

WINDOWS



A farmer prepares food for fellow farmers during the protest against the new farm laws, at Singhu border in New Delhi on Saturday

On PM's suggestion Eatala returns without taking jab

HANS NEWS SERVICE

HYDERABAD: Telangana Health Minister Eatala Rajender on Saturday decided not to take the Covid vaccine following a suggestion from Prime Minister Narendra Modi to politicians to give priority to healthcare workers. The minister was scheduled to take the vaccine at Gandhi hospital on the first day. Following the national rollout of the programme by the Prime Minister, Rajender formally launched vaccination at the hospital but returned without taking the jab. Minister for Industry and Information Technology KT Rama Rao later told reporters that the decision was taken on the Prime Minister's suggestion. "I am the captain of this (health) department," Rajender had remarked while defending his decision to inoculate himself, at a news conference on Friday evening. However, the Health Minister had to change his mind after Modi's suggestion. Following requests of politicians from some States, the Prime Minister advised them to wait and give preference to healthcare workers. Public representatives are ready to take the vaccine but they will wait in view of the Prime Minister's suggestion, said Rama Rao after inaugurating the vaccination at a centre at Tilak Nagar in Hyderabad. A total of 4,000 healthcare workers are taking the vaccine at 139 centres across Telangana on Saturday.

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IRREGULAR by MANJUL

Yes, vaccine vials were received 2 days ago. I just kept them in sunlight to disinfect!

THE GREAT VACCINE RUSH

INDIA TAKES ITS FIRST SHOT

NEW DELHI

AS India began its nationwide vaccination drive against Covid-19, as many as 1,91,181 people were vaccinated on Day 1, Union Health Ministry said. A total of 16,755 vaccinators were involved in the process across the nation, the ministry said, adding that no case of post-vaccination hospitalisation was reported.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the nation's Covid-19 vaccination drive on Saturday, the world's largest inoculation exercise against the novel coronavirus. In a virtual address, an emotional Prime Minister paid tributes to the scientists and healthcare workers, who have been on the frontlines of the fight against the pandemic.

"Amid the crisis and the atmosphere of despair, someone was transmitting hope by putting his life on the line to save us," Modi said. The Prime Minister said that all safety protocols, including social distancing and wearing masks, must remain in place.

During the vaccination drive, Maharashtra recorded 14 cases of adverse events, however, none of them were fatal. State officials currently studying them.

India will administer shots to three crore frontline workers in phase one. There are 3,006 session sites across the country, where 100 beneficiaries each will be given either of India's two indigenous vaccines, Covaxin or Covishield. **Continued on Page 4**

- PM launches world's largest drive
- Over 1.91 lakh inoculated on Day 1
- No case of post-vaccination hospitalisation



Mild infection good sign: AIIMS Director

NEW DELHI

AIIMS Director Dr Randeep Guleria on Saturday joined scores of healthcare workers across the country who were administered Covid-19 vaccine shots on the first day of the nationwide vaccination drive. Dr Guleria said mild infection or adverse reaction after vaccination is a good sign because it shows the immune system of the body is reacting to the vaccine and cre-

ating antibodies.

Moments after Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the vaccination drive across the country, the jab was administered to the AIIMS chief on live telecast. Dr



AIIMS Director Randeep Guleria

Guleria was the third person to take the shot. The first jab was administered to a sanitation worker named Manish Kumar, who became the first to be vaccinated at AIIMS in the country. **Continued on Page 4**

'Will prefer Covishield over Covaxin'

Doctors at RML Hospital express apprehensions

NEW DELHI: Resident doctors at one of Delhi's biggest healthcare hubs, the Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital, on Saturday demanded that they be administered Covishield vaccine and not Covaxin since the former has completed all the three stages of trials as required under protocol.

Covaxin is still only undergoing stage-III trials. The Central government has, however, sought to underplay such apprehensions saying "a lot of work" had gone into the development of both products. **Continued on Page 4**

Modi quoting Gurajada makes Telugus proud

HANS NEWS SERVICE

HYDERABAD: Prime Minister Narendra Modi tried to drive home his point of helping others selflessly by quoting renowned Telugu writer and poet Gurajada Apparao during the launch of nationwide Covid-19 vaccination programme.

The Prime Minister said, "Sontha labham kontha manuko, porugu vadiki thodu padavoy. Desamante matti kadoyi, desamante manushuloy." The quote translates into English as "Forego your self-interest to some extent and help neighbours. Nation does not mean just mud and soil, but people." Gurajada Apparao, who lived between 1862 and 1915, was born in Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh and lived in nearby Vizianagaram. Among his several writings, 'Kanyasulkam', written in 1892 is the most popular one.

This came as a surprise from the PM for the people in both the Telugu states.

The healthcare workers and sanitation wing officials were seen in a jubilant mood when Modi quoted Gurajada on the screens installed at all the vaccination centres.

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WhatsApp delays data-sharing change after backlash

Resets its Feb 8 deadline for accepting tweak over privacy issues

SAN FRANCISCO

WHATSAPP on Friday postponed a data-sharing change as users concerned about privacy fled the Facebook-owned messaging service and flocked to rivals Telegram and Signal.

The smartphone app, a huge hit across the world, cancelled its February 8 deadline for accepting an update to its terms concerning sharing data with Facebook, saying it would use the pause to clear up misinformation around privacy and security. "We've heard from so many people how much confusion there is around our recent update," WhatsApp said in a blog post. "This update does not expand our ability to share data with Facebook." It said it would instead "go to people gradu-

ally to review the policy at their own pace before new business options are available on May 15."

The update concerns how merchants using WhatsApp to chat with customers can share data with Facebook, which could use the information for targeted ads, according to the social network. "We can't see your private messages or hear your calls, and neither can Facebook," WhatsApp said in an earlier blog post.

"We don't keep logs of who everyone is messaging or calling. We can't see your shared location, and neither can Facebook." Location data along with message contents is encrypted end-to-end, according to WhatsApp.

Continued on Page 4

CAIT MOVES SC AGAINST NEW RULES

P4

Biden appoints Kashmir's Fazili as NEC Dy Director

WASHINGTON: US President-elect Joe Biden

has appointed Indian-American Sameera Fazili to a key White House position related to economy. Sameera Fazili has been named as Deputy Director, National Economic Council at the White House, the Biden-Harris Transition announced on Friday. The National Economic Council coordinates the economic policy making process and provide economic policy advice to the US President. Fazili is currently the Economic Agency lead on the Biden-Harris Transition. **Continued on Page 4**



PIO Vidur Sharma named US Covid testing adviser

US President-elect Joe Biden has named Indian-American health policy expert Vidur Sharma as testing advisor in his Covid Response Team, as Biden laid out his ambitious goal to intensify vaccinations across the country to tackle the spread of the deadly pandemic. The announcement of Sharma's appointment as Policy Advisor for Testing was made by Biden on Friday along with additional members of the White House Covid Response Team.



Pizza, world's most popular takeaway dish

NEW DELHI: Globally, the Italian dish was found to be the most popular Google search among online users who looked up takeaway options in 2020, according to a report from British insurance comparison company MoneyBeach.

The report analysed Google search data in 109 countries, and "pizza takeaway" was the top food-related query people entered throughout 44 nations. Pizza was a top takeaway search in its home country of Italy as well as in India, Barbados, Argentina and Morocco, among many others.

Chinese food was the second most popular search term, with 29 countries, including the US, Mexico, Australia, the UK and of course China, searching for the cuisine.

Sushi, on the other hand, was the only other takeaway dish to hit double digits, as the top search in 10 countries, making it the third most popular dish worldwide. **Continued on Page 4**

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'YouTubing' away to glory

RANI DEVALLA
VISAKHAPATNAM

ON any given day, their day's schedule includes charting out a menu based on children's demands, cooking, doing endless household chores and, of course, keeping the house spic-and-span.

But now, a majority of people, especially homemakers, add one of their favourite activities to the list as most of them set aside quality time for YouTube sessions.

Uploading a range of



posts and videos, the number of women YouTubers has gone up ever since the outbreak of Covid-19.

Confining to the four

walls of their home, women find the platform convenient both in terms of earning a decent income and getting treated to a variety

of posts that are in the offing. No wonder, they are glued to the small screen to watch videos and forwards that pop up one after the other.

A section of the YouTubers takes the viewers to a 'home tour' to showcase the 'grandeur' of their elegant apartment interiors and the lavishness that exudes from every corner of their house.

Next follows the most prized possession of many women – digital display of saris.

Continued on Page 4

TS elated as Covid jab drive gets underway in full swing

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

CORONAVIRUS vaccination programme has been launched with much fanfare involving State Ministers, legislators and other people's representatives actively in Telangana State. Giant screens were installed at all vaccination centres to witness the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speech on the occasion.

State Governor Tamilisai Soundarajan, Health Minister E Rajendar and Municipal Administration Minister KT Rama Rao were among others who launched the vaccination programmes at different centres in the city.

"The vaccination to the front-line warriors is not just mere injection of vaccine, it is indeed a thanksgiving to them for their selfless services since the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic," the Governor said. The Governor, along with her husband and renowned Nephrologist, Dr P Soundararajan, visited the NIMS Hospital and launched the vaccination programme on Saturday.

The Governor said due to the

GOVERNOR, MINISTERS, LEGISLATORS AND OTHER PEOPLE'S REPRESENTATIVES TAKE PART IN VACCINATION PROGRAMME ACROSS THE STATE



MA &UD Minister KT Ramarao watching the administration of Covid vaccine to a woman at a centre in Hyderabad on Saturday

relentless efforts of scientists, the nation could come up with own vaccine. "We must be proud that we are not dependent upon

any other country for the vaccine. Our own vaccine development is in the true spirit of self-reliant India as per the vision of

our Prime Minister's Atmanirbhar Bharat," she said, adding that soon India would start supplying Covid-19 vaccine to dif-

ferent countries.

Rama Rao said the people representatives were ready to get vaccinated and were waiting for the Prime Minister's nod. "We feel proud that corona vaccine is being manufactured in Hyderabad which already emerged as hub of vaccine manufacturing in the world. The State government is already extending all round support to the pharma industry by setting up pharma zones," he said.

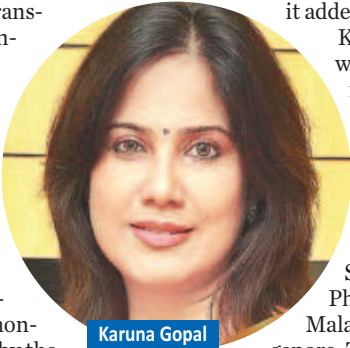
Rajendar said Telangana was well-prepared for the launch of corona vaccination for all. "Adequate workforce is already trained to administer vaccine to every individual in the coming days," he said. The Health Minister said all the vaccinated frontline workers would be provided required assistance after they get the first vaccine shot. All State Ministers were present at the vaccination centres. The ruling TRS and BJP MPs and MLAs were also seen visiting the centres in many parts of the State.

Hyd-based urban infra expert bags Skoch Challenger Award

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

FOUNDER President of Foundation for Futuristic Cities, a think tank that has influenced urban transformation in India for one-and-a-half decades, Karuna Gopal has been conferred the Skoch Challenger Award, a highly prestigious civilian honour instituted by the Skoch group in Delhi. She has been selected for this prestigious award for outstanding work spanning more than two decades in the area of urban reforms and urban innovations, according to a press release issued here on Saturday.

Skoch Challenger Awards, instituted in 2003, salute people, projects and institutions that go the extra mile to make India a better nation. The awards are distinctive for its approach of selection of awardees, which is not based on nomination but on



Karuna Gopal

discovery, said the release. Additionally, the College of Lifetime Achievers is regularly consulted for expert identification, inputs and qualification of a project, person or institution to be considered for the award, it added.

Karuna Gopal, who hails from a family of freedom fighters and IAS officers, has been invited by governments of the USA, Sweden, South Korea, UK, Philippines, Malaysia, UAE, Singapore, Turkey, Sri Lanka and Israel for inputs on Smart Governance. In 2018, Gopal was invited by the Prime Minister of UAE to address their flagship event - World Government Summit at Dubai. She contributed to the design of the '100 Smart Cities Mission' of India and has been invited to speak at the launch of the Mission by the Prime Minister. Her innovation Sculpt Your City-2009 shaped the mission guidelines and has been declared a National Best Practice, according to the release.

KISSA KURSI KAA... New GHMC Mayor still under wraps

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

SINCE the results of the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) elections were out, several winners have been waiting with bated breath for the announcement of Mayor candidate. However, suspense continues on who is going to be the lucky one in the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) even as the State Election Commission issued a gazette of the newly elected Corporators. Several Corporators including Vijaya Reddy, G Vijayalakshmi, Sindhu Reddy and Vijaya Shanti Reddy are in line to become the Mayor of the city.

It has been more than a month-and-a-half since the results were announced for the elections held on December 1 last year and the State Election Commission on Saturday issued a Gazette notification listing out the elected Corporators. The TRS is the single largest party by virtue of winning 56 seats followed by the BJP which won 48, AIMIM 44 and the Congress winning two seats in the 150-member corporation. The Corporator-elect of Lingogiguda division A Ramesh Goud died recently. The TRS would have to take the support of MIM if it wants to stake claim on the Mayor's post.

The term of the existing body is ending on February 10 and the BJP leaders had taken up protests demanding issuing of the gazette notification of the elected representatives. The elected representatives were restless as the existing members were still having supremacy in the body.

Meanwhile, the TRS is yet to take a decision on the post of the

TRS likely to convene a meeting in the last week of January to finalise the candidate for Mayor and Deputy Mayor post

Mayor, but sources said that several names were in consideration. With the Mayor post being reserved for general woman candidates, many ruling party corporators, most of them winning for the second time, are in the race for the first citizen of Hyderabad City.

The State Election Commission had announced earlier that the Mayor election would be held after February 10. The Commission had said that within one month of publication of the gazette, the first meeting of the body would be held, and the election of Mayor and Deputy Mayor would be held on the same day.

The post being a general woman category, the party has a chance to give it to candidate belonging to any community. The names of P Vijaya Reddy, Gadwal Vijayalakshmi (daughter of TRS secretary general K Keshava Rao), M Kavitha Reddy (wife of party leader Manne Goverdhan Reddy), Sindhu Reddy, Bonthu Sridevi and Ch Vijay Shanti are doing rounds. The party leaders are understood to be lobbying for the Mayor's post. Recently, representatives from Yadav community met Municipal Administration Minister KT Rama Rao and urged him to provide the post to Sridevi. Party leaders said a meeting of the party was likely to be held in the last week of January to finalise the candidate for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor post.

TS, Guj join hands to boost women entrepreneurship

Enter into an MoU to initiate a pre-incubation programme for 240 aspiring women entrepreneurs in Telangana and Gujarat

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

IN a first-of-its-kind, two State governments have joined hands to supercharge the growth of women-led start-ups in focus sectors. A total of 240 women entrepreneurs will be selected for pre-incubation programme and 20 will be shortlisted for the co-incubation programme.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was inked between Jayesh Ranjan, Principal Secretary, Industries & Commerce (I&C) and Information Technology Department, Government of Telangana and Anju Sharma, Principal Secretary of Higher & Technical Education, Government of Gujarat at a virtual event on Saturday.

IT Minister K T Rama Rao, Gujarat's Education Ministers Bhupendrasinh Chudasama, Vibhavariben Dave and WE Hub CEO Deepthi Ravula were among those who witnessed the event.

WE Hub is India's first State-led incubator to foster and pro-



mote women entrepreneurship to start up, scale up and accelerate global market access. It encourages and support start-ups in raising capital.

The partnership will initiate a pre-incubation programme for 240 aspiring women entrepreneurs in the EdTech, MedTech and Fintech sectors in the States of Telangana and Gujarat. Post three months of pre-incubation programme and after rigorous interventions, a total of 20 entrepreneurs will be selected for the final virtual/physical co-incuba-

tion programme. This co-incubation brings the start-ups the opportunity to scale up to viable enterprises and receive rapid growth mentorship from the leaders at i-Hub and WE Hub. The start-ups will also have government-supported exposure visits across Telangana and Gujarat.

"When we announced the formation of WE Hub in November 2017, little did people understand the vision of this initiative and the impact it would create. In the last two years, WE Hub has

pushed the narrative of democratising entrepreneurship by breaking the barriers that exist for women entrepreneurs through its work. We are happy that WE Hub has now become the best practice model for many States governments in India. Through this partnership, we would like to create a roadmap of how women entrepreneurship can be scaled, supported and sustained not just in India but across the world. I wish this collaboration the best and pledge our support for an Atmanirbhar Bharat

where entrepreneurship is based on competence and not gender," said IT Minister KTR.

"We are glad to collaborate with iHub to promote women entrepreneurship across Telangana and Gujarat. Through this collaboration, we are going to equip iHub with the learnings, knowledge and ecosystem we have developed in the past three years working with over 3,400 women entrepreneurs, 11 start-up programmes, incubating 148 start-ups and creating over 300 jobs," said Deepthi Ravula.

"When iHub connected with us, we were thrilled to collaborate on Incubation, knowledge sharing, curriculum development, programme creation for aspiring and existing entrepreneurs. To yield the desired benefits of making India the women entrepreneurship capital of the world, ecosystems must collaborate and this is the first step towards making the vision a reality," she added.

The commencement of the programmes is scheduled for the first week of February 2021.

TRS leader seeks Kavitha's help for promotions of cops

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

TRS leader and RTI activist J Sudheer on Saturday requested party senior leader and MLC K Kavitha to address the long pending promotions of constables in the State Police department. Along with a constable delegation, Sudheer met Kavitha and explained the plight of the cops facing in getting promotions due to legal issues. He requested the MLC to pursue the issue with DGP and Legal department.



HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

POLITICAL leaders from all parties, including the top Congress leaders paid rich tributes to former Union Minister late S Jaipal Reddy on his 79th birth anniversary at "Jaipal Reddy Memorial Place" near Sanjeevaiah Park on Necklace Road on Saturday.

Telangana Health Minister, Eatala Rajender paid a visit and offered floral tributes. Speaking to the media, he said, starting from college days, Reddy remained in State and national politics for a very long time. He left an indelible mark on society. He left good political values and ethics to us. Following his beliefs, values and ethics is the best tribute one can ever pay to him.

Starting from the early morning Jaipal Reddy's wife S Lak-

Leaders pay glowing tributes to Jaipal Reddy



TPCC president and Nalgonda MP N Uttam Kumar Reddy paying floral tributes to the portrait of former Union Minister late S Jaipal Reddy on his birth anniversary at Necklace Road on Saturday

shmi Reddy, Jaipal Reddy's sons Arvind and Anand Reddy, family members, relatives visited his memorial place and offered floral tributes. Several political leaders irrespective of party line also visited and paid their tributes. Some of these leaders include former PCC chief NUTTAM Kumar Reddy, senior Congress leaders Jana Reddy, V. Hanumanth Rao, CLP leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka; Congress firebrand leader Revanth Reddy; Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, MP; former Minister P Sudershan Reddy and others.

A politician par excellence, Reddy was the Member of Parliament seven times and Union Cabinet Minister thrice. He had a political career spanning over 50 years. He was a brilliant parliamentarian known for his oratorical skills and political acumen.

FOBs on top priority list, says MA &UD Secretary

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

ARVIND Kumar, Principal Secretary MA&UD announced on Saturday that the Foot Over Bridges are on the top priority list and will be completed soon and even on his Twitter handle he wrote that the Foot Over Bridges (FOB) at GVK Mall Banjara Hills work is going on in full swing and it should be ready in coming 6 weeks and added that a total of 28 new FOBs are under construction in different parts of the city and will be ready in next 3 months. According to a press release, in LB Nagar Zone Chakripuram cross roads near Nagaram, Dilsukhnagar Bus stop with escalators, Kothapet Fruit Market with escalators and Saroonagar stadium, in Charnimar Zone, CBS to MGBS with escalators and in Khairatabad zone places like Aremaisamma Temple, Langer House, GVK One road No1, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad Central mall, Panjagutta with escalators and also in the zones of Secunderabad like Gandhi hospital, Musheerabad with escalators and at St. Ann's School at Tarnaka and at other Zones of Kukatpally and Sheringampally foot over bridges works will be completed.

PROCEEDING WITH CARE



Vehicles ply on a road amid heavy fog on a cold morning near NHPC Chowk in Faridabad on Saturday

Priyanka Gandhi sends homemade food for protesting Cong MPs

KARTIKEYA SHARMA
NEW DELHI

CONGRESS General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra sent food cooked in her kitchen for Congress MPs protesting at Delhi's Jantar Mantar. Former Congress President Rahul Gandhi was accompanied by his sister Priyanka at the protest site.

Most of the MPs and MLAs protesting at Jantar Mantar are from the Punjab unit of the Congress. When IANS spoke to Jasbir Singh Gill, Congress MP from Khadoor Sahib in Punjab,

he said, "We met Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Friday and had a long chat. It seems that she wanted to appreciate the work we have done and for this reason she sent the food," he said.

Priyanka sent paneer, rajma, rice, roti and gajrela for the protesting lawmakers. Jasbir Singh Gill also told IANS that most of the time they get food from local gurudwaras and sometimes from people's homes. Congress lawmakers have been protesting against the three contentious farm laws for

the last 52 days. Gill also said they would continue with the sit-in protests till the farm laws are withdrawn.

The farmers' protest in Delhi has led to a standstill at the Singhu border where thousands of farmers continue to stay put. This is despite the Supreme Court announcing a four-member committee. This was the second public event attended by the Milan-returned Rahul Gandhi who first went to Tamil Nadu to attend the 'Jallikattu' event. (IANS)

Meeting held to review Republic Day preparations

NEW DELHI

AHEAD of Republic Day, Delhi Police Commissioner S N Shrivastava on Saturday held a review meeting in which he also took stock of the arrangements at farmers' agitation sites to maintain law and order, officials said.

In the meeting held with senior officers, the police chief took stock of anti-terrorism measures as well as action taken against criminals involved in various cases, including burglary, violation of the Excise Act and the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, and gambling cases, they said. Shrivastava also reviewed pending cases under POC SO and crime against women, officials said.

Senior officers examined proposed action against listed criminals under surveillance, including jail/bail/parole released criminals and 'Bad Characters',



Jawans practice marching during the rehearsal for the upcoming Republic Day Parade amid dense fog at Rajpath in New Delhi on Saturday

according to a police statement. "The officers have been directed to increase vigil through picket checking and update history sheets.

An action plan for police stations was also reviewed for formation of anti-snatching teams

and identification of areas prone to organized crime like liquor/drugs trade and gambling," said Anil Mittal, Additional PRO (Delhi Police). The district DCsP were also advised to take optimum use of crime teams for investigation, he said.



AI pilots plea against reduction in allowances

HC seeks response of Centre, DGCA and airline

NEW DELHI

THE Delhi High Court has sought the response of the Centre, DGCA and Air India on a plea challenging the national carrier's decision to reduce allowances of its employees and putting in place a scheme, under which anyone can be sent on leave for up to five years without pay.

The petition by the Executive Pilots Association (EPA) also challenged a civil aviation ministry letter that mentioned a reduction in allowances of pilots from 40 per cent to 35 per cent.

The ministry letter also said

that allowances of pilots will be based on 20 hours of flying as against the earlier 70 hours of flying. Justice V K Rao issued a notice to the ministry, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and Air India seeking their stand on the EPA plea.

Air India, during the hearing, told the court that the July 14, 2020, office order, which allowed the chairman and managing director of the airline to send anyone on leave without pay, has not been effected and the same might not be implemented in the next two-three months. The EPA, represented by senior advocate Vivek

Kohli and advocate Bharti Chawla, has challenged the Air India office orders of March 20, 2020, and July 22, 2020, by which the allowances were reduced by 10 per cent and 40 per cent, respectively.

The association has also sought setting aside of the office orders of July 14, 2020, and July 21, 2020, which put in place the compulsory leave without pay scheme. Besides that, the EPA has also challenged the December 18, 2020, letter issued by the ministry with regard to the reductions in allowances and the flying hours of pilots.

The association has contended that instead of rewarding its mem-

ber pilots for their courage and role in Vande Bharat Missions, for which they were lauded by the aviation minister, their allowances and flying hours were being reduced. Vande Bharat Missions were launched to repatriate Indians stranded abroad due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The allowances which have been reduced are -- flying allowances, executive flying allowances, special pay, wide-body allowance, domestic layover allowance and high-altitude allowance, among others, all of which exclusively affect pilots, the petition said. (PTI)

Sanitation worker first person to get vaccine

NEW DELHI

MANISH Kumar, a sanitation worker, became the first person to be administered a Covid-19 vaccine in AIIMS here during the launch of the nationwide vaccination programme in the presence of Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Saturday. As people around applauded, AIIMS Director Randeep Guleria also received a shot of the vaccine followed by NITI Aayog member V K Paul.

Kumar, who works at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences along with his mother Laxmi Rani, said he was not at all nervous and was "proud of getting the vaccine". Vardhan said the two vaccines -- the indigenous Covaxin from Bharat Biotech and Covishield from the Oxford/AstraZeneca stable -- were a 'sanjivani', life infusing, in the fight against the pandemic. "These vaccines are our 'sanjivini' in our fight against the pandemic. We have won the battle against polio and now we have reached the decisive phase of winning the war against COVID. I want to congratulate all frontline workers on this day," he told reporters shortly after the vaccine shots were administered.

Meanwhile, a security guard was the first to get the Covaxin shot at RML hospital and a security guard was also the first to get the jab at Safdarjung hospital. Several doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers also got the shots in these hospitals.

Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the world's largest vaccination drive against the pandemic. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who inspected the COVID-19 vaccination campaign at the Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan (LNJP) Hospital here and interacted with some health workers who received the shot, also urged people not to believe in rumours and listen to experts who say COVID-19 vaccines are safe.

Noting that it is a historic day, Vardhan said, "We have been blessed by the prime minister all through our fight against coronavirus. It's the largest coronavirus vaccination programme in world," he said. Asserting the safety of the coronavirus vaccines -- Covishield and Covaxin -- Harsh Vardhan said, "The experts gave their approval after seeing the results. There is no difference between vaccines. Both are equally safe and effective."

He said, "At times when rumours are being spread, I hope the media will spread the correct information and this move will help in the fight against the disease," the health minister said. Vardhan also said the Phase 3 trials of Bharat Biotech's Covaxin

Vardhan calls it historic day



A medic administers the first dose of Covishield vaccine to a frontline worker in the presence of Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan after the virtual launch of Covid-19 vaccination drive by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at AIIMS in New Delhi on Saturday

is ongoing. "It has been subjected to ample and adequate scrutiny," he said. "There is no need for any fear. We have to be absolutely fearless, and sure of the safety of this vaccine and also have to be patient...Everyone has to wait for his/her turn," the health minister said.

According to the government, the shots will be offered first to an estimated one crore healthcare workers and around two crore frontline workers, and then to persons above 50 years of age, followed by those younger than 50 years with associated comorbidities. The cost of vaccination of healthcare and frontline

workers will be borne by the central government. Vardhan said 3,006 session sites across all states and UTs held the exercise simultaneously on Saturday with around 100 beneficiaries vaccinated at each of the sites.

With a population of 138 crore and a history of Universal Immunization Program, which involves targeted vaccination against twelve vaccine preventable diseases, India stands at the cusp of recording history and shows the way to peers across the globe. "After Smallpox and Polio, it is the turn of COVID. All the remote, hard to reach areas, urban slums, tribal belts are all

covered in today's exercise," he said Vardhan elaborated on the preparations that were taken up for this huge exercise. "

"More than a lakh vaccinators were trained, multiple mock exercises were conducted, a pan-India national exercise was also conducted to hammer out the slightest glitches. "Technology was used to bolster performance as the eVIN platform was repurposed to CoWIN (Winning over COVID), SMS sent to all beneficiaries since the last two days (for Saturday's session) which would be repeated on schedule for their second dose and across all beneficiaries in all sessions," he said.

Speaking to reporters after taking the jab, Paul urged people to "embrace the vaccine". "I believe that this is a great vaccine. I have taken Covaxin. Embrace the vaccine. Both the vaccines that the government has authorised are safe and immunogenic. I request you to please embrace it as in this way you will help your family and your community," he said. On concerns over the efficacy of the vaccine, he said there is no evidence to suggest it is unsafe and these are false rumours and narratives.

Vardhan also visited Sir Ganga Ram Hospital to inspect the Covishield vaccination programme at the facility after AIIMS. "India has launched today the biggest vaccination programme. We should be proud of India's vaccination programme and I assure the people of the efficacy of the vaccination. "I have visited Sir Ganga Ram Hospital many times during the peak of COVID-19 crisis. That is the reason I am visiting this hospital today as Sir Ganga Ram Hospital has been in the forefront during the fight with COVID-19. People should not play politics in this important vaccination programme," a hospital statement quoting him said. (PTI)

Delhi BJP celebrates launch

NEW DELHI

DELHI BJP leaders and workers celebrated the launch of the mega COVID-19 vaccination drive on Saturday by distributing sweets and giving roses to health workers at various centres in the city.

Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta visited Shanti Mukund hospital, where sweets were distributed to the people and health workers.

Party office bearers and workers also celebrated the launch of vaccination drive at other hospitals, including AIIMS, Safdarjung, LNJP, RML among others. "It's a historic day and we are thankful to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for free vaccination of doctors, nurses, para medical staff as well as frontline workers who fought against COVID-19," Gupta said on the occasion.

BJP MLA and former president of Delhi BJP, Vijender Gupta cut cake with doctors and other staff of Saroj hos-

pital in Rohini before the launch of the vaccination drive there. Former Union minister and senior BJP leader Vijay Goel accompanied by North Delhi mayor Jai Prakash, visited LNJP and RML hospitals under the 'Modi Tujhe Salaam' campaign, and greeted health officials, doctors and nurses who were given the shot, by offering roses to them. Goel accused Congress of 'misleading' people and said leaders of the party should be given some vaccine that helps them think positively.

"Congress has been shocked by Modi's praise in the world. It is said that the party is doing politics on the vaccination programme which is being praised worldwide," he said. Under the 'Modi Tujhe Salaam' campaign, launched by social organisation Lok Abhiyan, awareness will be created among people about the coronavirus vaccines at parks and meetings of resident welfare associations, he said. (PTI)



Bird flu confirmed in owl found dead in Delhi zoo

NEW DELHI

A dead owl in the Delhi zoo has been found to have been infected with bird flu, officials said on Saturday. "The zoo witnessed the death of a brown fish owl in its captivity. Its cloacal, tracheal and ocular swabs were sent to the animal husbandry unit of the Delhi government for serological examination," zoo Director Ramesh Pandey said.

The samples were found posi-

tive for H5N8 avian influenza virus under real time RT-PCR test done by ICAR-National Institute of High Security Animal Disease (NIHSAD), Bhopal, on Friday, he said.

As per protocols and guidelines issued by the Centre and the Delhi government, sanitisation and surveillance drills have been intensified in the zoo and all possible preventive measures are being taken, the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate

Change said in a statement.

Pandey said, "Birds in captivity have been isolated and are under consistent monitoring and care for their behaviour and health. Spray of lime, virkon-S and sodium hypochlorite and foot bath of potassium permanganate are being done on regular intervals every day." Chicken feed to raptors and entry of vehicles inside the zoo have already been stopped. Movement of staff is also being restricted and regulated in

view of the bird flu outbreak.

The Delhi zoo has both captive and free-ranging birds, including local migratory waterfowls and waders, in its premises. On Monday, samples taken from crows and ducks at parks and lakes in the national capital had tested positive for the avian influenza. Pandey said that in case of any suspected death of birds in future, authorities will collect samples for test as per protocol. (PTI)

2 held for jewellery theft in Delhi

NEW DELHI

TWO people were arrested onboard a train in Jharkhand's Giridih district for robbing a jewellery shop in Delhi, police said on Saturday.

Police officials also claimed to have recovered jewellery worth Rs 86 lakh was recovered from their possession.

According to the police, the Railway Protection Force (RPF) raided the A2 coach of Kalka Mail going towards Howrah from Delhi, at Hazaribagh road railway station on Friday night.

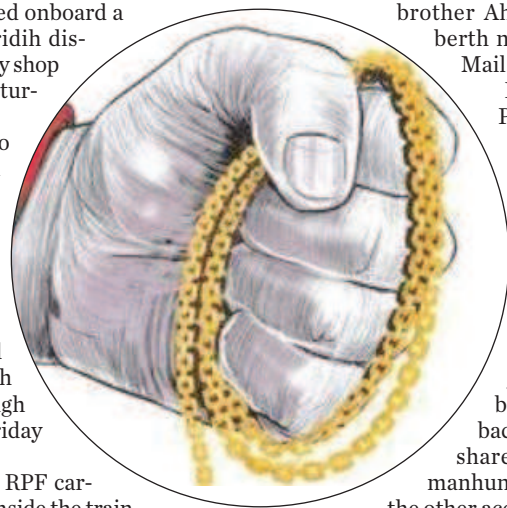
Acting on a tip-off, the RPF carried out a security check inside the train

and apprehended both of them.

During the check, Pintu Shekh and his brother Ahmad were arrested from berth number 16 and 18 of Kalka Mail.

Hazaribagh RPF in-charge Pakanj Kumar had a video call with the Delhi police to identify both the criminals. Besides jewellery, police have also seized a mobile phone and dry fruits packets from them.

The arrestees informed the police that eight people had looted a jewellery shop near Rohini bus stand. They were going back to their home with their share after the theft. Further, manhunt has been launched to nab the other accused. (IANS)



ATTACKS ON TEMPLES

Police revelations on TDP's role rattled Naidu, says Anil



► Minister condemns Oppn leaders' criticism of DGP Goutam Sawang

► Alleges TDP role behind several attacks on temples in the State

► Says Naidu is fearing that his party will disappear in view of YSRCP govt's welfare blitz

AMARAVATI

MINISTER for irrigation P Anil Kumar Yadav said TDP president N Chandrababu Naidu fearing police unearthing the role of the opposition party in attacks on temples, was making baseless allegations against police and the director general of police (DGP) D Gautam Sawang. He condemned the remarks of TDP leaders on the DGP for revealing facts regarding the incidents involving temples.

Speaking to media persons at party office at Tadepalli on Saturday, Anil Kumar Yadav said the police nabbed 80 persons in connection with 29 cases of attacks on temples. Alleging that the TDP was trying to derive political mileage by disturbing communal harmony, he said the police revealed the role of nine persons connected to TDP and BJP in the incidents.

He said while Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy was benefiting lakhs of people through his welfare schemes by spending Rs 80,000 crore in 20 months, the TDP is fearing the prospect of it losing its existence. He said while the police

are conducting investigation into sensitive issue of attacks on temples, the TDP has been making baseless allegations against the DGP.

Anil Kumar alleged that the TDP cadres had a role in the attacks on temples including in hidden treasure hunt in Maddikera police station limits of Kurnool district, chappal garlanding of Hanuman idol at Budwel in Kadapa district, damaging gopuram of Anjaneya Swamy temple in Kurnool district, desecration of Vinayaka idol at Golugonda mandal, damage to Varahalakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple idol in Singarayakonda, Saraswatidevi idol in Sankara Mutt in Narasaraopet and other offences in several other temples.

The minister said that Chandrababu Naidu who failed to come out during Covid pandemic for more than 10 months, had rushed to Ramatheertham in no time only for political reasons. He repeated the allegation that the TDP had been conspiring to defame the state government unable to digest its welfare schemes and its popularity.



Special Investigation Team chief G V G Ashok Kumar visiting Ramatheertham hill on Saturday

Collecting every piece of evidence, says SIT chief

RAMATHEERTHAM (VIZIANAGARAM)

► Ashok Kumar visits the Kodandarama Swamy temple at Ramatheertham as part of investigation

► Says they suspect same team is involved in various incidents of temple attacks

THE state government was taking temple desecration incidents very seriously and intensified investigation as part of which every piece of evidence was being gathered, said G V G Ashok Kumar, chief of Special Investigation Team (SIT) set up by the government to bring to book the persons behind the desecration of idol in Kodandarama Swamy temple at Ramatheertham in the district. He said they would not leave any accused in these incidents and were searching for similarities between the all incidents occurred in the state in the past few days, he added.

Ashok Kumar and some of the team members visited Neelachalam hill (Bodi Konda) in Ramatheertham village where the Kodandarama Swamy temple is located on Saturday. He spoke to district superintendent of police

(SP) B Rajakumari and enquired about various issues linked with the incident. Later, speaking to media, he said they would solve the case as soon as possible with the support of local police and other government officials. He appealed to the people to help the police by providing any information they have regarding the vandalism incident. Ashok Kumar said they were suspecting that same team had been involved in the temple vandalising incidents in various districts.

TDP chief denounces 'constant' harassment of party cadres



► Condemns physical attack on Palasa TDP activist Vinod in the name of a social media post

► Alleges political vendetta behind cases against victims

► Says more than 1,340 physical attacks have been made on the TDP supports, over 16 activists have been assassinated in 13 districts in just 19 months

AMARAVATI

TDP national president and former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu decried the 'non-stop harassment' being meted out to the TDP activists by the police in the name of social media posts and false cases.

He strongly objected to the 'physical attack' by the police on TDP activist Lakkoji Vinod in Palasa in Srikakulam district. He was wrongfully beaten up and tortured just for posting a comment on social media. Also, false cases were booked against him, he said.

In a statement here on Saturday, the TDP chief said that in the name of social media posts,

Vinod was taken away during midnight and was physically attacked. When TDP MP K Ram-mohan Naidu held a protest at the Palasa police station, counter cases were filed against the victim himself. Some police officials were conniving with the ruling YSRCP leaders to harass and persecute the TDP leaders out of political vengeance, he alleged.

Naidu asserted that it was only because of the nexus between the YSRCP and the police that the attacks on the TDP were on increase all over the state. It has become a routine to attack the TDP leaders and then to file false cases against them. Over 1,340 physical attacks were made on the TDP activists and over 16 activists were killed in all the 13 districts in just 19 months. This massive political violence held a mirror to the

chaotic lawlessness prevailing in the state, he said.

The TDP chief said that the law and order had deteriorated in the state and YSRCP leaders and the conniving police were not afraid even though the media and the courts were repeatedly exposing the lawless activities going on in the state. In a systematic way, the constitutional institutions were targeted and undermined. A fear psychosis was created wherein nobody could question the attacks and illegalities of the government, he added.

The former chief minister demanded unconditional release of Vinod and the false cases filed against him be lifted.

He alleged that the government was trying to implicate the TDP leaders in cases which it was failing to solve.

Active Covid cases less than 2,000 in State

AMARAVATI

ACTIVE coronavirus cases in Andhra Pradesh have dropped below 2,000 to 1,987 on Saturday, powered by 326 more recoveries.

On adding the new recoveries, total recoveries crossed 8.76 lakh. In the past 24 hours, 114 new Covid infections have been reported in the state, increasing the state's total tally to 8.85 lakh.

Chittoor district accounted for the highest number of infections at 24, followed by Visakhapatnam (22) East Godavari (13), Krishna (12), Nellore (10) and Kurnool (8). Among other places, Guntur and Srikakulam had 6 cases each, West Godavari (4), Anantapur and Vizianagaram (3 each) and Prakasam (1). East Godavari district's tally crossed 1.24 lakh, the highest among all Andhra districts, while the state's positivity rate fell to 7.06 per cent that is still higher than the national average of 5.68 per cent.

WhatsApp delays data-sharing change after backlash

Continuation from P1

"We're giving businesses the option to use secure hosting services from Facebook to manage WhatsApp chats with their customers, answer questions, and send helpful information like purchase receipts," WhatsApp said in a post. "Whether you commu-

nicate with a business by phone, email, or WhatsApp, it can see what you're saying and may use that information for its own marketing purposes, which may include advertising on Facebook."

Technology experts note that WhatsApp's new requirement of its users makes

legally binding a policy that has been widely in use since 2016.

Facebook aims to monetize WhatsApp by allowing businesses to contact clients via the platform, making it natural for the internet giant to centralize some data on its servers.

CAIT moves SC against new rules

Continuation from P1

The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) has filed a petition in the Supreme Court against WhatsApp's new privacy rules. "WhatsApp, which is rendering essential public services by enabling citizens to communicate, has recently imposed unconstitutional privacy conditions which are not only violative of the law but can impact the national security of the country," states the petition. CAIT has also prayed that the Union of India must frame guidelines to govern big technology companies like WhatsApp and frame policies that would protect the privacy of citizens and businesses. The petition further compares the difference of approach in EU and Indian countries with respect to the privacy policy of WhatsApp.

Biden appoints Kashmir's Fazili as NEC Dy Director

Continuation from P1

She was earlier posted at the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta where she served as the Director of Engagement for Community and Economic Development.

Fazili is the second Kashmiri-origin Indian-American appointed to a key position in the incoming Biden administration. In December, Aisha Shah was named as Partnerships Manager at the White House Office of Digital Strategy.

In the Obama-Biden ad-

ministration, Fazili served as a senior policy advisor on the White House's National Economic Council and as a senior advisor at the US Treasury Department in both Domestic Finance and International Affairs.

Prior to that she was as a clinical lecturer of law at Yale Law School. Originally from Buffalo, she now lives in Georgia with her husband and three children. Fazili is a graduate of Yale Law School and Harvard College.

■ Industries Minister Mekapati Goutham Reddy reviews progress in setting up of Defence Department unit at Kodavaluru in Nellore district

■ Asks officials to expedite settlement of land compensation issues and acquire more land if necessary

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NELLORE

MINISTER for industries and IT Mekapati Gautam Reddy asked the officials to speed up land acquisition for Utkarsha Aluminium Dhatu Nigam Ltd's proposed plant in Kodavalur mandal. He reviewed the progress on the project with the officials and representatives of the company at his camp office here on Saturday. He said any hiccup in payment of compensation to the farmers who handed over lands for the project should



Minister Mekapati Goutham Reddy conducting a review with government officials and representatives of Midhani at his camp office in Nellore on Saturday. DRDO Chairman Dr G Satish Reddy is seen.

be settled and additional land should be acquired if needed for setting up the industry.

He discussed with the representatives of Utkarsha Aluminium, a special purpose vehicle for setting up the unit of Midhani, on the investment for the unit and details of the direct and indirect employment to be generated by the department of defence-owned project. Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) chairman G Satish Reddy was also present.

It may be recalled that the district administration has recently cleared problems in acquiring 110

acre land for setting up the proposed defence unit, a joint venture of Midhani and Nalco, at Bodduripalem in Kodavalur mandal by transferring lands.

He suggested to the officials to promote ancillary industries in the region attached to the main unit. Officials have to discuss with the AP Industrial Infrastructure Corporation for providing basic amenities like water, electricity, and others. He suggested that the collector resolve the legal cases utilising the services of the Attorney General.

DRDO chief Satish Reddy said that officials have to discuss with

various wings frequently like electricity and others for quick establishment of the unit. He also asked for arrangement of accommodation for the staff members. He noted that Kodavalur mandal is close to the national highway and also to the port and the upcoming airport would also be useful for the unit.

Collector K V N Chakradhar Babu, joint collector M N Harendira Prasad, RDO Hussain Saheb, Kodavalur tahsildar Lazarus, chairman of the Vijaya Dairy K Rangareddy, representatives of Midhani, and others were present.

India takes its first shot

Continuation from P1

Every beneficiary will need to receive two doses of the same vaccine, 28 days apart. Since the pandemic hit India in March 2020, over 1.05 crore people have been infected with the disease, while close to 1.52 lakh have died. At present, Kerala and Maharashtra are reporting the highest number of daily cases.

Pizza, world's most popular takeaway dish

Continuation from P1

Fish and chips came in 4th place with it being the most popular takeout search term in 6 countries, including Canada and Piji.

Fried chicken is next on the list and was the most popular in 5 countries.

Indian food, Korean food, Thai food, tapas, tacos, burritos, pasta, kebabs and Malaysian food were other popular takeaway dishes in different parts of the world, but each were found to be popular search terms in fewer than 5 countries.

Continuation from P1

It makes women stick to their chairs for hours as the YouTube comes up with a peppy presentation of hand-woven fabrics in eye-pleasing colour combination.

For foodies, videos and posts are plenty on YouTube. Showcasing their culinary skills, women as well as men, introduce the viewers to a variety of preparations that include the recipe of 'pulasa fish', the most sumptuous variety available in Godavari districts and biryani made of 'chitti mutyalu' (a type of rice sourced from Bheemavaram). "In times of the pandemic, when home-cooked food is what many look forward to, YouTube turns out to be handy to experiment with new recipes," says Madhavi Vedula,

who anchors a YouTube channel that brings forth time-tested traditional recipes.

Based on the content uploaded, YouTube says, they make an easy buck by garnering sizeable viewership. "Digital marketing has seen a steep surge in recent times. Though many are into it, the reach is based on the quality of the content uploaded. Depending on the content and the viewership it garners, a YouTuber can earn from Rs.1,000 to Rs.1 lakh a month," says Durga Rao Kalla, who is into digital marketing for the past three years.

For some, it has become a new stage to exhibit their passion, while others prefer to connect with a larger audience by operating their own YouTube channels.

Mild infection good sign: AIIMS Director

Continuation from P1

Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan and Dr V K Paul, who heads a government panel on vaccine strategy, were also present at AIIMS. Both Dr Paul and Dr Guleria received the Covaxin jab. However, Vardhan was not vaccinated on Saturday. "I will get it when the time will come," said Vardhan.

After a gap of nearly an hour, Dr Guleria appeared before the media to share his personal experience after vaccination. He said he was feeling absolutely fine and he had no adverse reaction even after one-and-a-half hour of receiving the vaccine jab. He emphasised that there are absolutely no issues associated with the safety of both vaccines – Covaxin and Covishield – and people should not at all be worried about vaccination. "I have received it and I am doing absolutely fine. I am right before you", said Dr Guleria.

'Will prefer Covishield over Covaxin'

Continuation from P1

The resident doctors of Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital have even said that they might not participate in huge numbers if Covaxin is used. "Covaxin manufactured by Bharat Biotech is being preferred over Covishield manufactured by Serum Institute in our hospital...We would like to bring to your notice that the residents are a bit apprehensive about the lack of complete trial in the case of Covaxin and might not participate in huge numbers thus defeating the purpose of the vaccination," the Resident Doctors Association of the hospital said in a letter to the medical superintendent of the facility.

"We request you to vaccinate us with Covishield which has completed all stages of the trial before its rollout," the letter said.

Dr Nirmalaya Mohapatra, Vice-President of the hospital's Resident Doctors Association, said a lot of doctors have not

given their names for the countrywide drive launched on Saturday. "We are apprehensive regarding Covaxin. Trials are yet to be completed. We will prefer Covishield over Covaxin," Dr Mohapatra said.

Covishield has been developed by Oxford University and pharma major AstraZeneca and is produced in India by the Serum Institute of India, Pune. Covaxin has been produced by Bharat Biotech in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research.

The Union government had earlier said that Covaxin will be used as an emergency option but went on to say later that recipients wouldn't have a choice in the matter of the two vaccines. In Delhi alone, Covaxin is being used in six Central government facilities and Covishield at 75, including state government facilities and private hospitals. Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital is a Central government institution.

Tackle racism with an iron hand at once

RACISM has again raised its ugly head this time on Australian soil. Recent racist abuse, which is definitely a blot on International sports, on two cricketers Siraj and Bumrah (Report: 'Australian cricket is racial, unsporting, Jan 16), at Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG), has to be condemned by one and all. It is appalling these things happen in stadiums when most part of International cricket has been lost in the year 2020 because of COVID-19 and even though matches have started of late but with little spectator capacity. This is not the first time but also in previous tours this indecent rowdy behaviour from spectators has happened in cricket which is called a gentleman's game. The Indian team and BCCI immediately raised a formal complaint and the host board Cricket Australia reacted by evicting spectators concerned who were involved in racial abuse from the stadium



and tendered an apology.

In spite of all this rear guard action by Cricket Australia, racial abuse on Siraj and Washington Sundar continued at Gabba stadium in Brisbane. So more severe punishment can be imposed on indecent spectators involved in

racial abuse, in the form of prosecuting them by bringing a law so as to prevent it from occurring again and again. Racial abuse from the players or from the spectators in any form will never be tolerated. Now the time has come to take this racial abuse as

a serious issue by ICC and Cricket Australia by taking stern action against offenders. In India during IPL games all the cricketers from different parts of the world are greeted and treated equally. The ICC should tackle the racist abuse with iron fist by even banning the particular persons into the stadium for a certain period if this racist abuse from spectators continues unabated in any part of cricket playing nations. It will be the duty of a sports person suffering from racial abuse to bring it to the notice of relevant authorities without keeping mum. Enough is enough as far as racial abuse is concerned and the time has come to find a vaccine to eradicate this dreaded virus called 'racial abuse' in all arenas, not only in sports, across the globe. Few steps that Siraj has taken towards his skipper to complain about racial abuse should take a giant leap to curb the menace.

At the same time the ICC and various cricket boards should also think and mute the cricketers on the field to pass unwarranted verbal volleys against opposition team members, a la that has happened to Aswin & Co in SCG in India's second innings, so as to restore dignity and decorum in gentleman's game called cricket. It is unbefitting on the part of Tim Paine, the Aussie captain, to pass verbal abuse against Aswin at SCG, whose behaviour definitely diminishes Australian cricket pride. Australian cricketers' policy over the years is to demoralise the opponents by sledging and thereby forcing the opponents to commit mistakes while they bat. Everyone should realize that colour, caste, gender and religion are in no way decides the behaviour, skill, happiness, opportunities and success of a person.

V Nagendra Kumar,
Hyderabad

PAST AND PRESENT

NTR, man of many roles

January 18 is the 25th death anniversary of the legendary actor-cum-politician



M SOMASEKHAR PRASAD

IT was around 6 am on 18th January 1996, I was having my cup of coffee at a roadside hotel near the bus station in our seedy town of Badvel. The radio in the hotel was relaying the morning 5-minute English news bulletin from Delhi on the Kadapa radio station. All of a sudden, the newsreader took a long pause and broke the sad and devastating news saying that "the former CM of Andhra Pradesh, N T Ramarao died of a massive cardiac arrest in the wee hours this morning". And the bulletin ended. The small group of people who were there in the hotel couldn't believe when I told them the sad news in Telugu. His sudden demise was really a big shock for all those who know that NTR followed a strict health regimen and was very healthy.

A dutiful son: Even as a child, according to his biographers K Chandrabhas and K Lakshminarayana, NTR often went to the fields with his parents and those visits instilled in him values and the principle of hard working. This made NTR what he was. He used to wake up very early in the morning and practise yoga and meditation.

As a high school student, NTR was bright and was known for his beautiful hand and illustrations. He even helped his father in his milk business and till the end he remained to be a dutiful son. But NTR failed in the Intermediate exams and was forced to marry at an early age. At this stage he was desperately in need of a job and for some time he worked as a court attendant for a salary of 64 rupees. Later he tried his hand in tobacco business and running a printing press but soon he burnt his fingers and wound them up.

A talented and tenacious student: Later NTR's father forced him to pursue a B A course in A C College Guntur, much against his will. NTR used to walk three kilometres to catch a train in Vijayawada to go to Guntur and this he did for three years. It was here that the actor in NTR came out and made waves on the stage when acting in combination with friend Kongara Jaggaiah. Within no time NTR made a name and this fetched him straight away an offer to act as the hero in a film from none other than producer and director C Pullaiah. As his aim was to clear the B A exams in one attempt, NTR had the temerity to turn down the offer. Later in the exams for the post of Sub -Registrar, NTR was one among the seven successful candidates out of about 937 but he worked in that post only for 11 days before finally boarding a train to Madras for a successful and scintillating acting career.

A people's person: When one becomes successful, most of us tend to use name and clout to further our personal aggrandisement. Only a few persons readily spare their power and purse for a public cause. NTR belonged to the latter category of people. Soon in his acting career he, taking a cue from the lives of actors like Bellary Raghava and Prithviraj Kapoor, NTR also took up the cause of helping people in the wake of severe drought in Rayalaseema in 1952.

With a small troupe of actors, NTR toured the state, staging shows and collecting donations for the Rayalaseema drought victims. In 60s and 70s, floods in Bihar were as regular as clockwork

and almost every time NTR went to people with a hat in hand and gave succour to people outside the State. He also gave his mite to many such people's causes and this laid the foundation for him for a memorable role as a people's leader in real life in later days. **A supportive man:** Though he became a successful and busy hero, NTR was always down to earth, helpful and supportive. He helped many new, and aspiring actors and other artists. NTR lent a hand to Sobhan Babu when he was struggling for film offers. Again when the young and ambitious Aswini Dutt came to Chennai to make a movie and approached NTR, he readily gave him dates and paired him with director Bapaiah. The rest is history. Aswini Dutt became a mega producer and made many blockbuster movies with NTR. For scores of film actors and artists, NTR gave a break in one way or other.

Again it was NTR who introduced Dr. C Narayana Reddy as a lyricist and the writer went on to pen thousands of memorable songs, winning many laurels. Their friendship continued even after NTR became a CM. Actor Satyanaraya is yet another actor who found in NTR a friend, guide and philosopher.

A superstitious star: NTR's love for the number 9 is too well known. The number plate on his official car bore 9999. Little is known about why he liked the number but perhaps destiny had it -- his native village "Nimmakuru" has nine letters in English, his first initial 'Nandamuri' too has nine letters in English and with his two initial, the name, 'N T Rama Rao' is also 9 in letters. And finally he died on January 18th(9 in total) at the age of 72 (again 9)!

Romantic in real life: NTR was very handsome and after entering the films, this quality became an Achilles' heel for him. He became involved with many women romantically and his wife, who gave him seven sons and four daughters, swallowed his infidelity with uncommon dignity. This romantic streak in him was like the dark spot in the Moon. In this regard NTR was like Ravana and Shakespeare's Antony who also had a magnetic pull towards women and suffered fatal setbacks in their lives. But in the sunset years of NTR life after his wife's death, this love for women became just a longing for companionship. At this stage yet another woman came into his life, permeating everything in both his personal and political life to a great deal till his tragic and untimely death in the year 1996. In his long and eventful life of 72 years, NTR wore many hats and donned many roles with ease and aplomb. Though he was an actor, producer, director, writer, and politician, NTR the man was behind all these roles. And the saying that, 'Character is destiny' perhaps fittingly holds a mirror to him, the man.

In their book, "NTR, a Biography" writers K Chandrabhas and K. Lakshminarayana in particular, who worked with NTR for long years and watched his life from close quarters, present an authenticated ringside view of NTR in his many and varied roles. Though there are a couple of biographies about NTR in the market, this biography is unique in the sense that the writers have written for the first time in simple English about all important aspects from his childhood to his last minutes in life.

World's biggest vaccination drive is on



AFTER struggling and fighting the pandemic for nearly an year, SII and Bharat Biotech manufactured indigenous vaccine seeing the light of the day as nation prepares to start vaccination is not only a proud moment for scientists, technicians and all connected but also a red-letter day in the annals of Indian history.

While the milestone achieved by India within a reasonably short period sends a message to the world about India's vaccine capability, it also heralds a new beginning by carving a niche in the pharma sector.

As this also marks India's entry into the exclusive V5 club thereby reinforcing the fact that India's covid-19 fight is significant as it all set to roll out the world's biggest vaccination programme. Obviously, hailing India's emergence as pharma power, the striking feature is making inroads in global supply chain which only goes to show its solid base and reliability.

Thus when the whole exercise was done in a most scientific and transparent manner with nothing to hide, opposition digging its heels to criticise must bury its hatchet and extend all out cooperation like the rest of the world openly acknowledging India's feat and its constructive role at the WHO and in strengthening Covax initiative which propelled to make more vaccines to cater to global needs thus marking its name as

"provider of global health security".

Notwithstanding, the drama enacted by vested interests failed to make any impact on people, the government going ahead with reviewing the preparedness and overseeing the last minute arrangements to remove pinpricks if any before the world's biggest vaccination drive takes off under the supervision of top health department officials gives added confidence to people.

This hopefully is expected to bring a great relief to the people from all the pains and sufferings they had undergone during the past one year. All said and done, as the countdown begins on Saturday, the sixteenth after extensive trials, the need of the hour is building trust and dispelling fear due to the fact that there may be inherent reactions like any other vaccine indicating the body is reacting favourably.

At the same time, it is imperative, government prepares itself well to clarify questions relating to any safety concerns raised by anyone during the ongoing vaccine drive in order to clear the air. Moreover, when world's largest vaccine drive is only to save humanity from the jaws of death, government should ensure that strict action is taken against anyone trying to scare people against the universal vaccination.

K R Srinivasan,
Secunderabad

Owaisi emerges as national Muslim leader

RECENTLY the BJP MP from Unnao Sakshi Maharaj has openly said that AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi has helped BJP in Bihar and he would continue to do so in UP and West Bengal as well. Right from Arvind Kejriwal to Akhilesh Yadav all are accusing that Owaisi is "B" team of BJP party. Mamata Banerjee alleged that BJP is trying to import Owaisi's AIMIM party in West Bengal to sharpen the communal polarisation.

After Bihar elections results the Congress and RJD has also termed Owaisi as an agent of the BJP and Owaisi will work as per Prime minister Narendra Modi's advice. Surprisingly, in Bihar elections Owaisi has targeted RJD instead of BJP. Now in UP also instead of BJP Owaisi's main target seems to be Akhilesh Yadav led Samajwadi party. Hence many doubt that Owaisi as BJP's B team because AIMIM is considering SP Party as its main rival party in UP instead of BJP. Many intellectuals are criticising that AIMIM contesting in elections is only benefitting BJP.

AIMIM faces two serious questions from its rivals that it is a vote katwa party (vote splitting party) and it is the BJP agent. Analyst and critics are in dilemma whether Owaisi's growth is hurting or aiding BJP. Critics say that Owaisi divides Muslim votes which will help



saffron party. and that when there is elections especially in Muslims dominates areas Owaisi fields his party candidates, despite knowing that he will not be able to defeat BJP or will be able to form government, but he will fight elections and BJP will get benefited. They say that AIMIM always divides Muslim votes which will benefit BJP.

Every coin has two sides. Owaisi has extended his party base from Telangana to Maharashtra to Bihar. Now he wants to expand his party's base to UP and West Bengal. Owaisi rightly says that he has every right to participate in every elections and everywhere in the country. So he has been making concrete effort to expand his parties base and there is nothing wrong in it.

Owaisi's popularity is increasing day by day and he is known as champion of Muslims. He has

great mass following among youth. Previously Muslims trusted Congress party but now they have lost faith and hope in it. Now they see Masiha (the saviour) in form of Owaisi. When CAA made Muslims feel like outsiders in their own land, it is Owaisi who stood for them.

It is Owaisi who fought against the gruesome rape and murder of Muslim girl child in Kathua, against Article 370 in Kashmir, against triple talaq and many more. Owaisi fights for the Dalits and downtrodden. Owaisi became country's most recognized Muslim politician. Now it is the duty of opposition parties, instead of criticizing Owaisi as B team of BJP, it will be better to these parties to have an understanding with AIMIM party in next coming elections, otherwise definitely BJP will be benefited because of AIMIM.

Zakir Hussain, Kazipet

Nattu's record unique

TAMIL Nadu pacer T Natarajan earned the unique distinction of becoming the first Indian cricketer to make his international debut across all three formats during the same tour. The yorker specialist, who came to Australia as a net bowler, scalped three victims on debut in the first innings of the final Test against the Kangaroos at the Gabba. Natarajan, whose mother worked as a daily wage, has taken rapid strides in international cricket and could give the seasoned quicks a run for their money. Way to go!



N J Ravi Chander, Bengaluru

Include TS tableau at least now

THE absence of the Tableau of Telangana in the 70th Republic Day parade in New Delhi, will be like a garden without Rose. (Miffed Telangana keeps away from R.day celebrations, 16 Jan). Whatever the reasons for exclusion, efforts can be made at least now, to include Telangana Tableau in the eleventh hour.

It is because, the participation of Telangana, which has a distinctly rich cultural heritage will certainly promote cultural unity, trade commerce and industries between the 29 States and 8 UTs of the country and in the globe. Therefore, the learned authorities in the Ministry of Defence and the state of Telangana are requested to work in tandem and showcase the rich Ganga Jamuna tehzeeb of Telangana to the people of this country.

P H Hema Sagar, Secunderabad

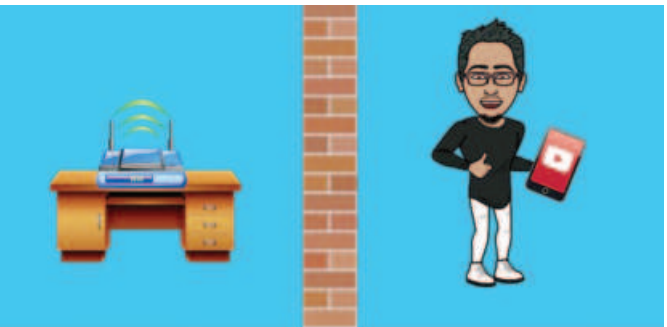
Our privacy is trapped between Apps and Wi-Fi signals

WITH the decision of WhatsApp management about its new policy on data sharing with Facebook the users of that messaging app are now switching over to other apps such as Signal and Telegram etc. Further, the statements of reputed technocrats Elan Musk (Tesla), Vijay Sekhar Sharma (Paytm) to avoid WhatsApp for data Privacy and security has made the people to lean towards alternate apps. Though the WhatsApp management has clarified about both the data privacy and data security nearly 1.78 crores of customers preferred Signal App and 1.57 crores of customers preferred Telegram App between January 5 -12.

These statistics speak the attitude of the customers on the protection of their personal information. The European countries are having tough data protection laws but in India, the picture is different such types of laws in a dormant state. Although

our Indian Parliament has initiated to bring in individual personal data protection bill on 11 December 2019, still it was in the womb of records.

Today the entire world is wriggling like that a fly trapped in the honey from social media. The social media groups that have interlaced the relations among the people with their efficiency now posing a threat to people and their personal information. The announcement of WhatsApp management has announced that the users in India should have to accept their new data sharing policy by February 8. As per the policy the personal information of the customers with Facebook and other groups of platforms. Further, one of its directors of policy has clarified that the rules remain unchanged in Europe. This announcement of the messaging platform has shocked its customers and raised many doubts on their data privacy.



On the Netflix platform, I have seen a documentary film "The social dilemma" three months ago that has been exposed to the toxic effect on humankind. This documentary consists of technocrats that worked in Facebook, Twitter, Uber-like social media giants, and designed programs for them. Their confession like statements frightening and thought-provoking. Their exemplary explanations about how customer's data used and abused make everyone experience heebie-jeebies.

Another film "The Great Hack" also gives details a data company "Cambridge Analytica" which symbolised the dark side of social media during 2016 US presidential election. This type of documentary should be included in academic concepts that could alert the young generations. Further, it is very easily perceptible that when we search a product on online platforms, we will receive notifications about the same product on social media platforms such as Facebook reflects

that data sharing is on. This is nothing but a deceitful breach of the laws of data privacy.

What is data privacy? Data Privacy is a part of the data protection area that deals with the proper handling of data with the focus on compliance with data protection regulations. It is centred on how the data is collected, stored, managed, and shared with any third parties. It is not only proper handling of the data but about the public expectation of privacy making an individual a key figure.

Data privacy focuses on the rights of individuals on their personal information following the law but data security meant preventing the third party from unauthorised access. Today the people are living to browse everything from their fingertips and sharing their personal information with many online platforms.

E.Gajendra Nath Reddy,
Badvel

Caste-based quota: What does ‘open category’ mean?

India still needs Ambedkar’s reservation idea but with its expanded scope

FATIMA HASAN

INDIA is not one of the advanced countries in the world which have no underprivileged classes, poverty and backwardness; rather, it is a developing nation which has fair percentage of its population who are backward and there is unequal distribution of income. In such a scenario, the concept of reservation is much needed in order to bring the backward population on par with the advanced sections of population of the country.

Then only, the principles of equality and justice can be achieved. Articles 14, 15 and 16 of the Indian Constitution provide for the right of equality in employment, access to education and in any promotions. The recent judgement of the Supreme Court in the Saurav Yadav and others versus the State of UP and others brought in the question of what does reservation mean and what all comes in its scope. It also enables the reserved categories to actually jump to the non-reserved categories on meritorious grounds.

The SC judgement can be acted upon for future purposes and for giving opportunity to candidates of horizontal and vertical reservations to access the open category seats with their own capacity. The historical judgement deters the government from using the open category as the reservation for upper castes. It did not just open the door for the women candidates but to all the reserved candidates to have opportunity on merit and pursue their career or do job in different fields like any general category person.

The three-judge bench, comprising Uday Umesh Lalit, S Ravindra Bhat and Hrishikesh Roy, observed that the candidates belonging to the reserved vertical category of OBCs, SCs, and STs can be appointed in the open category if they qualify on their own merit so that they are not counted under the reserved category. It has also resolved the disagreement that was there in filing the quota under horizontal reservations.



It is in a way encroachment on the non-reserved seats but at the same time meritorious selection is justifiable. On the face of it, it may appear to be encroachment on the non-reserved category. But when we vet it, we see that the reserved candidates are allowed to contest only on their own excellence and not upon their choice. Thus, it cannot be said that the reserved candidates are encroaching on the seats left for non-reserved sections. This is, in a way, a positive discrimination towards the reserved candidates.

The vertical reservation is different from horizontal reservation. We should not mistake between the vertical reservation and the horizontal reservation. Both are different but can be brought under one roof by giving cross-competing opportunities. The vertical reservation pertains to the SCs, STs and the other backward classes, while the horizontal reservation relates to the physical handicapped, army veterans, the freedom fighters and women.

The horizontal reservation cuts across the vertical reservation called the interlocking reservation. The percentage of reservations allotted to the horizontal reservation categories should be

adjusted against the percentage of OBCs, SCs, STs and general categories in the vertical reservation. This line of demarcation should not be misunderstood.

Can we forgo reservations without giving opportunities?

The judgment has also paved the way for scrapping the reservation policy in the long run. For instance, if a candidate belonging to the reserved category is given a chance and opportunity to contest with the person of non-reserved category on the merit basis then he can do so and this is how we can bring the unprivileged section out of that section. The whole idea of equality as enshrined in the Constitution revolves around fair opportunity and choices.

Are reservations to stay forever?

The question of whether the reservations should continue or not is long debatable one and not something that can be concluded with people divided into equal halves — those criticizing and supporting reservations. The reservation policy and its application to India’s scenario has to be clearly understood.

We can only expand its scope

by giving the reserved population the opportunity to contest with the general category candidates on merit basis. The 104th Amendment to the Constitution was brought in to extend the reservation for SCs and STs in Lok Sabha and Assemblies till 2030 and the abolition of Anglo-Indian representation in the Lok Sabha was justified as there were only 296 Anglo-Indians in the whole country as per 2011 Census though the figure is disputed.

But with 41 per cent and 48 per cent of OBC and women population respectively in the country, the reservation is a tool we will need for decades to come and actually it seems to be eternal. The introduction of the 10 per cent EWS quota itself justifies that India is not yet ready for total scrapping of reservation and that the country still very much needs it.

Hence, it can only be extended in its applicability and meaning but cannot be scrapped. So any argument against the reservation can die for now. One way to do it is that the capping percentage of reservation can be reduced slowly by enabling candidates to contest on merit and years later it may be scrapped. This can be done by open competition.

Cultural nationalism is here to stay

KARTIKEYA SHARMA

ON Friday, when President Ramnath Kovind donated Rs 5 lakh in personal capacity for the construction of Ram Temple in Ayodhya to the trust, life came a full circle for the Indian Republic. In 1951, when deputy Prime Minister Sardar Patel wanted the Somnath temple to be renovated by the Congress, it was opposed tooth and nail by Pandit Nehru, who wanted the new state to be at arm’s length from the renovation of the Somnath temple in Gujarat.

It led to a terse exchange of letters between Sardar Patel and India’s first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. The context was Somnath temple but the fight was over the idea of India and how the state will deal with religion in future. Nehru wanted distance but many in the Congress felt that Hinduism cannot be dealt with the European model of separating the state and the church.

Today the national consensus based on French secularism has been replaced by cultural nationalism promoted by the RSS. The latter has moved to the political fringe and former has become mainstream.

Nehru did not participate in the renovation of the temple. After Sardar Patel passed away, the matter was carried forward by another Cabinet Minister KM Munshi. Nehru was also opposed to President Rajendra Prasad attending the lingam installation ceremony which he eventually attended in 1951. Though money was raised from non-state actors by K M Munshi but it was enough to raise temperatures within the



Nehru government which had become very sensitive to the issue of religion. Despite Nehru’s objection Munshi and Rajendra Prasad ensured that they remained attached to the renovation project.

In fact the first Lok Sabha elections were fought by the Congress on the issue of communalism and inter-religious harmony. The construction of Ram Temple has become synonymous with national pride. Instead of remaining a legal issue about ownership of a piece of land, it became a matter of faith in the 1980s.

Though the meeting between the President and the Trust was personal in nature, it is a reflection of how mainstream acceptance of nationalism has changed in India. It marks a move from Constitutional Nationalism to Cultural Nationalism where the state does not feel uncomfortable with religious ceremonies. In the 1950s, for the Hindu Right group Somnath was symbol of a wounded Hindu pride as the temple was desecrated thrice over a period of 500 years.

The issue did not receive much traction because of Nehru’s lead-

ership but all this changed in next 50 years especially after Balasaheb Deoras became the RSS chief. He pushed the VHP to make the Ram Temple a political agenda and the BJP ultimately had to adopt it as their political agenda during the Palampur Session in Himachal Pradesh. It is for this reason that LK Advani started his Rath Yatra from Somnath temple for the construction of Ram Temple in 1990s.

The Indian Constitution during the Emergency also saw the word secular added to its preamble but the matter remained contentious even then. The difference is that there exists public acceptance to the phrase ‘cultural-nationalism’ and change in mindset towards the relationship of the state with Hindu religion.

It also reflects the realignment of Hinduism with nationalism. Whether, India of the future resets the clock or not, for now cultural nationalism is here to stay. The relationship between state and Hinduism has been further cemented through the process of through the process of judicial scrutiny and construction of the temple.

Another recession looms for UK economy as lockdowns bite

PAN PYLAS

THE British economy looks set to fall back into recession after official figures on Friday showed that it shrank by 2.6 per cent month-on-month in November, when much of the country was in a second coronavirus lockdown. The Office for National Statistics said that as a result of the fall, the economy is 8.5 per cent smaller than its pre-pandemic peak.

When the pandemic struck last spring, the economy contracted by up to a fifth over the first half of the year, before a summer easing of restrictions saw the economy recover a chunk of those losses. Because of the November fall, the economy is set to contract again in the fourth quarter. With most of the UK in an even tighter lockdown at the start of 2021 following a spike in new cases that has been blamed on a new variant of the virus in London and south-east England, it looks inevitable that the economy will shrink further in the first quarter of the year.

That means it will have contracted for two consecutive quarters, the technical definition of a recession. “It’s clear things will get harder before they get better and today’s figures highlight the scale of the challenge we face,” said Britain’s Treasury chief

Rishi Sunak. The November decline was not as bad as some economists feared, an indication that firms have managed to work out ways of selling their goods even when their doors are closed through on-line services.

The services sector was hit hard in November, shrinking by 3.4 per cent as rafts of hospitality and



The hope is that the rollout of coronavirus vaccines — the UK is ahead of many other countries — will see a pick-up in activity later this year. “While the economic story today is of only the second-ever double-dip recession on record, the story of the year will be a vaccine-driven bounce back in economic activity for sectors like hospitality and leisure,” said James Smith, research director of the Resolution Foundation

double-dip recession on record, the story of the year will be a vaccine-driven bounce back in economic activity for sectors like hospitality and leisure,” said James Smith, research director of the Resolution Foundation.

How dolphins are anchoring Chilika lake tourism

ZAFAR ABBAS

A dolphin jumps out of the brackish waters of Odisha’s famed Chilika lake and is the cynosure for all eyes on a boat on the lagoon. The boatman cuts off the engines in the middle of the lake as shrieks of excitement from the tourists escape. Seconds later, several pairs of eyes again hunt for a glimpse of the famed Irrawaddy dolphins keeps up the hide-and seek on the silver waters.

As the Sun maintains pace with the boat’s speed, some migratory birds together with white-bellied sea eagles, seagulls and kingfish-

ers try to divert attention from the lake. For Vibhu, the 44-year-old boatman on the Chilika lagoon from Satapada, it’s a routine evening which means any good day in terms of tourists footfall would get him more money to feed his family of 10.

Vibhu lives in a joint family, and life has not been easy amid the Covid times. The Chilika lake was closed during the worst phase of the pandemic for tourists forcing the boatmen and local fishers to pick up some other profession for a brief period.

“Now that the lake has reopened for tourists, we are expecting a good season. Tourists

have started visiting too and we wish the number would increase in the days ahead. We are dependent on the beauty of this eco-system in Chilika lake to attract tourists specially the Irrawaddy dolphins which is one of the major attraction,” Vibhu said.

Vibhu says that he also drives the boat of the fishermen when business is low in terms of tourists.

Another boatman Lakhwinder says that they used to ferry tourists several times in normal

times but now things have changed.

“We go to the lake by serial number. The number of rounds we make in the lake is directly proportional to the footfall in Chilika. We expect that with time more people would visit,” Lakhwinder says.

According to the Dolphin Motorboat Association, the charges for one hour is Rs 900. The charges amplify by the time duration and number of spots the tourists visits in the lake.



2020 was one of three warmest years on record

YOSHITA SINGH

THE year 2020 was one of the three warmest years on record and rivalled 2016 for the top spot, indicating the pace of the “human-induced” climate change which is now as powerful as the force of nature, the UN weather agency has said. All five datasets surveyed by the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) concur that 2011-2020 was the warmest decade on record, in a persistent long-term climate change trend.

The warmest six years have all been since 2015, with 2016, 2019 and 2020 being the top three. The differences in average global temperatures among the three warmest years are indistinguishably small. The average global temperature in 2020 was about 14.9°C, 1.2 (± 0.1) °C above the pre-industrial (1850-1900) level.

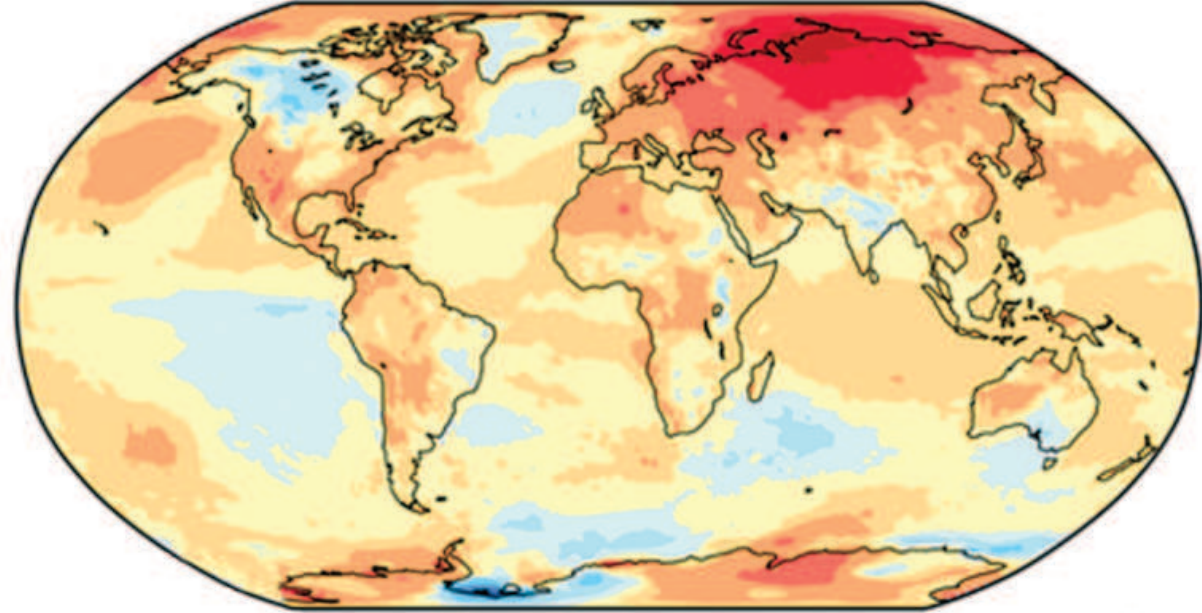
“The confirmation by the World Meteorological Organisation that 2020 was one of the warmest years on record is yet another stark reminder of the relentless pace of climate change, which is destroying lives and livelihoods across our planet,” Secretary-General António Guterres said. He pointed out that at 1.2 degrees of warming above pre-industrial levels, the world is al-

ready witnessing unprecedented weather extremes in every region and on every continent.

“We are headed for a catastrophic temperature rise of 3 to 5 degrees Celsius this century,” he said. “Making peace with nature is the defining task of the 21st century. It must be the top priority for everyone, everywhere,” he said. La Nina, which began in late last year, is expected to continue into the early-middle part of 2021.

La Nina refers to the large-scale cooling of the ocean surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean, coupled with changes in the tropical atmospheric circulation, namely winds, pressure and rainfall. It usually has the opposite impacts on weather and climate as El Nino, which is the warm phase of the so-called El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO).

“The exceptional heat of 2020 is despite a La Nina event, which has a temporary cooling effect,” WMO Secretary-General Petteri Taalas said. La Nina and El Nino effects on average global temperatures are typically strongest in the second year of the event. “It is remarkable that temperatures in 2020 were virtually on a par with 2016, when we saw one of the strongest El Nino warming events on record,” he added.



“This is a clear indication that the global signal from human-induced climate change is now as powerful as the force of nature,” Taalas said. The extent to which the continued cooling effects of La Nina this year may temporarily

diminish the overall long-term warming trend remains to be seen. The WMO pointed to sustained heat and wildfires in Siberia, diminishing Arctic sea ice and record-breaking hurricanes in the Atlantic as being among the climate

events that most stood out in 2020.

The UN weather agency said that temperature is just one climate change indicator. Greenhouse gas concentrations, ocean heat content, global mean sea level, sea ice extent and extreme

events are also factors. The WMO’s consolidated global temperature update incorporates information from five leading international sets of data. It also uses datasets that combine millions of meteorological and marine observations, including from satellites, with models to produce a complete reanalysis of the atmosphere.

“The combination of observations with models makes it possible to estimate temperatures at any time and in any place across the globe, even in data-sparse areas such as the polar regions,” according to WMO. The Paris Agreement aims to limit global warming to well below 2°C, preferably to 1.5°C degrees, compared to pre-industrial levels.

However, the global average temperature in 2020 had already approached the lower limit of the temperature increase that the Agreement seeks to avert. Moreover, there is at least a one-in-five chance that the average global temperature will temporarily exceed 1.5 °C by 2024, according to WMO’s Global Annual to Decadal Climate Update, led by the United Kingdom’s Met Office. The 2021 Met Office annual global temperature forecast also suggests that next year will again be one of the earth’s hottest years

Quality of startup ideas, execution increased significantly in recent yrs

K RAJANI KANTH

What is the investment philosophy that you follow at SucSEED?

The genesis of the fund was the need to spot, nurture and catalyse the growth of early-stage technology startups. We typically invest in promising pre-revenue startups with interesting use of technology, seeded in research institutions or otherwise, that have their products built. Ours is a long-term engagement model to fund and support them through three stages of capital during their growth – Bucket A (seed capital), Bucket B (growth capital) and Bucket C (pre-series A funding). SucSEED has a unique philosophy of being a meaningful part of the startup journey for a much longer duration than most conventional funds do.

SucSEED has recently closed its maiden Rs 100-crore fund. How many startups is the fund aiming to support, over how many stages and in which sectors?

We recently raised Rs 40 crore, marking the first closure of our maiden Rs 100-crore fund. The fund aims to nurture and promote Indian innovation by supporting early-stage technology-enabled startups in six emerging sectors such as healthtech, edtech, fintech, enterprise SaaS, cyber security and regtech, digital economy and smart living, using emerging deeptech innovations.

The fund has already identified three startups – Stargate (a direct-to-direct cross-border platform for curated lifestyle products), Auris (an AI-powered insights platform that curates insights in real-time to capture, enrich and analyse data) and Freestand (a marketing tech platform that enables FMCG brands to deliver physical product samples to digitally targeted customers) – for investment and has signed term sheets. Further, we have shortlisted three startups in healthtech and regtech space, where the due diligence is still underway. Our goal is to close over 80 investments in 52-odd startups over a three-year deployment period. Many of our investments in the first two years would be in the Bucket A category to provide them opportunity to grow during the fund life with capital allocation for different stages of fund support. We hope to accomplish this as we tap into new potential early-stage ventures.

Is SucSEED looking at floating its second fund? How big would this second fund be and which are the sectors that it would focus on to invest in?

Any successful fund house would have its

Hyderabad-headquartered SucSEED Indovation Fund is a Sebi-registered alternative investment fund (AIF-I) venture capital fund grown out of SucSEED Angel Network and IIITH Tech Ventures. The fund addresses the under-served formal fund needs of seed-stage tech startups. “It will drive investments in seed to pre-Series A-stages and will help portfolio companies to strengthen their product offerings, go-to-market strategy and build governance structure so that they progress to become category leaders,” **Vikrant Varshney**, Co-founder and Managing Partner of the fund, tells **Bizz Buzz**

SucSEED's goal is to close more than 80 investments in 52-odd startups over a three-year deployment period



Vikrant Varshney, Co-founder, Managing Partner, SucSEED

second and third funds in mind, too, to support various sectors or different investment themes. Having said that, our current focus is to raise, manage, deploy and deliver the objectives of the first fund to utmost satisfactions of our investment partners. Through the first fund, we are adding value to the ecosystem by discovering and supporting deeptech innovations which are supporting the problem statements of masses in the six sectors of our focus.

Our fund operations of discovering 30-odd investments in a year would mean, screening 4,000-odd startups and spotting opportunities through various rounds of conversations with them, which is quite an intense process to manage in itself. We already have around 10 partnerships in place with tech incubators like IIIT Hyderabad CIE, IIT Madras Incubation Cell, IIT Ropar TBIF and many focused accelerators like Pad-up, T-Hub and KSUM, which would drive the bottom-up discovery of such startups in our portfolio. We intend to have more than 50 such partnerships with an aim to get to such startups with strong value proposition into our portfolio and work with them to co-create serious growth and success for the Indian innovation ecosystem. SucSEED's second closing is targeted for March 2021, with a focus on corporate ventures, financial institutions, institutional entities, fund of funds, and family offices to join Indovation for discovery and growth of the early-stage segment.

Currently, which technology trends excite you the most?

It's always exciting when we see technology being used creatively to solve problems. Out-of-the-box solutions are even more exciting. The

quality of startup ideas and execution has increased significantly in the recent years. The background of the founders and their connect to the problems is much better. Technology is used to resolve / address these problems by design at the base rather than use technology just for tech sake or for using tech for management support only. Lately, there seems to be some very good solutions coming up using various facets of deeptech (AI, machine learning, computer vision, blockchain etc), which needs to be encouraged for building IP-based products and solutions, specifically using sensory inputs like cameras and other devices. Also, layers of intelligence are being used even in conventional enterprise solutions to enable predictive functionality for better user experience. Devices and hardware-centered startups in general also seem to be increasing. The pandemic has also brought in a wave of new technologies to enable contactless solutions.

Despite witnessing record funding year after year, many foreign investors opine that India is still an under-invested market. What is your take on this?

The issue is more of quality than quantity. There are sufficient funds already. The issue is more around discovery of not enough investible startups. Most funds look for startups that have proven their initial premise and have started to become known in their segment. But this typically takes one to three years for a startup to get to this stage. Till then, there is very little structured support available, especially from fund houses. This lack of high-quality support delays the growth of promising startups, many of whom outrun their runway and are forced to

shut down. Sometimes, delay in getting institutional fundings at an early stage delays the growth of their deeptech innovation and in the meantime, global proposition grows in a parallel window. Our belief is that more support is needed in earlier stages and that's why our fund starts to support from incubation space and helps them with funds regularly during their growth lifecycle if they are meeting their vision and execution milestones. Startups during the later stages have sufficient fund liquidity available even now and we have seen many startups becoming prominent from that category.

What have been your biggest learnings from the pandemic period, and any takeaways for the startup ecosystem?

One of the most heartening observations is that the pandemic has neither dampened the spirit of startups nor impacted use-cases by clients / customers. In fact, if anything, many seem to have marched forward with increased resolve and market has much higher acceptability towards digital / tech solutions. The only thing which was visible during the pandemic was lack of funds being disbursed by large fund houses as they took a cautious approach. However, funding continued at the seed, angel and growth stages. It's known that many startups brought disruptive solutions during the 2008 global crises, which became global ventures and unicorns within 7-10 years horizon. Continuing with the same trend, a lot of good solutions have been conceived during, and due to, this pandemic crises, too. Quality of thinking and execution has surely honed up the founders' ability to march ahead in difficult times. 2021 is looking very promising.

India bond yields surge in four months as RBI drains cash

The reverse repo cutoffs are a clear sign that RBI wants to align money market yields above the operational policy rate

SUBHADIP SIRCAR & KARTIK GOYAL

INDIA's bond yields surged the most in four months after the nation's central bank drained 2 trillion rupees (\$274 billion) from the banking system at a higher-than-expected rate.

The cutoff for the 14-day reverse repurchase operation was set at 3.55 per cent, 20 basis

points higher than the Reserve Bank of India's reverse repo rate of 3.35 per cent, and 3.5 per cent forecast by seven traders in a survey. The central bank got bids worth 3.06 trillion rupees, it said. The cutoff fuelled investor concerns that the RBI was signalling higher rates. The yield on the 5.15 per cent 2025 bond was up 10 basis points to 5.33 per cent, taking its advance for the week to 23 basis points. The benchmark 10-year bond rose 6 basis points to 5.95 per cent on Friday, the most since September 10. The RBI announced an open market bond purchase of 100 billion rupees for January 21 after market close.

“A combination of factors weighed on yields including higher cutoffs at the reverse repo, delay in RBI's open-market announcement and higher U.S. yields,” said Vijay Sharma, executive vice president for fixed-income at PNB Gilts Ltd. Since the RBI has now announced the OMO, long-end yields are likely to go back into the last one-month's range, he said. The RBI is draining excess cash after money-market rates crashed way below its 3.35 per cent-4.00 per cent interest-rate corridor late last year, spurring calls from investors to remedy a situation that could distort banks'



asset pricing. Too sharp a rise could drive volatility and raise concerns that the central bank is withdrawing stimulus support.

“The reverse repo cutoffs are a clear sign that RBI wants to align money market yields above the operational policy rate, which is the reverse repo rate,” said Arvind Chari, head of fixed income and alternatives at Quantum Advisors Pvt Ltd. “The cutoffs at the

next two to three auctions will be crucial to see if this indeed is the start of normalization of monetary policy.”

Short-term bonds sold off after the RBI's announcement last week to drain liquidity, as the market interpreted

it as the start of a sooner-than-anticipated withdrawal of ultra-loose liquidity accommodation. Borrowing costs for Indian companies also surged, a fallout that the RBI would like to avoid amid a nascent growth recovery. The RBI has since met with bank executives to assure them that easy policy will continue, according to people with knowledge of the matter. People's Bank of China, another Asian central bank, too withdrew cash from the financial system for the first time in six months on Friday.

The reverse repo auction alone may not be enough to support money-market rates given the high level of banking-system liquidity, according to ICICI Securities Primary Dealership Ltd. The RBI may need to provide explain its liquidity normalization process, such as laying out steps and a time table for a reversal of its emergency policy accommodation, economists including A Prasanna at the dealership wrote in a note this week. (Bloomberg)

Nobody wants to invest in an unstable country

Political instability might lead to low investment, productivity and growth

NOAH SMITH

POLITICAL violence in the US can reduce confidence in the country's stability, adding a risk premium to Treasury bonds and thus undermining the financial system. But that fallout, which I wrote about earlier this week, is far from the only possible economic consequences of the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol and threats of continuing mayhem. Exports, investment and many other features of the physical economy could be directly affected.

Research has drawn a clear and consistent link between political instability and economic slowdowns. In 2011, the International Monetary Fund looked at a large sample of countries and found that various measures of political instability were correlated with lower subsequent economic growth from 1960 through 2004. An earlier paper by economist Alberto Alesina found similar results. In unstable countries, investment is somewhat lower and productivity growth is substantially reduced.

This makes sense because instability increases uncertainty. If you're a businessperson and you don't know who's going to be in charge of the country in a year, it makes sense not to make any big investments that might be seized by the government, regulated out of existence or destroyed in a wave of violence. Lower productivity can be a result of less investment in new product development and new market entry, a worsening regulatory climate, misdirected investment or a host of other problems.

In the US, fear of political pandemonium could easily dampen entrepreneurship. If you look five years into the future and see the possibility of continuing unrest even if it doesn't reach the threshold of civil war you might think twice about starting a business here. This is especially true for immigrants, who start a disproportionate number of American businesses, and who often have the option of returning to their home countries. Less entrepreneurship means less innovation, slower technological progress and less competitiveness relative to China.

Instability will also hurt US businesses by robbing them of highly skilled labor from overseas. Who wants to move to a country where foreigners might be targeted and attacked? In fact, the Donald



Trump era has already seen a big decrease in legal immigration, much of which is of the skilled variety.

Foreign investors, too, will perceive a worsening business climate. Since the 1970s, foreign direct investment has become an increasingly important part of the U.S. economy.

Foreign Money Matters

This includes ventures like Toyota car factories in Kentucky, Airbus factories in Alabama and Volkswagen factories in Tennessee. Those foreign companies employ lots of American workers — about 8.5% of the entire U.S. labor force. If those companies perceive the U.S. as an unstable place, they may decide to put their next factory elsewhere, or even pull out entirely.

Overseas, too, American companies may suffer due to a perception that the U.S. is unstable. Businesses that buy U.S. exports semiconductor manufacturing equipment or construction equipment or computer chips may decide not to enter into long-term relationships with American suppliers. They won't want to be left suddenly bereft of crucial parts or machinery if violence or swiftly changing political winds disrupt American businesses. Reduced exports, again, means fewer jobs and lower wages for Americans.

And this isn't even taking into account the political and institutional ramifications of instability. President Trump's meddling with the Centers for Disease Control during a pandemic demonstrates all too clearly how leaders that arise from civil strife and instability can dam-

age critical institutions for their own political gain. Hugo Chavez' gutting of Venezuela's state-owned oil company is an even more dramatic example.

Government institutions are a critical complement to the private sector. They set the regulatory climate, provide certain critical services and maintain infrastructure. Staffing these institutions with cronies and hacks while purging them of the opposing side's appointees dramatically reduces their competence and vastly increases the uncertainty faced by every business that has to deal with them (which is effectively every business in the land).

Political chaos can also inhibit the government from making necessary investments in infrastructure. The more the country feels like it's in a state of civil strife, the less likely Congress is to approve big, forward-looking spending initiatives like road and bridge repair, green energy construction, broadband or a new electrical grid. That hurts every private business that depends on that infrastructure.

These effects could easily produce the kind of economic slowdown in the U.S. that we're used to seeing in countries like Venezuela, Thailand or Turkey. Declines in investment, productivity growth, entrepreneurship, labor demand and government competence would punish U.S. workers and business owners alike, even if the financial system manages to remain stable. Everyone in the country has an interest in quelling the current wave of violence inspired by Trump to bring political uncertainty and strife to a rapid end. (Bloomberg)

Do away with multi-tax system for cap market income: ANMI

NEW DELHI

AS the Union Budget for FY21-22 nears, stockbrokers have sought rationalisation and streamlining of the structure for the capital market. The industry body stockbrokers Association of National Exchanges Member of India (ANMEI) has written to Central Bank Direct Taxation (CBDT) on doing away with the multiple classification system for calculating tax on capital market income. In a statement, ANMI noted that financial markets worldwide play an important role in garnering growth capital for the economy. In the years following the coronavirus pandemic, catalysing equity market participation will hold the key to reviving India's GDP growth, it added. ANMI has urged the government to incentivise and encourage equity market investments by streamlining the tax structure applicable for market transactions in the Union Budget for the financial year 2021-22.

It has pointed out that in India, currently, there are multiple classifications for capital market income, such as speculative income, business income among others. While the intraday cash market trading is classified as speculative income, the intraday derivatives trade, on the other hand, is classified as business income.

“In fact, except India, no other country has this concept of speculative income. Globally trading positions are treated as ordinary business income and investment positions are treated as capital gains,” it said.

This large variety of classification of income arising out of capital market transactions is creating fungibility problems with respect to profit or loss incurred in different types of trades, ANMI said.

The industry body also said that to boost equity market participation, the concept of speculative income should be done away with in the forthcoming Union Budget. Also, like global markets, there should be limited categories of classification of incomes - Business Income, Long-term Capital Gain and Short-term Capital Gain, for the ease of the taxpayer.

QUIZ NO. 156

HANS BIZ QUIZ

WIKIPEDIA TURNS 20

1. Wikipedia has 35 million active editors. An average of 650 new articles a day just on the English Wikipedia site. When was Wikipedia launched?

- a) 20 January 2001 b) 17 January 2001
c) 15 January 2001 d) 1 January 2001

2. Wikipedia is one of the 15 most popular websites as ranked by Alexa. Over 2,80,000 people edit Wikipedia every month. Which three language versions of Wikipedia are the most popular?

- a) English, German and French
b) English, Mandarin Chinese and Bengali
c) English, Spanish and Russian
d) Spanish, English and Hindi

3. Wikipedia articles have been created in 317 language editions under the Wikimedia Foundation's auspices. Languages that meet specific criteria can get their version of Wikipedia, and more than ten versions of Wiki were closed due to a lack of active readers. Which language versions of Wiki still exist?

- a) Afar, Ndonga, Marshallese
b) Adyghe, Bislama, Corsican, Dzongkha
c) Choctaw, Hiri Motu, Herero
d) Kanuri, Kwanyama, Yi, Muscogee

4. Wikivoyage, an ultimate travel guide, aims to create the world's most extensive free, complete, and up-to-date worldwide travel guide. Which of the below is a library of freely licensed source texts and historical documents, including government documents, constitutions of many countries, poetry, and general literature?

- a) Wikisource b) MediaWiki
c) Wikimedia d) Wikilibrary

5. The Wikimedia Foundation is the non-profit organisation that hosts Wikipedia and our other free knowledge projects. Jimmy Wales and Larry Sanger launched Wikipedia. Who coined the name 'Wikimedia' as a portmanteau of "wiki" and "encyclopedia"?

- a) Vinton Gray Cerf
b) Sir Timothy John Berners-Lee
c) Jimmy Wales d) Larry Sange

6. Wikipedia runs the 'Wiki Women in Red' campaign to help close Wikipedia's gender gap by writing women's biographies. Which country's Foreign Ministry runs the WikiGap to strengthen women's and girls' rights, representation, and resources?

- a) Australia b) Luxembourg
c) Sweden d) Finland

7. China blocked Wikipedia in June 2004, ahead of the 15th anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests and rejected proposals to practice self-censorship in a bid to restore the site. In July 2014, which of the below was banned by Wikipedia from editing the content?

- a) IP addresses of Chinese Citizens
b) IP addresses of the US Congress
c) IP addresses of Arab and Middle Eastern Journalists Association
d) IP addresses of Members of the Federal Assembly of Russia

8. Wikipedia's vary in orthography. Chinese Wikipedia automatically translates from modern Mandarin Chinese into five standard forms- Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan, Singapore, and Mainland China.

What is the least popular but still active language version of Wikipedia?

- a) Fiji Hindi b) Bashkir
c) Cheyenne d) Soomaaliga

9. Every year, dozens of volunteer- and partner-led campaigns take place around the world to strengthen Wikipedia and other free knowledge projects. Wikipedia's official theme song 'Hotel Wikipedia' that is explicitly made for Wikipedia holics is a spinoff of which famous album?

- a) Hello, is it me you're looking for? Lionel Richie
b) Fields Of Gold, Sting
d) Tell all the people, The Doors
d) Hotel California, Eagles

10. A section of political ideologists in the US believe that Wikipedia has a liberal bias, so they've started up a competing website. Identify?

- a) Authoritarians b) Centristspedia
c) Conservapedia d) Populism

The Hans Biz Quiz has been compiled by **Sunil Dhavala**, CEO, The Third Umpire Media. He had held senior management roles at Bertelsmann, NGC, Fox Broadcasting, Star TV and others. He is an alumnus of Indian Institute of Foreign Trade

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AFTER ROOKIE ATTACK RESTRICTS AUSTRALIA TO 369

Rohit's dismissal puts India on backfoot

BRISBANE (PTI)

ROHIT Sharma's indiscreet shot selection pegged India back after rookie bowling attack restricted Australia to 369 on a rain-curtailed second day of the fourth Test on Saturday. With heavy thunder-showers preventing any play in the post tea session, India ended the day at 62 for two. Rohit was elegant as ever in his 44 off 74 balls before Nathan Lyon in his 100th Test enticed him to come down the track but the half-chip-half-loft was safely pounced by Mitchell Starc in the deep.

India also lost Shubman Gill (7) who edged one off Pat Cummins to Steve Smith. Cheteshwar Pujara (8) and Ajinkya Rahane (2) added only two runs in the 6.1 overs before the break. There were six boundaries from Rohit but he did not fiddle at deliveries in and around the off-stump channel even as Cummins and Josh Hazlewood bowled a testing spell under overcast conditions.

The shot of the session was an on-drive off Cummins which came after a streaky boundary through the slips in the same over. Another delightful stroke was an off-drive off Cameron Green as 49 runs were added for the second wicket. There wasn't much swing on offer but the pace off the track has increased compared to the first day and it only helped that the Australian pace attack is a

more well built one with average speed being at least 6-7 kmph more than their Indian counterparts.

Pujara, at the other end was playing his usual 'grinding out' game but it didn't look too arduous till Rohit kept the scoreboard ticking at the other end. It wouldn't be an over statement to say that among all top order batsman across both sides, Rohit looked the most comfortable and till his dismissal never looked like being troubled by the four-pronged attack. However as has been his wont in SENA countries, Rohit just before the tea break went after Lyon when the situation demanded that he could have played for

session-end. It was very similar to his dismissal off Moeen Ali at the stroke of tea during the 2014 series and that was also after being set in the middle-order.

India, who have been forced to field a depleted side won't mind an inclement weather which effectively makes the home team more jittery as a draw would be enough for Ajinkya Rahane to lift the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. In the first session, India's rookie bowling line-up did put up a lion-hearted effort, getting the last five wickets for 95 runs. Shardul Thakur (3/94) along with debutants Washington Sundar (3/89) and Thangarasu Natarajan (3/78) got the breakthroughs while Mohammed Siraj (28-

10-77-1) got one on the opening day. For an attack as thin on experience as India, the effort in adverse times can only be commended.

India lost five main bowlers through the three Test matches and were forced to hand Test debuts to Natarajan and Washington. Nathan Lyon (24 off 22 balls) and Mitchell Starc (20 off 35 balls) counter-attacked the inexperienced Indian attack with a brisk 39-run partnership to take Australia past 350-run mark. Going by statistics, Australia have never lost a Test match at the Gabba after scoring 350 in the first innings.

Resuming at 274 for five, Tim Paine (50) and Cameron Green (47) extended their stand to 98 before the home team encountered a mini-collapse. Thakur bowled a fuller delivery that shaped away and Paine's lazy drive without going to the pitch of the delivery saw Rohit Sharma take a regulation catch at the second slip. Paine was just getting into the groove with some good drives when Thakur provided the breakthrough. With the partnership broken, Green probably lost his concentration as he played for the turn to an angle delivery from Sundar which straightened after pitching and

‘Don’t regret playing that shot off Lyon’

BRISBANE (PTI)

ROHIT Sharma understands the criticism that his untimely dismissal has invited but the India vice-captain has “no regrets” about going after Nathan Lyon, saying that’s his way of putting bowlers under pressure.

Rohit looked in good touch during his 44 off 74 balls but was dismissed trying to loft Lyon over mid-wicket, the kind of shots that has often brought about his dismissal even during earlier Test matches.

“You always have a plan and I actually have no regret of playing that shot. It is something that I always like to do --- put pressure on bowlers. Nathan Lyon is a smart bowler and he bowled into me which made it difficult for me to get some elevation,” Rohit said at the post-match virtual conference. His shot selection invited criticism from the commentary box. India were 62 for two at stumps when Rohit could have gone for a big score after a good start. Rohit understands the disappointment-

ment but in his defence would explain why he went for that kind of a high-risk stroke.

“It’s not that it is (that shot) coming out of nowhere. It’s a shot that I have played well in the past. That’s something that I back myself to play and that’s the kind of role I play in this team. When it looks like that, it looks bad, but I don’t think too much as my focus is to make it count once I am in,” he said. “Having said that, there is a process I like to follow. Sometimes you get out and sometimes it goes over the ropes. Unfortunate and sad dismissal in the end to be honest. Like I said, those are my shots and I will keep playing them,” the senior player was forthright about his mind-set.

On the match situation, Rohit said that although 369 at the Gabba was a very good first innings score and there is no reason why India with two of their most seasoned campaigners at the crease can’t match the home team’s total on a good batting track. “We have got solid batters to come in now. Two of the most experienced players are still out there in the middle. The pitch is good and I don’t see any reason why we can’t get to that total of first innings.”

His advice for the batsmen is to play session by session rather than looking at the final total. “We should focus on what’s there in front of us rather than thinking too far ahead. It’s a big score and we have to focus on sessions, take it as it comes. The pitch is playing good and we have to back ourselves. We have the guys to do it and I don’t see why we can bat well on day three,” he said.



Thirimanne helps Sri Lanka cut England's lead to 130

GALLE (SRI LANKA (AP))

LAHIRU Thirimanne led Sri Lanka's gallant fightback to cut England's lead to 130 after captain Joe Root hit his fourth double test century on the third day of the first cricket test on Saturday.

Root's 228 had provided England a strong total of 421 and a meaningful first innings lead of 286, but Thirimanne stood firm for two sessions to remain unbeaten on 76 off 189 balls and carried Sri Lanka to 156-2 at stumps. Thirimanne's patient knock which included six boundaries was in sharp contrast to Sri Lanka's first innings effort when the whole team was rattled for 135 in two sessions on the first day. England had an opportunity to remove Thirimanne soon after the left-hander had completed his half century, but Dom Sibley spilled a two-handed catch at gully. England also wasted one of its three reviews as it unsuccessfully went for an lbw decision against Thirimanne when he was on 61. Thirimanne and Kusal Perera started a steady fightback with their 101-run opening wicket stand as they thwarted the spin threat of Jack Leach and Dom Bess on a turning wicket. Perera shelved his strokemaking in scoring 62 off 109 balls and even batted with a strapped hand after he was struck by Mark Wood's short pitch delivery in the middle session before England struck twice after tea.

Perera threw away his wicket early in the last session when he played a rash shot off Sam Curran's wayward de-



livery and holed out in the deep. Kusal Mendis, who had failed to score in his previous four test innings, labored for 65 deliveries in scoring 15 runs, but added 54 runs with Thirimanne to defy England's hopes of making inroads. Leach finally struck in the penultimate over of the day when he found the thin edge of Mendis' bat to provide England some relief. Earlier, Root hit 18 fours and a six in his well-composed double century off 321 balls before England was bowled out just before lunch. Dilruwan Perera ended Root's long vigil, which began in the last session on the first day, when he had England's skipper caught at deep mid-wicket off an extravagant shot as the offspinner finished with 4-109.

Resuming on 320-4, Root continued to dominate spinners despite Sri Lanka hitting back with three wickets in 12 balls. Fast bowler Asitha Fernando (2-44) had the overnight batsman Jos Buttler (30) caught behind and Sam Curran was clean bowled off the next ball before Bess, who survived the hat-trick ball was run-out in a mix-up with Root.

Indian fan complains of racism at SCG during third Test

SYDNEY (PTI)

SYDNEY Cricket Ground officials have launched an investigation after an Indian supporter alleged that he was subjected to racial profiling and abuse by a security officer during the final day of the third Test against Australia.

The incident took place after Indian fast bowler Mohammed Siraj was allegedly racially abused by spectators on the third and fourth day of the drawn Test at SCG.

Sydney resident Krishna Kumar met Venues NSW legal personnel on Thursday to lodge an official complaint, accusing the security at the venue of racial profiling and unjustified frisking. He informed the authorities that he felt “stripped and naked” by his treatment on the final day of the third Test (January 11), according to a report in the ‘Sydney Morning Herald’.

Kumar, who attended three days' play of the third Test, told Venues NSW that he was targeted after trying to carry four banners reading: “Rivalry is good, racism is not”, “No racism mate”, “Brown inclusion matters” and “Cricket Australia more diversity please”. A security officer stopped Kumar, informing him that that one of the banners exceeded the permitted dimensions.

Kerala's Azharuddeen enjoying his moment under the sun

SHYAM SUNDAR CHENNAI

KERALA's Mohammed Azharuddeen wouldn't have set out on the arduous journey to emulate the Mohammed Azharuddin of Hyderabad, if not for a cricket-crazy elder brother and a die-hard fan of the former India captain. From his name to his career option, everything to do with Azharuddeen was decided by Kamaruddeen.

The journey continues, though. While the first step towards fulfilling his family's dream was taken when he was chosen to represent Kerala in 2015, he shot into the national limelight recently with his 37-ball 100 in the domestic T20 Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy match against Mumbai.

“I have met him like twice or thrice. Once in my hometown and once in Hyderabad when we were there to play Ranji Trophy and he was the head coach of Hyderabad.



I shared the story of how I was named after him with Mohd Azharuddin sir,” Azharuddeen told PTI. “To be frank, like my elder brother, I did not follow Azharuddin sir. I have just watched a few videos of his on Youtube,” the Kerala stumper added.

The 26-year-old from Thalangara in north Kerala's Kasaragod town, known for its love for cricket rather than football, said the blistering knock would have surely pleased his brother Kamaruddeen, who had changed his youngest brother's name from Ajmal to Azharuddeen after his birth. Azharuddeen has seven brothers and all are big-time cricket fans.

Rooney stops playing to take Derby manager job permanently

LONDON (AP)

ALL-time record scorer for England and Manchester United. A haul of 16 trophies. Wayne Rooney's illustrious playing career is over. The former England and United captain has decided it's time to focus on trying to replicate his successes as a striker in management. After taking temporary charge of Derby in November — as a player-coach — the 35-year-old Rooney has accepted the manager's job on a permanent basis with the second division club through 2023. “It's a great feeling to go into management full-time,” Rooney said on Friday. “It's something that I've been preparing for, working for a few years now. Obviously had a taste of it over the last couple of months and I've enjoyed it.” Rooney has enjoyed three victories and four draws in his nine



games at the helm of Derby, which remains in the relegation zone. It's been 13 years since Derby played in the Premier League — a competition Rooney won five times after joining United from Everton at age 18 along with tasting glory in the Champions League, FA Cup, League Cup, Club World Cup and Community Shield.

“I've had a great career, I've enjoyed every minute,” Rooney said. “Some ups, some downs, I wouldn't change anything I've done in my career as a player.” It was often a tempestuous playing career, with

the fiery Rooney embroiled in controversies in his private life and hot-headedness in games. It is experience he will be able to draw on while nurturing future talents. At United, Rooney worked under the greatest British manager of all-time in Alex Ferguson.

With England, he witnessed more of the instabilities of coaching as a talented group of players never came close to winning a trophy. “Hopefully I can now start to write some history and have a successful managerial career,” Rooney said. Rooney, just like at United with his 253 goals, overtook 1966 World Cup winner Bobby Charlton as England's record scorer by netting 53 times in 120 appearances — the last in 2018 at Wembley Stadium against the United States. “He did it all,” former United and England teammate Rio Ferdinand said.



Pandya brothers' father Himanshu passes away

VADODARA (PTI)

INDIA all-rounder Hardik Pandya and his brother Krunal's father Himanshu has died. Krunal, who was leading Baroda in the Syed Mushtaq Ali trophy, has left the bio-bubble created for the tournament to be with his family, association secretary Ajit Lele told PTI. Hardik is not playing the national T20 tournament as he is preparing for the white-ball series against England. Himanshu had played a key role in the success of his cricketer sons. Krunal scored a match-winning 76 in the opening game against Uttarakhand and has also taken four wickets in the first three games.

Former India pacer Irfan Pathan took to Twitter and paid his condolences. “Remember meeting uncle for the first time at motibagh. He was so keen for his sons to play good cricket. My condolences to You and family. May god give you strength to pass through this difficult time @krunalpandya24 @hardikpandya7,” tweeted Pathan, himself a former Baroda captain.

Indian taekwondo rings in 2021 with online Speed Kicking Championship

MUMBAI (PTI)

INDIAN taekwondo has announced that its first-ever Speed Kicking Championship will be virtually held from February 14 to 18. As per the format of the event, athletes have to compete for the greatest number of kicks in exactly a minute. The participants shall be scored by an online set of judges based on technical

(number of kicks) and overall performance (quality of techniques), a media release issued here said.

Speed Kicking is one of the components every taekwondo athlete has to have in their arsenal to compete at the Asian Games, Olympic Games and the world championships. According to the release, the competition will be held based on individual capabilities and divided into colour belt division and black belt division.

There will be seven categories in total comprising both the divisions. Each category has guidelines that will have participants perform speed kicking and



winners will be decided by referees appointed by the referee commission. “I'm proud that India taekwondo is moving forward and executing tournaments of this scale. This also acts as a grounding event for the 2022 World Championship and the Asian Games,” India

Taekwondo president Namdev Shirgaonkar said.

“Athletes will be virtually performing within complete safety guidelines and they will in no way come in contact with any of the other participants or organisers. “India taekwondo will also conduct a webinar for the participants and their coaches to explain the rules and regulations.”