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WINDOWS



The women who have emerged as leaders during the ongoing farmers' protest have been featured on the international cover page of American news magazine TIME for its March edition. Titled 'On the Frontlines of India's Farmer Protest', the cover shows a group of 20 women at Tikri border on the outskirts of Delhi. The story talks about how women have come to the forefront over the last month or so. ►P6

Misleading: Centre slams NGO report claiming India 'Partly Free'

NEW DELHI: After a US-government funded NGO said in a report that civil liberties in India had been on a decline since Prime Minister Narendra Modi came into power, the government responded saying the findings were "misleading, incorrect and misplaced". In its report titled 'Democracy Under Siege', the US-based Freedom House - that conducts research and advocacy on democracy, political freedom, and human rights - changed India's status as a free country to 'partly free'. The report said the change in India's status is part of a global shift in the balance between democracy and authoritarianism.

Mamata to contest from Nandigram, take BJP head on

KOLKATA: After announcing Trinamool Congress' list of 291 candidates for the high octane Assembly polls beginning this month, party supremo Mamata Banerjee made her intention clear on Friday that she will contest only from Nandigram in East Midnapore district, considered a stronghold of newly-inducted BJP leader and once close aide of the Chief Minister, Suvendu Adhikari. ►P6



SITHARAMAN'S 'DHARAMSANKAT' ON PETRO PRICES

TAX CUT SHOULD BE JOINT CALL OF CENTRE, STATES

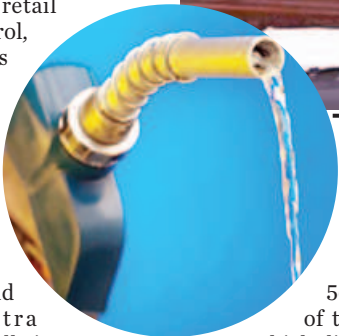
FM says high petrol, diesel prices burden on consumers

NEW DELHI

UNION Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday acknowledged that consumers have a case for petrol and diesel prices to be brought down but said a reduction in taxes to make that happen should be a joint call of the Central and State governments.

As much as 60 per cent of the retail price of petrol, which has shot above Rs 100-mark in some places in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra and is at an all-time high elsewhere in the country, is made up of central

Currently, the Central government levies a fixed rate of excise duty while States levy different rates of VAT. Under the GST, the two would merge and bring uniformity, solving the problem of fuel rates being higher in States with higher VAT



and state taxes. Taxes make up for about 56 per cent of the record high diesel rates. Sitharaman, who had increased Central excise duty on petrol and diesel by a record margin last year to mop up gains arising from international oil prices plunging to a two-decade low, remained non-committal on taking the first step to cut central taxes to give relief to consumers. For consumers, "there is enough case to say that

Opec decision set to trigger fuel price hike further

NEW DELHI: Petrol and diesel prices have reached an all-time high now. Things only will be getting worse in the coming days. Contrary to what the government had expected, the crude oil prices aren't coming down. OPEC has in fact decided to extend the production until April. This can only mean that the prices will continue to rise in the coming times.

prices should be down. It's a burden," she said while interacting with journalists at IWPC. While the burden on the consumers is "understood", the pricing is a vexatious issue, she said. "That's where I use the word 'dharamsankat'," she said.

CBSE revises exam dates of class 10, 12

NEW DELHI

THE Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on Friday revised the dates for classes 10 and 12 exams. The dates for the class 12 physics paper and applied physics are shifted from May 13 to June 1. Besides, the dates for History and Banking papers have also been revised.

Similarly, the class 10 mathematics paper will be held on June 2 instead of May 21 as per the revised date sheet, including other various subjects.

The date sheet is available on the website cbse.gov.in. The board exams will be held from May 4 to June 1.



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Farmers stir hits century today

NEW DELHI: The farmers agitation against the three central farm laws will enter its hundredth day on Saturday with union leaders asserting that their movement is far from over and they are 'going strong'. The marathon movement has sent out a message of unity, made "farmers visible once again" and brought them back on the political landscape of the country, they said on Friday. Rakesh Tikait of the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) said they are prepared to continue the protest for as long as it is required.

IndiGo flyer says he's Covid+, before take-off

NEW DELHI

A passenger on board an IndiGo flight announced just before take-off from Delhi that he was COVID-19 positive, prompting the pilot to return to the parking bay for safety of the passengers, sources have said.

The IndiGo flight 6E-286 was preparing for take-off for Pune on Thursday when the man told the cabin crew that he was COVID-19 positive and showed them documents to prove it. The pilot of the Airbus A320 Neo then radioed the ground controllers



about the situation and decided to return, the sources said. An announcement was made by the pilot that passengers on three rows of seats - from 6 to 8 - should get down first and wait in a coach for containment. The

COVID-19 positive passenger sat in one of these rows. The seats had to be disinfected and seat covers changed before the flight could take off again.

While the passengers were waiting for the safety measures to be completed in the aircraft, they were provided with PPE gowns and were asked to wear them for the entire duration of the flight, sources said.

The COVID-19 positive passenger was sent to south Delhi's Safdarjung Hospital's Covid facility in an ambulance.

Gym trainer, female friend found dead

NEW DELHI

A 29-year-old gym trainer and his 23-year-old female friend have been found dead in a room in Tilak Nagar in West Delhi. Police said that the bodies were highly decomposed.

The man identified as Pawan Paliwal, a resident of Meerut was a gym trainer and a model while the girl identified as Priyanka Bist, a resident of Nainital, worked in a consultancy in Gurugram.

The police received a PCR call on Friday regarding a foul smell coming from a house in old Mahabir Nagar in West Delhi.

Social media rules toothless: SC

PURNA SINGH
NEW DELHI

THE Supreme Court on Friday said the governments new rules for OTT platforms have "no teeth, as there is no provision for prosecution of those who do not abide by these rules".

A bench headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan said: "These rules are only guidelines... no mechanism to control (the content on OTT platforms). "Without legislation cannot control it."

The observation was made by the top court during the anticipatory bail plea hearing of Amazon Prime Video India head Aparna Purohit against Allahabad High Court order, which declined to entertain her anticipatory bail in connection with the FIRs lodged against her over web series 'Tandav'.



The top court observed that "uncontrolled and unscreened" viewing of films on OTT platforms is an issue. The bench stressed that a law should be framed to put in place a mechanism to control the content on these online platforms. "The rules are more of guidelines in nature with no effective measure of either screening or taking effective action against those who do not follow," said the top court.

The bench also granted protection from arrest to Purohit, who moved the top court apprehending arrest. However, the top court asked her to co-operate in the ongoing investigation in the matter.

The court also asked the Centre to consider bringing in a law instead of mere guidelines. Solicitor General, appearing for the Centre, asked for two weeks' time in the matter.

Bharat Biotech begins nasal Covid vaccine trials in Hyd

HYDERABAD: The clinical trials for Bharat Biotech's nasal Covid-19 vaccine candidate have been kicked off in Hyderabad. A Hyderabad hospital, one of the four facilities shortlisted across the nation for Phase 1 of the clinical trials, gave the vaccine to two of the 10 short-listed volunteers on Friday. Both the patients who have received dose are healthy and doing fine after receiving the vaccine, sources have said. Bharat Biotech was given the permission to conduct the first phase of clinical trial for its intranasal Covid-19 vaccine BBV154 by the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) on Tuesday.

Free sanitary pads for girl students

CM to launch scheme on International Women's Day

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

CHIEF Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy directed the officials to distribute branded sanitary napkins to the girl students from seventh to twelfth class in the government educational institutions for free.

During the review meeting at camp office here on Friday, the Chief Minister instructed the officials to lay more focus on the health and hygiene of the girls and added that the state government would launch the distribution of free sanitary napkins on March 8 coinciding with International Women's Day.

The officials said tenders would be completed by April 15 and MoUs will be made between reputed companies and MEPMA and SERP by end of April. The sanitary napkins will be distributed to all girls in Government schools, junior colleges and Gurukul schools from July 1. Each girl will be given 10 sanitary napkins per month totalling to 120 napkins per annum. The Government

ment would spend Rs 41.4 crore per annum for this scheme. SERP and MEPMA will sign MoUs with reputed companies to ensure branded sanitary napkins are made available at Cheyutha Grocery shops at affordable prices.

The Chief Minister instructed the officials to provide best coaching to girls for competitive exams. He wanted an action plan to be made by taking



the help of reputed coaching centres which could provide the best coaching by utilising the laptops provided to the students by the government. He instructed the officials to complete the process of receiving options from students for laptops under the Amnavodi scheme. He said the coaching should be interactive, using technology and laptops with the help of selected professional support.

Indian-Americans taking over US

WASHINGTON

INDIAN-Americans are 'taking over the country', US President Joe Biden said on Thursday, referring to the large number of 'incredible' professionals from the community holding key positions in his administration.

In less than 50 days of his presidency, Biden has appointed at least 55 Indian-Americans to key leadership positions in his administration ranging from his speech writer to the NASA, to almost every

Says President Biden at NASA meet

President Joe Biden has appointed at least 55 Indian-Americans to key leadership positions in his administration ranging from his speech writer to the NASA, to almost every wing of the government



President Joe Biden congratulates NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory Mars 2020 Perseverance team for successfully landing on Mars during a virtual call in the Roosevelt Room at the White House on Thursday

wing of the government.

"Indian - of descent - Americans are taking over the country; you Dr Swati Mohan; my Vice President (Kamala Harris); my speech writer, Vinay (Reddy). I tell you what. But thank you. You guys are incredible," President Biden said during a virtual interaction with scientists at NASA who were involved in the historic landing of Perseverance rover on Mars on February 18.

Indian-American scientist Swati Mohan leads the guidance, navigation, and

control operations of NASA's Mars 2020 mission.

Joe Biden, who was sworn in as the 46th president of the United States on January 20, has created history by appointing at least 55 Indian-Americans to key positions in his administration. This does not include Vice President Harris, which is an elected position, and Neera Tanden, who a day earlier withdrew her nomination from the position of Director of White House Office of Management and Budget.

Womenia

Smiling women from across India

SIDDHI JAIN

In what merges together her passion for art and travel, portraits of various smiling Indian women by Delhi-based artist and art curator Priyanka Banerjee created over ten years, brings out the resilience and spirit of women of the country.

Hailing from the beautiful city of Bokaro in Jharkhand, and having quit a corporate career to pursue her long-held dream to create art, Banerjee says she created these smiling portraits as a departure from the silent struggle that often characterises women's lives.

"Women are the epitome of strength. Their smiling faces de-stress the viewers. Although the rural women enjoy less amenities compared to their urban counterparts, they know the art of staying happy with their limited resources available. Hence, the 'smiling women' form an important subject of my art," shared Banerjee.

The paintings are executed using different mediums like watercolour on paper, acrylic on canvas, charcoal on paper.

"These portraits have been created over a span of ten years. Though I had no plan to create such a series, I was fortunate to capture their smiles as an intrepid traveller. I captured their smiles through my lens and have eventually transformed them into my artworks," she adds.

As an avid traveller, Banerjee has also found inspiration in the hills and biodiversity of Nainital, Mukteshwar, and Ranikhet where everything from tall and sturdy coniferous trees like pines, oaks, cedar, deodars; the ancient and beautiful Muktesh-

Smiling portraits give a positive view and are a departure from the silent struggle that often characterises women's lives says Banerjee



priyanka banerjee



war temple situated atop amidst the scenic splendor; the occasional giggles of the children echoing in the woods; the serpentine roads of the hills; the majestic royal Bengal tiger basking in glory of its natural habitat in the Jim Corbett; the spotted deer and the Old British style bungalows - have become her muse.

"Women have made their presence felt in almost all spheres of life and the Indian culture attaches great importance

to them. However, generally women all over the world (including India) speak the same language of 'silence' as they carry on with lives which are very often full of struggle. Hence, the portraits of smiling women symbolize positivity in times of despair. 'A smile' is synonymous with a happy and de-stressful life. As I make portraits of smiling women, I have tried to bring out the beauty in them," she concludes.

Karishma Chavan hosts "Here to Slay" to promote female artists

ASKARI JAFFER

Dancer, choreographer and 'Dance Plus' judge Karishma Chavan set to host an event "Here to Slay" on 7th March Sunday on account to Women's Day in Mitron, Bandra, Mumbai. Singer Akasa Singh known for songs like "Naagin", "Aithey Aa", "Thug Ranjha" and Indie Vocalists Arunaja known for "Broken", "Dankila" will be performing for the event.

Karishma Chavan made her acting debut through 'ABCD' and was part of many dance reality shows like 'Nach Baliya', 'Jhalak Dikhhla Jaa'. She has choreographed the songs in the films 'Khoobsurat', 'Kick', 'Hasee Toh Phasee', 'Tumhari Sulu' and 'Veere Di Wedding'.

Karishma shares her objective behind her event "Here to Slay" and says, "All that I have achieved till date has not been without a series of rejection, judgment and criticism. In a male dominant industry, as a woman, promoting female artists is very important to me. "Here to Slay" personally, this night is all about beginning a brand new avenue, organised exclusively by women for the purpose of creating a space where we can come together under a single roof to promote female talent and celebrate womanhood in its true sense."

On talking about the challenges in male dominated industry she says, "The pay disparity is very evident. I think it almost feels like a woman chosen for a job has to be almost grateful for the position she



has received as opposed to it being based on her talent. I guess these times will change if female talent becomes hard to ignore. If you don't get in the desired result / money at the box office, everyone is replaceable whether male or female. Unfortunately the first thing that determines the pay scale of an in front of camera woman is her looks. But luckily for OTT platforms it's becoming more talent based. In all this professionalism also matters."

On sharing about her journey as a Choreographer she says, "Tough long and adventurous but definitely worth it. My career started at the age of 18 and a half. Every step of the way I have experienced utmost happiness as I love what I do from the bottom of my heart. Hence the obstacles and hurdles to overcome never broke me. 16 years later I am exactly where I am supposed to be. I get to wake up every day to create experiment and



"In a male dominant industry, as a woman, promoting female artists is very important to me"- Karishma Chavan

bring visions alive on stage as well as films. I am blessed. Yes I have had setbacks due to people or competitors but I guess that applies to all walks of life."

On talking about choreographing in Bollywood she says, "I want to work with anyone who is willing to push themselves enough to surprise everyone but most importantly themselves. I had a wonderful experiences working with Shah Rukh Khan as well as Akshay Kumar and would definitely love an opportunity to do it again. I also love to work with Deepika Padukone again and Kangana Ranaut."

She shares, she had to face many challenges due her body type on which she adds, "I think the biggest challenge was to convince peers,

bosses and clients that I was right for the job. A lot of them judged me on my body type. But I took it in my stride. I took it up as a challenge and eventually proved a lot of people wrong."

About body positivity she says, "I used to be more concerned about my image as a younger girl. Over the years I have learned to love myself and make peace with which I am and what I have to offer as an individual. My body is a part of who I am and I am much more than good looks. I believe in substance. I have faced many a hurdles due to the narrow perception of people and their very horse blinded opinions on how a dancer should look. Luckily we are breaking those stereotypes and I pray many will follow."

KFC India launches an all women restaurant in Hyderabad

Earmarks International Women's Day with the restaurant powered on by women

Continuing to expand its footprint across the country, KFC India recently opened a new restaurant in the IT city of Hyderabad. What makes it more special is that this is an-all women restaurant - led and operated by an all-women team! Right from taking orders, preparing your favourite KFC items, serving customers to managing the overall operations of the restaurant - this is one restaurant that completes runs on woman power.

This is the second all-women restaurant for KFC India, the first being in Darjeeling, and only goes on to reinforce the brand's commitment towards gender

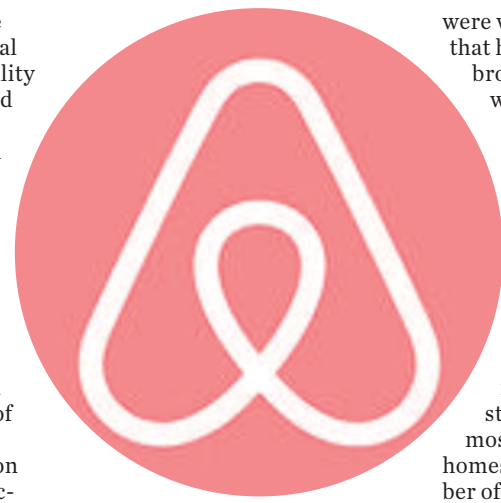
parity and belief in empowering women from the grass root level. The brand has also had woman delivery riders, who have been bravely breaking stereotypes and carving a niche with their unconventional career choices. Ask any of the women on this super team at the Hyderabad restaurant, and thoughts as "KFC has helped me develop and sharpen my skills, with a clear vision on career growth" or "I have always loved and enjoyed working at KFC" are echoed across. Through efforts as these, the brand takes forward the legacy of their iconic founder Colonel Sanders who always believed in all people.



Women hosts in India earned over ₹16M during the pandemic

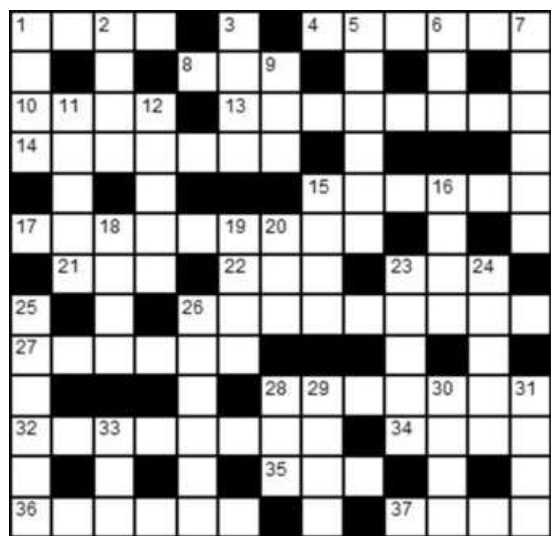
'Airbnb' celebrated the journey of exceptional women, including hospitality entrepreneurs, who braved the challenges of the past year to nurture successful enterprises in the travel and tourism sector, including as 'Airbnb' hosts. Data shows that for many first-time hosts around the world, sharing their homes on 'Airbnb' also provided an important safety net from the economic challenges of the pandemic.

In India, women hosts on the platform earned collectively over INR 16 million in 2020. In addition, in the period March 2020 to February



2021, over 27% of all hosts that had signed up to the platform

were women. Data also shows that homestays can catalyse broader economic impact within communities. According to the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI), the homestay sector, within tourism, has a significant employment multiplier effect, and also helps economically empower women. It found that irrespective of ownership status, women manage most of the operations in homestays. The largest number of women hosts on 'Airbnb' list properties in Goa, followed by Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore.



CROSSWORD

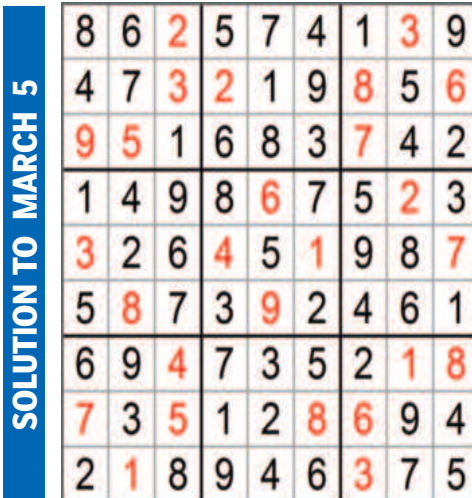
Across

- 1 Chattering birds (4)
- 4 To do with race or culture (6)
- 8 China's ex-Chairman (3)
- 10 Cain's victim (4)
- 13 Previously (8)
- 14 Below (7)
- 15 Greenswards (6)
- 17 An explosive powder (9)
- 21 Catch (3)
- 22 Seeing organ (3)
- 23 Sister (3)
- 26 Memory improvement (9)
- 27 Decreased? (6)
- 28 Chief prize (7)
- 32 A large edible crustacean (4,4)
- 34 Talks noisily or foolishly (4)
- 35 Delicious (3)
- 36 Showy and cheap (6)
- 37 Equal (4)

Down

- 1 Dull and dreary (4)
- 2 At what time? (4)
- 3 Foolish (4)
- 5 A swollen part (6)
- 6 Here-there connector (3)
- 7 Most modest (6)
- 9 Sound of amazement (3)
- 11 Started (5)
- 12 Sprang (5)
- 15 Abound (4)
- 16 Roman eight (4)
- 18 Bad Roman emperor (4)
- 19 Travel (4)
- 20 It is used to colour a fabric (3)
- 23 Serpentine (5)
- 24 Exclusive story (5)
- 25 "W" in L.B.W. in cricket? (6)
- 26 Dealer in textiles (6)
- 28 A type of bird (3)
- 29 Border (4)
- 30 Piece of glass (4)
- 31 Emperor of Russia (4)
- 33 At this time (3)

SUDOKU



Women should be more confident and self-assured: Manushi Chhillar

Bollywood debutante and former beauty queen Manushi Chhillar joins squash ace Dipika Pallikal and 24-year-old boxing prodigy Nikhat Zareen to raise awareness on equality. Manushi feels it is imperative to tell girls to overcome psychological barriers and feel positive about their bodies.

"I'm delighted to be a part of a campaign that aims at propelling women to break barriers and shatter glass ceilings. What I loved about the initiative is that this is essentially a platform to inspire women to be more confident, self-assured and ambitious. I relate to this a lot because it is imperative for us to tell girls to overcome psychological barriers and feel positive about their bodies and celebrate their achievements to foster a really positive attitude towards life," says Manushi.

The campaign, titled Make A Move, is aimed at inspiring young girls across India to dream big. The campaign will uncover stories of women around the world who go through great lengths to ensure movement remains part of their lives, despite physical, cultural, or psychological barriers. The campaign has roped in young achievers to spearhead the initiative.

Manushi is all set to step into Bollywood with the Akshay Kumar-starrer 'Prithviraj', based on the life of Prithviraj Chauhan. The film is directed by Dr. Chandraprakash Dwivedi, who helmed the television series 'Chanakya' and the period drama 'Pinjar' in the past.



78% respondents have faced violence in public places: Study

NEW DELHI

A study on bystander behaviour has revealed that 38.5 per cent of them didn't intervene during violence in public spaces because they did not know what to do.

According to the study -- 'Decoding Bystander Behaviour: Actions to Address Violence Against Women' -- 78.4 per cent of the respondents said that they had faced violence in public spaces.

The study by Breakthrough with support from Uber India and IKEA Foundation was conducted in Jharkhand (Hazaribagh district), Bihar (Gaya district), Haryana (Jhajjar district), Delhi, Maharashtra (Mumbai), Telangana (Hyderabad) and Kolkata, covering over 721 respondents through digital survey and 91 in-depth interviews. Most participants, particularly women, identified violence as a broad term, consisting of physical, mental, verbal, and sexual abuse.

The study also highlighted how patriarchal practices were culturally embedded in society and its correlation between deteriorating mental health and



everyday misogyny and patriarchy. The study found that 54.6 per cent of the respondents said that they have intervened in an incident of violence against women in a public space, while 55.3 per cent respondents observed the discomfort of woman/girl facing violence.

Around 67.7 per cent respondents said that their intervention resulted in the violence stopping. People who intervened to stop the violence did so in a variety of ways which included swapping seats with the survivors/victims, giving one's

mobile number to connect later, taking the survivor for medical help. Respondents also said they helped by physically escorting someone home when she is being harassed. The study also found 45.4 per cent of the respondents said that they have not intervened in an incident of violence against women. Over 38 per cent respondents said that they did not intervene because they did not know what to do.

Around 31 per cent of them said that they were worried about their own safety, and about 11.5 per cent of them felt

that they would be dragged into police/legal matters if they intervened. "For us, promoting positive bystander action to address violence against women has been a consistent focus area. Breakthrough's intent in undertaking such campaigns is to move the general public from identifying violence against women and girls as a personal issue to identifying violence against women and girls as a shared community issue, a shared responsibility, requiring community action," said Sohini Bhattacharya, President & CEO, Breakthrough.

Gurugram college students protest, demand online exam

GURUGRAM

HUNDREDS of students of the Dronacharya Government College here staged a protest and blocked the road in front of the college on Friday, which led to huge traffic congestion on the stretch.

The protesting students were demanding online exams due to Covid-19. After an assurance from the college management, the students ended their protest within half an hour.

"There was confusion among the students about an offline examination. As per the Gurugram University circular, the students can take examinations in either offline or online mode and it depends upon them. The confusion happened due to the direc-



Students of the Dronacharya Government College stage a protest demanding exams be conducted online in Gurugram on Friday

online examination," Virender Atri, Principal, Dronacharya College, told IANS.

"We will soon release Google consent form to the students and will inform them about online examination," Atri said.

The students were protesting against conducting the first and second year semester exams in offline mode.

"The collage management has informed us about an online examination. They will soon share exam consent form. We have no problem with an online examination," said a protesting student.

"We are following the UGC directions to conduct pending semester exams. The examination will be taken as per the university directions," said Atri.

tion of the Maharishi Dayanand University in Rohtak. The university in their circular directed

that only Covid-19 infected students and students who belong to other states are eligible for

Ex-MP Dhananjay Singh surrenders in Prayagraj

PRAYAGRAJ

FORMER Bahun Samaj Party (BSP) MP Dhananjay Singh surrendered in the MP/MLA court in Prayagraj on Friday. The Lucknow police had announced a cash reward of Rs 25,000 on him on Thursday. Dhananjay Singh was wanted in the murder of history-sheets Ajit Singh, who was shot dead on January 6, allegedly at his behest.

He has been charged with conspiracy in the murder. The police, on Thursday, raided the former MP's residence on Sultanpur Road and several other hideouts but could not find him.

According to a statement issued by the Lucknow police, it identified six flats, two farm houses in Lucknow



Police personnel take former MP Dhananjay Singh (centre), after he surrendered following a non-bailable warrant issued against him in the Ajit murder case, in Prayagraj on Friday

and various properties in Delhi, Jaunpur, Varanasi, Mau, Barabanki and also some other property in

Jharkhand, belonging to Dhananjay Singh.

22-yr-old woman hangs herself, two children

NEW DELHI: A 22-year-old woman committed suicide by hanging herself along with her two children following an argument with her husband in Subhash Place area of Delhi, the police said.

According to the police, on Thursday the woman had sought permission for going to her native place Madhubani in Bihar for the Mundan ceremony of their child. But this turned into an argument. Thereafter, the husband left for work. After he left the woman hanged herself along with the two children. "The husband of the woman was on his job. After coming back from work he saw them hanging from the window. The door of the room was closed from inside and he broke it open with the help of neighbours," said Usha Rangnani, DCP North West.

They were married about five years ago, Rangnani said, adding that the bodies have been sent to a hospital for postmortem.

'300 obscene TikToks of husband, can't be ground for cruelty on wife'

NEW DELHI

THE Supreme Court on Friday declined to grant anticipatory bail to a man, who has been accused of cruelty towards his wife. The man claimed his wife had made 300 obscene TikTok videos in his, which was rejected by the top court.

A bench headed by Chief Justice S.A. Bobde and comprising Justices A.S. Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian, at the outset, told the petitioner's counsel that her client was a cruel man and he should not expect any relief from the court. Petitioner's counsel replied that her client was not cruel and he has not committed any cruelty.

The bench replied his wife has called him cruel in her complaint and the court was merely citing it. The Rajasthan-based man had moved the top court seeking



ing anticipatory bail in an FIR lodged by his wife.

The petitioner's counsel claimed that the wife has allegedly made "300 tik-tok videos", which are obscene. The bench replied this does not mean that the man should commit any kind of cruelty on his wife. "If she has done that, still you do not mistreat her like that," said the Chief Justice. The petitioner's counsel insisted for relief in the matter. The Chief Justice replied: "You divorce her if you could not get

along, there is no need for cruelty." The petitioner's counsel said there is no need for custodial interrogation in the matter. However, the bench replied that it does not agree with this contention of the petitioner, and cited the FIR lodged by wife against the husband.

The petitioner's counsel contests that the FIR registered against her client was one-sided. The Chief Justice replied that FIRs are always one-sided and he has never seen a joint FIR filed by both sides.

SC seeks Centre's reply on 81-yr-old mom's plea seeking son's return from Pak jail

NEW DELHI

LAST 23 years have been traumatic for a mother, who is fighting an endless battle to have one sight of her son, an Indian Army man who she believes is languishing in a Pakistani jail after he had gone missing from the

India-Pakistan border at the Rann of Kutch in Gujarat. Kamla Bhattacharjee, 81, has moved the Supreme Court with a prayer seeking directions to the Centre to take immediate and necessary steps regarding repatriation of her son Captain Sanjit Bhattacharjee from

the Lahore Kot Lakhpat Central Jail, Pakistan. The grieving mother said she is fighting a lonely battle, after she lost her husband last year in November with his last wish unfulfilled: to have glimpse of their son. According to the plea, Sanjit went for patrolling from 14-19 April, 1997, along with members at the night time on a joint border in the Rann of Kutch Gujarat and Pakistan.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is for general information that I PRAMOD SONI S/o LATE SHRI KHEM CHAND SONI residing at B1/156, Paschim Vihar, New Delhi- 110063, declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as PRAMOD KUMAR SONI IN MY Passport No.-Z2275078, Voter ID: ACB0287128 and in my IDBI Bank Account No.- 013106100070. The actual name of mine is PRAMOD SONI which may be amended accordingly.

RE-OPEN NIZAMUDDIN MARKAZ

HC grants 10-day time to govt to file reply

PURNA SINGH

THE Delhi High Court on Friday granted 10 days time to Centre, Delhi government and the city police to file a reply to an application seeking reopening of Nizamuddin Markaz, which is locked since the last one year.

The Markaz is closed since the coronavirus-induced lockdown. On the night of March 29, police and health authorities started bringing people out from the Markaz and sent them to hospitals and quarantine facilities.



Waqf board seeking reopening of the Markaz. The Markaz which was locked on the premise of getting the area sanitised, has remained shut since Mar 31, 2020, the plea elaborated.

On March 31, an FIR was registered after thousands of people, including foreign nationals, participated in the Tablighi Jamaat congregation at Nizamuddin Markaz, with many of them testing positive for Covid-19 later. Justice Mukta Gupta has directed the authorities to file the status report within ten days on the application filed by Delhi

UP farmers to be linked to food processing units

LUCKNOW

THE Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh is all set to create employment opportunities through the food processing units in the villages.

This is a part of its commitment to empower the farmers and youth residing in the rural areas. The state government has already presented its strategy to make the farmers and the youth in the villages self-reliant by linking them to the 62,122 food processing units before the NITI Aayog.

According to the government spokesman, Uttar Pradesh's food ecosystem offers huge opportunities for investments with stimulating



growth in the food retail sector. "The government's multi-dimensional rural centric approach will not only provide employment benefits to the rural populace by connecting them directly to the food processing units, but will also drive the rural economy by installing new units in addition to the existing ones," the spokesman said. The diverse basket of agri-

cultural raw material base and agro-climatic attributes of Uttar Pradesh provide the requisite platform for the state to develop a vibrant food processing industry.

Acknowledging the food processing potential in Uttar Pradesh, the government has planned a strategy to directly link the farmers to food processing units in order to en-

hance the agricultural trade.

The state government also made a budgetary provision of Rs 40 crore for the implementation of the Uttar Pradesh Food Processing Industry Policy, 2017. The policy provides capital investment subsidy and interest subvention at present. Moreover, the government will also take adequate measures to equip the food processing sector with the best facilities in order to create more employment possibilities.

The government is aiming at providing jobs to over three lakh people by bringing in investment of more than Rs 20,000 crore in the coming months in this sector.



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Changing trends in media ecology

THE Union Government's haste in framing of rules to monitor digital media, specially taking into account manifold attacks on articles critical of the government and increasing attacks on freedom of the press and journalistic rights has come in for media scrutiny once again in the country. Media is getting increasingly hostile to what it perceives as designs of the BJP-led government to scuttle dissidence and disagreement as a direct attack on press freedom. Media is getting dragged into the tussle between the civil society members and the governments by supporting the former.

But, where does the problem lie? A media revolution is transforming, fundamentally and irrevocably, the nature of journalism and its ethics. The means to publish is now in the hands of citizens, while the internet encourages

new forms of journalism. Our media ecology is a chaotic landscape evolving at a furious pace. Professional journalists share the journalistic sphere with tweeters, bloggers, citizen journalists and social media users.

Amid every revolution, new possibilities emerge while old practices are threatened. Today is no exception. A central question is to what extent existing media ethics is suitable for today's and tomorrow's news media that is immediate, interactive and "always on" – a journalism of amateurs and professionals. We are moving towards a mixed news media – a news media citizen and professional journalism across many media platforms.

This new mixed news media requires new mixed media ethics – guidelines that apply to amateur and professional whether they blog, tweet,

broadcast or write for newspapers. Media ethics needs to be rethought and reinvented for the media of today, not of yesteryear. The changes challenge the foundations of media ethics. The challenge runs deeper than debates about one or another principle, such as objectivity. The challenge is greater than specific problems, such as how newsrooms can verify content from citizens.

The revolution requires us to rethink assumptions. What can ethics mean for a profession that must provide instant news and analysis; where everyone with a modem is a publisher? The media revolution has created ethical tensions on two levels. On the first level, there is a tension between traditional journalism and online journalism. The culture of traditional journalism, with its values of accuracy,

pre-publication verification, balance, impartiality, and gate-keeping rubs up against the culture of online journalism which emphasises immediacy, transparency, partiality, non-professional journalists and post-publication correction.

On the second level, there is a tension between parochial and global journalism. If journalism has global impact, what are its global responsibilities? Should media ethics reformulate its aims and norms so as to guide journalism that is now global in reach and impact? What would that look like? Media ethics must do more than point out these tensions. Theoretically, it must untangle the conflicts between values. It must decide which principles should be preserved or invented. Practically, it should provide new standards to guide online or offline journalism. Well, we are on the cusp of change and a clash is inevitable between the powers that be and the media coming to terms with the sweeping changes.



China stealing intellectual property to stay competitive

PUSHKAR SINHA

IN trying to maintain its economic competitiveness and fulfil its political ambitions, China is stealing R&D secrets, patents and intellectual assets on an industrial scale according to a report by Stratfor Worldview.

China and its Ministry of State Security has been implicated in scores of trade theft accusations and accounts for around half of all charges related to economic espionage during 2016-2019 under the US Economic Espionage Act of 1996. FBI Director Christopher Wray has noted that the on an average 10 hours the FBI opens a new China related counterintelligence case and that there was a marked increase in caseload of around 1300 per cent in the past decade. This has had a considerable economic impact too: Independent researcher Nicholas Eftimiades has estimated that Chinese economic espionage activities have accounted for \$320 billion in losses which is about 80 per cent of total cost of intellectual property theft to the US in 2018.

It is difficult to thwart because of the strategically important trade ties of around \$550 billion in goods that facilitate the flow of information and make counterintelligence policies extremely expensive. China's interest in economic espionage has been made clear through initiatives such as Made in China 2025 and Thousand Talents plan. The Made in China aims at achieving self-sufficiency in high tech industry by 2025 and dominating the global tech markets by 2049. The Thousand Talents program similarly aims to recruit scientists, researchers and industry professionals to work in China and bringing in know-how to achieve China's ambitious goals. The US investigators have alleged that targeted employees of the program have been offered cash bonuses in exchange for bringing sensitive documents and trade secrets with them when they relocate to China.

In 2018, Chinese recruiters were accused of offering an engineer at a US energy company around \$1,70,000 in 2018 to bring secrets related to battery technology that his company was working on. Before that in 2011, China has offered a disgruntled engineer at energy technology company AMSC \$1.7 million to provide trade secrets that would save partially government owned company Sinovent around \$800 million in contracts it had with AMSC, as per a Reuters report. The rise of Chinese telecom giant Huawei took place at the same time in 2009 when Canadian

China's interest in economic espionage has been made clear through initiatives such as Made in China 2025 and Thousand Talents plan. The Made in China aims at achieving self-sufficiency in high tech industry by 2025 and dominating the global tech markets by 2049. The Thousand Talents program similarly aims to recruit scientists, researchers and industry professionals to work in China and bringing in know-how to achieve China's ambitious goals. The US investigators have alleged that targeted employees of the program have been offered cash bonuses in exchange for bringing sensitive documents and trade secrets with them when they relocate to China

telecom bigwig Nortel was filing for bankruptcy. Huawei's industrial methods and R&D setup were similar to Nortel as they had been stolen through hacked emails of officials at Nortel, as reported by Global News.

The financial incentives also come in the form of promises of lucrative entrepreneurial endeavours and investment. Several million dollars in Chinese funding were used by a Texas-based materials science researcher to adapt syntactic foam technology that provides greater buoyancy control in modern maritime vessels from his previous employer to his own company and provided China with secrets it wanted. Similar incentives were provided to employees in the Pharmaceutical industry, with Chinese investors luring a biochemist working on monoclonal antibodies to steal sensitive material from her employer, GlaxoSmithKline, and attempt to start her own rival business in China.

The attempts at economic espionage are sometimes directed towards undermine the national security and defence of a foreign country. In early January 2020 an alert was issued to several companies where Indian researchers were working regarding Chinese Cyber intrusion attempts, as reported by local media⁵. The attempt was to target certain top end military equipment design and UAV technology. China starts producing this equipment domestically and sells at a cheaper rate after stealing techniques and designs, inflicting irrecoverable damage to original equipment manufacturers.

In response, the US has introduced a variety of policies, ranging from restriction in Chinese students and program to sanctions, designed to identify and prevent economic espionage. Counter measures have been incorporated with an element of proportionality: that is the loss incurred by US because of Chinese economic espionage not only includes economic losses but also takes into account the principles violated in the process, as per independent Scholar Catherine Lotrionte.

Economic espionage undermines the means and incentives for entrepreneurs to innovate and values of global trade regime. It also incentivizes unfair trade practices. Some have advocated permitting private American companies to counter cyber attack arguing that this approach would be more effective in getting China to detest its economic espionage efforts. However, others have suggested that a notice of wrongdoing should be provided by the injured state to wrongdoing state and offer to negotiate before resorting to countermeasures. US has also indicated interest in pursuing a claim against China for Cyber economic espionage through the World Trade Organisation for violating principles of fair trade that members have to adhere to.

An especially aggressive cyber strategy of 'defending forward' has been put in place to check Chinese intrusion in cyber space. The strategy aims at disrupting the infrastructure used by the hackers at source and exposing their tools. Chinese companies that benefit from the cyber theft have also been brought to the book. The US Department of Commerce recently debarred the exports of US Technology to a Chinese chip manufacturer accused of recruiting individuals to steal information from Micron, a semi-conductor company, as reported by Reuters. Indian companies have also upgraded their infrastructure, since they are home to the backend technology of various Information Technology companies to protect from Chinese intrusions.

The unease over Ease of Living Index rating



IN MY OPINION
V RAMU SARMA

- “This is not Ahmedabad but Hushaar Hyderabad.”**
- The merchandise exports from Telangana across all categories in 2019-20 were valued at \$ 7.4 billion which is higher than the national AAGR of 4.7 per cent.
 - The key destinations for the merchandise exports from Telangana are the US (28 per cent), China (six per cent), Russia (four per cent), the UAE (four per cent) and Bangladesh (four per cent).
 - Telangana accounts for six per cent of the electronics production in India and has significant headroom for growth.
 - The State has been pro-active in enacting its own policy to boost the growth of the sector, it could benefit from the Centre's Production Linked Incentive Scheme and Scheme for Promotion of Manufacturing of Electronic Components and Semiconductors.
 - Telangana accounts for substantial agricultural produce ranging from rice, maize, lemon, grapes, mango and soyabean. In particular, the State accounted for the highest production of turmeric and sweet orange, third highest production of tea and coffee, and the fourth highest production of marine fish.
 - Telangana is one of the fastest growing States in India in terms of installation of solar power and ranks second in terms of solar power generation, after Karnataka. In order to cater to the growing energy demand and to facilitate faster uptake of renewable energy, Telangana could further expand its network of solar power plants and attract investments for setting up man-

ufacturing of photovoltaic cells, which are mostly imported from China.

- Telangana accounts for about 30 per cent of India's pharmaceutical production, 40 per cent of total bulk drugs production and 50 per cent of the bulk drug exports from India in 2019-20. Over the last four years, Telangana has attracted over Rs 10,000 crore investments.

These are the nuggets we often here from the ruling party bigwigs including top ministers. But still Hyderabad has been ranked 24th in Ease of Living Index by Union Housing and Urban Ministry. What does that indicate? There are two possibilities. One, either the Centre is "partial" in its attitude towards Telangana as is being alleged by ministers and ruling party leaders or the claims of the State government are not correct.

Hyderabad city is fast expanding. We have ORR and now we are going in for Regional Ring Road. It has all the qualities and facilities to be ranked much higher considering the performance in independent surveys conducted by different organisations, including global bodies. City of Pearls is way ahead of other cities in every sense one can argue.

It would be desirable if the state government instead of trying to use this for campaign against the BJP in the MLC and Nagarjuna Sagar by election makes a serious review of the reasons for such low ranking.

The fact is that the city traffic is chaotic. Drainage system needs to be modernised. Another three months, the monsoon would set in and if it is heavy as we saw last year then god forbid, the city would once again face deluge. We had heard the government make several promises when it faced unprecedented floods last year but then after that things did not move forward and no measures to prevent recurrence of such a situation has so far been taken.

It is even finding it difficult to convene the budget session citing the two MLC elections and one assembly by poll as the reason. By the time all this political drama is



What really matters is local government practices in municipalities across areas of services, finance, policy, technology and governance. Transparency and accountability is yet another criteria. Hence, the government should not dismiss the present rankings without doing an in-depth analysis of the real ground level reasons that made ranking agencies to judge Hyderabad and place it at 24th position

over, we would have reached closer to monsoon season.

Many countries are going in for making best use of technology and are coming up with innovative ideas to make the life of the people safe and comfortable but we do not seem to be even taking note of such innovations. In some countries streetlights have been given unique numbers and geo tagged and all the lamps are integrated into a special map used by emergency operators. But here we make more noise than action.

The former president of India Dr A P J Abdul Kalam said, "The dream is not that which you see while sleeping. It is something that does not let you sleep." If the bureaucrats and the political executive realise this, Hyderabad would certainly be in top ten places in Ease of Living.

The biggest problem that the country and the State has been witnessing is that the political opposition has faded away. The Union Government and the State governments ruled by regional parties have been bulldozing opposition parties. Many lured to defect from their parent party so that there would be minimal opposition.

Desertions from one party to another is not a new phenomenon. Even the anti-defection law enacted in 1980s could not stop it thanks to the enterprising political parties which voted in favour of the act for having found ways to circumvent the law. The general experience has been that politicians in financial trouble, either not having enough money or those in excess and under investigation, choose to defect.

This new phenomenon has left the opposition in disarray. The main opposition Congress is in a pathetic situation where it is not able to find a full time president. Other opposition parties are fighting in their backyards. Democracy seems to be more on paper and the ruling parties across the state have got a new alibi to throttle the opposition in the form of Corona restrictions.

There is no point trying to pass on the blame on to Centre. Senior bureaucrats need to analyse why Hyderabad failed to figure in the top ten if not top three cities. It is time they stand up and tell the government where things were going wrong and what immediate and long term measures the government should take up to see

LETTERS

Vaccination needs to be pursued aggressively

INDIA has successfully developed the vaccine, manufactured the vaccine and planned the supply chain in a way that it reaches the vaccination centers in safe and sufficient quantities.

In a country like India, where scientific literacy is just improving, where the vaccine hesitation is still marginal, and when the clear communication is yet to be established, successful implementation is a major challenge for Government of India (GoI). Massive vaccination can help us come out of Covid-19 fears.

Now as the vaccination centres are equipped with skilled nurses and sufficient doses, the main focus has to shift towards improving the demand for the vaccine. Demand can be improved in two ways, by Market Push and Market Pull. The GoI has to work in both ways to achieve successful vaccination drives.

First, Market Push, there are certain things GoI can do to improve the vaccination rate. One, doing extensive publicity using both traditional and digital mediums, with 'Safe and Easy to Get' as the core value of promotion. Two, encouraging all government offices staff and their families get vaccinated, to create secure workplaces. Three, coordinate with corporates where there are major employees, to vaccinate their employees. Doing these three things will cover both innovators and early adopters, comprising 16 per cent of the product adaptation curve.

Second, Market Pull. With 16 per cent of the product adaptation curve already covered, our strategy should be devised to cover the next 68 per cent comprising Early Majority and Late Majority. To appeal to this 68 per cent, the promotion should be more intensified with core value being safe and affordable vaccines. The vaccination centers have to be increased and wide publicity on registration steps and further vaccination process should be carried out. Parallely, resolving grievances and clearing the fog around vaccination should be consistently done to build trust among the public.

Madhishetti Vishal, Hanamkonda

Undervaluing PSUs, a crime

IT is a known fact that core industries were brought under public sector as the domestic businessmen did not have resources to invest in such huge and capital intensive projects and it was also the plan of the then ruling party to provide raw materials and infrastructure at a very economical cost to domestic players. It served the purpose. Most of the industrial majors of this day are the beneficiaries of the PSUs. Most of the bank loans offered and not repaid to be written off are from PSU banks.

Having grown more than life size they are equipped to even by the same PSUs which enabled their gigantic growth. Most probably even to acquire such PSUs again banks are to advance, which may or may not be repaid and may ultimately have to be written off. Mandate given is to preserve and promote people's assets. But selling them away quoting vague reasons speaks

more of inefficiency of the rulers rather than their nationalist spirit. In the process the social welfare schemes are going to be axed adding further to the untold hardships of the have-nots. One wonders why a property like Vizag Steel Plant worth around Rs.3 lakh crore should be thrown away at a cheaper cost of around Rs.5000 crores. This creates a natural suspicion in the minds of all. It is time for the rulers to respect the sentiments of the people and reverse their decisions to repose confidence in the minds of all.

A G Rajmohan, Anantapur

Cap petrol price

FOR the past one month, the petrol and diesel prices are increasing almost on daily basis hurting the common people. Now the Government may heed to the recommendations of Ecowrap, which is the research wing of SBI, by setting up a stabilisation fund (page 11, March 5). Instead of blaming previous governments for the increase in the petrol prices, the government can further study and simply follow Ecowrap's suggestion, which was well supported by statistical analysis. Establishing and operating these recommendations will surely stabilise the petrol prices and be like a boon for the common people.

G V N Murthy, Hyderabad

GOP has problems galore

PROPOS, the editorial "For Congress, it is better to act late, than never", (The Hans India, February 5). The rift in the Congress has deepened. First, a rally was held in Jammu, ostensibly to honour Ghulam Nabi Azad, which saw the presence of

key members of G-23, the dissenters who wrote a letter demanding organisational changes in the party. Azad then praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi – which led to Congress workers demanding his removal. Another G23 leader, Anand Sharma, criticised the party's decision to ally with a political outfit led by a Muslim cleric in Bengal – which prompted a fierce response from others close to the party high command.

Four separate issues have come together in the Congress. One, there is a general sense of drift after two consecutive Lok Sabha poll defeats, and erosion of faith in Rahul Gandhi's ability to deliver victories. Two, there is an organisational crisis where internal channels to express and resolve grievances have collapsed and the leadership structure is unclear. Three, there are unfulfilled personal ambitions, including that of the dissenters, which have now led them to speak up. And four, there is jostling to position oneself for possible elections to the Congress Working Committee and other positions.

If this rift in the Congress leads to a stronger opposition, it is good for democracy. But the challenge for the challengers is that they seem to lack the mass base outside the party and internal strength within the party to force a change in leadership. The party establishment has co-opted a set of G-23 leaders. At the same time, the Congress leadership should recognise that its real challenge is not the dissenters, but the party's failure to win the confidence of citizens in elections.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, Bengaluru

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State getting raw deal from NDA govt: KTR

HYDERABAD

A progressive State like Telangana has not received due support from the NDA government at the Centre during the last six-and-a-half years, IT and Industries Minister KT Rama Rao claimed on Friday and sought support for such States to realise the goal of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat.' Referring to the NDA government's slogan of Team India, he said "things will not happen" unless the intention translates into real action and the Centre and states work together, though the motive was very noble. "But the one grievance I do have, Telangana has been, as I pointed out, a very progressive state, a state which has continued to encourage business."

"Unfortunately, the kind of support that we have anticipated, the kind of support we expected from the Government of India in the last six and half years, has not come about," he said, addressing a meeting of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) here. Appealing to the Centre to rethink on priorities, Rama Rao, the working president of the ruling TRS, said slogans like 'Atmanirbhar Bharat', 'Make in India', 'Self-Reliant India' were great slogans but the country was still not really making in India and is one that assembles without manufacturing much.

MLC polls: Parties roll up sleeves to decimate rivals

Sparring parties unleash massive campaigning, blame game and war of words

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

WITH just a week left to the biennial election to the MLC seats, the heads of the political party - TRS working President KT Rama Rao, TPCC President N Uttam Kumar Reddy and BJP State Chief Bandi Sanjay brace up to counter their rivals in the elections.

The political parties engage in massive campaigning and a war of words. KT Rama Rao asked his party activist to campaign vigorously on job creation by the TRS government and the BJP's failure in fulfilling the promises. He said that BJP and Congress are falsely accusing TRS of not providing employment though the TRS government has provided lakhs of jobs. TRS president accuses BJP and Congress of provoking people against the ruling party.

KTR held a teleconference with his party leaders from



• TRS cadre asked to highlight creation of jobs in Telangana

ALLEGATIONS AND CHARGES GALORE...

• TRS alleges BJP, Congress of provoking people against it

• Party leaders conduct meeting via video call

• TPCC president slams BJP over hiked fuel prices

• TRS to give a tough fight to BJP in Nalgonda constituency

Pragati Bhavan and reviewed the ongoing poll campaign in Nalgonda - Warangal- Khammam and Hyderabad - Rangareddy- Mahbubnagar graduate constituency on Friday. He asked the leaders to accord priority to 1.33 lakh jobs created in the government sector since the formation of Telangana in the poll campaign. The TRS leaders were also instructed to voice the issues of Bayyaram

steel plant and Tribal University which were mentioned in the Andhra Pradesh reorganization act yet to be fulfilled. He asserted the leaders highlight the setup of skill development centres in the districts and Hyderabad as a hub of employment. K T Rama Rao expressed confidence that TRS would retain the Nalgonda segment and a resounding victory in Hyderabad graduate constituency.



Similarly, in a Zoom meeting, TPCC President N Uttam Kumar Reddy urged the party leaders to engage in door-to-door campaigning and to highlight the misdeeds of the TRS and BJP ruling governments. Slamming the BJP Government at Centre for a humongous rise in the prices of petrol, diesel and cooking gas Uttam said, "The price of a litre of petrol was about Rs. 70 in the

year 2004, which has now increased to nearly Rs 100, BJP is making the lives of poor Indians bad to worse."

He further accused Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao of not doing anything for the nearly 30 lakhs unemployed youth in Telangana. Of them, he said over 19 lakhs qualified youth were registered with the Telangana State Public Service Commission (TSPSC).

On the other hand, the saffron party chief Bandi Sanjay held marathon meetings with his party leaders at the party head office to analyse the winning prospects of the party. The Survey report says, BJP candidate N Ramchander Rao's winning prospects are bright, and the party will have to put more efforts to win the Nalgonda segment where TRS sitting MLC P Rajeshwar Reddy already locked horns with Telangana Jana Samithi leader M Kodandaram to retain the seat.

TRS, BJP rivals in TS, pals in Delhi: Revanth

HYDERABAD

CONGRESS party MP A Revanth Reddy on Friday lashed out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi for cancelling the promises made by Congress party-led central government in the AP Reorganization Act before the formation of separate Telangana state. He asked the PM as to who gave him the power to cancel the promises made in the Act. He made these remarks while addressing an election campaign for G Chinna Reddy, the party candidate from Hyderabad, Ranga Reddy and Mahbubnagar graduate MLC seat.

Revanth also asked Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao why he did not corner the PM Modi on the issue of the cancellation of Railway Coach Factory and ITIR project. He dared IT minister KTR come forward and sit on a fast-unto-death at Jantar Mantar in Delhi to achieve the promises made in the Reorganization Act. He wondered if KTR would declare a war against PM Modi along with him to meet all the demands of the state.

He alleged that both TRS and BJP were enemies in the state but friends in Delhi. He also alleged that both CM KCR and PM Modi were cheating the people of the state while referring to the promises made by KCR and PM on provision of jobs to the unemployed youth of the state and the country.

TTD not to take over temples anymore

TIRUPATI

HEREAFTER the TTD will not take over any endowments temples under its management, said TTD executive officer (EO) Dr K S Jawahar Reddy. Speaking to media after the monthly 'Dial Your TTD EO' interactive programme on Friday, the EO said that TTD had so far took over the control of 32 temples from state endowments department located in various districts and now resolved no more taking over of the temples under its maintenance. "If needed, TTD is ready to provide financial support to the shrines that have rich historical background and architecture, cultural and traditional value," he said indicating TTD's unwillingness to take over the temples at the behest of leaders keen on bringing the temples under the cash-rich TTD which is needless to say boost their image at the cost of TTD.

Disclosing that TTD had netted an income of Rs 93.96 crore through Hundi offerings in February, he said this includes Rs 90.45 crore through the cash offerings made by devotees after darshan of Lord Venkateswara in Tirumala temple and also through 'eHundi' floated by TTD for receiving the offerings from devotees online for the Lord which was Rs 3.51 crore.

It is pertinent to note that the income through the Hundi cash offerings 'Kanakas' reached pre-pandemic period which was monthly on an average Rs 90-95 crore.

Detailing the revenue, darshan, prasadam sale, etc., in February, the EO said TTD also received Rs 22 lakh through 'eHundi' of Goddess Padmavati temple, Tiruchanur. In all, 14.51 lakh pilgrims had

■ EO says they have decided not to take over temples from Endowments Department from now on

■ If necessary, TTD will provide financial support to temples that have historical, cultural and architectural importance



TTD EO Dr K S Jawahar Reddy speaking in Dial your EO programme at Annamayya Bhavan at Tirumala

■ More than 14 lakh devotees have darshan of Balaji and Rs 93.46 cr revenue netted in Feb

a darshan of Lord which was on an average about 50,000 daily while 76.61 lakh laddus were sold in Tirumala temple in the month.

The EO said the focus of TTD is on producing Panchagavya cow and Ayurvedic products for the benefit of people at large and added that initially TTD planned to bring out as many as 100 products and the revenue from the sale will be added to TTD Gosamrakshna Trust to boost up the programmes taken up for preserving, protecting and promoting indigenous cow (Desi) species. To avoid environmental pollution, we are also working on Green power energy generation of wind and solar renewable energy sources, he added.

TTD to resume all darshans if things turn normal

TIRUMALA

TTD will resume all darshans in a phased manner, including Arjitha sevas, privileged darshan for senior citizens, specially-abled, etc., which were suspended since March last year, owing to Covid pandemic, said TTD EO Dr KS Jawahar Reddy.

The EO attended to 32 pilgrim callers from across the country during the monthly Dial your EO programme held at Annamayya Bhavan at Tirumala on Friday responding to various issues and suggestions brought by them during the interactive programme. .

Callers Ranga Rao and Radhakrishna from Vijayawada, Praveen from Anantapur sought to know when TTD will resume separate darshan facility for senior citizens and physically-challenged pilgrims that were cancelled a year back, the EO

■ Responding to callers during Dial your EO, Jawahar Reddy says after resuming Arjitha sevals on April 14, the TTD will take stock of Covid situation and decide on resumption of privileged darshan for senior citizens, differently-abled and others

said after resuming Arjitha sevals on April 14, TTD will review the Covid situation and consider resuming the darshan facility for them.

Reddy Prakash from Punganur complained of no response from TTD call centres though he had tried several times while a pilgrim wanted simplified procedure for allotment of rooms which is now very cumbersome and another sought measures to avoid delay in

Kalyanakatta.

Answering a caller, the EO said as part of its Sanatana Dharma Prachara, TTD is rigorously working to bring out Ashtadasa Puranas to the public and veteran pundits are working on the project. "We have already released Matsya Puranam, Brahma Maha Puranam, Vishnu Puranam etc., recently and will release others also," he said. He also said as sought by the caller, he will verify about Sri Bhashyam penned by Sri Ramanujacharya and see the possibility for its publication.

Srinivas from Hyderabad said that they are not getting SVBC telecast properly to which the EO said because of want of upgradation viewers facing problem in some areas which would be sorted out soon by replacing the old equipment with latest ones which is on.

Buggana defends excess borrowings

AMARAVATI

DEFENDING excess borrowings by the state government, minister for finance Buggana Rajendranath Reddy said that AP is only state which protected and improved economy during Covid pandemic by helping people who lost their livelihood through various welfare programmes. He said that by distributing money to people through various schemes, the state government is able to improve economy during lockdown period and added that the state is ahead of all states in protecting economy during crisis period.

Brushing aside the criticism of opposition parties on increasing debt of the state, the minister said that the state government borrowed in excess for the welfare of people. He said that the Central government itself gave permission for lending 2 per cent extra in addition to the usual 3 per cent in view of Covid. The Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system introduced by Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy also helped in a big way during corona crisis as money was transferred to the accounts of people directly without any middlemen, he said.

In addition, the state government is able to get grant in aid of Rs 24,000 crore from Central government, whereas the previous TDP government failed to get funds despite alliance with NDA in the past.



Minister for Finance & Planning, Legislative Affairs Buggana Rajendranath Reddy addressing the Press Conference at R&B Building, in Vijayawada on Friday

■ Asserts extra borrowing only to help people in distress

■ Says the State is ahead of others in helping people through welfare programmes

■ Observes direct cash transfers helped improve economy during Covid pandemic

The minister said AP stands first in GST collection despite shut down of all sectors. The state government is able to collect Rs 16,169 crore registering 8 per cent growth in GST in present financial year. He said that the government is able to bring down fiscal deficit from -12.96 per cent to 7.6 per cent on an average for all the quarters of present financial year.

Rajendranath Reddy said the tax revenue stands at Rs 61,248.27 crore by January 2020-21, non-tax revenue Rs 2,569.58 crore and grant in aid Rs 24,420.85 crore. Whereas the revenue expenditure on pensions stands at Rs 14,185.97 crore by January 2021, Rs 8156.72 crore on expenditure on subsidy, and capital expenditure Rs 19,062.01

crore.

Condemning the comments of TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu on development of Kurnool district during his municipal election campaign, the minister said that the YSRCP government has been striving hard for development of Kurnool district. He cited the example of Orwakal industrial sector as part of Hyderabad-Bangalore industrial corridor, Orwakal airport and several other developmental works.

The finance minister said that though his ancestors were in mining for decades, he was still residing in an apartment and had an old car. He asked Naidu to compare his assets with him and not resort to cheap comments for political gain.

Task Force seizes 2.5 tonne red sanders logs

HANS NEWS SERVICE
CHITTOOR

IN a major haul, the RSASTF (Red sanders Anti smuggling Task Force) on Friday seized 138 red sanders logs weighing more than 2.5 tonne, which is the highest number in the recent months, from a dump found in SL Puram forest area of interior KVB Puram Mandal in the district. Two smugglers also were arrested when they came to the dump area for taking out the logs to outside the forest for the illegal transportation of the red sanders logs to the other state

The logs were found in a dump which was unearthed by the Task Force team led by RI Krupanandam during the intense combing operation in KVB Puram forest area where the logs were stashed at a steep hilly area in the forest.

According to Task Force DSP KS Venkataiah the Task Force combing was going on for two days which ultimately led to the major breakthrough in finding the dump in KVB Puram forest area. But the Task Force in a clever move waited at the dump area anticipating the smugglers to arrive there which proved correct.

He said that preliminary investigations revealed that the smugglers readied the logs in the dump covered under thick vegetation and were waiting

Task Force DSP Venkataiah says the smugglers covered the logs with thick vegetation and were waiting for opportunity for transporting

for the opportune time for the illegal transportation of the logs but run out of luck with the Task Force outwitting them and landed them in the trap of the force.

The team laying in wait surrounded the smugglers as soon as they reached the dump area and nabbed them, DSP said adding that one of them was mastry Chembaiiah belonged to SL Puram and another is his accomplice Chengaiah also a resident of the same area.

He said the Task Force is on the lookout for the two more persons, Venkatesh and Prasanth involved in the bringing of the woodcutters from Tiruthani area in Tamil Nadu and made these logs ready after dressing them for transport.

The logs were brought to the Task Force office at Kapilatheerthamin Tirupat along with arrested smugglers for further investigation.

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

MINISTER for industries, commerce and information technology Mekapati Gautam Reddy said multilateral banks are playing a crucial role in fighting poverty, supporting economic growth, and ensuring sustainable gains in the quality of people's lives in developing countries.

He was addressing a virtual conference on 'Business opportunities with largest sources of funding'. Senior officials from the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Asian Infrastructure Development Bank (AIIB), the New Development Bank (NDB), chief secretary Aditya Nath Das, president of the FTCCI Ramakanth Inani, president of the FAPCCI C V Atchut Rao and the members of FTCCI and FAPCCI participated in the conference.

The minister recalled that India



■ Says pandemic has shown just how critical these banks are in moments of crisis

■ Addressing a virtual meet on funding for business opportunities, the Industries Minister says the AP govt has focused on creating hard infrastructure like industrial corridors, industrial parks, ports

is one of the founding members of the World Bank (WB), the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and very recent Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the New Development Bank (NDB).

The World Bank assistance in India started from 1948 and of ADB's assistance in 1986. India became a founding member of AIIB from 2016 and holds the second

largest shares after China. India has received \$4.35 billion from the bank, the highest for any country. In June 2020, AIIB approved USD 500 million for Covid-19 Emergency Response Fund and Health Systems Preparedness Project and another USD 750 million for Covid-19 Active Response and Expenditure Support, in a co-financing arrangement with the ADB.

The pandemic has shown just how critical multilateral development banks (MDBs) are in moments of crisis.

The Andhra Pradesh government focused on investing in resources to secure future by creating hard infrastructure such as industrial corridors, industrial parks, ports, airports and others coupled with the soft infrastructure such as improving the educational facilities, improving the health care, skill development and capacity building so that our youth are well equipped to reap the benefits of industrialisation.

The minister recalled that the ADB is on board with the Visakhapatnam Chennai Industrial Corridor Development Program (VICDP) to enhance industrial growth and create high quality jobs.

The World Bank is funding Rejuvenating Watersheds for Agricultural Resilience through Innovative Development (REWARD) project in five parched districts of Rayalaseema.

TODAY'S QUOTE

Mega steel plant will fuel growth in Odisha

“The Rs 50,000 crore integrated steel plant in Odisha will bring a new wave of economic development and employment generation in the State and will give boost to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat. Centre is committed to providing all kinds of facilities for setting up of this mega steel plant.”

— Dharmendra Pradhan, Union Minister



INFRA

NHAI gets AI for attendance watch

NHAI introduces AI-based face recognition system for attendance monitoring in line with its commitment to adopt technology to enhance transparency and accountability. It has deployed artificial intelligence (AI)-based face recognition system for attendance monitoring of the field staff. The technology also comes with real time location capturing feature.

FOREX (buy rates in ₹)			
US Dollar	77.37	South	
Euro	91.41	African Rand	5.48
UAE Dirham	21.86	Hong Kong Dollar	10.81
Thai Baht	2.75	Japanese Yen	0.77
British Pound	104.9	New Zealand Dollar	54.72
Australian Dollar	58.82	Saudi Riyal	21.39
Canadian Dollar	60.34	Swedish Krona	9.84
Swiss Franc	81.66	Singapore Dollar	57.15

DELHI SATURDAY 6 MARCH 2021

BIZ BRIEFS

ICCMA seeks price hike

Indian Corrugated Case Manufacturers Association (ICCMA) on Friday urged companies and corporates that use corrugated boxes to allow increase in prices of corrugated cases in the wake of enormous rise in raw materials. “Corrugated boxes manufacturing industry is reeling under the twin blows of rise in raw material cost and supply disruptions. The total cost increase for box makers has already crossed 70 per cent cumulatively on account of paper alone,” said Sandeep Wadhwa, president, ICCMA. The industry which comprises over 350 automatic corrugator units and more than 10,000 semi-automatic units, mostly in MSME sector, are facing immense stress on account of these unprecedented cost increases, he added. The industry employs a workforce of over 6 lakh and plays a pivotal role in the Indian economy by enabling the smooth functioning of supply chains for essential goods and others, he said.

Vivo unveils new initiative

Vivo, on Friday, launched Vision+, a global initiative reaffirming its long-term commitment to leadership in mobile photography technology in India and the brand plans to invite smartphone users to showcase their photography skills. The initiative aims to build a visual content ecosystem for mobile photography enthusiasts through initiatives including content co-creation, education, and cultural exchanges. Nipun Marya, Director, Brand Strategy, Vivo India, said, “We are happy to take a step further in our core pursuit to create a pleasant imaging experience for consumers. It is our vision for humanity as a technology brand, and our cultural responsibility as a consumer brand to share Vivo's mobile imaging culture”. With Vision+, we want to showcase how images carry emotions.

INDIA NEEDS TO HOME IN ON TRADE PACTS FAST

It is critical to review trade arrangements at both the multilateral, regional and bilateral levels to study where it can gain the maximum advantage

SUSHMA RAMACHANDRAN

THE economy seems to be slowly returning to a path of positive growth, but one sector continues to be a laggard and that is trade. Exports which had crashed about a year ago after the onset of the pandemic are slowly inching back on to a positive track. Imports especially of the non-petroleum segment are raising faster, an indication that domestic industrial output is picking up. The pace of growth for both inward and outward trade, however, is uneven. Exports in January, for instance, rose by 6.16 per cent year on year, while there is now a dip in February by 0.3 per cent. As for imports, these rose by a meagre 2 per cent in January but spurted by 7 per cent in the following month.

Regarding overall exports, the apex export body, the Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) has estimated there could be a 7.3 per cent decline to \$290 billion in 2020-21 from \$313.36 billion in the previous fiscal. The fall is obviously due to disruptions caused by Covid. This is both in terms of lower production within the country as well as collapse in demand in traditional markets like the US and Western Europe. At the same time, FIEO is quite upbeat about the current fiscal and expects exports to reach a height of \$350 billion, largely based on the higher order bookings for products like processed food, pharma, medical and diagnostic products, chemicals and electronics. This ambitious projection is only likely to be achieved in case demand revives sufficiently in developed country markets that have been this country's major trade partners. The dip in exports for February underlines the fact that the path to higher export growth is not going to be an easy one. India's exports, however, need to be viewed in the context of world trade during 2020 and predictions for growth in 2021. According to the World Trade Organisation



(WTO), global trade was expected to decline by 9.2 per cent in 2020, followed by a 7.2 per cent rise in 2021. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), on the other hand, expected a decline of 10.4 per cent in 2020 and a growth of 8.3 per cent in the volume of global trade. Trade in services is expected to grow more slowly given the curbs on cross-border tourism and business travel.

In other words, even the predictions for the current year do not envisage a return to pre-pandemic trade volumes. It will take another year or so for international trade to return to normal levels. For India, therefore, it is critical to review its trade arrangements at both the multilateral, regional and bilateral levels to study where it can gain the maximum advantage. On the regional front, it has already shied away from joining the giant Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) on the grounds that it was not in its self-interest. At the bilateral level, it is in the process of negotiating a number of key free trade agreements including with the European Union and the US which have taken an inordinately long time to complete. It has not concluded any new FTA since 2012. But if this country

does not want to get left out of the multiple trade agreements that are being concluded by most countries, it will have to become more pro-active in this area.

The spate of regional and bilateral free trade pacts being concluded is largely due to the decline in influence of the World Trade Organisation in recent years. India has been an important player in this forum right from its inception but has not been successful in achieving all its goals on various trade issues. One of the reasons for the declining status of the WTO has been the US withdrawal from the trade body during the Trump administration. In fact, it even stalled appointments to the key dispute settlement panels that have helped in the past to resolve many irritants between member states. The outlook for the WTO, however, has brightened with the advent of the Biden administration which has pledged to resume active US participation in multilateral fora. As a first step, it gave support to the appointment of the first woman and first African Director-General, the Nigerian-American Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala. Significantly, Ms Okonjo-Iweala held her first bilateral meeting with the Indian delegation. She has also pub-

It has not concluded any new FTA since 2012. But if this country does not want to get left out of the multiple trade agreements that are being concluded by most countries, it will have to become more pro-active in this area

licly declared her respect for this country and its role at the WTO. At the same time, it is not clear whether she would support many of India's proposals and may actually veer towards supported the developed countries. For instance, she has already said that investment facilitation is an issue that will have to be taken up despite India's opposition to it. It is also not known whether she will support the case of India and other developing economies on agriculture and the need to protect livelihoods. In any case, it is clear a new era has begun at the WTO. On the positive side, the new DG appears set to revive the dispute settlement mechanism as she has underlined the need for a platform to resolve members' disagreements. Even so, it is clear that India will have to negotiate nimbly to ensure that its interests are protected at this apex trade body. Till such time, however, as the WTO once again becomes an important forum for global trade, it would be wise for this government to build closer ties with other trading partners. Regional and bilateral trade agreements need to be reviewed and FTAs with large entities like the EU and the US need to be put on the fast track. There is no time to be lost if India is to play a significant role in global trade in the coming years.

Market falls for 2nd day over profit booking

Sensex tumbles 441 pts, Nifty drops 143; Rising US bond yields rattle global investors

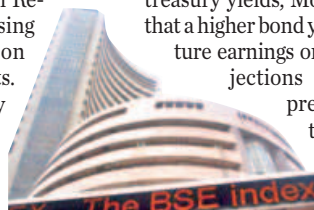
MUMBAI

BENCHMARK BSE Sensex tumbled over 440 points and the NSE Nifty cracked below the psychological 15,000-level on Friday due to profit booking in financials and IT stocks in line with relentless sell-offs in global equities as US bond market turmoil continued to rattle investors. The 30-share BSE barometer declined by 440.76 points or 0.87 per cent to close at 50,405.32, continuing its falling trend for the second day due to concerns over bond yields. Intra-day, the index swung around 726 points.

The NSE barometer Nifty ended lower by 142.65 points or 0.95 per cent at 14,938.10.

Domestic equities corrected for second consecutive day as rise in 10-Year USA Treasury yields and commentary from Federal Reserve chairman on rising bond yields weighed on investors' sentiments. Barring FMCG, all key sectoral indices witnessed sharp pullback with metals and PSU

bank indices witnessing steeper correction in the range of 3-4 per cent,” said Binod Modi, Head - Strategy at Reliance Securities. Over the last two sessions, the Sensex has shed 1,039.33 points or 2.02 per cent and the Nifty has lost 307.5 points or 2.01 per cent. However, on weekly basis, the Sensex gained 1,305.33 points or 2.65 per cent and the Nifty added 408.95 points or 2.81 per cent. On the Sensex chart, IndusInd Bank, SBI, Dr Reddy's, NTPC, ICICI Bank, HCL Tech and Bajaj FinServ emerged as major laggards. On the other hand, ONGC, Maruti, Kotak Bank, Nestle and Ultratech Cement were among gainers. Of the Sensex shares, 21 ended with losses. Clearly, rising bond yield fear, which appeared to have softened last week, has come to the fore again with back-to-back sharp rise in USA treasury yields, Modi said, adding that a higher bond yield reduces future earnings or cash flow projections and therefore premium valuations of equities become doubtful.

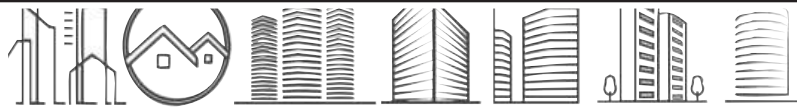


MTAR Tech IPO subscribed 200 times

NEW DELHI

THE Rs 597-crore initial public offering of Hyderabad-based MTAR Technologies was subscribed more than 200 times on Friday, the final day of the bidding process on overwhelming support from investors. The IPO has received bids for 145.79 crore equity shares against an offer size of 72.6 lakh equity stocks, translating into a subscription of 200.79 times, data available on the exchanges showed. The portion reserved for retail investors was subscribed 28.4 times, qualified institutional buyers category was subscribed 165 times and non-institutional category re-

ceived 650.79 times subscription. TAR Technologies, a precision engineering solutions company, on Tuesday raised Rs 179 crore from anchor investors. The IPO consists of a fresh issuance of up to 21,48,149 equity shares aggregating Rs 123.52 crore and an offer for sale of up to 82,24,270 equity shares worth up to Rs 473 crore by selling shareholders. The price band has been fixed at Rs 574-575 per equity share for the initial share-sale, which got fully subscribed on the first day of the issue itself on Wednesday. Proceeds from the fresh issue will be used to repay debt, fund long-term working capital requirements besides attending to general corporate purpose.



REAL CORNER



Housing demand in India at all time high

ARCHANA RAO
NEW DELHI

RESIDENTIAL real estate demand in India is at all-time high, thanks to favourable factors such as low interest rates, change in consumer preferences and reduced stamp duty in Maharashtra. Post lockdown in India, consumers likings have shifted towards bigger houses which led to surge in residential real estate demand. Niranjan Hiranandani, President, National Real Estate Development Council (NAREDCO), on Monday, expressed his gratitude on the overwhelming support the real estate industry has received from different quarters post lockdown.

“Covid period found a positive outlook for the developers, especially those who had stocks (house) with them which were ready or close to ready. So, there were several benefits for a house buyer. If you had an occupation certificate, you didn't have to pay GST, so you saved 5 per cent.” Hiranandani said while addressing a panel of industry experts on a real-estate webinar organised by NAREDCO. “If you were in Maharashtra, you saved 3 per cent (reduced stamp duty) and there has been a reduction in the rate of flats or the prices have remained consistent despite inflationary tendencies which have taken place,” he added.

On commercial space, Hiranandani

Commercial space absorption will see 10-15% fall due to work from home practice, says NAREDCO



dani reiterated that work from home is going to exist in the coming years. The commercial real estate will witness a reduction of 10-15 per cent due to work from home. NAREDCO is also planning to introduce a rating system for the associated developers.

“My estimate is that the demand in terms of commercial space post Diwali 2021 is also going to see an aggressive change. Even in our company we are betting on an aggressive commercial market too along with the residential market and we are hoping that this will work out very quickly. Post June-July 2021, we think that the people will be back into their offices after vaccinations,” he added.

Renu Sud Karnad, Managing Director, HDFC Ltd., speaking on the occasion said, “There is a huge opportunity we all are sitting at.

Interest rates are the lowest today and State Bank of India has announced even lower rates, making us aware that interest rate after some time is slowly going to go up. Developers have been sensible about the pricing and government initiatives, most importantly, such as the reduction of stamp duty has played an important role. My real concern is interest rates shouldn't go up.” She also warned - Developers should not get carried away with the current pricings as the confidence in real estate is slowly picking up in the market and the fear of ongoing projects remaining incomplete is also a possibility. She further said that the real estate bodies such as NAREDCO, needs to push state government across the country to provide greater incentives to developers like that of the state government of Maharashtra.

Demand rising for luxury smart homes, villas

NRIs looking forward to investing in Indian real estate mkt

AS the real estate sector emerges out of pandemic, the market for luxury smart homes and villas in India is thriving and demand has improved in the past three-four months, said Aditya Kushwaha, CEO & Director of Axis Ecorp. He also noted that non-resident Indians (NRIs) are looking forward to investing in the Indian real estate market.

“The market for luxury smart homes and villas is constantly thriving in the country. While in the year 2020, people were showing some resistance, but things have started getting better in the past three-four months,” Kushwaha said. He further noted that these properties can be rented out to homestays and tourism businesses, which is another booming market that promises an assured and stable source of income to investors. Axis Ecorp recently announced the launch of its luxury smart service villa project, Axis Yog Villas, located in the Dodamarg taluka of North of Goa. The CEO noted that the company has witnessed ‘unprecedented interest’ for the Axis Yog Villas.

He said: “The project is pegged at the value of Rs 250 crore and we have set ourselves a target of garnering sales to the tunes of Rs 100 crores in the next six months. Given the response we are getting, it will not be surprising if we achieve this target sooner.”

He, further said that the company major project will be Axis Lake City, which will mark our entry into the eco-luxury space.

In addition to this, we are gearing to launch Axis KNCJ (in Darjeeling) which will be our first project beyond the realms of Goa.”

He noted that the company plans to invest Rs 500 crore in the coming three years in these projects its major spending will be focused on this year.

Banks see pickup in home loans

With renewed customer interest, builders are selling non-'vastu', tough-to-sell, houses without offering much discount

PEOPLE have started buying their dream home again after the Covid-19 induced lockdown and economic disruptions completely dried out new purchases. Such has been the renewed customer interest in housing that builders are selling even tough-to-sell, non-'vastu' houses without offering much discount.

And the numbers are showing that the housing activity is again picking up momentum. According to a report by Emkay Global Financial Services, systemic monthly mortgage disbursement in February has been at a high of Rs 75,000 crore as against Rs 40,000 crore average. This is mainly due to pent-up demand driven by benign rates, attractive property prices, low stamp duty (temporary though in Maharashtra) and change in customer behaviour to house ownership/bigger house size.

Financial distributor Andromeda has

clocked nearly Rs 2,100 crore in disbursement in February (up 20 per cent YoY) with home loans at Rs 1,250 crore (60 per cent of disbursement).

After a dip in H1FY21, systemic retail loan growth trend remained healthy in H2FY21 (up 9 per cent YoY/7 per cent YTD) with mortgage growing 8 per cent YoY/6 per cent YTD amid the festive cheer, the brokerage said in its report.

Among large players, SBI leads the pack with nearly 31 per cent market share in recent disbursements made in the mortgage segment, followed by the HDFC group at 19 per cent, ICICI at 13 per cent, BOB at 9 per cent and Axis at 7 per cent. Kotak has shown fresh aggression in line with management's guidance, with 3 per cent market share in home loan disbursements in February.

“We expect overall retail credit growth to accelerate further (currently 9 per cent YoY vs 15 per cent last year), led by mortgages (contributing 51 per cent of retail loans) and back-end support by unsecured (Cards/PL) and vehicle loans,” the brokerage said.



'Hurricane Pant' strikes Eng hard

AHMEDABAD

RISHABH Pant changed his game-plan and in turn India's fortunes with a magnificent century, helping the side snatch control from England's grip to finish the second day at a robust 294 for 7 in the final Test here on Friday.

England dominated the first two sessions and India looked in all sorts of trouble before Pant (101 off 118 balls) suddenly decided to catch the opposition by the scruff of their necks, effortlessly changing gears in company of Washington Sundar (60, 117 balls, 8x4).

The duo added 113 runs in 26 overs but more importantly, landed an exquisite 'left-hook' on England's hopes of turning party-poopers, having already conceded a first innings lead of 89 runs. At stumps, Washington was still at the crease with Axar Patel (11).

For someone, who has always been panned for his lack of game awareness, it was Pant 2.0 at play where he defended when it was necessary but unlocked his brutal attacking instincts when required.

The first 50 came off 82 balls and the next off 33 balls with Washington being the ideal foil, holding one end well en route to his third half-century in Test cricket. Just like playing a single spinner in the third Test was a blunder, England paid the price for playing a bowler short as their main four got tired during the final session.

In Virender Sehwag style, Pant deposited Dom Bess into the 'cow corner' of the stands against the turn, to complete his third Test hundred, first at home, having missed at least five in recent years. When he finally got out, Root's frustrated expression was a dead giveaway that the match was now out of hand for England, having conceded as many as 141 runs in a single session.

Pant had hit 13 fours and two sixes during an innings which, in all

Completes his 3rd Test ton, first at home, having missed at least five in recent years

Hits magnificent century, gives India significant lead in fourth Test: Sundar unbeaten at 60

likelihood, will earn him the 'Man of the Match' award. Ben Stokes (22-6-73-2) troubled the Indians with reared up deliveries, one of those got skipper Virat Kohli (0), but there was no trouble for Pant, who would gleefully pull the England all-rounder.

The audacity with which he came down the track against Anderson (20-11-40-3), depositing him over extra cover for a boundary, could have taken anyone's breath away. So subtly Pant changed the pace of his innings, that even Root didn't know what hit his team which looked in control when India went into the tea at 153 for 6.

Pant was then batting on 36, defending the deliveries that would turn and jump off the rough while playing Anderson and Stokes judiciously. England till then had maintained the shine of the ball well but post tea as the ball got soft, Pant took charge.

With Washington looking solid at the other end, Root asked Jack Leach (23-5-66-2) to come round the wicket and the idea played into Pant's hands as the visitors didn't attack the rough areas enough. It was one fascinating day of Test cricket where flamboyant players like Rohit Sharma (49 off 144 balls) and Pant traded their natural attacking instincts for a more conservative approach.

The pitch wasn't very difficult to bat on but certainly not as easy as Pant made it look with his devil-may-care approach which later rubbed on Washington.

Earlier, in the first session, Cheteshwar Pujara (17 off 66 balls) and Kohli's (0 off 8 balls) dismissals brought England back in the game. Ajinkya Rahane (27 off 45 balls) hit a flurry of boundaries to get the scoreboard moving but James Anderson had him caught at second slip with a beautiful delivery that held its line at the stroke of lunch in a session.

The approach taken by Rohit and Pujara during their 40-run stand of 24 overs in the morning session, wasn't a bad one.

They saw off Anderson's morning spell with Stokes bending his back

at the other end. The flashy shots were cut out and with all the time at their disposal, they were ready to grind the bowlers out and dispatch those occasional bad balls to the boundary.

Stokes' one such full toss or a tossed up one from Leach was given some rough treatment by Rohit, who otherwise produced a dead defensive bat on multiple occasions. It was only towards the fag end of the session that he played an aerial shot, slog-sweeping Dom Bess between deep mid-wicket and deep square leg for a boundary.

Pujara also did the hard work but ended up frustrated with Leach making him his bunny. He prodded forward hiding his bat behind the pads to a straighter one from Leach and Nitin Menon made a good decision factoring in the deliberate padding to a ball that was hitting off-middle.

The sparse Motera crowd, anticipating a 'Friday matinee show' from the megastar Indian captain was left high and dry when

Stokes produced an effort ball with extra bounce outside the off-stump corridor which Kohli edged to Ben Foakes behind the stumps. The script didn't change until the final session but then they got struck by 'Hurricane Pant' which took its time to build up. (PTI)

SCOREBOARD DAY 2

England 1st Innings: 205	
Indian 1st Innings: (Overnight 24/1)	
Shubman Gill b Anderson	0
Rohit Sharma lbw Stokes	49
Cheteshwar Pujara lbw b Leach	17
Virat Kohli c Foakes b Stokes	0
Ajinkya Rahane c Stokes b Anderson	27
Rishabh Pant c Root b James Anderson	101
Ravichandran Ashwin c Ollie Pope b Jack Leach	13
Washington Sundar batting	60
Axar Patel batting	11
Extras: (B-8, LB-5, NB-3)	16
Total: (For 7 wickets in 94 overs)	294
Fall of wickets: 1-0, 2-40, 3-41, 4-80, 5-121, 6-146, 7-259.	
Bowling: James Anderson 20-11-40-3, Ben Stokes 22-6-73-2, Jack Leach 23-5-66-2, Dominic Bess 15-1-56-0, Joe Root 14-1-46-0.	

Indian batsman Rishabh Pant celebrates his century during the second day of the 4th and last cricket Test match against England in Ahmedabad on Friday



4th T20I: Finch, spinners help Aus level series 2-2

WELLINGTON

CAPTAIN Aaron Finch's unbeaten 79 and a brilliant effort from the spinners helped Australia beat New Zealand by 50 runs in the 4th T20I at the Westpac Stadium on Friday. Finch led Australia to 156/6 after which New Zealand were bowled out for a meagre 106 runs in 18.5 overs.

Australia have thus come from 2-0 down to level the five-match series 2-2.

While fast bowler Kane Richardson cleaned up the tail to end the match with three wickets for 19 runs, spinners Ashton Agar, Adam Zampa and Glenn Maxwell starved the New Zealand batsmen of runs. The three players took two wickets each with Agar giving just 11 runs in his four overs. All-rounder Kyle Jamieson's 30 off 18 balls pushed a lacklustre New Zealand past the 100-run mark.

Finch hit five fours and four sixes in his knock. He smashed 38 out of 42 runs in an unbeaten seventh wicket stand with Jhye Richardson that pushed Australia over the 150-run mark.

The decisive final match of the series will now be played at the same venue on Sunday. **Brief scores:** Australia 156/6 in 20 overs (Aaron Finch 79 not out, Marcus Stoinis 19; Ish Sodhi 3/32) beat New Zealand 106 all out in 18.5 overs (Kyle Jamieson 30; Kane Richardson 3/19, Ashton Agar 2/11, Glenn Maxwell 2/14) by 50 runs

Bagan face resurgent NorthEast in first leg of semifinals

BAMBOLIM (GOA)

ATK Mohun Bagan and NorthEast United lock horns in the first leg of their Indian Super League (ISL) semi-final tie at the GMC Stadium on Saturday.

NorthEast have been on an unbeaten run of nine games since Khalid Jamil took over as head coach halfway through the league stage. Bagan, on the other hand, missed out a spot in the 2022 AFC Champions League after losing 2-0 to Mumbai City FC in the last game of the league.

The match will be between the two teams with similar approaches, both set up in a compact way to make it difficult for the opposition to score.

NorthEast have won eight out of the 13 matches this season in which they took the lead. Similarly, Bagan have taken the lead 14 times, and won 12 of those matches.

"We are going to play against a good team. ATK Mohun Bagan are a good side. Defensively strong and their attack is strong too. We have to be very careful as the first match is very important. It will be the toughest game of the league. So we will have to prepare well and we will have to be strong," said Jamil.

NorthEast can look at history for encouragement. Bagan coach Antonio Habas is winless in three first leg ISL semi-finals, losing two and drawing one. "It's an advantage but we are thinking about tomorrow. It's our first game, we have to be careful," added Jamil.

For ATK Mohun Bagan, the last three games cost them the League Winners Shield. However, they are still in the contest for the ISL

crown and will hope to redeem their season by lifting the title.

"NorthEast United have had a good season. It's a very difficult team because they have good players in defence, central midfield and good players in attack. They also had good performances and give 100 percent on the pitch," said Habas.

(IANS)



Federico Gallego to start his first game in over 3 weeks (ISL)

SEMIS RESULT

FC Goa draw with Mumbai City FC 2-0

Sukruth shines in Warangal's 84-run win over Willowmen

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

RIDING on Karam Sukruth's 80 off 142 balls, Warangal District defeated Vijay Puri Willowmen by 84 runs in an A2 Two Days Division League Championship match played at Ballebaaz Cricket Ground in Warangal here on Friday.

Warangal were off to a shaky start as they saw their opener Mohd. Abdul Meraj depart at 9 with the scoreboard reading 24 runs. The side lost their third wicket at 67. Sukruth played a 53-run partnership with a Ganesh before the latter was bowled out at 43.

Sukruth then found an able partner in B Suresh and hit a flurry of boundaries to get the scoreboard moving before their flamboyant 50-run partnership

ended with Suresh being out LBW for 32 runs with the total at 226/ 5. Sukruth on his way to 80 played attacking shots and hit 14 fours before taking the total to 242/6. Warrangle added another 39 runs to end their inning at 281 all out in 69 overs.

In replay, chasing a 282-run victory target, Vijay Puri Willowmen started their innings on a steady note with the opener Aashlesh Vaman scoring 54 off 84 balls. However, after his departure Willowmen lost their wickets at regular intervals and their innings ended in 75.5 over with a 197 run total.

The bowlers to do the damage were N Pavan Reddy 20-4, B Suresh 51-2 and Sukruth who sizes with the bat also claimed a wicket for the team conceding 21 runs.



ICC to identify Delhi-based fixing kingpin

NEW DELHI: The International Cricket Council's (ICC) anti-corruption unit (ACU) is hoping to publicly identify a corruption mastermind in New Delhi soon, based on pieces of evidence gathered from players and officials. The ACU believes that most cricket corruption cases around the world can be linked back to 10 or 12 individuals working as bookies in India, according to The Telegraph report. Once the unit identifies the fixer, the ICC will use article 2.4.9 of the code of conduct under which known corruptors will have their names and mugshots along with their aliases uploaded on the ICC's website.

Bhutia's football school starts talent hunt

NEW DELHI: BBFS Residential Academy, a flagship initiative of Bhaichung Bhutia Football Schools (BBFS), announced that it will be conducting trials for admissions for year 2021 at Delhi-NCR as well as Chandigarh on Sunday. These will be among the first of many cities where the trials will be held. The admissions to the residential academy will be open only for players born between 2004 & 2010, and selected players will get a chance to be admitted into the academy at a nominal fee, where they will not only get CBSE schooling but also football coaching from licensed coaches via the integrated football training programme.

Belarussian coach passes away in Patiala

New Delhi: Belarussian Nikolai Snesev, who was appointed as a middle and long-distance coach till September by the Sports Ministry, passed away in his room at Patiala's National Sports Institute (NIS) on Friday. He was 72. Adille J. Sumariwalla, president of the Athletics Federation of India (AFI), confirmed the passing away of Snesev. "AFI is deeply shocked to learn about the sudden demise of the recently-appointed middle-long distance coach Dr. Nikolai Snesev in Patiala," said Sumariwalla in a statement. Sumariwalla said a detailed statement will follow shortly. "It's a natural death as per the doctor's report.

Bilbao beat Levante, face Barca in Copa del Rey final

VALENCIA (SPAIN)

ATHLETIC Bilbao booked their place to play FC Barcelona in the final of this season's Copa del Rey after winning the return leg of their semifinal 2-1 away to Levante.

Levante have never played a cup final, but went into the game with a slight advantage after a 1-1 draw in Bilbao three weeks ago. A 0-0 would have seen them through. The visitors knew that too and quickly went on the attack against a Levante side that was reasonably happy to sit deep and soak up pressure on Thursday, Xinhua news reports.

Raul Garcia fired Athletic's first chance just wide after good work from Oscar de Marcos before Roger Marti put Levante



ahead by turning and squeezing off a shot from the edge of the six-yard box.

Iker Muniain headed wide for Bilbao when he should have hit the target, but the visitors were level just before the half hour when Oscar Duarte hauled down Garcia,

who drilled a powerful penalty high into the corner of the net.

Bilbao kept up the pressure with Yuri Berchiche missing a good chance to cross for Raul, while Muniain shot tamely at Aitor Fernandez when well placed.