment generation is no longer taking place, employment in our manufacturing sector is declining, less wages are being paid to the workers, there is less demand in the market, and businesses are less inclined to invest. We should not be misled by the booming Sensex. Big companies and e-commerce companies are doing well. But the economic growth is down because there is little purchasing power in the ground economy.

The government has tried to restart this fortuitous cycle by making increased investments in infrastructure. This would have been in the right direction if it would have led to the generation of employment. However, the investments in highways, airports and rail freight corridors is mostly being made by capital-intensive machines. Take the highways for example. The land will be dug by an excavator. Cement will be purchased from the cement factory. The cement factory will use machines to dig the limestone. The cement will be transported in large trucks to the highways. The highway will be made by laying the cement by automatic machines. I reckon that only 15 percent of the government expenditure goes into the hands of the workers in the entire expenditure chain. The remaining 85 percent money keeps rotating on the top as if 85 percent oils is floating on 15 percent water. This money does not connect with the ground. For this reason, the growth rate of the economy is down and is not likely to revive from these investments. Making a shopping mall in the middle of a slum does not lead to an increase in the income of the slum-dwellers.

The present infrastructural investments will not help the economy for another reason. It is beneficial to make a highway if trucks are waiting to ply on them. Our growth rate has been declining

over the last six years. The demand for the infrastructure that is being created is less. The toll-ways may not be able to recover their investments in absence of trucks plying on them. Indeed, Surface Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari has said that the toll collections in 2020-21 have been higher than in 2019-20. I think this is because more toll-free roads have been brought under toll. However, these investments will certainly prove beneficial in the long run. But, as famous economist John Maynard Keynes had said, "In the long run we are all dead." The need was to create demand in the economy immediately. Indeed, demand for steel and cement in the making of highways will not jumpstart a fortuitous cycle because there will be less employment of workers, less generation of employment and less connection with the ground economy. I am not opposing increased investment in infrastructure. That is certainly needed. I am opposing the particular investments in big highways made with automatic machines. Need was to make small town roads with labour-intensive methods.

The need was to also to support small businesses that employ large numbers of workers. This could be done by increasing the import taxes on items like cloth and rubber chappals that are produced by small industries; and also increasing the rates of GST on large factories making these items. That would have enabled small industries to sell their goods in the market. We must accept that this would lead to an increase in the price of these goods in the market and force the consumer to buy expensive goods made by small industries. This additional burden on the consumer must be thought of like an "employment tax." The protection provided to small industries would have led to the generation of employment which, in turn, would have created demand in the market. Just as a person who has overcome a sickness needs to be given tonic to revive his working capacity, similarly, the small industries that have just faced the triple problems of demonetisation, GST and lockdown need to be given the tonic of protection to revive their working.

A positive step taken by the government in the Budget is to monetise the infrastructure projects like highways, electricity transmission lines, rail tracks, ports, airports, etc. The government plans to either privatise these completed projects or give them out on contracts and raise money. The money raised can be used to invest in other infrastructure projects that are limping due to financial



The present infrastructural investments will not help the economy for another reason. It is beneficial to make a highway if trucks are waiting to ply on them. Our growth rate has been declining over the last six years. The demand for the infrastructure that is being created is less. The toll-ways may not be able to recover their investments in absence of trucks plying on them. Indeed, Surface Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari has said that the toll collections in 2020-21 have been higher than in 2019-20. I think this is because more toll-free roads have been brought under toll. However, these investments will certainly prove beneficial in the long run. But, as famous economist John Maynard Keynes had said, "In the long run we are all dead."

crunch. It would be better though if these new investments were to be made in labour-intensive projects as mentioned above.

The government has planned to privatise a number of Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs) like Air India, Shipping Corporation of India, IDBI bank, Bharat Earth Movers Limited, Pawan Hans and other companies. The government has made a target of raising Rs 1.75 lakh crore in the current financial year which is nearly ten times the Rs 20,000 crore generated from this head in the present financial year. It is not impossible though it is difficult to raise this huge amount.

The Finance Minister has estimated in the Budget that the fiscal deficit in the present year 2020-21 will be 9.5 percent of our GDP. The government has placed a target of fiscal deficit of 6.8 percent in

the coming year 2020-21. This estimate is based on the assumption that the economy will rev up and Rs 1.75 lakh crore will be obtained from disinvestment. The second wave of corona pandemic despite the vaccination drive puts the attainment of these estimates in much doubt. The economy can face another crisis in that situation. The government will have to borrow large amounts to cover this deficit. This borrowing can be made from the Reserve Bank of India or the market. The economy will face price rise if the Reserve Bank prints notes and lend the money to the government. On the other hand, interest rate will increase if the government borrows this money from the market. The economy will suffer in both cases.

(The author is formerly Professor of Economics at IIM, Bengaluru)

LETTERS

Intellectuals should spread awareness

IN tune with the adage Yatha Raja thatha Praja (As the king, so as the people) people always imitate leaders and so leaders need to practice sincerely before preaching the common man (VIPs throw Covid protocols to wind, March 28). It is high time right thinking citizens take initiative and guide the society to come out of this pandemic. This is because Covid is going to stay for many more years and that vaccination is not 100 per cent fool proof according to various experts. Country will be at loss - more due to the silence of intellectuals than ineffective politicians.

Kshirasagara Balaji Rao, Hyderabad

II

OUT of the 5 strategies to curb Covid spread as envisaged by the Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan and his team, Government should take care of increasing testing, providing more health care resources and vaccination drive. The other two, to be followed by the people, isolation and Covid related behaviour are easy to implement but very difficult to monitor and enforce, since people (mostly heterogeneous groups) will have different perceptions about the virus. Hence it is imperative to enforce people to follow the preventive measures of the pandemic strictly and any laxity should not be tolerated to effectively counter the second wave of the virus.

G V N Murthy, Hyderabad

Why is SC secretive?

THE Supreme Court as part of an in-house enquiry absolved the future CJI of all the charges levelled by another constitutional authority, albeit retaining it as a secret.

Transparency is the hallmark of any true democracy. If in-house inquiry has absolved the future CJI, then what is the fate of the complainant who is also a constitutional authority. It is a minimum expectation that neither the CM nor the Supreme Court Judge could escape accountability from people's perspective.

The issue should have a logical conclusion instead of burying it once and for all. The SC owes to the people of India the reasons for keeping it as a secret because grave allegations cannot be set aside under the umbrella of secrecy.

D Nagarjuna, Hyderabad



The world should intervene in Myanmar

It is tragic that over 90 people were killed by the military junta in Myanmar where people gathered to protest against the establishment of military rule. Hundreds have already

died in the protests. And to see butchering of people by the military daily there is heart breaking. What the UN body is doing? Is it defunct? Is there is one to question the killing of innocents? Pathetic it is for the poor people of Myanmar. World leaders, including Modi, should take steps to check the deaths of innocent people of the country. Human killings by the military junta is a violation of human rights too.

If the November elections were rigged, as proclaimed by the military junta, then it is for the judiciary to decide the future of the politicians and the people and not the military. So, release the leaders and hold talks to bring in calm and peace in this region.

Sravana Ramachandran, Chennai

II

This refers to the news report, "Myanmar forces kill dozens of protesters", The Hans India, March 28. The 76th Myanmar Armed Forces Day will stay engraved as a day of terror and dishonour as the armed forces killed 120 citizens taking the total death toll to 440 since the coup was staged by military on February 1. Security forces are murdering unarmed civilians, including children, the very people they swore to protect. These are not the actions of a professional military or police force.

Ever since the military captured power in Myanmar, the country has steadily descended into political and economic chaos. When the Generals toppled the democratically elected government, detained its leaders, including State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and President Win Myint, and declared a state of emergency with prohibitory orders, they may have thought that they could quickly consolidate power through force. But they were proved wrong as tens of thousands of people turned defiant and stood up against the junta.

The Generals now find it increasingly difficult to consolidate power and restore order. How long will the Generals continue to kill their own people? And even if they quelled the protests through more bloodshed, what kind of a Myanmar would they be left with? Surely, no one wants an ex-

tremely poor, isolated country with a broken society and a shattered economy. The Myanmar Generals should, without further bloodshed, heed the public's demands, end the coup, respect the election results and restore the country's democracy. That is the only way forward.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, Bengaluru

III

It is galling that Myanmar's trigger-happy military has gone on a killing spree, gunning down protesters with impunity. On Saturday, security forces killed about 100 people, including little tots, in one of the bloodiest days since the military coup. Myanmar's military has exterminated 400 civilians since ousting elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi on February 1. The killings have shocked the international community and mark a new low for the country's junta.

N J Ravi Chander, Bengaluru

Lanka is also to be blamed

As propos T K Nandan's views on India-Sri Lanka relations (Readers' Pulse, THI March 28), let me beg to differ with his view that LTTE engaged in crass violence and bloodshed throughout their existence in Sri Lanka. Let me draw the esteemed reader's attention to the turmoil of the Indian Tamil who settled there had undergone through. As I listened to news in late 60's that the Lankan Army perpetrated atrocities on Tamils to the extent that their women were molested in front of men and like now fingers point to President Rajapaksa's role in the disappearance of thousands of people then also many people had such ill-fate.

I concur that in 1987 IPKF was deployed by Rajiv to kill our own brothers and sisters. It was a mishap that led to Rajiv's demise. In 1971 Bangladesh was delivered from the clutches of Pakistan with the heroic fight of Indian Army while IPKF had an indelible slur in history.

Dr T Ramadas, Visakhapatnam

Badvel YSRCP MLA Venkata Subbaiah passes away



Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy consoling the family members of Badvel MLA Dr G Venkata Subbaiah in Kadapa on Sunday

- He was 61 and is survived by wife and two children
- CM Jagan pays his last respects to the departed soul

KADAPA

NOTED Orthopaedic surgeon and Badvel YSRCP MLA Dr G Venkata Subbaiah (61) passed away on Sunday after prolonged illness. He is survived by wife and two children.

According to the family members, Venkata Subbaiah was suffering from ill-health for some time and was undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Kadapa city and he breathed his last at around 6.30 am on Sunday. Venkata Subbaiah joined the YSRCP in 2014.

In recognition of the services rendered by him to the poor and downtrodden during the last 25

years, the YSR Congress Party offered him MLA ticket from Badvel SC constituency in 2019 general elections and he got elected to the Assembly for the first time with thumping majority. Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy visited the house of Badvel MLA here and paid his last respects to the departed soul. Jagan expressed condolences to the bereaved family. The Chief Minister recalled the invaluable medical services rendered by Dr Venkata Subbaiah to the poor and downtrodden in Kadapa district. He assured full support to the family members of the deceased.

Government Chief Whip G Srikanth Reddy, Kadapa In-charge Minister A Suresh, Deputy Chief Minister Amzath Basha, Kadapa city Mayor Suresh, party MLAs, District Collector CH Harikiran and others were present.

TDP national president N Chandrababu Naidu, BJP State general secretary S Vishnuvardhan Reddy and others expressed grief over the demise of the doctor-turned-legislator.

VSP displaced families demand either surplus lands or jobs

- Lament that they are being denied of justice for decades
- Assert that they will not remain mute spectators if the Centre hands over the PSU to a private party
- They have been taking part in rallies and relay hunger strike ever since the Centre announced 100% disinvestment in VSP
- Demand allotment of captive mines to the steel plant

VASU POTNURU VISAKHAPATNAM

VISAKHAPATNAM Steel Plant (VSP) displaced families demand the BJP-led NDA government either to provide placements in the plant or give back the surplus lands to them.

Alleging that justice continues to be denied to them for decades, they now say that they will not be mute spectators if the Centre hands over the PSU to the private party.

From the day the Centre's decision on 100 per cent strategic sale of the VSP came to light, the



VSP displaced families to take out a rally 'Chalo Collector Office' on March 31

VSP displaced families took to the streets to protest against the move in various forms, including relay hunger strike and rallies.

Along with rolling back the privatisation move, their list of demands include allotment of captive mines to the VSP to sail through the losses and offer employment to the R (rehabilitation)-card holders.

With the Centre paying no heed to their pleas, the displaced families now demand returning of the VSP's surplus land to them.

Of the 16,600 displaced families, only 8,500 were employed in VSP on both permanent and temporary basis. "We gave away our lands at a nominal price for

the establishment of the steel plant. The lands should be used at least for its expansion purpose but certainly not to sell them off to the private sector. For decades, justice continues to elude us. The Centre has to provide us a solution before going ahead with its plans," asserts P Bhasakara Rao, president of Visakha Ukku Nirvasita Iyka Sangham.

Elaborating further, Dharmala Rami Reddy, an R-card holder, says, "It's a continuous fight for three generations until their death. Now, the fourth generation is battling for the promised jobs. In the process of privatisation, there is no job security even for the existing personnel of the



P Bhasakara Rao, president of Visakha Ukku Nirvasita Iyka Sangham



Dharmala Rami Reddy, a Rehabilitation (R)-card holder

RINL. How can we expect to be placed in the plant once its ownership shifts to a private player."

While their over 45-day-long fight stretches further, the displaced families intend to take out a rally 'Chalo Collector office' from Saraswathi junction to Collector office on March 31.

LIGHTHOUSE TOURISM A unique aspect to strengthen India: PM

NEW DELHI

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi on Sunday highlighted the importance of strengthening the tourism sector in India, an industry that has suffered the most amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Modi, in his 75th episode of radio podcast series Mann Ki Baat, said one 'unique aspect' of the sector is lighthouse tourism, adding "the country has been working towards promotion of the zone". Modi said that 71 lighthouses have been identified across India to strengthen facilities in order to promote tourism.

"I have talked about various aspects of tourism on multiple occasions during the Mann Ki Baat series, but lighthouses are unique when viewed from the perspective of tourists. Lighthouses have always been the centre of attraction because of their grand design. 71 lighthouses have been identified from all over the country to promote tourism. Museums, amphi-

theatre, open-air theatre, cafeteria, children's park, eco-friendly cottages will be prepared in these lighthouses according to their capacity," the PM said.

Modi had spoken about the development of tourism facilities near lighthouse complexes in one of his speeches at the Maritime India Summit earlier this month. While reminding the listeners about his speech, he thanked one "Guruprasadh Ji" from Chennai for taking interest in his request and sharing images of his visits to lighthouses in Tamil Nadu.

The PM also mentioned a "unique lighthouse" in the latest episode of his Mann Ki Baat. Modi talked about a lighthouse situated in Gujarat's Jhinhuvada town. He said the unique feature about the lighthouse is that it now stands tall about 100 km away from the coastline. "Some rocks in the village suggest the presence of a very busy port in the area centuries ago, meaning the coastline was up to Jhinhuvada before," Modi added.

Contesting Tirupati LS by-election is God's blessing: Ratna Prabha

- Development is the main plank on which the BJP will fight the election, she asserts
- Says both the BJP and Jana Sena will work together for her victory

HANS NEWS SERVICE TIRUPATI

STATING that she is contesting Tirupati Lok Sabha by-election following the blessing of God, BJP candidate and retired IAS officer K Ratna Prabha asserted that she will make the voice of Tirupati and AP heard in the Parliament.

The former Chief Secretary of Karnataka in her maiden media meet here on Sunday, affirmed that she will not be shy in voicing the people's problems or seeking any measures required for development in any forum and even take any issue to the prime minister if required.

Without naming YSRCP, she said despite 22 MPs, neither our issues were getting focused nor our voice was getting heard, she said stressing on supporting her to win the election to fight for the cause of the State. Apparently countering her critics, she said she is the daughter of the soil and Andhra Pradesh is her Janma Bhumi while Karnataka her Karmabhumi.

Ratna Prabha said she has a passion for work and to serve the needy while explaining the reason she joined the BJP after retirement and cited many instances particularly during the pandemic last year helping many including AP fishermen stranded in Udupi, Karnataka return home and many such cases.

The BJP nominee said that she is not new to people as she is in good touch with them through social media and asserted that she will be available to people in need or aggrieved for help at all times. She took the occasion to delineate many of her achievements including in



BJP candidate for Tirupati Lok Sabha by-election K Ratna Prabha addressing the media in Tirupati on Sunday. Party State president Somu Veerajulu and senior leader Ch Adinarayana Reddy are also seen.

shifting Telugu film industry from Chennai to Hyderabad when she was Regional Officer, Central Board of Film Certification, Hyderabad and also getting AP-Chennai industrial corridor at the time of approval of Bengaluru-Chennai corridor.

The main plank of the party for the by-election, she said is development and added that focus will be laid on the achievements of the BJP for development of pilgrim city through various projects including Smart City Project, International Airport, IIT, IISER and development of national highway and other infrastructure facilities.

Answering a question on the doubts expressed in some quarters on Jana Sena working for her in the election, she said it is baseless and she is 200 per cent sure of the support from the party.

"Pawan Kalyan also on my request assured to campaign and sought to prepare the road

map for his tour and instructed cadres to be active in the electioneering," she categorically said that BJP and Jan Sena would work together in the by-election for her victory.

To a question on she appreciating Chief Minister Jagan many times (in the past), she said there is nothing wrong in lauding any good work by anyone but that does not mean supporting him.

She said that the public attitude should change to reject anyone offering money or luring them for votes and observed that, "If they accept money for temporary gain or joy they have to suffer for years."

Earlier, Ratna Prabha arrived at Renigunta airport to a tumultuous welcome by party activists and leaders from 7 constituencies in Tirupati Parliament and arrived in the city in a rally from the airport.

BJP State president Somu Veerajulu and others were present.

PM bats for diversification, modernisation of farming

Continued from P1

In this context he noted the work done by an individual in Assam who collated and compiled the scattered works in the local Karbi dialect, leading to the language's revival. He stressed keeping alive local cultures that form the rich tapestry and mosaic of India's diversified social picture.

He dwelt on the importance of the "waste to wealth" campaign, and on saving Sparrow-a bird species- which is becoming extinct. He lauded women for making their mark on various aspects of the country's life and hailed national cricketer Mithali Raj on her achieving the milestone of 10,000 runs. Also, he complimented badminton player PV Sindhu.

He felicitated adherents of Christianity across the world on the coming Easter festival which he said was a symbol of the resurrection of hope. He also wished people concerning the forthcoming Holi, and other festivals.

Daily Covid deaths cross 300 for first time in 2021

Continued from P1

Registering a steady increase for the 18th day in row, active cases increased to 4,86,310, comprising 4.06 per cent of the total infections. The recovery rate has further dropped to 94.58 per cent, the data stated.

The 62,714 new cases were reported in a span of 24 hours, the highest since October 16, 2020, while the death toll increased to

1,61,552 with 312 daily new fatalities, the highest in about three months, the data updated at 8 am on Sunday showed. The daily death toll of 312 is the highest since December 25, 2020, when 336 new deaths were reported.

As many as 63,371 new infections were recorded in a span of 24 hours on October 16. The number of people who have recuperated from the disease in-

creased to 1,13,23,762, while the case fatality rate stood at 1.35 per cent, the data stated.

India's Covid tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7; 30 lakh on August 23; 40 lakh on September 5; and 50 lakh on September 16. It went past 60 lakh on September 28; 70 lakh on October 11; crossed 80 lakh on October 29; 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one-crore mark on December 19.

Wanted criminal killed in exchange of fire

Continued from P1

In retaliation, police fired and Kuldeep suffered injuries. He was rushed to the Baba Saheb Ambedkar Hospital at Rohini where he was declared brought dead." Deputy Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) Pramod Singh Kushwah said.

Police said that around 20 rounds were fired -- eight by Kuldeep and around 10 by the Special Cell team -- during the exchange of fire.

The flat belonged to Yogender Dahiya, also an associate of Kuldeep. He has been arrested, they said.

According to a senior police officer, the escape plan for Kuldeep was hatched by his associates to revive the Gogi gang.

On March 25 afternoon, Kuldeep escaped from custody after a gunfight broke out at a

government hospital here.

At the hospital, the assailants first threw chilli powder at the police team and then started firing at them to which the security personnel retaliated with 12 rounds of fire, killing one of them on the spot and injuring another.

The shootout took place when police were taking Kuldeep, who is a member of the Gogi gang, to the hospital for treatment.

Five to six men came in a Scorpio car and a motorcycle from the rear entrance of the hospital building and fired at police.

The Gogi gang is involved in extortion, collecting ransom and protection money as well as committing car-jacking among others.

Kuldeep was arrested by the Special Cell of the Delhi Police in March last year from Gurgaon.

4 cr old vehicles ply on Indian roads

Continued from P1

Uttar Pradesh occupies the second spot with 56.54 lakh vehicles, of which 24.55 lakh are older than 20 years. The capital Delhi is at third place in terms of old and polluting vehicles at 49.93 lakh, of which 35.11 lakh are older than 20 years.

The digitisation of vehicle numbers revealed that Kerala has 34.64 lakh such vehicles, followed by 33.43 lakh in Tamil Nadu, 25.38 lakh in Punjab and 22.69 lakh in West Bengal. Maharashtra, Odisha, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Haryana have these vehicles in the range of 17.58 lakh and 12.29 lakh. The number of such vehicles ranges between 1 lakh and 5.44 lakh for Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Puducherry, Assam, Bihar, Goa, Tripura and the union territories of Dadra-Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu.

Rest of the states have such old and polluting vehicles below one lakh each, as per the central data. The government plans to impose a green tax on old vehicles soon in a bid protect the environment and curb pollution.

Vehicles like strong hybrids, electric vehicles and those running on alternate fuels like CNG, ethanol and LPG will be exempted. The revenue collected through the green tax will be

utilised for tackling pollution, as per the ministry. Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari in January this year had approved a proposal to levy a 'green tax' on old vehicles which are polluting the environment.

The proposal has been sent to the states for consultation before it is formally notified. Green tax is imposed by a few states/UTs at different rates at present.

Under the scheme, transport vehicles older than eight years could be charged green tax at the time of renewal of fitness certificate at the rate of 10 to 25 per cent of road tax. Personal vehicles will be charged green tax at the time of renewal of registration certification after 15 years; public transport vehicles, such as city buses, will be levied lower green tax; while higher green tax (50 per cent of road tax) is proposed for vehicles being registered in highly polluted cities.

Differential tax will also be charged depending on fuel (petrol/ diesel) and the type of vehicle. Apart from strong hybrids, electric vehicles and alternate fuels like CNG, ethanol, LPG etc, vehicles used in farming, such as tractors, harvestors and tillers, will be exempted from the tax.

Lockdown plans in Maharashtra?

Continued from P1

The Chief Minister then asked the officials to prepare a detailed plan for implementation of a lockdown which will have a minimum impact on the economy of the State, the release said.

"There should not be any kind of confusion among the people once a lockdown is announced," the CM is quoted as saying.

Meanwhile, night curfew will be imposed in entire Maharashtra from Sunday night in view of alarming rise in coronavirus cases.

"I do not wish to impose lockdown. But there seems a possibility of healthcare facilities falling short given the rise in number of coronavirus patients," Thackeray was quoted as saying. He asked officials to ensure availability of adequate hospital beds and medicines, the statement said.

On Saturday, Maharashtra reported 166 coronavirus-related deaths, highest this year, besides 35,726 new cases of infections.

TN CM ‘trapped’ as he is ‘corrupt,’ alleges Rahul Gandhi

CHENNAI

CONGRESS leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday lashed out at AIADMK top leader and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister K Palaniswami alleging he is trapped due to graft and he bowed in front of Union Home Minister Amit Shah as he had indulged in corruption. Addressing a public meeting here for the April 6 Assembly polls, Gandhi said when he saw Prime Minister Narendra Modi ‘controlling’ the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu and making him “touch his feet silently I am not ready to accept it”. The Congress leader said he was angered to ‘see’ that Palaniswami, belonging to the great Tamil civilisation, touched the feet of Modi and Shah and bowed in front of them. One has to touch the feet of Modi and Shah and bow before them, whether a person was in the BJP or in an alliance with that party, he claimed adding the saffron party does not understand any other kind of relationship.

While the BJP wanted everyone in the country to ‘bow’ before Modi and Shah duo, the Congress party believed in the ethos of brotherhood and equality, he said. He was for a relationship with the Tamil people that is equal, and respectful and also wanted the state to be run from Tamil Nadu and not Delhi, an



DMK president MK Stalin being greeted by MDMK general Secretary Vaiko as Congress leader Rahul Gandhi looks on during a public meeting, ahead of Tamil Nadu Assembly polls in Salem on Sunday

2 Kerala cadre IAS officers sent back from poll duty in TN

CHENNAI

TWO Kerala cadre IAS officers, Sriram Venkitaraman and Asif K. Yusuf, who were posted as election observers in Tamil Nadu have been called back by the Election commission of India to Kerala.

A Kerala-based newspaper group, “Siraj” had petitioned the Chief electoral officer Kerala to call Sriram back. An FIR had been registered against Sriram in a case related to the death of the Siraj newspaper’s Thiruvananthapuram bureau chief K.M. Basheer in the early hours of August 3, 2019. It was alleged that Sriram, who was driving a car under the influence of alcohol, had hit Basheer and killed him instantly.

Asif K. Yusuf is facing criminal charges on furnishing non-creamy layer certificate with fudged income details to claim OBC reservation for getting into the civil services. Asif has been replaced by Kerala Ayush secretary Dr. Sharmila Mary Joseph IAS, while Venkitaraman has been replaced by Jaffer Malik IAS. It is to be noted that election commission guidelines prevent officers with tainted background being sent on election duty as observers. (IANS)

oblique allegation that the BJP-led Centre called the shots in the state and not the AIADMK government.

“However, they do not know understand that Tamils have not bowed in front of anyone in their history but had always reciprocated ‘twice’ love and affection showered on them. Tamil Nadu is part of the very foundation of India”, he said and also expressed his desire to learn Tamil.

While previous polls were contests between political parties of Tamil Nadu, the AIADMK and DMK, the present one was between the AIADMK, RSS, Modi, Shah (BJP) on the one side and the Tamil people on the other side, he alleged. The

AIADMK-BJP front would be ‘decimated’ in Tamil Nadu in the poll battle and the DMK, its chief M K Stalin and his party-led Sec-

ular Progressive Alliance is the instrument that would steer the rout of AIADMK and its allies, he said. Stalin would become the

Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, he exuded confidence. “It is going to be a government that will not be controlled by Delhi.” (PTI)

DMK MP booked for alleged vulgar comments against TN CM

CHENNAI

DMK MP A Raja has been booked by the city police over a complaint from the ruling AIADMK for allegedly making vulgar personal remarks against Chief Minister K Palaniswami, a senior official said on Sunday.

The case was filed based on a complaint to the state Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) which was forwarded to the Greater Chennai Police, Commissioner Mahesh Kumar Aggarwal told reporters here.

“On the basis, the case was filed under Indian Penal Code and Representation of People Act,” he said, without divulging details. Earlier, Raja courted a controversy after he allegedly made vulgar personal remarks against Palaniswami during an election campaign, with the AIADMK knocking the doors of the EC with a plea to debar him from campaigning for the April 6 Assembly elections.

Meanwhile, AIADMK workers staged protest against Raja, a former Union Telecom Minister, in Salem and Karur districts on Sunday, with activists burning his effigy in the former, also the native district of the CM.

AIADMK ally BJP had also hit out at Raja for his comments, with Union Minister Smriti Irani alleging “DMK is such a political party that does not respect women.”

DMK president M K Stalin without mentioning anyone’s name, had said on Saturday that during campaign, partymen must make dignified comments, saying rivals would distort and edit speeches. (PTI)



Cops blame rats for disappearance of seized illicit liquor



ETAH (UP)

A probe has been initiated into a claim by officials of a local police station that rats were behind the disappearance of a large number of seized cartons of illicit liquor from a strong room. A senior police officer said over 1,400 cartons of liquor have gone missing from the Kotwali Dehat police station here and a case has been registered against Station House Officer Indreshpal Singh and clerk Rishal Singh. However, a general diary at the police station mentions that 239 cartons have been damaged by rats, which the senior police officer said seems to be fishy and unacceptable.

Superintendent of Police, Etah, Udai Shankar Singh on Sunday confirmed the development and said that a probe is on in this regard. He, however, refused to elaborate further. A senior police officer of the district

told PTI, “A week ago, it came to light that around 1,450 cartons of illicit liquor seized are missing from Kotwali Dehat police station.”

When asked whether some cartons have been damaged by rats, the police officer said, “The general diary of the police does mention that 239 cartons were damaged by rodents. However, this is not acceptable, and it seems that the matter is fishy. It has been probably done to cover the goof-up.”

A case has been registered against SHO Indreshpal Singh and clerk Rishal Singh. Both of them had not turned up to provide an explanation for the incident despite summons issued in their names, he said. Meanwhile, Vikas Kumar, a police officer from Aligarh who is probing the case, said, “Efforts are on to ascertain as to where the seized liquor has gone.” (PTI)

BJP’s central leadership targets to garner power in Puducherry

CHENNAI

THE BJP’s central leadership is eyeing to garner power in Puducherry as the BJP, AINRC and AIADMK alliance is sitting pretty in the Union Territory.

With several opinion polls predicting a landslide victory for the NDA coalition in the upcoming Assembly elections, the BJP’s national leadership has exuded confidence that the combine will emerge victorious at the hustings.

Single phase polling to 30 seats in Puducherry is slated for April 6. The All India N.R. Congress (AINRC) is contesting 16 seats, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) 9 seats and the remaining 5 seats by All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK). The NDA had announced N. Rangaswami, former Chief Minister and President of AINRC, as the Chief Ministerial candidate and ever since the BJP alliance has been hitting the right chord.

In the 30-member Assembly, the saffron party has hardly a member but has always been backed by 3 nominated members. The election manifesto of the NDA alliance was released by the Union Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

Meanwhile, a galaxy of senior party leaders including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Minister Nitin Gadkari will be attending the electioneering in Puducherry.

Union Ministers Amit Shah and Irani are the two senior

leaders who will be attending the public programmes in the UT. Prime minister Narendra Modi will be attending the NDA public programme at 5pm on Tuesday at the Anglo- French stadium.

BJP leader in-charge of Puducherry, Nirmal Kumar Surana told IANS, “The NDA alliance is led by former Chief Minister N Rangaswamy of the AINRC and he knows the in-and-out of the state. We are leaving no stone unturned and the NDA combine is heading for a comfortable majority. With the arrival of senior national leaders of the party, the BJP campaign will gain momentum and we are in course of a huge electoral victory in this assembly elections.” (IANS)

Tejashwi, Kanhaiya focus on Bihar voters in Assam



NEW DELHI

IN Assam, the Congress-led alliance is pitching leaders from Bihar to woo the migrant voters, who have a significant presence in more than two dozen Assembly constituencies.

Tejashwi Yadav, Leader of Opposition in the Bihar Assembly whose party is contesting on one seat, addressed three rallies on Saturday, which drew good crowds. He campaigned for Congress candidates -- Sambhu Singh Mallah in Ratabari, Kamkhya Prasad Mala in Dholai, Mukesh Pandey in Lakhipur and Sashi Kanta Das in Raha. Tejashwi said: “People are fed up with the BJP’s double engine government in Assam. Our alliance is committed to progressive, inclusive, development and welfare oriented government in the state.”

Former JNU Student Union President Kanhaiya Kumar also drew large crowds during his rallies in the state, campaigning for the Congress-led alliance.

Seeing the crowds at the rallies, the Congress leaders say that this surely will pave the way for their government.

Congress observer and MLA for second term from Kadwa in Bihar, Shakil Khan is coor-

inating for the party in Assam and is trying to woo the migrants towards Congress. Shakil Khan speaking over the phone from Guwahati said, “I am confident that Congress will get more than 70 seats as the BJP government has been mired in corruption and did not do anything except dividing the state on non issues.”

The party is banking on ‘five guarantees. in the state which includes five lakh jobs for youth. Party General Secretary Jitendra Singh said, in a tweet, “Assam’s tea workers deserve a life of dignity, much like their tea gardens enveloped with bright shades of intense green, Congress five Guarantee will reinstate the colours of a dignified life, very soon!”

The Congress is leaving no stone unturned to cash in on the anti-CAA sentiments of the local people and over the low wages of the tea estate workers.

The 126-member Assembly will go to the polls in three phases, the first phase voted on March 27 (47 seats), which saw a huge turnout and the second phase is on April 1 (39 seats) and April 6 (40 seats) in the third phase. The results will be declared on May 2. (IANS)



Artists give a finishing touch to an effigy based on coronavirus theme for Holi Dahan on the eve of Holi festival in Mumbai on Sunday

Famous as ‘tree man’, TN bus conductor wins PM’s praise

NEW DELHI

POPULAR as the ‘Tree Man’, Marimuthu Yoganathan, a bus conductor in Tamil Nadu’s Coimbatore city, on Sunday accumulated admiration by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his extraordinary initiative to encourage people in planting trees. Yoganathan gives free saplings to the bus travellers along with the ticket and he has spent a large portion of his income for this purpose.

The bus conductor is learnt to have planted over three lakh saplings in the last 30 years using his own money.

Besides, getting praise from Prime Minister, Yoganathan has been honoured with “Eco Warrior” award by Vice President M.Venkaiah Naidu, “Unsung Hero” award by wildlife filmmaker Mike Pandey and film actor John Abraham in

“Timberland” function held in Delhi. He has also garnered appreciation on social media too.

While addressing the country in the 75th episode of ‘Mann Ki Baat’, the Prime Minister said there is Marimuthu Yoganathan who works as a bus conductor in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu.

“Yoganathanji while issuing tickets to the passengers of his bus also gives a sapling free of cost. In this way, Yoganathanji has got planted of innumerable trees! Yoganathanji has been spending a big chunk of his salary towards this work.”

“Now after listening to this story, who as a citizen will not appreciate the work of Marimuthu Yoganathan? I heartily congratulate his efforts, for his inspirational work,” Modi said. Yoganathan is employed as a bus conductor in the Tamil Nadu State Trans-



port Corporation. He is known as eco activist and Yoganathan visited around 3,743 universities, colleges, schools and industries and took

classes to raise environmental awareness.

The 52-year-old conductor, who has been conferred with the title ‘Sutru Suzal Seyal

Veerar’ by the Tamil Nadu government, reportedly uses 40 per cent of his monthly salary towards buying saplings and educating children. (IANS)

“ Investors should purchase stocks like they purchase groceries, not like they purchase perfume ”

—Ben Graham



HANS INVEST

Stocks.MFs.Bonds.Commodities



Gold market sentiment likely to remain strong

DR H C UPADHYAY

HYDERABAD: With the US dollar gaining strength vis-à-vis other leading currencies and treasury bills fetching higher returns, investors have shifted gears in favour of stocks and treasury bills. Consequently, New York gold declined and closed at \$1,733.30 (per Ounce), while silver followed the suit and closed at \$25.03 (per Ounce). Platinum and palladium closed at \$1,182 (per Ounce) and \$2,598 (per Ounce) respectively.

Other economic parameters remained stable. However, Brent closed at the lower level of \$64.57 (per barrel) so also Crude MCX which was quoted at Rs 4,466 (per barrel). While Gold MCX stood at Rs 44,650 (per 10 gms), MCX Silver closed at Rs 64,648 (per kg) and Copper MCX closed at Rs 671 (per kg). Sensex and Nifty 50 closed at 69,008.50 and 14,507.30 points respectively. On Saturday, leading foreign currencies' exchange rates were, US Dollar: Rs 72.45, British Pound: Rs 99.91, Euro: Rs 85.67, Singapore \$: Rs 53.83, Swiss Franc: Rs 77.13, Australian \$: Rs 55.29, Saudi Riyal: Rs 19.32, New Zealand Dollar: Rs 50.80, Kuwaiti Dinar: Rs 240.03, Omani Rial: Rs 188.40 and UAE Dirham: Rs 19.72, Japanese Yen: Rs 0.66 and Hong Kong Dollar: Rs 9.32.

In local markets, standard gold (24 carats) declined by Rs 380 and closed at Rs 45,710 (per 10 gms). Ornamental gold too, followed the suit and was quoted in the range of Rs 41,800 - 41,900 on the closing day. Silver (0.999) also declined by Rs 2,500 and closed at Rs 69,300 (per kg). Considering the evolving atmosphere of bonhomie among leading economies including the USA, global market sentiment is expected to remain fairly strong in the coming few weeks.

Market course hinges on macro data

Vaccination pace, Q4 results weigh during truncated week

CHERUKURI KUTUMBA RAO

Hunted by noise over US bond yields, worries over second Covid wave, uncertainty over outcome of state assembly elections and weak global cues; markets have fallen for second successive week. The Sensex fell 849.74 points or 1.70 per cent to end at 49,008.5 and while the Nifty declined 236.7 points or 1.6 per cent to close at 14,507.3 levels. The broader indices had outperformed the benchmark indices with the BSE midcap index was down 0.3 per cent and smallcap index fell 1 per cent. It is pertinent to observe that FIIs were net sellers of more than Rs 6,000 crore and DIIs were net buyers of more than Rs 4,500 crore during the week.

Next week would be a truncated one for the Indian markets as markets will remain closed on March 29 for Holi and on April 2 on account of Good Friday. Given the short-trading week, the markets are broadly expected to stay in a defined range with limited moves on either side. Keep excessive leveraged exposures under check so long as the markets are under the broad consolidation phase, warn old timers. The stability in the market depends on the pace of vaccination and fourth-quarter results which are expected to be positive, given the recovery in economic activity during January and February 2021. Near term direction of the market will be determined by the macroeconomic data, Covid situation, changes in bond yields, crude oil prices and global cues. Keep an eye on some macro data that the government and RBI will release. February infra output, Q4 current account, Q4 external debt, preliminary import and export data for March and forex reserves as of March

26 are some of the data that will be released.

The RBI is slated to announce its first bi-monthly monetary policy of 2021-22 fiscal on April 7, 2021, after a three-day meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee. True to prediction and warnings in this column last week's new listings, Suryoday SFB, Kalyan Jewellers, Anupam Rasayan, and Craftsman Automation listed lower than their issue prices. Before these last five listings, the average debut gain for a public issue stock in 2021 was 38 per cent. As investors are increasingly turning their attention to some high-flying IPOs that earlier recorded big listing gains, are coming to terms with the force of gravity. All eyes are now on the listing of well-known investor Rakesh Jhunjhunwala-backed mobile gaming company Nazara Technologies.

Heard on the street

The blockage of the Suez Canal prolongs a period of unusual pain for global supply chains and unusual profits for the shipping industry that serves them. Investors are betting on a return to the old normal, but the arrival date keeps getting pushed back. The gigantic vessel beached in the Suez Canal caps a year of extraordinary drama for shipping. Container volumes collapsed in the first wave of the pandemic but recovered far faster and further than expected. That helped drive a historic surge in shipping rates that has yet to unwind.

The Suez jam will extend the disruptions. Around 12 per cent of global trade flows through the canal and the

MARKET Khabrein



longer it remains blocked, the more vessels will pile up on either side or take the long route around Africa.

Investors are by and large assuming the post-pandemic normal, when it eventually emerges, won't be different for supply chains from the old one. The hope for shipping - and the risk for global supply chains - is that the industry has learned from its long period of generating subpar returns.

Futures & sector watch

Settlement week witnessed brisk trading in the derivative segment. Rollovers were a tad lower compared to three month averages. The India VIX inched with a 1.40 per cent rise on weekly count as the market witnessed a rise in volatility. PCR OI for the week closed at 2.08. Richly valued options are clearly suggesting expectations of heightened volatility next week as well. Fears of second wave of Covid-19 cases has triggered shift of buying into defensives Pharmaceuticals, FMCG and IT. Use declines to buy Dr Lal Path Labs, Divi's Labs, Cipla

and Sun Pharma. Heightened interest is likely in HUL and ITC from FMCG space, Asian Paints, and Berger Paints. Expectations on Q4 results of IT biggies are high. Stay invested in TCS, HCL Tech and Infosys for further gains. Ahead of their monthly sales number for the month of March on April 1, auto companies are likely to attract stock-specific buying.

Momentums seen in February numbers likely to continue say industry observers. Commercial vehicle segment may report robust sales. Stay invested in Tata Motors and Ashok Leyland. With reports of price hikes in passenger vehicles from April, mild bump up likely in March sales. With only three trading sessions in the coming week expect absence of sector leadership and highly stock specific moves. Stock futures looking good are Berger Paints, Gujarat Gas, JSW Steel, Tata Steel, Tata Consumer and PI Inds. Stock futures looking weak are AU Bank, Coal India, SRF, M&M and Zee.

Stock picks

Deepak Fertilisers and Petrochemicals Corporation Ltd. (DFPCL) is among India's leading producers of fertilizers and industrial chemicals. The company is one of the leading manufacturers of NPK and specialty fertilizers in India. The company under its flagship brand Mahadhan, manufactures high quality NPK, specialty and water soluble fertilizers. It offers a basket of 48 products which include bulk fertilizers, specialty fertilizers, water soluble fertilizers, micronutrient and secondary nutrients, catering to every farmer's crop nutrient requirement. It is the only manufacturer of 24:24:0 Nitro Phosphate in India.

The company has the largest Nitric

Acid Complex in South East Asia and is the leading manufacturer of industrial chemicals in India: Nitric Acid, Iso Propyl Alcohol (IPA), Food Grade Liquid Carbon Dioxide and Methanol. It is the largest manufacturer of Iso Propyl Alcohol. User industries include pharmaceutical, inks and coatings, cosmetics and agrochemicals. It is moving from a domestic market leader to being a global player, while moving forward into mining services and solutions in agri-business. In Pune, the company has built India's first true Lifestyle Centre, Creativity. It is first of its kind retail destination that focuses on home and interior and also offers a unique F&B experience. Spread across 10 acres with over 4 lakh sq. ft. of retail space it is the largest destination for Home and Interiors in Western India.

Why we are recommending the company:

- Reduction in debt levels and demand recovery to help the company report record profits in coming quarters. The company's focus on balanced product mix and new verticals would be key drivers for the stock.
- Diversified contribution of different verticals of businesses
- The company is expanding capacities in Ammonia, Iso Propyl Alcohol, TAN and Fertilizers.

Buy between Rs 200-210 for medium term (nine to twelve months) price target of Rs 325-375. In the event of sharp correction in the broader market, stop loss should be at Rs 175. We are looking at a risk reward ratio of 1:6.

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

The impact of valuation change in AT1 bonds

Sebi wrote-off the entire value (₹8,415 crore) of the AT1 bonds of Yes bank



K Naresh Kumar

Last few weeks witnessed frenetic communication over AT1 bonds, occupying a lot of space and print in the financial news. The topic has come back into the general realm after the Securities Exchange Board of India (SEBI) wrote-off the entire value (Rs 8,415 crore) of the AT1 bonds as part of the rescue package for Yes bank. Last week a bench at Bombay HC admitted a petition of AT1 bondholders' plea for claims worth Rs 160Cr.

Additional tier -1 bonds, popularly known as AT1 bonds are issued by the banks to shore up their core capital base to meet Basel III norms. Basel III is a global, voluntary regulatory framework on bank capital adequacy, stress testing, and market liquidity risk. This third instalment of the Basel Accords was developed in response to the deficiencies in financial regulation revealed by the financial crisis of 2007-08. It's intended to strengthen the bank capital requirements by increasing bank liquidity and decreasing bank leverage.

Under the Basel III framework, bank's regulatory capital is divided into tier-1 and tier-2 capital. The

tier-1 is further sub-divided into Common Equity (CET) and Additional Capital (AT1). The norms require banks to maintain a total capital ratio of 11.5 per cent of which 8 per cent in tier-1 capital i.e., own equity, reserves, etc. and tier-2 (supplementary reserves and hybrid instruments, etc.). AT1 bond forms part of the tier-1 capital and is a type of unsecured, perpetual bond that has no maturity while the issuing bank has the option to call back the bonder repay the principal after a specified time.

Though these instruments have a face value and fixed coupon, are not similar to your normal bonds due to the voluntary call option. This means, the issuing bank could use the call option to vest the bond if they deem no further capital requirement. This unfortunately is also considered as a possible fixed nature of the bond by some investors who looking for a better return (higher coupon) ended up investing in them. Also, the issuer could skip paying the interest partially or fully without creditors being able to question them as a default. As these bonds are issued primarily to shore up 'equity' capital of banks, the regulator allows banks to hold back coupon payouts if the bank makes losses or faces insufficient reserves.

Moreover, the banks could altogether write-down the principal

and not just the interest payments, in case of bank's weak financials. The 'principal loss absorption' is a key term for all AT1 bonds, allows the issuing bank to simply write-off the face value (principal) either in full or partial if its CET ratio goes below 6.125 per cent. Another damning feature of these bonds are the Point-of-Non-Viability (PONV) where the RBI has right to direct a bank to write-off the entire value of its outstanding AT1 bonds if it feels that the bank requires a public sector capital infusion to remain a going concern. The Yes bank saga had highlighted this. Earlier in the month, Sebi has issued a circular stating that maturity of all perpetual bonds should be treated as 100 years from the date of issuance for the purpose of the valuation. It has also issued regulations that put a limit of 10 per cent for cumulative investments by MFs (mutual funds) in tier-1 and tier-2 bonds. In a response, the finance ministry has asked the market regulator to withdraw its directive to MF houses to treat AT1 bonds as having maturity of 100 years as it could disrupt the market

and impact capital rising by banks.

The absence of any specified valuation norms, many MFs used to consider the call-option date on such bonds as the maturity date. According to an estimate of the outstanding AT1 bonds of Rs. 90K Cr, over Rs 35K Cr are held by MFs. The new directive had resulted in valuation concerns of these bonds with yields of perpetual bonds issued by SBI and BOB had gone up by as much as 90 basis points (bps) following Sebi's circular. Some banks have even deferred the issuance of fresh AT1 bonds to avoid paying higher yield.

However, last Monday, Sebi has ended the logjam by amending valuation rule of perpetual bonds. In a statement, Sebi said that the deemed residual maturity of Basel III AT1 bonds will be 10 years until March 22. It also mentioned that the period will be increased to 20 and 30 years over the subsequent six-month period. From April 23 onwards, the residual maturity of AT1 bonds will become 100 years from the date of issuance of the bond. This would kick into force from 1st April 21 and thanks to the gradual tinkering, the MFs wouldn't be taking too much disruption to accommodate the newer changes.

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

Market consolidation continues

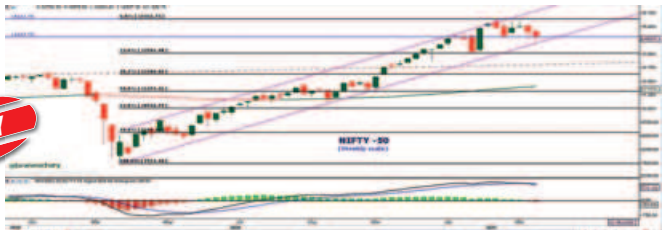
BULLS TURNING CAUTIOUS FOR LAST 6 WEEKS

THOVITI BRAHMACHARY

The stock market declined for the second consecutive week and closed at four week low. The Nifty lost 236.70 points or 1.61 per cent. The BSE sensex also lost 1.7 per cent. The broader indices Nifty midcap-10 fell by 0.9 per cent and the smallcap-100 index down by 2.7 per cent. Nifty Pharma up by 2.5 per cent, and the metal index advanced 0.6 per cent. All other sectoral indices ended up with losses. The Bank Nifty, Auto and Energy indices were down by 2.5 per cent 4 per cent respectively. The advance-decline ratios were negative during the week. FIIs sold Rs 6,280.85 crores during the week. The DIIs bought Rs 4,596.64 crores.

The Indian stock market consolidation continues for the sixth week. Like any other consolidation, the current is also not giving any clues about the future moves as it formed at the lifetime highs. The consolidation between 15,431-14,467 has resulted after a sharp budget rally of 1,835 points. Interestingly, the Nifty tested the 50 per cent retracement level twice during the one last month and closed just below to at the end of the week. It also tested the 61.8 per cent retracement on Thursday. And it has oscillated around 50DMA, and finally, it closed 1.74 per cent below to it.

The daily chart pattern looks like a double top, as it formed two lower highs and a valley point.



The valley point breached on March 19th on an intraday basis, and closed below on March 25th, but able to close above the valley point at the end of the week. The Nifty is moving in an upward channel since March 2020 levels. In any case, the Nifty closes below the 14,264 may result in a channel breakdown, which will confirm the major top formed at 15,431 on February 16th. In fact, the Bank Nifty, which is one of the driving force of the Mar-Feb rally. Two days to go, the Nifty forming a shooting star candle on a monthly chart. Three shooting stars in a row on a monthly chart is a significant sign of topping formation. Currently, the Nifty has six distribution days. Any addition of distribution days and a breach of prior low will change the market status to the downtrend.

Two different channel patterns, one is bearish (double top), the other one is bullish (bull flag), are giving confusing signals. Both patterns witnessed a breakdown and retested. Unless either pattern breakout happens, when the consolidation ends, we can expect violent moves.

On the indicators front, there is nothing much to discuss. The

RSI (60.39) has closed below the two prior lows and earlier resistance on the same weekly chart. It actually broke the descending triangle. The main driving force for the market is FII inflows. An aggressive buying in the last five months has significantly slowed down. After pumping Rs 1,79,104 crores in just five months at an average of almost Rs 36,000 crore.

The current PE is at 39.51 and touched 41.78 on February 16th 2021. The Price to Book Value (PBV) does not take the earnings into account as a parameter. The PBV of 4.34 (February 16th) is at 12 years high. On Friday close it was at 4.11.

The bulls are turning cautious for the last six weeks. The Nifty must break either 15,100-330 level and register a bullish flag breakout to continue the uptrend. It should break down the double bottom pattern by closing below the recent two swing lows of 14,460-264 to signal a significant correction of 20 per cent from the current top. In consolidation, we may not get a well-qualified trade.

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

DERIVATIVES OUTLOOK

DASARI SREENIVASA RAO

The Nifty began April F&O series on a sluggish note with low Open Interest (OI) indicating long closure during the recent weakness. However, the premium in April futures rose giving caution to investors. Normally, upsides in markets don't bode well with high premium. Hence, volatility may continue in the short-term. After upside movement in the February series, March F&O expiry recorded heavy selling pressure at higher level. Nifty declined over five per cent in the March series and Bank Nifty was a major under performer as it fell 10 per cent. On the OI front, the Nifty suffered six per cent reduction in the positions, indicating long un-

High futures premium holds caution amid volatility

winding in the index, according to sharekhan.com.

The Nifty witnessed extreme volatility during the March derivatives series and ended near the lows at 14,325. A recovery on Friday helped in reducing losses and the Nifty closed the week with losses of more than one per cent. Going ahead, analysts predict some consolidation for Nifty ahead of the result season.

The highest Call OI is seen at 15,000 strike followed by 14,700 /15,500 /14,800 /1,500 strikes, while reasonable addition of Call OI build-up is at 15,000 /15,100 /15,500 /14,800 strikes.

Coming to the Put side, the 14,000 strike recorded the highest Put OI followed by 14,300 /14,500 /14,400 /13,800 strikes. Further, 14,500 /14,000 /14,300 /14,200

strikes witnessed significant build-up of Put OI.

Dhirender Singh Bisht, senior research analyst (derivatives) at SMC Global Securities Ltd, said: "From derivatives front, the 14,300 Put strike witnessed some hefty Open Interest build up, while 14,700 and 14,800 strikes hold strong Open Interest build up in Calls."

Bisht forecasts: "From the technical front, Nifty can be seen trading in a downward sloping channel with formation of lower bottoms, which suggests that selling pressure is likely to persist on higher levels. Additionally prices are holding well below its short-term moving averages as well on daily charts. On downside, bears are likely to grip the markets once a slide below the 14,300 level seen. The strong support for Nifty is seen at 14,000 lev-

F&O TRADING			
Product	Contracts	Turnover (Rs/cr)	Premium (Rs/cr)
Index Futures	3,71,363	35,332.03	--
Stock Futures	6,01,652	55,823.00	--
Index Options	2,03,92,765	19,54,889.12	15,977.76
Stock Options	10,47,840	98,861.10	2,554.97
F&O Total	2,24,13,620	21,44,905.25	18,532.73

Source: NSE As on Mar 26, 2021

els." From the options space, uniform activity can be seen near At The Money (ATM) Calls and Put strikes with no major difference in OI positions. Further, high valued options are indicating volatility for the week ahead. Derivatives analysts predict that the 14,700-14,900 range would be crucial for any change of trend. On downsides, recent lows near 14,300 may act as an immediate support to the NSE Nifty. As per data from Sharekhan.com,

the Nifty rollover for April was at 81.67 per cent versus 78.25 per cent. Bank Nifty's April month rollover was at 88.18 per cent versus 77.76 per cent, while market-wide rollover was at 84.13 per cent.

"Nifty index reclaimed 14,500 levels in Friday's session after ending March series on a negative note. Traders showed some buying interest at lower levels as metal stocks along with FMCG counters surged along with some madcap stocks,"

observes Bisht. The Nifty Futures began the April series with OI of 0.98 crore shares versus 1.05 crore shares in open interest.

The April F&O series started with Rs123,716 crore as against Rs134,900 crore in stock futures, Rs14,197 crore versus Rs15,854 crore in Nifty futures and Rs174,421 crore versus Rs 182,495 crore in index options and Rs38,354 crore versus 46,104 crore in stock options. "The Implied Volatility (IV) of Calls closed at 21.21 per cent, while that for Put options closed at 23.49 per cent. The Nifty VIX for the week closed at 22.70 per cent and is expected to remain volatile. Put-Call Ratio of OI for the week closed at 2.08," adds Bisht.

Bank Nifty

The NSE's banking index Bank Nifty closed at 33,318.20 points, a

net fall of 843.40 points or 2.46 per cent from 34,161.60 points. The banking stocks remained in sluggish mode along with the auto sector. However, technology stocks may remain in focus ahead of their quarterly results. The Bank Nifty commenced the April F&O series with 2.5 year high OI as weakness seen in the March series had resulted in fresh build-up of short positions. Any recovery is expected to be limited till any major closure of positions in the banking index.

According to data from ICICI Direct.com, the Call base at 34,000 strike holds significantly high OI indicating immediate hurdle for the banking index. A fresh positive bias can be made in the banking index if it is able to sustain above these levels only. The current price ratio of Bank Nifty-Nifty fell to 2.29 level. ICICI Direct.com expects the banking index to perform in line with the Nifty, while focus may shift to other sectors in coming weeks.

India edge past England by 7 runs to win series

Curran's unbeaten 95 off 83 deliveries goes in vain; Pant, Pandya shine but hosts set below-par 330 victory target

PUNE

INDIA got a scare before they managed to beat England by a slender 7-run margin in the third and final One-day International against England at the Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium here on Sunday.

Sam Curran (95 not out off 83 deliveries) threatened to take the game away from India after the home side had reduced the Englishmen to 200 for seven at one stage in chase of 329. However, the total proved too much in the end. Shardul Thakur took four wickets for 67 while Bhuvneshwar Kumar took three wickets for 42 runs.

Earlier, Rishabh Pant and Hardik Pandya hit stroke-filled half-centuries but India

lower-order caved in meekly to settle for a below-par 329.

Pant's sparkling knock of 78 off 62 balls was well supported by Hardik (64 off 44 balls) but India lost their last four wickets for a mere eight runs to finish at least 30 runs short on another batting belter.

Pant, during his career-best knock plundered four maximums and five boundaries, while Hardik had five fours and four sixes during their 99-run stand for the fifth wicket.

However Krunal Pandya's (25 off 34 balls) serious limitations while facing express pace was exposed by Mark Wood (3/34) as India lost the momentum during the final 10 overs despite brilliant 103 run opening stand inside 15 overs between Rohit Sharma (37; 6x4) and Shikhar Dhawan (67 off 56; 10x4).

The senior Pandya at times was finding it difficult to bring his bat down in time while facing the pace of Woods and didn't get a single boundary consuming nearly six overs of the innings.

It was a day when India's top order was troubled by English spinners with Adil Rashid's (2/81 in 10 overs) googlies in successive overs removing Rohit and Dhawan.

Skipper Virat Kohli (7) tried to rock back and play a cut shot only to be bowled by a Moeen Ali off-break.

KL Rahul was sent back by a friendly full-toss from Liam Livingstone leaving India

spot of bother at 157 for 4 just before the halfway stage of the innings. However Pant started off from where he had left in the last game and ditto for Hardik as they took apart Rashid by reading wrong 'uns well.

Hardik smashed three sixes off Ali which forced the captain to take him out of attack as

200 came in the 30th over.

Pant brought up his third ODI fifty with a towering six and was in his elements as he took on both the pacers and spinners and so was Hardik.

When it looked like the duo would go berserk, Curran removed Pant as Jos Buttler

took a stunning reflex catch to his left with his body balance tilted towards right. And then Ben Stokes cleaned up Hardik as the hosts again slipped to 276/6. A quick fire 30 off 21 balls by Shardul Thakur was the only consolation in an otherwise poor show by lower order. (HANS/PTI)



We didn't get what we expected: Hardik Pandya

India's Hardik Pandya congratulates Rishabh Pant after he scored half century during the 3rd ODI match against England at Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium in Pune on Sunday

3rd ODI SCOREBOARD

India
Rohit Sharma b Rashid37
Shikhar Dhawan c & b Rashid67
Virat Kohli b Ali7
Rishabh Pant c Buttler b Curran78
KL Rahul c Ali b Livingstone7
Hardik Pandya b Stokes64
Krunal Pandya c Roy b Wood25
Shardul Thakur c Buttler b Wood30
Bhuvneshwar c Curran b Topley3
Prasidh Krishna b Wood0
T Natarajan not out0
Extras (LB-1, W-10)11
Total (all out, 48.2 Overs)329
Fall of wickets: 1-103, 2-117, 3-121, 4-157, 5-256, 6-276, 7-321, 8-328, 9-329
Bowling: Sam Curran 5-0-43-1, Reece Topley 9.2-0-66-1, Mark Wood 7-1-34-3, Ben Stokes 7-0-45-1, Adil Rashid 10-0-81-2, Moeen Ali 7-0-39-1, L Livingstone 3-0-20-1.

England
Jason Roy b Kumar14
Jonny Bairstow lbw b Kumar1
Ben Stokes c Dhawan b Natarajan35
David Malan c Sharma b Thakur 50
Jos Buttler lbw b Thakur15
Liam Livingstone c & b Thakur36
Moeen Ali c HH Pandya b Kumar29
Sam Curran not out95
Adil Rashid c Kohli b Thakur19
Mark Wood run out (HH Pandya/Pant) 14
Reece Topley not out1
Extras (lb 1, w 12)13
Total (For 9 wickets in 50 overs)322
Fall of wickets: 1-14, 2-28, 3-68, 4-95, 5-155, 6-168, 7-200, 8-257, 9-317
Bowling: Bhuvneshwar Kumar 10-0-42-3, T Natarajan 10-0-73-1, Prasidh Krishna 7-0-62-0, Shardul Thakur 10-0-67-4, Hardik Pandya 9-0-48-0, Krunal Pandya 4-0-29-0

Krishna-Vishnu pair goes down in men's doubles final of Orleans Masters



PARIS

THE Indian pair of Krishna Prasad Garaga and Vishnu Vardhan Goud let slip a strong start to go down to England's Ben Lane and Sean Vendy in the men's doubles final of the Orleans Masters badminton tournament here on Sunday.

The unheralded Indians, the only ones left in contention from the country on the final day, lost 21-19, 14-21, 19-21 in a 56-minute battle with the fourth seeds. Krishna and Vishnu had paired for the first time in this event and would be pleased with the results they managed.

Krishna, 21, is India's no. 1 ranked doubles player and used to pair up with Satwiksairaj Rankireddy in his junior days. After Satwik and Chirag Shetty were paired together, Krishna started playing with Dhruv Kapila since November, 2016.

The duo continued for two

and a half years before separating in 2019. The 20-year-old Vishnu also played with a few other Indian doubles players in his junior days. He and Ishaan Bhatnagar had reached the finals at the 2019 Bulgarian Junior international.

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty were the first Indian pair to win a super 100 event at Hyderabad in 2018. The duo also went on to win Thailand Open 500 and reaching the finals of French Open 750 event.

Krishna had earlier paired with Shlok Ramchandran, while for the 20-year-old Vishnu, it's his first international tournament at the senior level.

On Saturday, Saina Nehwal bowed out in straight games in the women's singles semifinals to end India's singles challenge at the tournament. Saina lost 17-21, 17-21 to Denmark's Line Christophersen in her semifinal clash. (PTI)

TS chess c'ship from March 31

HYDERABAD: Telangana State Chess Association will be conducting 7th Telangana State Senior Fide Rating Chess Championship-2021 from March 31 to April 3 at Yoga-hall, LB Stadium, Hyderabad.

Top four players from this tournament will represent Telangana State in the upcoming National Senior Chess Championship -2021. Time control 90+30 seconds increment from move one.

Under Swiss format total eight rounds will be conducted every day with two rounds, Round 1 at 10am and Round 2 at 3pm, with 30 minutes default time. New players have chance to get Fide rating with this prestigious Telangana Title Chess Championship and there is no age and gender restrictions for the participants. Those who wish to participate register must their names before March 30 through website www.chesste-langana.com or contact 7337578899/7337399299 and there will be no spot entries.

ISSF WORLD CUP

India end best-ever campaign with 2 more gold

NEW DELHI

INDIA pulled the curtains down on its best-ever ISSF World Cup campaign with two more gold medals here on Sunday, somewhat making up for missing out on the chance to swell its unprecedented tally of 15 Olympic quotas.

Dominating the event from start to end, hosts India topped the chart with an incredible tally of 30 medals, half of them being gold. The country also bagged nine silver and six bronze medals in what could be the last major international outing for rifle and pistol shooters before this summer's Tokyo Olympics.

On the last competition day, shotgun shooters Prithviraj Tondaiman, Lakshay Sheoran and Kynan Chenai ended India's campaign with a gold medal in the men's trap team event.

Before that, the trio of Shreyasi Singh, Rajeshwari Kumari and



Manisha Keer claimed the gold medal in the women's trap team final after blanking Kazakhstan 6-0. In the gold medal match, the team fielded by the host nation did not break a sweat as it romped to a crushing win over Kazakhstan's Sarsenkul Rysbekova, Aizhan Dosmagambetova and Mariya Dmitriyenko, taking the number of gold won by India to 14 in the tournament.

Vijayveer Sidhu, Gurpreet Singh and Adarsh Singh looked



off colour and settled for the silver medal in the men's 25m rapid fire pistol team event. The USA's Keith Sanderson, Jack Hobson Leverett III and Henry Turner Leverett won the gold medal with a 10-2 victory over the home team.

"I had hoped that the home range would help me get my 16th quota... the cookie crumbled. But that boy (Vijayveer), he is very young and he shot very well...

In the long run you will see a

lot of good things from him," National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) president Raninder Singh said after the tournament. The national shooting body's chief was satisfied with the performance of his athletes. "Athletes morale is high, but, as I had said earlier this is not a marker for Olympics. But it's important that we have done well, because it leaves us morally high, these things matter, psychologically it's important for us. (PTI)

Jehan begins F2 season with second-place finish

BAHRAIN: India's Jehan Daruvala began his 2021 FIA Formula 2 Championship campaign on a high note, clinching second place in race 1 here at the Bahrain International Circuit.

Jehan showed his mettle in the second race too, climbing from eleventh to fourth, to miss a second straight podium by a whisker. In the final race, he had to settle for a sixth-place finish that puts him third place in the points standings, after Round 1 of 8. "I kept out of trouble at the start of race 1, and then made sensible moves up the order. Both, Lawson and I, had similar pace towards the end, but it was difficult to pass. It's good to start the season with a podium," the Red Bull Racing Junior driver said after his victory.

"I enjoyed race 2 too, with the amount of overtaking in the last few laps. Unfortunately, I flat-spotted my set of soft tyres, causing severe vibrations that seriously compromised race 3 for me. A big thanks to Carlin for the excellent car which helped me finish in the points in all the races," he added.

DUBAI

EXPERIMENTATION remains the focus for head coach Igor Stimac as India prepare to face the United Arab Emirates in their second international friendly match in four days at the Zabeel Stadium.

Stimac had played as many as 10 debutants in India's 1-1 draw against Oman on Thursday. The match marked the first time since November 2019 that the India played a game and they were also facing a team that was placed 23 spots above them in the FIFA rankings. On Monday, India would be facing a team that placed 30 places above them.

Stimac is looking at these two matches as testing ground for the squad he wants to assemble at the national camp later in the year before India resume their campaign in the 2022 FIFA World Cup qualifier, which also doubles up as the qualifiers for the 2023 Asian Cup. While India are out of contention to make it to the World Cup, they are fighting to progress in the

Asian Cup qualifier which, Stimac said before the Oman game, has always been the team's target.

"That's why we want to play better opposition, to advance our game," said Stimac in a virtual press conference on Sunday.

The match against Oman was a story of two halves. India were almost overwhelmed by their opponents in the first half and did well to allow Oman to score just one goal despite all the possession they had. India were far more adventurous in the second half, however, threatening the Oman goal on a number of occasions.

"Everyone is looking to



get something more out of friendlies so it is difficult to find better opponents. We need to find a way to control the ball and be quick in passing in transition. I don't expect us to control, UAE are better in quality and have many experienced players. We are here to get experience for our team," said Stimac.

Stimac said that he will be making a raft of changes in the match against UAE so as to give as many chances as possible to the 27 players who form the squad. This includes keeping out talismanic centre-back Sandesh Jhingana, who

paired up with Chinglensana Singh in the match against Oman.

He said that he wants his players to adapt to the pace of international football.

"Our players need to understand that this is not the Indian Super League (ISL) where there is lot of time in the middle to control the ball. Here you need to be quick and sharp, there is no time to control the ball," he said.

India played UAE last in the 2019 AFC Asian Cup where they lost 2-0. (HANS)

U-16 boys, girls tennis tourney on April 2

HYDERABAD

SPORTS Village and Noor Tennis Academy will jointly conduct a tennis tournament for Under-16



boys and girls on World Autism Awareness Day, April 2.

Tournament to be held at the Academy's courts in Vattinagulapally, Financial District, beside SVCG cricket ground in Gandipet mandal from 8am to 4pm.

For registrations and other details, kindly contact senior national coach Shaik Nooruddin on Mobile No: 92477-16811. Spot entries are also accepted.