



## WINDOWS

### SC asks States to give ₹2K per month for education of children restored with families

NEW DELHI: Observing that COVID-19 has affected normal life since March and children did not had the opportunity to attend classes, the Supreme Court on Tuesday directed all the states to provide Rs 2,000 a month for the education of each child who was in a child care institution (CCI) and has now been restored to his or her family during the pandemic. The apex court was told that 2,27,518 children were in CCIs when the COVID-19 pandemic started and 1,45,788 have been restored with their families or guardians. Taking note of the plight of children who are residing in CCIs during pandemic period, the top court stressed on the need to provide them requisite infrastructure for education and said that states should ensure that required number of teachers are made available to teach them. A bench headed by Justice L. Nageswara Rao also said state governments should provide necessary infrastructure, including books and stationery, to CCIs for the online classes of children living there on the basis of recommendation from district child protection units within 30 days. The top court said that it might be necessary for the states to nominate a teacher for a batch of 20-25 children in CCIs so that they could get education during the pandemic time. The bench, also comprising Justices Hemant Gupta and Ajay Rastogi, said states would pay Rs 2,000 per month for their education and this amount has to be given at the recommendation of the district child protection unit, keeping in mind the financial position of the children's families. The bench said extra classes are necessary for these children to prepare for the exams in March next year.

### Pranab's memoir: Daughter, son in Twitter spat

PRANAB Mukherjee's children are on a war path over the publication of the late President's memoirs which appear to feature some disparaging references to Congress president Sonia Gandhi and former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, whom Mukherjee blamed for the party's 2014 electoral loss, according to The Tribune report. ▶P3

### S&P sees faster GDP recovery in FY21

S&P Global Ratings on Tuesday raised India's growth projection for the current financial year to (-)7.7 per cent from (-)9 per cent estimated earlier on rising demand and falling Covid-19 rates. For the next financial year 2021-22, S&P projected growth to rebound to 10 per cent. Its revision in growth forecast for the current fiscal reflects a faster-than-expected recovery in the September quarter. "Rising demand and falling infection rates have tempered our expectation of Covid-19's hit on the Indian economy. ▶P6



Members of AIIMS Nurses Union during their indefinite strike over their long-pending demands in New Delhi on Tuesday

## Delhi HC restrains AIIMS nurses from continuing strike

NEW DELHI

THE Delhi High Court on Tuesday restrained the Nurses Union of All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in New Delhi from continuing with their indefinite strike till January 18, the next date of hearing in the matter.

A Bench of Justice Navin Chawla directed the Nurses Union to restrain from continuing the strike after AIIMS, Delhi submitted that the grievances of the Union were being considered by the authorities concerned.

The Bench also sought a response from the Nurses Union on the petitioner filed by the AIIMS administration against the strike,

called by the Nurses Union over their long-pending demands, including that related to the Sixth Central Pay Commission.

The strike was illegal and in violation of the Industrial Disputes Act, AIIMS said in its plea before the High Court. It said that the strike by the nurses violated an order earlier passed by the court prohibiting any such action by AIIMS employees.

The petition was filed after approximately 3,500 nursing strength of the hospital went on an indefinite strike on Monday, sitting at the hospital premises shouting slogans, holding placards, amid the pandemic.

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### British PM Johnson to be chief guest at R-Day fete

NEW DELHI

BRITISH Prime Minister Boris Johnson will be the chief guest at the Republic Day celebrations in January 2021, British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab confirmed. Raab made the announcement after his meeting with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Tuesday. He came to India on a bilateral visit on Monday night. Stating that the presence of Boris Johnson during the Republic Day celebrations is "symbolic of a new phase between India and UK," External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said: "I'm pleased that PM Boris Johnson has invited PM Modi to join the UK-hosted G7 summit next year. UK PM Johnson has also accepted the very generous invitation to attend India's Republic Day celebrations in January, which is a great honour. Continued on Page 5

## At 4.1 degrees C, Delhi sees coldest day this season

NEW DELHI

A COLD wave gripped Delhi on Tuesday as icy winds blowing from the snow-covered western Himalayas brought the minimum temperature down to 4.1 degrees Celsius, the lowest in the city this season so far, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said. For the plains, the IMD declares a cold wave when the minimum temperature is 10 degrees



logical Department (IMD) said. For the plains, the IMD declares a cold wave when the minimum temperature is 10 degrees

Celsius or below and is 4.5 degrees less than the normal for two consecutive days. "However, for small areas such as Delhi, a cold wave can be declared if the criteria are fulfilled even for a day," Kuldeep Srivastava, the head of the IMD's regional forecasting centre, said. Cont'd on Page 5

## Winter session of Parl scrapped

### BUDGET SESSION LIKELY IN JANUARY 2021

NEW DELHI

THERE will be no winter session of Parliament this time because of the coronavirus outbreak, the government has officially said, ending speculation. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi has said in a letter to the Congress's Lok Sabha leader that all political parties favour scrapping of the session to avoid any Covid spread and jumping straight to the Budget session in January. But the Congress says it was never consulted.

Joshi replied to Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chaudhary's letter demanding a session to discuss controversial new farm laws that are at the core of massive farmer



### Decimation of parliamentary democracy is complete: Cong

NEW DELHI: Slamming the Modi government for its decision to not hold Parliament's winter session in view of Covid-19, the Congress on Tuesday said the "decimation of parliamentary democracy is complete" and asked if election campaigning can be done amid the pandemic then why can't the session be held. Senior Congress leader and the party's chief whip in Rajya Sabha Jairam Ramesh said the Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Ghulam Nabi Azad, was not consulted on the matter.

protests on highways near Delhi.

Chaudhary, the Congress's leader in the Lok Sabha, had stressed on the need to amend the laws, which he said were rammed through Parliament by the government.

The minister replied that he had held discussions with leaders of all parties and the consensus was not to call a session due to Covid-19 even though the monsoon session held in September after a long delay due to anti-virus logistics was "one of the most productive sessions with 27 Bills passed in 10 continuous sittings". Among those Bills were the three farm laws that have sparked the current farmer protests.

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## AP to back Centre on farm laws

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

ANDHRA Pradesh Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy on Tuesday reportedly assured the Centre of his support to "whatever efforts the Centre takes to address the farmers' grievances".

In his interaction with Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday in Delhi, Jagan Mohan Reddy threw his weight around the NDA Government and assured the Home Minister of his party's support to the Centre's move in Parliament in this regard.

It is said that he agreed with the Prime Minister's insistence on initiating the long-pending reforms in the farm sector, including the throwing up of the markets to the private players.

Continued on Page 5

contribute Rs 2,000 or more, will be given photographs of Lord Ram and the proposed Ram temple. It may be recalled that in 1989, the VHP had launched a similar drive when people from 2.75 lakh villages across the country had donated 'shilas' (bricks) and a sum of Rs 1.25 crore was mobilised for Ram temple construction. "We would go back to those villages and tell people their

nations and is designed to dupe devotees. People, at present, can donate directly



into the designated bank accounts." He said that those who

'sankalp' (pledge) is turning to reality," said VHP national spokesperson, Vinod Bansal.

Seers will also join in the drive and will reach out to over 1.25 lakh villages in the country. The VHP will also reach out to those communities with whom Lord Ram interacted during his 14-year exile. "VHP has decided to reach out to all these communities and seek funds for temple construction. We want the message of Lord Ram to reach every household," Bansal said.

temple construction. "We would go back to those villages and tell people their

# PM SEES BIG CONSPIRACY BEHIND FARMERS' PROTEST

## Says govt ready to clarify all doubts on agri laws

NEW DELHI

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday blamed the Opposition for the ongoing stir by thousands of farmers, who have been protesting the three new farm laws by camping near Delhi's borders, saying the peasants have been misled.

Modi was addressing the public after laying the foundation stone for a desalination plant and a milk processing and packaging plant in Gujarat's Kutch.

"The country is asking why small farmers who produce grains and pulses should not get the freedom to sell crops. Agricultural reforms were in demand for years. Many farmers' organisations have also demanded in advance that they should be given an option to sell food grains anywhere," the PM Modi said, backing the clauses from the recently-cleared laws by the government.

"Today those who are confusing the farmers by sitting in the Opposition have supported these reforms in their time. They just kept giving false comfort to the farmers. When the country has taken these steps, they are now confusing the farmers," he said. Modi said that a conspiracy is going on to confuse the farmers. "They are being scared that after new agrarian reforms, others will occupy the land of the farmers. You tell me, if a dairyman contracts to take milk from you, does he take your animal?" he asked.

Extending support to the farmers via his address, Modi said, "I am again telling farmer brothers and sisters that the government is ready to solve their doubts. The in-



PM Narendra Modi addresses at the foundation stone laying ceremony of development projects in Kutch on Tuesday



They are being scared that after new agrarian reforms, others will occupy the land of the farmers. You tell me, if a dairyman contracts to take milk from you, does he take your animal?"

terest of farmers has been the priority of our government since day one."

Thousands of farmers hailing from Punjab and Haryana have been protesting for the last 20 days in and around the national capital demanding the repeal of three farm laws.

Enacted in September, the three farm laws have been projected by the Centre as major reforms in the agriculture sector that will remove the middlemen and allow farmers to sell anywhere in the country.

## Farmers harden stance

- Vow to 'make' govt repeal agri laws
- Decide to block Chilla border today

NEW DELHI

HARDENING their stance on the three new agri laws, farmer leaders on Tuesday said they will 'make' government repeal these legislations and asserted their fight has reached a stage where they are 'determined' to win it no matter what.

They said they will completely block the Chilla Border between Delhi and Noida



Farmers leaders addressing a press conference after a meeting of Joint Farmer Front at Singhu border in New Delhi on Tuesday

on Wednesday to press for their demands.

Addressing a press conference at Singhu Border here, farmer leader Jagjeet Dalle-

wal said, "The government is saying 'we won't repeal these laws', we are saying we will make you do it." "The fight has reached a stage where we are determined to win no matter what," he said. Dallewal also said, "We are not running away from negotiation, but the government has to pay heed to our demands and come forward with concrete proposals." Several other farmer leaders also addressed the press conference and called upon people to pay tributes on December 20 to those farmers who have lost their lives during the ongoing protests. Continued on Page 5

## Raja Chari to lead SpaceX mission

WASHINGTON

NASA and European Space Agency (ESA) have selected three astronauts, including Indian-American Raja Chari, to serve as crew members for SpaceX Crew-3 mission to the International Space Station (ISS), which is expected to launch in the autumn of 2021.

Raja Chari will serve as commander, while NASA's Tom Marshburn will be pilot and ESA's Matthias Maurer will serve as a mission specialist, NASA said on Monday.

A fourth crew member will be added at a later date, following a review by NASA and its international partners.

This will be the first spaceflight for Raja Chari, who became a NASA astronaut in 2017. He is a colonel in the US Air Force and joins the mission with extensive experience as a test pilot. He has accumulated more than 2,500 hours of flight time in his career. Chari was among the 18 astronauts selected last week to form the Artemis Team and help pave the way for the next lunar missions, including

sending the first woman and next man to walk on the lunar surface in 2024.

His father Sreenivas V Chari immigrated to the US from Hyderabad.

Marshburn is a Statesville, North Carolina, native who became an astronaut in 2004. Prior to serving in the astronaut corps, the medical doctor served as flight surgeon at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston

and later became medical operations lead for the International Space Station. The Crew-3 mission will be his third visit to the space station and his second long-duration mission. Marshburn previously served as a crew member of STS-127 in 2009 and Expedition 34/35, which concluded in 2013.

Maurer comes from Saint Wendel, in the German state of Saarland. Like Chari, Maurer will be making his first trip to space with the Crew-3 mission. When Chari, Marshburn, and Maurer arrive at the orbiting laboratory, they will become expedition crew members for the duration of their six-month stay.





# Womenia

TWEET PATROL



**GEETA PHOGAT**  
@GEETA\_PHOGAT

I wish we could party like that every day, it was definitely worth getting a year older. Thank you for putting so much effort into making my day absolutely unforgettable! Love you All #birthday #memorableday



## Help your kids in e-learning during pandemic

COVID-19 has posed such an emergency situation that the whole educational system has switched to e-learning in order to keep the students engaged in their academics.

The unexpected closure of schools during the lockdown has led to digital education to ensure safety and to keep up the students with the curriculum. Hence, it is quite challenging for teachers, parents, and students to get used to the new age of schooling through e-learning.

As no one knows till when the schools and other educational institutions remain shut,

Though the sudden change in the routine is a bit uncomfortable, there are some best ways and proven techniques to make virtual schooling or e-learning happy and healthy.



### SET UP GOALS

Lockdown provides a perfect time for kids or students to develop new skills. Hence parents can encourage their kids to set goals in order to spend their time productively. You can ask them to write their goal and stick it at a place where it can be easily noticed. Establish an action plan and time needed to complete each task and then stick with the plan and measure the progress. Finally, make time to celebrate accomplishments, this will encourage kids to set up and achieve new goals.

### MONITOR YOUR KID'S ONLINE BEHAVIOUR

Stay with your kids during their virtual classes. This can help your kids if there are any technical issues that can disturb and even make them panic while engaging in their school work. Also, staying in touch with your kids while they are using the computer is crucial as increased access to the internet may heighten the risk for a child's safety, protection, and privacy. Follow age-appropriate monitoring levels and use parental control apps for safe online sessions.

### HELP KIDS TO DEAL WITH ANXIETY

As kids, they are unsure about the current situations and might be stressed out due to the new challenges they are facing about unexpected school closure or staying at home or engaging in their academics with e-learning. So, it is important for you as parents or caretakers to hear their concerns and help them to understand what is happening around them. Make sure to spend some time listening to them and provide age-appropriate information to make them comfortable and feel secure.

### STAY CONNECTED VIRTUALLY

Though it is important to maintain social distancing, staying in touch with friends also helps a lot for children with emotional wellbeing. Find out some ways to provide opportunities for kids to interact with friends and family members virtually in your presence. This helps to maintain connections and boost kids' moods. Staying in touch with children's faculty helps you to stay informed about academics and provides guidance about how to support your kids during homeschooling.

### ESTABLISH A DAILY ROUTINE

Parents need to set up a daily routine along with their kids with age-appropriate activities. This helps them to spend their time productively by creating equal opportunities for education, recreation, and family. Also, plan a time for physical activity like playing outside when they are done with online classes and school work. This aids kids' physical and mental health.

### CHOOSE THE RIGHT PLACE FOR E-LEARNING

Help your kids to adopt the new way of learning by creating the right atmosphere for their virtual classes. Set up a quiet and comfortable space in the home dedicated especially for their learning. This way you can lower their chances of distraction and let them concentrate on their e-learning. Also, check for the right lighting and good network connectivity in the learning space to ensure children a better experience while distance learning virtually.

## How to choose your face wash the right way

PUJA GUPTA

Face wash is one of the most basic and important elements in a beauty regimen. Not only does it cleanse and clean your face, but it is also the first step towards a great skincare routine. But often, we end up using the wrong face wash. So here are some of the ways in which you can determine what suits your skin.

#### Say hello to plumpy skin

Apple Cider Vinegar has become one of potent beauty products. From their drinks to its wide range of prod-

ucts, apple cider vinegar has some of the unexpected beauty benefits. It cleanses the skin by banishing impurities and helps maintain skin's natural pH balance for a refined look. It helps control acne, blackheads, and clears pores and makes it blemish free.

#### Go acne free

Don't we all fuss about acne? Haven't we all experienced a pimple right on our nose during a wedding and all your efforts in minimizing the acne go waste? A Tea Tree Face Wash works the best in such circumstances in combating acne. So no more fretting about that one acne on your face. Tea Tree Face Wash anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial properties that reduces redness, swelling and inflammation, leaving your skin smooth, supple and clear skin.

#### Oily skin go away

To all the people who have oily skin, we feel you. We have your back. Dealing with oily skin is a struggle and we struggle to find the right products. Say yes to cleansing and thereby rejuvenating your skin. It will not only remove the excess sebum but will also leave your skin visibly shiny.

#### Hydration is the way to go

Skin hydration is one of the potent steps. If your skin is hydrated, it becomes resilient, keeping impurities at bay. Your skin is hydrated, smooth and supple. Moisture is the foundation of a healthy skin and hydration face cleanser just does the right job.



## Miss Bahrain shares fashion tips

India-born Miss Bahrain and fashion influencer Pryanca Talukdar gives styling tips and fashion hacks Puja Gupta

India-born Miss Bahrain and fashion influencer Pryanca Talukdar says she is all about minimalism with an edge and loves details.

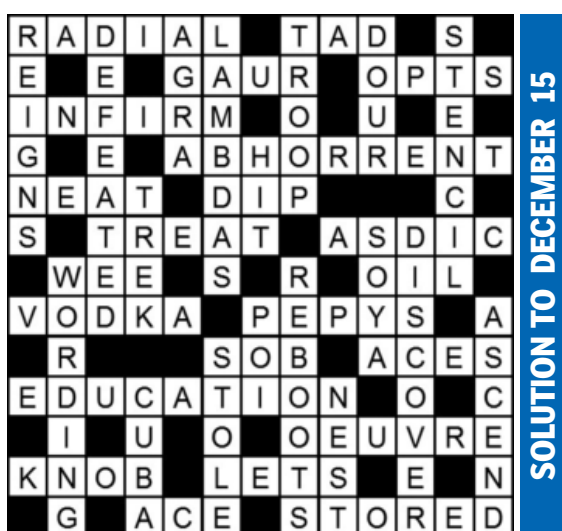
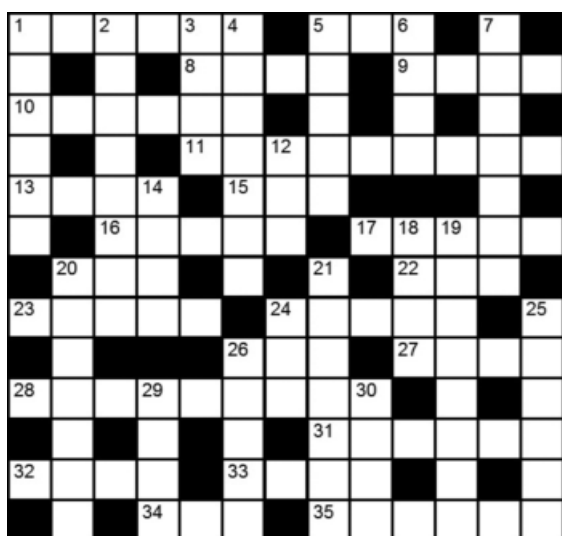
The fashionista, who recently collaborated with denim brand Freakins to launch its latest collection, shares few styling tips for the collection and also reveals her fashion hacks.

Pryanca shares, "What excited me more about this collaboration was the fact that I was going to be involved in the whole process of designing, sampling, working the fits and reworking to finally launch the collection. This has been a smooth sailing journey of these many months we put in our hard work together as a team. I am all about minimalism with an edge. I love details, I love co-ords, I love styling oversized outfits as much as I

like skin fits. So, in this capsule collection you'll see it all. I feel and I don't want to sound corny but every piece is an extension of my personality."

On darker days just pick a co-ord with a nice pair of shoes and you're good to go. Front knot your regular tee to make it a crop. Put anything oversized over your pants and tee or your athleisure to up the game.

Sharing her piece of advice for the upcoming bloggers/influencers, Pryanca shares, "Dedication, passion and staying true to yourself. Every person has their own style, embrace that, bring that to the table, let people see you. I often get asked about how to start blogging! Well honestly, I wouldn't know how to answer that because I don't know when I started, I just did what made me happy and in no time it turned into a full time job, so staying focused comes naturally to me because what I do is what I am most passionate about."



SOLUTION TO DECEMBER 15

### CROSSWORD

#### Across

- 1 Instrumental piece (6)
- 5 Grief stricken (3)
- 8 Just (4)
- 9 Creep along (4)
- 10 Igloo dweller (6)
- 11 Divide into two parts (9)
- 13 Extinct bird (4)
- 15 Barely defeat (3)
- 16 Ham it up (5)
- 17 Tom Sawyer's aunt (5)
- 20 Hand-woven Scandinavian rug (3)
- 22 Method (3)
- 23 Belgian city (5)
- 24 Trig. function (5)
- 26 Failure (3)
- 27 Hindu deity (4)
- 28 Padrone (9)
- 31 Immense star system (6)
- 32 Sci-fi/fantasy award (4)
- 33 Epochs (4)
- 34 Spider house (3)
- 35 Scraps or bits (6)

#### Down

- 1 Quick (6)
- 2 Visible to the \_\_\_\_ : most plainly or obviously visible ? (5,3)
- 3 Burial place (4)
- 4 Smears on oil (7)
- 5 A sweet, sugary liquid (5)
- 6 Platter (4)
- 7 Sharply (7)
- 12 Interjection denoting disgust ? (3)
- 14 Middle East sultanate (4)
- 18 Undischarged (4)
- 19 Tear roughly (8)
- 20 A metallic element, re (7)
- 21 Spanish wine shops (7)
- 24 Trophy (3)
- 25 Greek gods of woodlands (6)
- 26 Star in Cygnus (5)
- 29 Perceive as fact (4)
- 30 Impetuous (4)

### SUDOKU



SOLUTION TO DECEMBER 15

### NEWS ROUNDUP

## Dhvani Bhanushali: 'I will definitely try my hand at acting'

Singer Dhvani Bhanushali says she plans to join films in a few years, after learning the craft of acting. Before that, she wants to establish herself as a pop music icon.

"Firstly, I want to concentrate on making music. I think one person cannot put his feet in two different places. I want to stabilise myself and I have decided I want to become a pop icon. So firstly I want to follow that path. After a few years, I will definitely try my hand at acting. But before that I need to learn the craft as well," said Dhvani

Dhvani's new song "Nayan" has garnered over 44.4 million views since release. She has sung the song with Jubin Nautiyal, and also features in the video.

"We decided to make this song in the beginning of lockdown and we shot it eight days before its release. I am happy that the audience is giving really nice feed-



back to the song and it is bringing smile on their faces," she said.

"Nayan" is penned by Manoj Mutanshir and composed by Lijo George and Dj Chetas. The song is currently streaming on YouTube.



## Disparaging references to Congress president Sonia and former PM Manmohan Singh Pranab's memoir: Daughter, son in Twitter spat

NEW DELHI

PRANAB Mukherjee's children are on a war path over the publication of the late President's memoirs which appear to feature some disparaging references to Congress president Sonia Gandhi and former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, whom Mukherjee blamed for the party's 2014 electoral loss, according to The Tribune report.

In a dramatic turn of events today, Mukherjee's son and former Congress MP Abhijit Mukherjee shot off a letter to publishers Rupa asking them to stop the publication of the memoirs entitled

"The Presidential Years". Mukherjee's daughter Sharmistha who is in custody of her late father's notes and diaries however asked her brother not to make trouble by preventing the publication of the content for "cheap publicity".

"I, daughter of the author of the memoir 'The Presidential Years', request my brother @ABHIJIT\_LS not to create any unnecessary hurdles in publication of the last book written by our father. He completed the manuscript before he fell sick. The final draft contains my dad's hand written notes & comments that have been strictly



adhered to. The views expressed by him are his own & no one should try to stop it from being published for any cheap publicity. That would be the greatest disservice to our departed father," Sharmistha wrote on Twitter

after her brother earlier tweeted, "I, the Son of the author of the Memoir 'The Presidential Years' request you to kindly stop the publication of the memoir as well as motivated excerpts which is already floating in certain me-

dia platforms without my written consent." Abhijit said his father would have done the same had he been alive. The memoirs whose excerpts were this week released by Rupa have Pranab Mukherjee blaming Sonia Gandhi and former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh for the party's dismal 2014 showing. Pranab says in the memoirs that some in the grand old organisation believed that the debacle could have been averted had he been prime minister.

"The Presidential Years 2012-2017" is set for January 2021 release and features the late President's impressions

of the two prime ministers he worked with - Manmohan Singh and Narendra Modi.

Mukherjee says, "I believe that the moral authority to govern vests with the PM. The overall state of the nation is reflective of the functioning of the PM and his administration. While Dr Singh was preoccupied with saving the coalition, which took a toll on governance, Modi seemed to have employed a rather autocratic style of governance during his first term, as seen by the bitter relationship among the government, the legislature and the judiciary. Only time will tell if there is a better

understanding on such matters in the second term of this government." On Congress party's 2014 electoral rout, Mukherjee makes a candid admission, "Some members of the Congress have theorized that, had I become the PM in 2004, the party might have averted the 2014 Lok Sabha drubbing. Though I don't subscribe to this view, I do believe that the party's leadership lost political focus after my elevation as president. While Sonia Gandhi was unable to handle the affairs of the party, Dr Singh's prolonged absence from the House put an end to any personal contact with other MPs."

## IIT-Guwahati develops AgSpeak to help farmers manage crops

GUWAHATI

STUDENTS of IIT Guwahati and alumni of NIT Silchar and Dibrugarh Universities in Assam have developed a multi-lingual smartphone application, AgSpeak, for farmers to manage their crops. The agri-tech start-up which is free for small farmers has been developed with the goal of optimising in-farm productivity through Artificial Intelligence (AI), a press release issued by IIT, Guwahati said.

The start-up has been co-founded by Sidhartha Bora (NIT Silchar alumnus), Manik Mittal (IIT Guwahati student), Akash Sharma (IIT Guwahati student), Nitin Chauhan (IIT Guwahati student), Dhritiman Talukdar (NIT Silchar alumnus), and Kookil Pran Goswami (Dibrugarh University alumnus).

This application will help the farmers in making decisions and managing farm activities by the click of a single button on their smartphone or computer. IIT Director Prof T G Sitharam said that it is a matter of immense pride that "our students are working to bring out a state-of-the-art technology for the farmers of our country".

'AgSpeak' is multilingual and has an option of Assamese and this feature is a first among all the agri-tech applications available in the market, the release said. The application considers up to 20 local crop parameters which are key indicators of their health like temperature, rainfall, sunlight hours, soil health status, among others, to alert farmers about probable



**AgSpeak considers up to 20 local crop parameters which are key indicators of their health like temperature, rainfall, sunlight hours, soil health status, among others, to alert farmers about probable crop threats in advance**

crop threats in advance and suggest best practices to tackle the problems, hence optimising the resources used and maximising productivity. The app along with the Internet of Things (IoT) hardware has been tested for the past three months with 500 farmers and two tea estates and some of the major breakthroughs were precise prediction about blights in potatoes, tea mosquito bug along with water stress in winter crops which are a major concern for farmers and can cause major crop damages, if not controlled in time, the release said.

Nearly 250 farmers have already been pro-

vided hands on training in utilising the full potential of the app and its user friendliness and multilingual features make it extremely easy for farmers to use. Major commercial users of the product include commercial plantation farms like tea gardens, lemon orchards and grape vineyards.

AgSpeak is free for small farmers and there is a system for in-app purchases like soil testing and agri-doctor consultation. Besides, the IOT devices can be rented on monthly/yearly basis by commercial farms to further enhance precision farm management, the release said.

## AAP to contest UP Assembly elections in 2022: Kejriwal

NEW DELHI

THE AAP will contest the Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls in 2022, its national convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal announced on Tuesday as he accused political parties in the state of doing nothing but stabbing people in the back. In a virtual press briefing, Kejriwal said development and progress in UP have been held back by its "dirty politics" and "corrupt leaders".

People in the state want an honest government which only AAP can provide, he added. Citing Delhi's Mohalla clinics, free water and electricity, healthcare and education facilities, the chief minister said people of Uttar Pradesh were being deprived of these basic amenities by the parties that have formed governments in the state over the years. "Why do the people of UP travel to Delhi for every major and minor facility? If a family living in Kanpur has to send their child to a good college, they have to send her to Delhi. If a person living in Gorakhpur has to get good medical treatment for his parents, they have to come to Delhi.

## Navy's senior most submariner dies of Covid

NEW DELHI

VICE Admiral Srikanth died on Tuesday morning at the base hospital here due to COVID-19-related complications, officials said. The vice admiral, the Navy's senior-most submariner, was due to retire on December 31.

Expressing his condolences, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh tweeted, "Deeply pained at the untimely and sudden demise of Director General Seabird, Vice Admiral Srikanth." The Ministry of Defence and the Indian Navy will always remember his stellar contributions and remarkable service to the nation, Singh said.

"My deepest condolences to his bereaved family and friends. Om Shanti!" the minister stated. Srikanth was admitted at the base hospital in Delhi after he contracted COVID-19, said a junior Navy officer who had worked under him. Subsequently, the vice admiral tested had negative for COVID-19 on Sunday morning, but developed breathing difficulties by evening, the officer said.

"He was shifted to ICU and was



subsequently put on a ventilator," the officer mentioned. Officials said the vice admiral, who was the Navy's senior-most submariner, died on Tuesday morning. Previously, he had held charge as Inspector General of Nuclear Safety and Commandant of the National Defence College, officials said.

79 more cases at IIT-M

Seventy nine more people have tested positive for coronavirus on the Indian Institute of Technology-Madras campus here, taking the tally in the institution to 183, a senior health official said on Tuesday.

## Farmers protest enters 20<sup>th</sup> day



### BJP real 'tukde tukde gang, says Badal

NEW DELHI

LAUNCHING a scathing attack on the BJP over farmers' protest against the three central farm laws, SAD chief Sukhbir Singh Badal on Tuesday called the saffron party the "real tukde tukde gang", accusing it of setting Hindus against Sikhs in Punjab. Asking the former ally to shun the "arrogant attitude" over the farm laws and accept what farmers want, Badal warned the BJP against any attempt to set Hindus against Sikhs. He said if one speaks in favour of the Central government, he is called 'Desh Bhakt' and if he speaks out against it, he is branded as tukde tukde gang. "BJP has smashed the national unity to pieces, shamelessly inciting Hindus against Muslims & now desperately setting peace-loving Punjabi Hindus against their Sikhs.

### 'Centre trying to divide farmers'

THE All India Kisan Sabha said the government is trying to divide farmers' groups. "The unprecedented growing unity of the agrarian classes will be further cemented through the ongoing Kisan struggle across the country, and will strongly counter the cynical handwork by the Modi Government to divide the Kisan movement. "The central government, apart from using repression against the farmers in struggle, has also used all other means to defame and discredit the struggle. But all these efforts have gone in vain.

"The growing unity among the agrarian classes is clearly visible in the ongoing farmers struggle. The enduring agrarian crisis that had taken a toll of over five lakh peasant suicides due to indebtedness is the major cause that ensures consolidation of the peasant classes against the neo-liberal policies.

### 4 farmers die in road accidents

FOUR Punjab farmers returning from protest sites near Delhi borders were killed in two separate road accidents on Tuesday. Around 20 farmers have become 'shaheed' during protest so far. On average, one farmer has died every day since protest started. In the first incident, two farmers belonging to Patiala were killed in an early morning accident after their tractor-trolley was hit by a truck in Haryana's Karnal district, police said. In the accident, which took place on Taraori flyover in Karnal, a third farmer was seriously wounded while some others sitting on the trolley escaped with minor injuries. Taraori police station's SHO Inspector Sachin said the two deceased were aged around 24 years and 50 years respectively. Two more Punjab farmers died while seven others injured when their vehicle collided with a truck near Bhagomajra in Mohali on Tuesday, officials said.

## No medical practitioners, Ayush or others, can claim Covid cure: SC

NEW DELHI

THE Supreme Court on Tuesday held that when the entire world is engaged in research for a Covid-19 vaccine, no medical practitioner of any stream of medicine can claim that they can cure Covid-19.

A bench headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan and comprising Justices R. Subhash Reddy and M.R. Shah said: "When statutory regulations itself prohibited advertisements, there was no occasion for homeopathic and other medical practitioners to claim that they are competent to cure Covid-19 disease."

The top court did not agree with the Kerala High Court's direction that if any qualified doctor practising AYUSH medicine made any advertisement or prescribed any drugs or medicines, as a cure for Covid-19 disease, except as pre-

scribed in the March 6 advisory, it was open for the authorities to take appropriate action under the provisions of the Disaster Management Act, 2005.

However, the apex court added that the High Court was correct in observing that no medical practitioner can claim that they can cure Covid-19.

The top court verdict came on an appeal filed by Dr A.K.B. Sadbhavana Mission School of Homeo Pharmacy challenging the Kerala High Court's August 21 verdict.

"When the scientists of entire world are engaged in research to find out proper medicine/vaccine for Covid-19, there is no occasion for making any observation as with regard to homeopathic medical practitioners. Homeopathy does not cure the disease, but it cures the patients," the top court said.

## Tablighi event: 36 foreigners acquitted of all charges

NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Tuesday acquitted 36 foreigners, who were charge sheeted for attending Tablighi Jamaat congregation in Delhi by allegedly being negligent and disobeying the government guidelines issued in wake of COVID-19 pandemic in the country. Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Arun Kumar Garg acquitted the foreigners from 14 countries of all charges.

The court had on August 24 framed charges against the foreigners under sections 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant), 269 (negligent act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) of the Indian Penal Code and Section 3 (disobeying regulation) of Epidemic Act, 1897.

The charges were also framed under section 51 (obstruction) Disaster Management Act, 2005.



## Technology holds key for mass Covid vaccination

After a long wait, the Covid vaccination has started in the UK, US, and Canada of one developed by Pfizer-BioNTech. While nations like the UAE and Bahrain approved the use of the Chinese vaccine, Singapore becomes the first Asian country to approve the emergency use of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. This is good news for humanity given the scale of devastation this pandemic has brought to the world. However, vaccinating the massive population of the entire globe is a Herculean task, which can't be accomplished without the intervention of technology. Also, this task becomes tougher due to fears of possible side effects people develop after inoculation.

In this perspective, technology firms globally are coming up with solutions powered by new-age technologies such as machine learning, data analytics and cloud technology to enable government agencies to roll out this massive vaccination programme smoothly. These interventions can be divided into two parts. The first one is patient-specific, while the second one is

related to supply chain issues. For efficient and equitable distribution of vaccines, public health agencies have to undertake a registration process for identifying the vulnerable groups. After identification, these agencies have to schedule the vaccination process in a phased manner. Post-vaccination, people have to be monitored for any side effects. Apart from patient management, health agencies also have to take care of the supply management issues such as managing the cold chains, sourcing vaccine doses from pharmaceutical companies, availability in adequate numbers, and preserving vaccines under desired specifications.

Taking these factors into account, global IT services firms have already come up with new solutions. For instance, Genpact has tied up with the UK government for developing an AI (artificial intelligence) - a powered tool that will gauge Adverse Drug Reaction (ADRs) post-vaccination. Similarly, Infosys' subsidiary Simplus has launched a Salesforce-based vaccine administration system resolution which provides solu-

tions related to citizen registration, prioritisation, provider enrolment, supply chain visibility, forecasting, vaccine administration, wellness surveys, and adverse event monitoring. Similarly, Microsoft has tied up with Accenture to come up for enabling fair and equitable vaccine distribution across the globe. According to experts, vaccine distribution creates new business opportunities for the IT industry though the deal sizes may not be more than \$40-50 million per contract. However, it will support the growth of the healthcare segment.

As the world sees light at the end of the tunnel, technology-based solutions are key to efficiently distribute the vaccine across the globe. At a time, when the lives and livelihoods of billions are at stake, technological intervention is a must for pulling out the world from this abyss created by the pandemic. More so for India which is home to over 1.35 billion people. The governments at the Centre and in the States in India are also gearing up to tap IT for the speedier administration of vaccines. The effective use of IT is essential for the vaccination in India given the size of the country's population. Isn't it?



## Changing dynamics of the Palestine-Arab relationship

ASAD MIRZA

MANY Arab countries, and Saudi Arabia in particular, are having a rethink on their relationship with the Palestinians. Many recent developments in the Arab world and the change of guard in the USA, has led to many new permutations and combinations on the relationship front amongst western and the Arab world. One such changed consequence has been the relationship of the Palestinians with the rest of the Arab world, and in particular with Saudi Arabia.

Recently, Saudi Prince Bandar bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz's scathing and unprecedented attack on the Palestinian leadership, during an interview aired by Saudi Al-Arabiya television stated that Saudi Arabia and its citizens regard the Palestinians as "ungrateful."

During the interview, the prince, a former Saudi Ambassador to the US, said, "The Palestinian cause is a just cause, but its advocates are failures, and the Israeli cause is unjust, but its advocates have proven to be successful."

He accused the Palestinians of cosying up to Saudi Arabia's foes, Iran and Turkey, and criticised them for accusing the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain of betrayal for agreeing to establish relations with Israel. He also accused the Palestinians of "ingratitude or lack of loyalty" toward Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries that supported them for decades.

The interview set the tone for many other Arab watchers, analysts and columnists to pour scorn over the Palestinians and their leadership, particularly the ones controlling the Palestinian Authority (PA). Many expressed support to Prince Bandar bin Abdulaziz's criticism of the Palestinians, with some saying the time has come for a new Palestinian

leadership that prioritises its people's interests and does not pocket the financial aid sent to them by the Arab countries and the West.

Saudi political analyst Abdel Rahman Al-Mulhem in an article in Al Yaum newspaper wrote that, "Palestinian leaders stole the aid sent to the Palestinian people and built mansions in Washington, Paris and London, while ignoring the suffering of their people."

Saudi researcher and columnist Fahd Al-Shoqiran, in one of his columns stressed that Palestinians "must be reminded that the hundreds of billions of money their leaders received to support their cause from Saudi Arabia throughout its history were capable of building the Palestinians huge cities." Instead, Al-Shoqiran said, Pales-

tinian leaders used the money to buy private planes and luxurious buildings in Europe and the US. The overwhelming reactions against the Palestinians leads one to surmise that the equations are changing fast, and in fact where Saudi Arabia is concerned, the Palestinians are on a very slippery ground. In fact, they may wake up to discover that it is getting slippery all over the Arab world.

Al-Otaibi is one of the several Arab commentators who have recently talked about the need for the Arab countries to take matters into their own hands and try to solve the Israeli-Arab conflict without involving the failed and corrupt Palestinian leadership. This is a demand that no Arab has dared to make in the past few decades. It demonstrates that a growing number of Arabs believe that there can be no solution to the Israeli-Arab conflict as long as the current Palestinian leadership remains in power. Saudi political analyst Fahim Al-Hamid has commented that over the past several decades, the Palestinians have missed many opportunities to find a solution to their conflict with Israel. Referring to the on-going power struggle between the Palestinian ruling Fatah faction in the West Bank and Hamas in the Gaza Strip, Al-Hamid accused the two parties of "trafficking" in the Palestinian issue.

According to Khaled Abu Toameh, an award-winning journalist based in Jerusalem, Palestinian leaders, meanwhile, appear to be afraid of responding to the serious charges made by Prince Bandar.

Unlike past, these leaders have not sent their people to the streets to burn Saudi flags in protest of the criticism made by the prince and other Saudis. Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and his officials are well aware that, unlike the UAE or Bahrain, Saudi Arabia is a large and extremely powerful country. They also know that losing the support of Saudi Arabia would mean forfeiting the backing of several other Arab countries closely associated with the kingdom.

Meanwhile, the Geneva-based Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor (Euro-Med), a youth-led independent organisation that advocates for human rights across Europe and the Middle East, has said that it has collected names of about 60 Palestinians detained by the Saudi authorities in recent months. But the PA has not raised the issue with Saudi authorities in its recent parleys.

Many people in the Arab countries are now saying that it is high time for the Palestinians to start looking after their own interests and think for a better future for their children. The message being delivered is: "We want to march forward; you can continue to march backward for as long as you wish." Arab writers and journalists have also expressed outrage over the Palestinians' opposition to peace plans, particularly the US administration's yet-to-be-announced "Deal of the Century." They accuse the Palestinians of losing countless opportunities and said that the "Deal of the Century" could be the Palestinians' "last, best chance to achieve a state."

The Arab attacks on the Palestinians reflect an intense and increasing disillusionment in the Arab world with the Palestinians and anything related to them. At the core of this deep sense of disillusionment is the Arabs' belief that despite all they did to help their Palestinian brothers for the past seven decades, the Palestinians have proven to be constantly ungrateful toward the Arab and Muslim people and States. Absence of a charismatic leader like Yasser Arafat could also be one of the reasons for this growing disillusionment.

Until a few years ago, it was the Egyptians who were spearheading the anti-Palestinian campaign in the Arab world. Now it seems that it is the Saudis' turn to question the Palestinians. Additionally, these denunciations are coming not only from Saudis, but from a growing number of Arabs in other Arab and Gulf countries.

It is also being said that the latest Saudi media onslaught against the Palestinians could be a prelude for Saudi Arabia following suit with the UAE and Bahrain by establishing relations with Israel. In the given circumstances, it would seem prudent for the Palestinian leadership to be seen as fully committed to the Palestinian cause and find ways to improve the plight of the common Palestinians. To achieve this they may have to tone down some of their demands, in order to achieve something substantial and concrete and treat that as a foundation on which to build a new Palestinian State, otherwise the movement will die a withering death and not achieve what it set out to achieve. (The writer is a political commentator. The views expressed are personal)

# 2020: Third warmest year on record

AKSHIT SANGOMLA

A look back at 2020 evokes an unsettling picture: It was, after all, the year when the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 held the world by a thread, causing massive economic setbacks and upending lives. At the same time, the climate crisis — while it took a backseat in the face of the health crisis — continued to contribute to volatile weather events.

Optimism had prevailed when the lockdown was announced; observers believed that the shutting down of all economic activities to curb the spread of the virus would bring down the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The belief, however, was only a blip in the long-term GHG emission trends, as the latest state of the global climate provisional report by World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) found. It was published on December 1, 2020.

The report stated that the reduction in GHG gases "will be practically indistinguishable from the natural inter-annual variability, driven largely by the terrestrial biosphere." It added that the real-time data from specific locations indicated increasing levels of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) and nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O) in 2020.

CO<sub>2</sub>, CH<sub>4</sub> and N<sub>2</sub>O are the three primary GHGs that cause anthropogenic global warming. N<sub>2</sub>O seems to be becoming the next big concern in terms of its increasing concentrations in the atmosphere and global warming potential. Human emissions of N<sub>2</sub>O — which is 300 times more potent than CO<sub>2</sub> — increased by 30 per cent between 1980 and 2016, according to a research paper published in Nature on October 7, 2020.

Nitrous oxide is a dangerous gas for the sustainable existence of humans on earth. It has the third-highest concentration — after CO<sub>2</sub> and methane — in our atmosphere among greenhouse gases responsible for global warming. N<sub>2</sub>O can live in the atmosphere for up to 125 years. Its global concentration levels increased from 270 parts per billion (ppb) in 1750 to 331 ppb in 2018 — a jump of 20 per cent. The growth has been the quickest in the past five decades because of human emissions. As the GHG emissions continue to be on the rise Earth is also getting warmer. The development



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The planet was warmer by 1.2 degrees Celsius from January to October in 2020 than the pre-industrial average measured between 1850 and 1900, according to the Nature report. This is the second-warmest recorded when compared to similar periods in historical data. The year is on course to become the third-warmest year on record. The record heat in 2020 has been despite near-La Niña conditions prevailing in the equatorial Pacific Ocean since August and moderate La Niña conditions prevailing since late September.

The La Niña phase of the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) phenomenon has a cooling effect on many parts of the world. The warmest year on

record was 2016, which had very strong El Niño conditions which is the warming phase of the ENSO. This portends that 2020 has been almost as warm as 2016, if not for the opposing ENSO conditions in both years.

In fact, a WMO report in July stated that one of the next five years may be witness to global average temperatures of 1.5 degree Celsius above pre-industrial levels. There is a 20 per cent possibility of the event.

The report titled The Global Annual to Decadal Climate Update added that the global average temperature rise would likely be above 1°C in each of the next five years. The range of temperatures is likely to be between 0.91 and 1.59°C. There is also a 70 per cent chance that the 1.5°C rise above pre-industrial levels barrier will happen in one

or more months in this time. This is when countries under the 2015 Paris Agreement of the United Framework Convention for Climate Change have agreed to limit the planet's warming to 2°C by the end of century. The extent of warming makes the goal challenging and brings a lot of consequences in its wake. These include increase in sea levels, melting ice sheets in the Arctic and Antarctic and extreme weather events such as marine heat waves, tropical cyclones, heavy rainfall, floods, droughts and wildfires.

Ocean heat content (OHC) is one of the most crucial indicators of global warming as 90 per cent of excess heat in the atmosphere is taken up by the seas and oceans. The heat content of oceans in the depth from 0-2000 metres was at a peak in 2019 and the trend is expected to hold in 2020 and the coming years as well, according to 15 different international datasets of OHC. All datasets agree that OHC increased significantly in the last two decades. Heat accumulation has occurred in the last 60 years in ocean depth of 700-2000 metres.

Temperatures over ocean surfaces were so high in 2020 that 80 per cent of ocean areas experienced at least one marine heat wave (MHW) till date. During such times, the average temperatures of the ocean surface (up to a depth of 300 feet or more) rise by 5-7°C above normal.

MHWs can be caused by locally formed heat fluxes between the atmosphere and the ocean or due to large-scale drivers of the Earth's climate like the ENSO. There were also much stronger MHWs (43 per

cent) over the oceans in 2020 than the moderate ones (28 per cent). Global sea-level rise in 2020 was also similar to 2019 values and the general decreasing trend has continued. This was mainly due to the increased melting of the ice sheets in Greenland and Antarctica. In Greenland alone, ice weighing 152 gigatonnes melted between September 2019 and August 2020, which was on the high end of the 40-year satellite records. The melting of the ice sheets has been driven by record temperatures in polar regions. When the mercury rose to 38°C in Verkhoyansk in Siberia on June 20, 2020, it was reported as the highest temperature ever recorded in the Arctic Circle region. This was around 18°C higher than the normal temperature for that time of the year for the place. The WMO officials at the time were certain about the observational accuracy of the data. Even though the town is in the Guinness book of world records for the largest temperature range it experiences — from some -67°C to some 37°C — this new record has an imprint of global warming.

"The new high shows temperature swings may be increasing," Raghu Murtugudde, a climate scientist at the University of Maryland, had told Down To Earth. The soaring temperatures also cause wildfires in parts of the Arctic region.

This event was also symptomatic of a much greater problem as the Arctic region is the climate capital of the world. It controls and influences climate in most other regions and has been warming at twice the rate as compared to the rest of the planet as a result of Arctic amplification, wherein the melting ice hastens warming by exposing areas that are not good at reflecting back heat into the atmosphere. This creates a feedback loop between melting ice and rising temperatures, amplifying the impact of warming. The climate in the Arctic region impacts weather systems further south through the changing nature of the Arctic jet stream, which is a band of winds over the region that keeps the region insulated from winds in the lower latitudes.

This jet stream as a result of warming is becoming wavy and allowing cold winds to get out — and warm winds from outside to get in — thereby disrupting long-term weather conditions everywhere.

(Courtesy: Down To Earth)

# Banks should look into corporates' track record

R K PRAYAG

THE Narendra Modi government has shown foresight and iron will while fighting a global pandemic, described as the most challenging in this century. During the Covid-19 crisis, he extended a helping hand to the common man, and also took measures towards creating a better environment for businesses and corporates simultaneously.

Landmark measures like universal financial inclusion and the slashing of corporate tax rates show that the government firmly believes in "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas". But, then, the Modi government's commitment to overall inclusive growth has never been in question.

In the immediate context of Covid-19, the government has responded well, and given a call for "Aatmanirbhar Bharat", ensured food security for the poorest, and announced a much-needed fiscal stimulus package.

The RBI announced a moratorium on bank loans for all, including the corporates. The move has been hailed by all. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, as also Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, have often said the wealth creators must be encouraged and respected. This welcome sentiment should result in a level-playing field for the corporates as they rebuild a pandemic-ravaged India and help realise the \$ 5 trillion vision.

There are some areas of concern, however, that need

the government's urgent attention and the RBI's intervention. While the government has been encouraging banks to lend to corporates, at times they face some unlikely roadblocks — an issue that is best addressed urgently.

Banks now follow differential interest rates to corporates, based on their credit ratings. In principle, this may appear to be logical, but in practice, the difference between interest rates for a highly-rated corporate and a moderately-rated corporate may be as huge as 5-6 per cent. Considering that we are looking at figures ranging in 100s and 1000s of crores of loans, the difference in interest rates could, thus, be enormous.

While credit rating is important, we also know the instances of Enron and IL&FS that were rated highly but went bust, throwing up a range of challenges. Otherwise, too, there have been instances of AAA rated companies fumbling and struggling.

Logically, a corporate would be rated moderately (and not highly) because of its perceived poor financial health. A high rate of interest would then only hasten its downside! Surely the banking ecosystem, the RBI and the government do not want that! In any case, collaterals and other securities are secured while disbursing loans, so the banks could surely be more considerate.

The banks, perhaps, could take a cue or two from retail loans, or how credit card companies evaluate their cus-

tomers, while devising a structure for corporates.

After the RBI directed banks to link retail loans to an external benchmark, some public sector banks have begun offering differential interest rates, guided by the consumers' CIBIL scores. The interest rate differentiation goes up to 2 per cent in select categories, while it usually varies between 0.5 and 1 per cent.

Why shouldn't then corporate loans' interest rate differentiation should be, say, up to 1 per cent, and not the unreasonable 5-6 per cent? Credit cards, on the other hand, look at the past and immediate track record, while offering cards, card limits, and other offers. This provides a viable model for the banks while offering corporate loans. Plus, banks should do their own ratings of customers and corporates, based on their records. There have been many instances where credit-rating agencies have been seen to be doing half-baked jobs. Why leave the future of corporates in the hands of these agencies alone? Banks should look at the companies' performance, business model and track record.

Like a concerned and valued regulator, the RBI should address these concerns. Measures should be taken to ensure that corporates do not slide into the red. A government nudge would be timely here. Businesses and industry, on their part, will ensure that India recovers from the pandemic real quick, more employment opportunities are created, and India gets back its "fastest-growing large economy" tag soon.



# Guntur chilli to have its own brand

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
GUNTUR

THE red-hot Guntur chilli powder made from the chillies grown in Guntur district in the state is well-known across the country and recognised in the global markets for its spice value. Guntur is the main producer and exporter of many varieties of chillies and chilli powder from India to various countries. The product of the district will soon be coming out with a new brand powder under the Andhra Pradesh State Co-operative Marketing Federation Ltd. (Markfed). As per reports, the Guntur Agricultural Market Committee will soon be entering the field of processing. Through this, the committee had decided to manufacture and sell chilli powder with its own brand name in view of the growing demand for Guntur chilli powder in the market. High quality chillies purchased from farmers will be processed and sold across markets. The necessary

**HOT BRAND ON THE WAY**



**Guntur Agricultural Market Committee will shortly enter processing**

**Will purchase top quality chillies from farmers, process and sold across markets**

**Processing units will be set up at Guntur Mirchi Yard and Palnadu Market Committee after checking market response**



**Markfed will market the product under Markep brand**

equipment required to test the quality of the produce for processing units have already been purchased. The processing units will be set up at Guntur Mirchi Yard and Palnadu Market Committee after checking the market response. Guntur chilli powder has always

had a high demand in the country and abroad. The Guntur Mirchi Yard exports around Rs 6,000 crore of produce annually. Export of chillies to China, Thailand, Singapore and other countries are estimated at Rs 2,000 crore. The establishment of these chilli

processing units would fetch high prices to farmers as well as added income to the market committees. Keeping this in mind, a decision to this effect was taken over the processing and sale of chilli powder at a meeting chaired by Chandragiri Yesuratnam, the Guntur Mirchi Yard chairman. Steps are afoot to rent out mills in Guntur and manufacture chilli powder by March next year. Markfed has decided to introduce the brand under the Markep name. This kind of process is already in place in Maharashtra, where market committees process and sell byproducts of various agricultural produce grown by farmers through processing units. The agricultural committees are able to provide quality products to consumers as well as ensuring high prices for farmers directly. The Guntur Market Committee plans to enter the market in this similar way of processing with chilli powder within its market yards and supply through its Markfed brand outlets.

## Citing Covid vaccination, govt rejects local polls in Feb

**The State govt which has been bent on avoiding local body elections under current SEC Nimmagadda's tenure, says in an affidavit to High Court that official machinery will be busy with Covid vaccination in Jan and Feb in view of the vaccine schedule announced by the Centre**

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
AMARAVATI

THE guidelines issued by the Central government on administering of Covid-19 vaccine to the people in January and February came in as an excuse for the state government to seek deferment of the proposed local body elections in the state. On Tuesday, it submitted an additional affidavit in the High Court stating that it would not be possible to conduct the elections to local bodies in February, as the official machinery would be busy with the coronavirus vaccination programme. "As per the Central government guidelines, the vaccination programme will be taken up in January and February. Not only the police department, but the employees of various other departments would be engaged in the vaccination programme," the government said. It pointed out that it would be a two-month programme, as the second dose of vaccine should be administered after four weeks of first dose. "Vaccination programme is as important as the local body election process. In fact, the government has to give more importance to vaccination because it is an issue of public health," the government said

in the affidavit. It may be mentioned that State Election Commissioner Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar has planned to hold the elections next February, but the government has been turning down his decision since it doesn't want elections to be conducted under his watch. There has been a war of letters between Ramesh Kumar and the state government on the conduct of elections. Though Chief Secretary Nilam Sawhney had written letters to the SEC expressing inability to conduct the elections due to Covid-19 pandemic, the SEC had consulted the Opposition with his proposal and all the parties agreed to the same.. He even called for revision of electoral rolls and wanted to hold a video conference with district collectors to discuss the arrangements to be made for the conduct of elections. He moved the high court twice, arguing that the state government was questioning his authority as a quasi-judicial body. The state High Court has rejected twice the appeal of the Jagan Mohan Reddy government seeking a stay on the SEC's decision to conduct elections to the local bodies in February. As a result, the government was in a state of dilemma as to what it can do.

## Expose failures of 3 parties, YC cadres told

- ▶ **State Congress executive president Tulasi Reddy inaugurates 2-day Youth Congress training programme**
- ▶ **Accuses YSRCP, TDP and BJP of miserably failing the people on SCS, and funds**
- ▶ **Youth Congress chief Rakesh Reddy says training will be on various issues to prepare members for a sustained struggle against the anti-poor govts in State and the Centre**

TIRUPATI

PARTY youth should play a proactive role for the rebuilding of the Congress in Andhra Pradesh, said state Congress working president N Tulasai Reddy while inaugurating the two-day Youth Congress training programme here on Tuesday. Tulasi Reddy said the two regional parties YSRCP, TDP and the communal BJP proved inimical to the state development and the youth activists should expose these three parties miserably failed to do anything to the state. BJP betrayed the state by going back on its promises on Special Category Status (SCS), special grant for backward areas development, reimbursement of revenue deficit and slow down of funds to Polavaram project, he said while seeking the youth activists to strive to remind the people on how BJP hindering the progress of the state. He did not spare the ruling YSRCP from his attack and alleged that SC, ST, BC, Minority and Kapu corporations' funds were diverted by the government to its populist schemes like Amma Vodi and Vahana Mitra to derive political mileage. Stating that the three capital pro-



APCC Working President N Tulasi Reddy addressing the inaugural session of AP Youth Congress members' training programme in Tirupati on Tuesday

posal is a historic blunder, he said the splurging of public money resulted in development initiatives coming to a halt and the government is not even able to repair the roads badly damaged in the recent rains causing hardship to the people. AP Youth Congress president Rakesh Reddy said that on the directive of All India Youth Congress the two-day training camp is being organised in all states for youth activists and AP is first to conduct the training on various issues for preparing them for a sustained struggle against the anti-poor governments in the centre and in the state and also strengthening party. AICC secretaries Meyappan, Christopher, AICC member K Pramila, PCC general secretary D Rambhupal Reddy and others were present.

## YSRCP targets Kuppam to humiliate TDP chief

V PRADEEP KUMAR  
TIRUPATI

KUPPAM constituency being represented by TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu has been generating much political heat since YSRCP government came to power. The ruling party has been trying to make inroads into the stronghold of Naidu with determination. Recently, panchayat raj and rural development minister Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy challenged that if Naidu wins

anywhere in the district he will say goodbye to politics. YSRCP Kuppam coordinator Bharath said that they will defeat Naidu in Kuppam itself in the next Assembly elections. These comments have infuriated TDP circles. Former minister N Amaranath Reddy, TDP MLC Gounivari Srinivasulu and others retorted immediately saying that Ramachandra Reddy had no stature to comment or challenge Naidu. Srinivasulu made it clear that Naidu cannot be defeated

and the minister should be ready to say goodbye to politics. Ramachandra Reddy with his political and personal rivalry with Naidu since university days, has been laying more focus on Kuppam for a long time. Chittoor MP N Reddeppa was visiting the constituency frequently in a bid to gain upper hand in the segment. TDP leaders were alleging that the ruling party has been wooing their cadres by various means to send signals that the party is weakening.

**AP CM pays tributes to Potti Sreeramulu, Patel**  
AMARAVATI

CHIEF Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy paid rich tributes to Amarajeevi Potti Sreeramulu and first Deputy Prime Minister and Union home minister Sardar Vallabhai Patel on their death anniversary at the camp office here on Tuesday. The Chief Minister offered floral tributes to the portraits of Potti Sreeramulu and Sardar Vallabhai Patel. Ministers Kurasala Kannababu, Chellaboina Venugopala Krihna, AP Agri Mission vice-chairman M V S Nagi Reddy and others were present.

## Farmers harden stance

*Continued from P1*  
Farmer leader Rishipal said one farmer has died every day on an average since the protest started in the last week of November. "A Homage Day (Shraddhanjali Diwas) for all the farmers who lost their lives and became martyrs in the ongoing protest will be organised across the country in villages and tehsil headquarters on December 20 from 11 am to 1pm," said another farmer leader. Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that farmers gathered near Delhi are being misled as part of a conspiracy.

## Delhi HC restrains AIIMS nurses from continuing strike

*Continued from P1*  
It sought directions to the protesting union to go back to work, especially in the present time, as it said the whole hospital had come to a standstill. Advocate VSR Krishna, appearing for AIIMS, submitted that it had no role to play in the resolution of nurses' demand pertaining to the Sixth Pay Commission and the strike was a pressure-building tactic. He said the strike also violated a High Court order prohibiting such action by AIIMS employees. It was stated that as per the order, there could be no sloganeering, dharna on the AIIMS campus. Lawyer apprised the court that nurses left their jobs and all clinical work. "It is a Covid hospital," Krishna said. The court was also informed that all the grievances raised by the nurses were being looked into in a sympathetic manner. On the other hand, the strike has left patients' families outside the emergency ward stand clueless about what is to be done. Some of the family members of patients said they were not being allowed inside and sought to know who was taking care of the patients.

## British PM Johnson to be chief guest at R-Day fete

*Continued from P1*  
The presence of PM Boris Johnson as the chief guest at Republic Day 2021 would be in a way symbolic of a new era, a new phase of our relationship." Johnson is the sixth from the UK to be Republic Day chief guest. He will also be the first British PM since John Major in 1993 to be chief guest at the celebrations. In the past, members of the British royalty have been chief guests — Prince Philip in 1959 and Queen Elizabeth II in 1961. British chancellor of exchequer Rap Butler (1956, along with Japan's former chief justice Kotaro Tanaka) and then Chief of Defence Staff Lord Louis Mountbatten (1964) have also been chief guests in the past. This time, however, India may have a truncated version of the Republic Day celebrations due to the pandemic, like the scaled-down version of Independence Day celebrations on August 15.

# AP CM pushes for speeding up of works in Pulivendula

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
AMARAVATI

CHIEF Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy instructed the officials to not delay construction works after the foundation stone is laid. During a review meeting on developmental works in Pulivendula, Maidakur, Kamalapuram, Rayachoti constituencies, along with works in Kadapa here on Tuesday, the Chief Minister called upon the officials of the Pulivendula Area Development Authority (PADA) for all-round development of Pulivendula to make it a model town in a phased manner. The Chief Minister said during a review that works should be started at the earliest once the foundation stone is laid for the projects to get completed in the fixed timelines without any delay. Under e-AP, for developing 76 highways tenders are being called to take up the projects at Rs 184 crore. He directed the authorities to develop Muddanur-Kodikonda checkpoint highway as a national highway, as it is one of the busiest highways in the state. He said that judicial preview should be completed for various works sanctioned under irrigation and award the tenders at earliest. The Chief Minister instructed the officials to set up a school on par with international standards along with a city centre, drinking water supply, sewerage works and slaughterhouses to develop Pulivendula as a model

- **Tells officials not to delay development works after laying foundation stone**
- **Tenders are being called to develop 76 highways under e-AP at a cost of Rs 184 cr**
- **To lay foundation stone for Institute of Rural Management Anand-AP on Dec 24 at Pulivendula**



town. He told the officials to focus on maintaining quality in all works being taken up for the project, to ensure that the structures last long. The Chief Minister will be laying foundation stone to IRMA-AP (Institute of Rural Management Anand-AP) on December 24, which is being set up in the APCARL (Centre for Advanced Research on Livestock) Pulivendula. He directed the authorities to construct an underground drainage in Vempalli at a cost of Rs 92 crore and called for completion of works in a phased manner with proper planning and without causing any inconvenience to the public. Also, at a cost of Rs 217 crore, four highways

in Kadapa city are to be developed. For the development of temples, he instructed the officials to start works at Veeranjaneya Swamy temple with Rs 21 crore. Along with revamping the existing 24 temples, 26 more temples are proposed to be constructed at SC, ST, BC colonies. The Chief Minister also directed the officials to expand the runway in Kadapa airport in order to enable night landing services. Meanwhile, the officials informed that for the first time ever 10.14 tmc ft water was stored in Chitravathi balancing reservoir. Kadapa MP YS Avinash Reddy and other officials were among those present at the meeting.

## AP logs 500 new Covid cases

AMARAVATI

STATE added 500 new cases to its Covid-19 tally on Tuesday that now rose to 8,76,336. In 24 hours ending 9 am on Tuesday, 563 patients also recovered while five more succumbed in the state. The latest health bulletin said the number of active coronavirus cases fell to 4,660 after 8,64,612 recoveries and 7,064 deaths so far. Chittoor, Krishna, Guntur and West Godavari districts reported new cases in excess of 50 each. Nine other districts added less than 50 fresh cases each in 24 hours. Krishna district saw two fresh Covid-19 fatalities while Chittoor, Guntur and Nellore reported one each. After 1.09 crore total sample tests, the overall infection positivity rate stood at 8.01 per cent while the recovery rate was 98.66 per cent. The case mortality rate remained stable at 0.81 per cent. Meanwhile, the state government reduced the rates of Covid-19 tests in ICMR-approved private labs as the cost of reagents and testing kits decreased significantly. State Principal Secretary (Health) Anil Kumar Singhal issued an order fixing Rs 475 as the rate for each sample sent by the government for testing.

## At 4.1 degrees C, Delhi sees coldest day this season

*Continued from P1*  
At 4.1 degrees Celsius, the minimum temperature at Safdarjung Observatory, which provides representative data for the city, was five degrees below normal this morning. At Jafarpur, the mercury dipped to 3.6 degrees Celsius. The Ayanagar and Lodhi Road weather stations recorded a minimum of 4 degrees Celsius and 4.2 degrees Celsius respectively, the IMD said. On Monday, the maximum temperature in the national capital had dropped to 19.4 degrees Celsius, four degrees below normal and the lowest so far this month, as cold winds swept the city. The air quality has also improved to the "moderate" category due to the strong winds. Delhi's air quality index (AQI) was 190 at 10 am. The 24-hour average AQI was 160 on Monday, 305 on Sunday and 356 on Saturday. An AQI between zero and 50 is considered "good", 51 and 100 "satisfactory", 101 and 200 "moderate", 201 and 300 "poor", 301 and 400 "very poor", and 401 and 500 "severe".

## AP to back Centre on farm laws

*Continued from P1*  
He agreed with the suggestion that this would pave way to higher prices to the farm produce. The Centre proposes to hold meetings and media conferences on the new farm laws. Amit Shah is said to have asked Jagan to cooperate in conducting these meetings. It may be recalled that the Home Minister is meeting "friends and allies" in this regard for consultations over its proposed moves. The Centre is amenable to amendments to assure the striking farmers to end the impasse over the new farm laws and the Electricity Bill. YSRCP sources said that "the meeting was not confined to the farmers issue alone but other issues too came up for discussion. The Chief Minister reiterated his demand for early reimbursement of all Polavaram dues while apprising the Union Home Minister of the progress of the project works and his Government's resolve to complete the project by 2022 and release water for the kharif season."

"He (Jagan) also brought to his (Amit Shah) notice of his government's decision to create three Capitals for the State for developing all regions of the State," the sources said. The Chief Minister is said to have referred to the funds due to the State under various heads, including for Polavaram project. He is also said to have assured the Centre of AP's preparedness to roll out Covid-19 vaccine smoothly. The meeting came on the eve of the Cabinet meeting on Wednesday in which the Government is proposing to reassure the farmers by committing itself to the welfare of farmers. Whether the assurance comes in the form of an ordinance is to be seen. At the last meeting on December 9, the Union Cabinet gave a nod for Atmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana (ABRY) to boost employment in the formal sector and incentivise the creation of new employment opportunities during the Covid-19 recovery phase under Atmanirbhar Bharat Package 3.0.



## TODAY'S QUOTE

### Covid has accelerated digital trend

“ Covid-19 pandemic accelerated the trend of digitisation and compressed it from years to weeks, children are now using online learning and health services have gone online among others. Consumerisation of technology which started in 2007 saw the smartphone become the vehicle of change.

— Nandan Nilekani, Infosys Chairman



## TRADE

### Merchandise exports fall by 8.74%

Rising coronavirus cases and subsequent lockdowns in key export markets dragged India's merchandise exports lower by 8.74 per cent in November, official data showed on Tuesday. Country's merchandise exports during the month under review receded to \$23.52 billion from \$25.77 billion in November 2019.

| FOREX (buy rates in ₹) |        |                    |       |
|------------------------|--------|--------------------|-------|
| US Dollar              | 78.06  | South              |       |
| Euro                   | 94.02  | African Rand       | 5.66  |
| UAE Dirham             | 22.05  | Hong Kong Dollar   | 10.92 |
| Thai Baht              | 2.82   | Japanese Yen       | 0.81  |
| British Pound          | 102.07 | New Zealand Dollar | 54.65 |
| Australian Dollar      | 58.19  | Saudi Riyal        | 21.58 |
| Canadian Dollar        | 60.65  | Swedish Krona      | 10.09 |
| Swiss Franc            | 86.38  | Singapore Dollar   | 57.95 |

DELHI WEDNESDAY 16 DECEMBER 2020

## BIZ BRIEFS

### Hyderabad wins LG prize

Pandu Ranga Bolisetty, a resident of Hyderabad, has won a brand new LG Insta-View Refrigerator under 'LG Premium League' consumer campaign conducted by LG India. The winners were announced through a live event. Spread over 10 weeks, the campaign offered gifts worth Rs.7.5 crore for consumers on the purchase of LG's premium televisions alongside bumper prizes such as Mercedes-Benz Car, LG Insta-View Refrigerators and Premium LG Gram Laptops. Giresan Gopi, Business Head, Home Entertainment, LG Electronics India, said, "Hearty congratulations to the winners and a big thank you to all the participants. We are always excited about such campaigns as it helps us engage with our loyal customers and create a sense of excitement".

### Jagdale's clinical study

Jagdale Healthcare announced the results of a clinical study on its popular health drink Mulmina. Clinical studies on Mulmina Mango and Mulmina Orange have shown a significant increase in antioxidant markers like Superoxide Dismutase (SOD), Catalase (CAT) and Glutathione(GSH) and immune markers like Immunoglobulin A (Ig-A) in 14- and 28-days period. Rajesh Jagdale, Chairman and Managing Director, Jagdale Industries, India, said "Even prior to the onset of Covid-19, we have been reviewing various measures to provide for increased immunity in individuals, as a preventive solution to diseases, that will be easy to access by the masses. With the study results showing positive effects in increasing immunity of the body and making it more resilient to the seasonal diseases, our products will go a long way in decreasing the current disease burden in the country."

### Profit.Co partners AIFF

Profit. Co said that AIFF (All India Football Federation), the governing body for football in India, has opted for its OKR software to monitor the federation's second four-year strategic plan launched in 2019. OKR's strategy tool will be to monitor the plan, its growth and achievements. AIFF is the first sports federation to implement Profit. Co's framework in March 2020 across most of its employees barring the technical staff on the field to streamline and implement its strategic plan. "OKR software stood out because the framework helps in transparency, especially while having collaborations. OKR ensures there is a dialogue and engagement between departments to get work done faster and with more efficiency. We needed an impactful monitoring and tracking tool that gave the team a sense of alignment which made us opt for OKRs," said Kushal Das, General Secretary, AIFF.

### Vivo releases its study

Smartphone maker vivo released findings of its study titled 'Smartphones and their impact on human relationships 2020'. The study revealed that 66 per cent of Indians believe that their smartphone improves their quality of life. 70 per cent of Indians feel if smartphone usage continues increasing, it is likely to impact their mental/physical health. 74 per cent of respondents said that periodically switching off their mobile phone can help them spend more time with family. Nipun Marya, Director-Brand Strategy, vivo India, said, "Amidst the socially distant lives that the pandemic pushed us to lead, the smartphone emerged as the central nervous system for everything, be it working or learning from home".

# S&P sees faster GDP recovery in FY21

Global rating agency has revised GDP contraction to (-) 7.7% from the earlier forecast of (-) 9%

NEW DELHI

S&P Global Ratings on Tuesday raised India's growth projection for the current financial year to (-)7.7 per cent from (-)9 per cent estimated earlier on rising demand and falling Covid-19 rates.

For the next financial year 2021-22, S&P projected growth to rebound to 10 per cent. Its revision in growth forecast for the current fiscal reflects a faster-than-expected recovery in the September quarter. "Rising demand and falling infection rates have tempered our expectation of Covid-19's hit on the Indian economy.

S&P Global Ratings has revised real GDP growth to negative 7.7 per cent for the year ending March 2021, from negative 9 per cent previously," S&P said in a statement. A faster recovery keeps more of the economy's supply side intact and can set India up for more prolonged above-average growth during the recovery phase, it added.

India's gross domestic product (GDP) fell 7.5 per cent in the July-September quarter, against a contraction of 23.9 per cent in the April-June quarter. Earlier this month, Fitch Ratings also revised its growth forecast for India to (-)9.4 per cent, from (-)10.5 per cent, on signs of economic revival,



while the Asian Development Bank said the economy is likely to contract 8 per cent as against the earlier forecast of 9 per cent contraction, on faster recovery.

Last month, Moody's upped India's growth forecast to (-)10.6 per cent for the current financial year, from its earlier estimate of (-)11.5 per cent. In the statement, S&P on Tuesday said India is learning to live with the virus, even though the coronavirus pandemic is far from defeated.

However, the reported cases have fallen by more than half from peak levels, to about 40,000 per day.

"It is no surprise that India is following the path of most economies across Asia-Pacific in experiencing a faster-than-expected recovery in manufacturing production," S&P Global Ratings Asia-Pacific Chief Economist Shaun Roache said. Manufacturing output was about 3.5 per cent higher in October 2020 when compared to the year-ago period, while the output of consumer durables rose by almost 18 per cent.

"This recovery underscores one of the more striking aspects of the Covid-19 shock - the resilience of manufacturing supply chains.

India's GDP fell 7.5 per cent in the July-September quarter, against a contraction of 23.9 per cent in the April-June quarter

## Narayana Health, MSMF launch innovation centre

Physical incubator will nurture 10 startups in 2021

NEW DELHI

HEALTHCARE services provider Narayana Health, in association with Mazumdar Shaw Medical Foundation, on Tuesday launched Mazumdar Shaw Medical Foundation (MSMF) MedTech Innovation Centre - BIRAC BIONEST, at Narayana Health City in Bengaluru. The centre will help medtech entrepreneurs who are looking to address affordability, access and innovation challenges in the healthcare ecosystem, Narayana Health and MSMF said in a joint statement.

Narayana Health Founder and Chairman Devi Prasad Shetty said MSMF's vision is to fill the gap in healthcare innovation by creating a single platform for entrepreneurs to co-create solutions in conjunction with doctors, scientists and technology enthusiasts.

"The physical infrastructure will help us to further strengthen our

mission, as the infrastructure can support 39 startups at any given point of time with the total seating capacity of 82. We are looking at nurturing 10 startups in 2021," Shetty said.

"This is a culmination of one of our key objectives, which was to set up a medtech innovation hub within the hospital," Biocon Chairperson and MSMF Founder Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw said at a virtual press conference. She noted that one of the key focus areas for Indian medtech has to be affordable innovation, because we need to make sure that anything which comes out of these labs is accessible to anyone who needs it and affordability has to be at the heart of it.

"Affordable innovation is my driving mantra for whatever I do at Biocon and I am sure it can be the driving mantra for anything to do with innovation in India when it comes to life sciences," Mazumdar-Shaw said.

## Auto sector incurred ₹2,300-cr loss per day: Report

NEW DELHI

IN the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdowns, the automotive industry suffered Rs 2,300 loss crore per day and an estimated job loss in the sector was about 3.45 lakh, according to a Parliamentary panel report submitted to Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu on Tuesday. The Parliamentary Standing Committee On Commerce, chaired by Telangana Rashtira Samithi (TRS) MP Keshav Rao, has also suggested a slew of measures for attracting investment in the automotive sector in the country, including overhauling of the prevalent land and labour laws.

"The committee was informed by the auto industry associations that all the major original equipment manufacturers (OEM) have cut down their production by 18-20 per cent due to low demand and decline in sales of vehicles," the panel said in its report.

## I-T sleuths raid Chettinad group

Detect tax evasion of over ₹700 cr; seizes ₹23 cr cash

NEW DELHI

THE Income Tax Department has detected tax evasion of more than Rs 700 crore after it recently raided multiple locations of Chennai-based Chettinad Group, the CBDT and official sources said on Tuesday. "The highlight of the search includes seizure of unaccounted cash of Rs 23 crore from various locations," the CBDT said in a statement. "As of now, the department has succeeded in detecting evasion of income of over Rs 700 crore," it said.

The statement claimed that tax sleuths also detected documents related to possession of "foreign assets to the extent of Rs 110 crore in the form of fixed deposits, which were not disclosed in the return (income tax return) and will attract action under the Black Money Act". The taxman had raided 60 premises



of the Tamil Nadu-based group in Chennai, Trichy (Tiruchirappalli), various locations in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Mumbai on December 9.

While the CBDT said its action and further detections were made against a "leading business group operating from Chennai, based on intelligence input about tax evasion", the official sources identified it as the about 100-years-old Chettinad Group. The group is involved in business activities like cement manufacturing, logistics, construction, among others, the CBDT said. (PTI)

## Delhivery eyes IPO next year

NEW DELHI

SUPPLY chain company Delhivery on Tuesday said it will head towards the public markets in the next 12-15 months.

It also said Steadview Capital has bought \$25 million (about Rs 184 crore) worth of secondary shares from one of its early investors. The logistics firm, however, did not name the investor. "We are delighted to welcome Steadview Capital onto our cap table. We've known Steadview and Ravi for quite some time, and it's great to have them join us for this next phase of Delhivery's journey. "Steadview is a long-term investor and we see them playing a key role as Delhivery heads towards the public markets in the next 12-15 months," Delhivery founder and CEO Sahil Barua said in a statement.

Last year, Delhivery had announced raising more than \$400 million (Rs 2,766.82 crore) in a financing round led by SoftBank Vision Fund.

## SIP inflows hit 31-month low in November

Inflows stand at Rs 7,302 cr as investors opt for liquidity

NEW DELHI

Investment in mutual funds through systematic investment plans dropped to a 31-month low of Rs 7,302 crore in November amid challenging economic environment.

However, investment through the Systematic Investment Plans (SIPs) route had risen in October after six months of continuous decline. The 44-player mutual fund industry witnessed an inflow to the tune of Rs 7,302 crore through SIPs in November as compared to Rs 7,800 crore in the preceding month, data from the Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi) showed.

This was the lowest-level since April 2018, when the investment through the route was Rs 6,690 crore. Since the last three days of November were non-business



days, a significant amount of SIP flows might not be reflected in the official numbers. It is also significant to note that there has been a healthy addition of 3.39 lakh SIP accounts in November. Fund collection through SIP was Rs 7,788 crore in September, Rs 7,791 crore in August and Rs 7,831 crore in July. It dropped below the Rs 8,000 crore-mark in June to Rs 7,917 crore. It was at Rs 8,123 crore in May, Rs 8,376 crore in April and Rs 8,641 crore in March.

Marketmen said investment

through SIPs have fallen because investors want to maintain some kind of liquidity at their end as the current situation is uncertain when it comes to their jobs and businesses. They, further, said SIP inflows still remain lacklustre as many retail investors paused such investments during the lockdown. High market levels have also meant that those who stopped hesitate to start now, expecting a correction. Besides, equity mutual funds, which mainly depends on SIP for flows, saw an outflow of Rs 12,917 crore in November, making it the fifth straight month of withdrawal as investors booked profit amid higher market valuations.

Currently, mutual funds have over 3.41 crore SIP accounts through which investors regularly invest in Indian mutual fund schemes.

## Majesco pays 19,480% dividend

NEW DELHI

IT company Majesco Ltd on Tuesday approved payment of interim dividend at the rate of 19,480 per cent, i.e. Rs 974 per equity share of face value of Rs 5 each for financial year 2020-21. This is one of the highest dividend payouts seen in recent times. This interim dividend payout translates to an amount of Rs 2,788.4 crore on a shareholder base of 28.577 million shares. The remaining cash reserves estimated at Rs 103 crore will be distributed subject to board and regulatory approvals.

Majesco will go ex-dividend on December 23 and record date for dividend has been fixed at December 25. Earliest Dividend Payout will be done on December 30, Majesco said.

Majesco said the interim dividend payout is restricted to the quantum of free reserves as of September 30, i.e. Rs 2,788.4 crore or Rs 974 per share.

## Syringe makers step up output as India plans mass vaccination

NEW DELHI

WITH India set to begin mass Covid-19 vaccination in a couple of weeks, top syringe makers in the country are eagerly waiting for the licenses so that they can supply the required numbers to avoid the last-minute rush or shortage. Reliable sources told IANS that nation's top syringe manufacturers are ready to supply nearly 1.8 billion syringes required for hassle-free vaccination and are currently waiting for the tenders to be open.

According to Rajiv Nath, Managing Director of Hindustan Syringes & Medical Devices Ltd (HMD), the estimated demand in India would be around 900 million pieces of different kinds of syringes for just one shot of the vaccine, considering 60-70 per cent of the country gets vaccinated. "The number would amplify to 1.8 billion if the vaccine India chooses needs two



shots," Nath said. He also stressed that the time taken to vaccinate all of India is linked to what percentage of population is targeted and how many vaccine dosages actually needed.

For example, to vaccinate 60-70 per cent of India, it may take little less than one year approximately if there is a single dose and it may be 1.5 years if a double dose is needed.

"We are currently producing approximately one lakh pieces of 0.5 ml Kojak AD syringes per hour, 24 hours a day. It's going to be a challenge to vaccinate over 1.5-2 lakh people every hour in eight working hours daily," Nath emphasised.



# WHICH SHOULD BE THE NATIONAL ANIMAL - TIGER OR COW ?

## The Hans India readers speak out their mind



Cow has great importance in the Hindu tradition. In Hindu tradition, cow is considered the earthly embodiment of Kamadhenu symbol of gentleness, maternity, loving and endurance. Her legs symbolise four Vedas; her nipples four Purushartha her horns symbolise the God, her face the sun and moon, and her shoulders agni (God of fire). Thus, the abode of each deity in each part. Based on these proven facts declaring cow as national animal is unerring.

Akula Kavitha,  
Private employee,  
Karimnagar

What is the need for this government to bring the issue of replacing National Animal Tiger with cow and what significance does it have at this juncture. When the entire nation is suffering with Covid-19 healthcare issues, the farmers are protesting in the streets for the anti-farming laws. In my opinion let it be Tiger or Cow, there makes no big difference as long as the living conditions of people in this country are improved.



Maddela Nagesh,  
Pharma professional, from Gadwal

Historically Tiger weighs more value in the animal kingdom as it is regarded as king of the forest due to its wildness and ferocity and of course anybody would show more interest in Tiger due to its unique features and attacking attitude, because of which it may have been chosen as our National Animal, however Cow which is a humble and most like domestic animal among the large section of people in this country. It's difficult to choose between the two weighing between the two.



Sudhakar, Mahabubnagar

Tiger should be the Indian National Animal as we love tigers. We Hindus worship goddess Durga sitting on tiger, Lord Ayyappa also sits on tiger, tiger is very closely related to legends. In Indian history beginning from Moghul emperor to Akbar, all loved to hunt tigers. Though lion is more powerful than tiger, we love tiger because of its color, royalty and style, that is why royal Bengal tiger was declared as our national animal, I want tiger to be our national animal



Ch Narendar, Adilabad

Our ancestors say that cow is one of the seven carrying forces. Goutama is not only a mother for her own children, it also feeds us. When a mother dies after giving birth to a child then we give cow's milk to the child. Our Puranas tell that All God and Goddess live in cow. We must save the cows. Cow should be the National Animal. So that cow slaughter stops. And we can save our protectors.



TVS Suchitra, class 9th, Khammam.

We Indians have a great responsibility in care of tigers because tiger is our National animal, if we replace our national animal with cow then the tigers will be in great risk. Tiger population is also gradually decreasing due to deforestation. Tiger is also national animal for Bangladesh, South Korea, Malaysia. Our country is number one in the population of tigers and number of sanctuaries. I want tiger to continue as Indian national animal.



Narasimha Swamy, Adilabad



In my opinion, replacing tiger with cow as a National animal is definitely a good move because this will sensitize more people to protect the fast reducing population of cows in this country. Apart from being a religiously worshipped animal cow also provides milk and related products which are very much useful for the mankind in fulfilling the food needs of this nation. Therefore I strongly recommend the Central government's move to replace cow with tiger as India's National Animal.

Deepa Nayak,  
Jacharla,  
Mahabubnagar

COW is a symbol of cultural evolution. 966 million population of India is of Hindus. And symbol of welfare and prosperity. In, Atharvaveda (one of the four Vedas). As the above facts it shows that cow is significant for religious festivals and it is used by the farmer. The government must announce Cow as the national animal instead of tiger.



P Jaivanth, VII Class, BPL School Bhadrachalam.

Cow should be declared our national animal as cow gives us milk like a mother, everything that we get from a cow is very useful to us even its urine. Cow benefit the humans and the environment in many ways that we fail to recognize or appreciate. Cows dung is also used as fuel all over the country. I want to say cow should be declared as national animal instead of tiger.



R Uday Bhaskar, junior college lecturer, Adilabad

Cow shouldn't be looked at in a communal angle. A Cow gives livelihood to most of the people in the country especially people in villages. The Cow can be declared as a National Animal to preserve the livelihood and ancient culture of the nation. Spiritualism is the spirit of this country. This is achieved only by preserving the culture of the ancient Indians.



Dr P S Vijayender Goud, Public Health specialist

Cow should be declared national animal unconditionally on Technical basis instead of religious basis. Cow's milk and milk products have medicinal values which improves immunity. Cow dung and urine are also very useful in agriculture and other aspects, I urge central government to announce cow as national animal without any late.



T Srinivas, teacher, Halia, Nalgonda

As per my opinion, everyone must respect the cow like our mother. one cannot imagine India without Cow. The cow is a sacred animal and an icon for world peace. The Cow is the only animal which is useful to the human community during its life and after death as well. Its duty of every Indian including governments to protect country's asset cow in all aspects



Bhaskar, Computer instructor, Nalgonda

I support cow as national animal. In my opinion, replacing tiger with cow is right in all perspectives. Not just because of Hindu dharma, cow has many dimensions to be regarded as sacred. Hopefully, it won't draw any opposition.



Dr K Sai Sharan, Asst professor, Warangal

It's better to announce cow as a national animal because Tiger can save itself from hunters most of the time, but we have to save cows from slaughter as it can't defend itself from butchers.



Dr Kishore,  
Associate Professor (Pediatrics),  
NMC, Nellore

I would like to add my sincere support for declaring cow as a national animal. In fact cow has itself regarded as sacred animal since ages. For every suspicious event, Hindus are bound to worship cow as a noble tradition. It's milk, urine, and dung are highly useful for human survival. Prime Minister Narendra Modi should take initiative to introduce a bill ensuring national animal status. Killing the cows is to be declared as major offence. All Hindus should rise their voice to declare cow as National Animal.

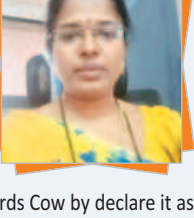
M N Murthy, President,  
Sankar Seva Samithi, Chittoor.

Cow is a sacred domestic animal as per Hindu religion and epics. It is a symbol of holiness. Cow is also a symbol of health and wealth in our rural economy as its milk, urine and dung are having medicinal values. Cow's milk is essential for children for their healthy growth as it has all minerals, vitamins. By considering all these qualities our central government should declare cow as national animal.



Boyina Someswara Rao, Srikakulam

In rural parts of India farmers give most priority to Cow. Grazing of cow is a symbol of sacredness. People of Hindu religion worship Cow as a symbol of goddess Lakshmi Devi. Our people believe that service provided to the Cow is service to the God. We are offering prayers to the Cow in several occasions as part of Hindu religious traditions. Cow is having high status in the minds of people and government should also prove its respect towards Cow by declare it as a national animal.



G Vasanthi, Asst Professor, AITAM Engineering College, Tekkali.

## Jalpally municipality told to drain water from Osman Nagar

### Municipal Commissioner seeks two-weeks' time to address the issue

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD

THE High Court bench headed by Chief Justice Raghavendra Singh Chauhan and Justice Bolla Ramchandra Reddy on Tuesday heard two pleas which alleged that the Jalpally Municipal authorities have failed to drain the rain water that inundated the Osman Nagar of Balapur mandal during the incessant rains in October.

The CJ bench, aggrieved over the affidavit of Jalpally Municipal Commissioner G Praveen Kumar over the measures taken to clear the inundated water, queried why flood water was not pumped out even after two months.

The Jalpally Municipal Commissioner who attended the court on Tuesday informed the bench that necessary measures were taken to pump the water out from the Osman Nagar area. Further, he informed the court that two autos, one tractor and 10 labourers were deployed in Osman Nagar on daily basis for removal of silt, debris, sanitation, bleaching, spraying disinfectant chemicals and fogging. He informed that as of Tuesday, only 4 feet of floodwater was lying in Os-



man Nagar area and it would be drained in another 15 days.

CJ Chauhan stated that the court doesn't want to hear bu-

LEGAL NOTES

## AgriGold case: Court gives nod for selling properties

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD

THE High Court bench headed by Justice MS Ramchandra Rao and Justice Amarnath Goud on Tuesday finalised the auction of another building along with the multi-storey AgriGold corporate office building sold by Andhra Bank in Hyderabad. The Telangana High Court examined the petition filed by the AgriGold Corporate Office in Hyderabad for approval of the auction. Narender Reddy, senior counsel for Andhra Bank, informed the court that Rs

14 crore had been sold in the bidding. Ravichander, a senior advocate for AgriGold, informed the court that he had no objection to the sale. Petitioners Counsel Shrawan Kumar, however, objected to the sale of the most valuable building by banks at a low price. Further, he contended that reducing the value of the building from Rs 26 crore to Rs 14 crore would be unfair to the depositors. According to Reserve Bank of India regulations, banks are required to conduct a forensic audit and file a criminal case

reauratic language instead wants the people's issues to be solved. He directed the municipal authorities to pump out the inundated water from Osman Nagar as early as possible and provide relief to people besides directing the Municipal Commissioner to file factual reports on measures taken to pump out the water. He adjourned the matter to January 7.

against those who evade arrears. Counsel for the petitioner contended that in case of Amrapali real estate scam, the Supreme Court had ruled that the purchasers of flats could not sell their assets with the money and deposit the debts, and that the judgment of the Supreme Court to sell and recover the assets diverted by the banks was also applicable in the case of AgriGold.

The High Court bench, however, clarified that it was not possible to cancel the Andhra Bank open bid when it was put up for public auction and that it was not appropriate to object now without challenging in the Supreme Court the orders given by the High Court in the past to auction the banks. The court adjourned the matter for two weeks.

## No change in annual medical, dental tuition fee, says govt

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD

IN view of the Covid-19 pandemic, the State government has agreed to preserve the current fee structure for undergraduate (UG) medical and dental courses in all private non-minority medical and dental colleges for the academic year 2020-21. Orders were issued on Monday by the government to uphold the current fee structure at private medical and dental colleges. The Telangana State Admission and Fee Regulatory Committee has also submitted its recommendations for setting the fee structure for MBBS and BDS courses for the period 2020-2023 and demanded that the required orders be issued by the State government.

The current annual tuition fee for medical students in A category (50 per cent) in medical colleges is Rs 60,000, for students in B category (35 per cent) Rs 11, 00,000 and for C category C tuition fee (15 per cent) is set at a maximum of two 'B' category times. The annual tuition fee for students under A Category (50 per cent) across dental colleges in the State is Rs 45,000, B category (35 per cent) is Rs 4,00,000 and C category (15 per cent) is Rs 5,00,000. For the entire course period, students would pay the same tuition fee as they did during the admission period.

## BJP makes light of Errabelli's remarks

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD

THE State BJP leaders pooh-poohed the statements of Panchayat Raj Minister Errabelli Dayakar Rao who said that the voters of Warangal were intelligent than their Hyderabad counterparts.

The Minister has reportedly made the comments expressing confidence that the voters of Warangal Municipal Corporation would not go the way the voters of Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC), and the ruling TRS would win the Warangal Municipal Corporation elections.

It can be recalled that the voters of GHMC have dashed the hopes of the ruling TRS as well as the BJP by giving no clear majority to either of the parties to occupy the mayor seat on their party's strength.

Against this backdrop, the Panchayat Raj Minister has reportedly stated that the Warangal voters were smarter than the GHMC voters, and they wouldn't choose the same course in the ensuing elections like that of GHMC voters.

However, BJP State general secretary G Premender Reddy said, "We are going to people appealing to give us clear majority and the mayor post. We will also nail the ruling TRS in our election campaign exposing its wrongdoings," he said.

Dismissing the statements of

- Urges the Warangal voters to teach a lesson to the ruling TRS
- Accuses the State government of using Central funds sanctioned for Warangal city under Smart City, Heritage City and Amrut schemes

Dayakar Rao, he said that what was in store for the TRS was going to be more damaging than the one it had faced in the GHMC elections. Reason being, "The TRS has failed in delivering on its electoral promises like providing Rs 300 crore annually to the Warangal city besides other promises. Further, it did not allow the development to take place in Warangal city."

"For example, the Centre has sanctioned the projects under the Smart City, Amrut Scheme as well as the Heritage City. Only a very few cities in the country have got all three. However, the projects could not be taken up as the State government failed to release its share of funds. What's more shocking is that it has diverted the funds sanctioned by the Centre to the Warangal city to other projects," he added.

Former MP and BJP leader Vivek Venkataswamy said, "People of Warangal are all set to teach a lesson to the TRS and Chief Minister K Chandrababhan Rao in the ensuing civic body elections."

## JEE Main-2021 schedule announced

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD

THE National Testing Agency (NTA) has notified schedule for the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) Main-2021. Accordingly, the examination will be held for four days from February 22 to 25, 2021 and the examination will be held in 13 languages. The registration process for the same commences from December 15 and candidates can apply till January 15, 2021, through online mode visiting [jeemain.nta.nic.in](http://jeemain.nta.nic.in).

As per the NTA announcement, the entrance examination will be held in multiple shifts from the ensuing academic year. The multiple shifts will be spread over for three to four days, in February, March, April and May 2021.

Giving the much sought after relief against the backdrop of the pandemic impact, the NTA said that candidates appearing for JEE-Main

next year will have to attempt 75 out of 90 questions, or 25 out of 30 questions in each of the sections like Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics. The decision has been taken following several school boards in the country reducing the syllabus of two years course of 10+2 level. According to the NTA, the multiple session spreading over four months is intended to provide multiple chances to the candidates to improve their scores.

This provides an opportunity for the candidates who fail to perform well in the first attempt. Further, a candidate gaining the first-hand experience from his first attempt can correct his mistakes committed, and give his best in the next attempt. Also, those who could not attend the examination for various reasons need not drop a whole year and waste their precious time. The NTA will consider the best of the scores to prepare the merit and rank lists, it said.

## Suman rips into Sanjay for jibe on KCR

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD

TELANGANA Rashtira Samithi MLA and Government Whip Balka Suman on Tuesday lashed out at the BJP State president and MP, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, for the latter's remarks against the TRS president and Chief Minister K Chandrababhan Rao. Addressing a press conference, Suman said the BJP leader was spreading hate and "talking nonsense". The BJP leader lacks knowledge on politics, has no respect for the Constitution and is a nomad, Suman ridiculed, adding that Sanjay was trying to misguide the people on welfare and development programmes in Telangana. "Chief Minister K Chan-

- ♦ TRS MLA accuses the BJP leader of spreading lies and talking nonsense
- ♦ Says Sanjay lacks knowledge about politics, has no respect for Constitution
- ♦ Adds people are not ready to support BJP's false propaganda against KCR



drashekar Rao is known for working for the welfare of farmers and uplift of poor. Unlike other States, Telangana under KCR leadership has come up with several schemes for the betterment of people in the State," the MLA said. He further alleged that the BJP leadership was making false charges

and derogatory remarks against KCR. "We are not afraid of their threats. The government will spend huge funds for the welfare of poor," he said. Despite failing to release funds for flood victims, the BJP leaders are making tall claims, he fumed.

The TRS leader asked the BJP lead-

ers to learn something before they make false charges against the ruling party leaders and the KCR government. Despite Corona pandemic causing huge losses to all departments, welfare was given top priority in our State, he said. This can be attributed to the vision of KCR who has always been there for the cause of the poor and downtrodden. Several schemes like 2 BHK houses, pensions, KCR Kits, 24-hour free power, Rythu Bandhu, Rythu Bima and others of Telangana state were being replicated by other States, he said, adding that the BJP should refrain from making such derogatory remarks against the Chief Minister as the people were not ready to support the saffron party's false propaganda.



# Kohli moves to No. 2, Rahane enters top 10

ICC Test rankings

DUBAI

ACE Indian cricketers Virat Kohli and Jasprit Bumrah have moved up by a spot in their respective ICC players rankings in Test cricket.

Kohli has displaced New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson at the second spot in the latest ICC Test rankings for batsmen. India's Test vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane has also entered the top 10 list. Cheteshwar Pujara has maintained his seventh spot in the list currently led by Australia's Steve Smith.

In the bowlers list, Bumrah has moved to number eight while ace off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin has entered the top 10. The list is led by Australia pacer Pat Cummins, followed by England's Stuart Broad and Neil Wagner of New Zealand.



In the list of all-rounders, Ravindra Jadeja is the highest ranked Indian, currently occupying the third spot. Ashwin is placed at the sixth spot.

In the Test team rankings, India are placed at the third spot while Australia and New Zealand occupy the first and second spot respectively.

India and Australia are scheduled to take on each other in the four-match Test series beginning Thursday. Kohli will take part in the first Test only and will return to India after the pink-ball fixture at the Adelaide Oval (December 17-21) to be with his wife Anushka Sharma who is expecting their first child. (IANS)

**Kohli's absence big boost to Oz, incentive for Indians to lift up their game: Gavaskar**

NEW DELHI

VIRAT Kohli's absence in the last three Tests of the upcoming four-match series will be a huge boost to Australia considering his record Down Under where he has scored six centuries and three fifties in 12 Tests he has played so far, say Sunil Gavaskar and Allan Border.

"I think it is a huge boost for the Australians, a man who has six hundreds in 12 Tests in Australia. It is a huge boost for Australians not to be bowling to Kohli in the last three Tests," said Gavaskar during a media interaction.

Kohli will be returning to India after the Adelaide Test (December 17-21) to be with his wife Anushka Sharma who is expecting their first child.

Border concurred with Gavaskar saying that absence of the 32-year-old will leave a huge gap in the Indian line-up.

"I agree, there will be a huge gap in that line-up -- just his presence around that team and out on the field. I think the Aussies will really enjoy that they don't have to bowl to him for three of the Test matches. So he will want to hit the ground running at Adelaide and try and get India off to a flying start and see what happens from there," said Border.

"It's hard to replace anyone like him. So we have to wait and see the impact it has but surely the Aussies will be warm favourites for the games where he is not playing.

That is for sure," added the former Australia captain. Gavaskar, however, felt that India can be competitive despite Kohli's absence having proven previously that they can win without him.

"As far as Indians are concerned, every time Kohli hasn't played, India have won. He didn't play the Dharamsala Test (against Australia). He was down with shoulder injury, (Ajinkya) Rahane captained, India won. He was unavailable for the Afghanistan Test, their debut Test, because he wanted to play County cricket which even though didn't happen but he wasn't selected for the Test. India won that Test too. Then India won the Asia Cup and Nidahas Trophy when Kohli didn't play," said the 71-year-old.

"So somebody or the other from the Indian ranks, they lift themselves up to make up for his absence. And therefore like I said that though it is going to be a huge boost for the Australians, for the Indians it will be a great incentive to lift their game up, for everybody to give that extra to make up for his absence," he added. The former India opener said that in Kohli's absence, Rahane would move from number five to number four with Hanuma Vihari batting at five. (IANS)

## HFL launches football academy in city

HYDERABAD

HYDERABAD'S biggest football league, the Hyderabad Football League (HFL) launched its first ever football coaching academy at Basheerbagh with an aim to provide top class coaching to the next generation of male and female footballers.

The training will be conducted in separate batches for budding football enthusiasts of 8 years and above from Monday to Friday between 5pm and 7pm. The academy is all set to provide coaching to multiple batches comprising of 15 players per batch.

Speaking at the event Adil Mis-try, Director of HFL said that this was the first of many academies that they plan to open in various parts of the city and their vision is to ensure that the next generation of young footballers from Hyderabad are better equipped and technically strong as players from anywhere in the country. For queries and registrations visit their website [www.thehfl.in](http://www.thehfl.in) or call +91-9133662193.



## Mohun Bagan aim to get back to winning ways

MARGAO (GOA)

HAVING slipped from the top position in the Indian Super League (ISL) table after going winless in their last two matches, ATK Mohun Bagan

will target a return to winning ways when they face in-form FC Goa at the Fatorda Stadium here on Wednesday.

While the Mariners are placed third on the table with 10 points after five games, their opponents, FC Goa, placed fifth with 8 points, are not too far away. The contest will not only see two of the strongest teams in the Hero ISL take on each other but will also pit two tactically sound managers with contrasting philosophies.

Mohun Bagan coach Antonio Habas puts his belief in a pragmatic way of playing the game -- sitting deep and hitting opposition sides on the counter attack. So far, the Kolkata giants have had an average of 46 percent possession - third-lowest by a team this season.

Meanwhile, Juan Ferrando's

### MATCH RESULT

Hyderabad FC beat SC East Bengal 3-2

FC Goa side, like to hog possession of the ball. They have averaged 59 percent possession - most by a team this campaign.

Bagan, however, will have to deal with injury concerns with



ATKMB head coach Antonio Habas

Javi Hernandez and Tiri both doubtful for the game. Injuries to the duo have disrupted the balance of the side and Habas acknowledged the problem after his side dropped points in their previous game against Hyderabad FC.

"There is a long way (to go this season)," Habas had said about his team losing the top spot. "Obviously, we don't want to lose but we have many problems with injuries. But we have to recover the players and make them compete."

While striker Igor Angulo will aim to extend his goal-scoring tally for Goa, Roy Krishna will be key for Bagan during counter-attacks. The Fijian has scored four of his team's six goals so far - with all their goals coming in the second half.

Out of the five goals Goa have let in so far, three have come after the half-time break and Ferrando is aware his side will need to be alert throughout the game. (IANS)

## Sreesanth among Kerala probables for Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

FORMER India fast bowler Shanthakumaran Nair Sreesanth who was banned for life for betting-fixing before being

reprimed by the Supreme Court, appeared to have got a new lease of life on Tuesday as he was named among the 26 probables of Kerala for the T20 Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy starting January 10.

It is the first time that Sreesanth, 37, is back in official cricket after serving a seven-year ban. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) had banned him for life in August 2013 for his alleged involvement in the betting-spot-fixing scandal that rocked the 2013 edition of the Indian Premier League.

It remains to be seen if he will be chosen in the final team of 15 that will compete in the T20 tournament, to be played between January 10 and 31.

After Sreesanth moved a special court in Delhi in 2015, he was acquitted of all charges. In 2018, the Kerala High Court had struck down the life ban and also quashed all proceedings against him. However, a division bench of the Kerala High Court restored the ban.

Sreesanth then moved the Supreme Court against the division bench order. And in March last year, the apex court upheld his guilt but asked the BCCI to reduce his quantum of punishment. The BCCI then reduced his life ban to seven years which came to an end on September 12 this year. Sreesanth has played 27 Tests, 53 ODIs and 10 T20Is in which he taken 87, 75 and 7 wickets respectively. (IANS)

## Aashi grabs 2 podium finishes in Dubai Endurance Karting Championship

DUBAI

MUMBAI'S rising kart racing star Aashi Hanspal created a record of sorts by taking part in the prestigious 24-Hour Dubai Endurance Karting Championship and also clinching two podium places along with her teammates in the overall championship.

Aashi became the only Indian girl to compete in the World Series event held over the weekend in Dubai's Motorcity.

The all-Indian team, featuring Arjun Manjunath (Bangalore), Rachit Singhal (Delhi), Jamie (Mumbai), Aditya Swaminathan (Bangalore) and Aashi, grabbed the second position in the overall championship as well as the first position in the Nations Cup. Aashi, who was chosen for the Out-



standing Women in Motorsports Award by FMSCI in 2019, had also become the only Indian girl to take part in the FIA Girls on Track 'Rising Stars' initiative in France in October earlier this year.

"I was thrilled when DojoMoto Racing invited me to race for Team EBC Brakes along with fellow racers from India. We worked well as a group and won two trophies, one of which as a Team India representative," Aashi, 14, said. The annual Dubai Endurance Championship consists of four rounds, with the last one being the 24-Hour Championship held this weekend in Dubai.

In Round 1, teams raced against each other for 400 laps, in Round 2 for six hours non-stop and in Round 3 for 12 hours non-stop. (IANS)

## Dhyan Chand biopic in the works

MUMBAI: The story of hockey legend Dhyan Chand will soon come alive on the big screen, in a biopic directed by Abhishek Chaubey. The film "DhyanChand" will go on floors in 2021. Chaubey, who made "Uda Punjab" and the "Ishqiya" films in the past, has been writing the script for over a year along with Supratik Sen. Casting is underway. Dhyan Chand, widely acknowledged as the Wizard of Hockey, represented India in the sport from the mid-1920s to 1949. During his career, he helped India win three Olympic Gold medals. He was felicitated with the Padma Bhushan in 1956. Dhyan Chand's son, Ashok Kumar, an Olympic medalist and winning goal scorer in the 1975 World Cup Hockey, is elated, too. "There is no better hockey player to date in the world like three-time Olympic gold medalist Dhyan Chand. The genius of Dhyan Chand and his achievements will be seen by the world. My family and I are thrilled to be a part of this," said Ashok Kumar. The film is produced by Ronnie Screwvala's banner RSVP and Blue Monkey Films. The film is expected to hit the theatres in 2022. (IANS)

## Messi, Ronaldo included in Ballon d'Or Dream Team

PARIS: Lionel Messi, Ronaldo Nazario and Cristiano Ronaldo have found place in the greatest team of all time announced by France Football -- Ballon d'Or Dream Team. Having cancelled its annual Ballon d'Or award for the world's best footballer because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the weekly magazine instead has announced its best XI in history, as voted by journalists from 170 countries and regions. The esteemed line-up includes Brazil's three-time World Cup winner Pele and legendary Argentinian Diego Maradona, who died last month of a heart-attack. The team also includes goalkeeper Lev Yashin; defenders Cafu, Franz Beckenbauer and Paolo Maldini; and mid-fielders Xavi and Lothar Matthaus. "For me it is an honour to have been included in the eleven of the Ballon d'Or Dream Team. I want to thank you for choosing me and also congratulate all the players who were selected ... and all the nominees, there are real phenomena on that list," Messi, said in an Instagram post.

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