



The 'Star of India' sapphire is displayed at the American Museum of Natural History, as their newly renovated Allison and Roberto Mignone Halls of Gems and Minerals is prepared for a projected Spring 2021 reopening in New York. The 563-carat sapphire reflects light in a star pattern and is the largest of its kind in the world

Impeachment trial confronts memories of Capitol siege



WASHINGTON: The impeachment trial of Donald Trump is more than an effort to convict the former president of inciting an insurrection. It's a chance for a public accounting and remembrance of the worst attack on the US Capitol in 200 years. In the month since the Jan. 6 siege by a pro-Trump mob, encouraged by his call to "fight like hell" to overturn the election, defenders of the former president say it's time to move on. Trump is long gone, ensconced at his Mar-a-Lago club, and Democrat Joe Biden is the new president in the White House. With the trial set to begin Tuesday, and a super-majority of senators unlikely to convict him on the single charge, the question arises: Why bother? Yet for many lawmakers who were witnesses, onlookers and survivors of that bloody day, it's not over. One by one, lawmakers have begun sharing personal accounts of their experiences of that harrowing afternoon. Some were in the Capitol fleeing for safety, while others watched in disbelief from adjacent offices. They tell of hiding behind doors, arming themselves with office supplies and fearing for their lives as the rioters stalked the halls, pursued political leaders and trashed the domed icon of democracy.



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CHAKKA JAM CHOKES NATION

OCT 2 DEADLINE TO REPEAL FARM LAWS

Won't go home until our demands are met, asserts Tikait

NEW DELHI:

BHARATIYA Kisan Union (BKU) leader Rakesh Tikait on Saturday said that protesting farmers will not go home unless their demands are met.

Tikait was addressing farmers at Ghazipur on the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border, during the three-hour countrywide 'chakka jam' to intensify their agitation against the new farm laws. "We will not return home unless our demands are met," Tikait said. "We have given time to the Union government till October 2 to repeal the laws. After that, we will do further planning. We will not hold discussions with the government under pressure."

Tikait, who has been one of the most prominent faces of the farmers' protest, shot further into limelight after a video of him went viral last month where he tearfully declared that he would rather die by suicide than end the agitation, after the Ghazipur administration ordered to vacate the site. Since then, he has warned the Centre of losing power if it does not meet the farmers' demands and asserted that the protests will continue.

Meanwhile, farmers across the country held the 'chakka jam' to protest the Centre's handling of the agitation as well as the budgetary allocations made this year for agriculture. Roads were, however, not blocked in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

Tikait, who had an-



BKU leader Rakesh Tikait gestures towards security personnel who had blocked farmers' movement during their protest against Centre's farm laws, at Ghazipur border in New Delhi on Saturday

Delhi put under heavy security blanket 10 metro stations closed briefly

NEW DELHI: The three-hour-long nationwide 'chakka jam' by protesting farmers was held on Saturday amid tight security, even as there was no such event in the national capital which was turned into a fortress with heavy security deployment by the Delhi Police, paramilitary and reserve forces personnel to prevent any untoward situation. The Delhi Police had also used

drone cameras to keep a tight vigil at protest sites. Ten Delhi Metro stations, including Mandi House and ITO, were closed for the duration of the 'chakka jam' from 12 noon to 3 pm, and reopened after the protest ended. Around 50 people were detained near Shaheed Park in central Delhi for allegedly holding an agitation in support of the 'chakka jam'. The Samyukt Kisan Morcha,

an umbrella body of farmer unions protesting against the Centre's three farm laws, had said on Friday that the protesters would not block roads in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand during the 'chakka jam', even as it asserted that peasants in other parts of the country would block national and state highways for three hours, but in a peaceful way.

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nounced that there was no plan to hold 'chakka jam' in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, said they had informa-

tion about some miscreants trying to turn the 'chakka jam' protests into a violent one. However, Tikait said,

farmers in small groups will submit a memorandum to district headquarters in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Tens of thousands of farmers have been camping out on the outskirts of Delhi for over two months, with ten rounds of talks between the government and farmers' groups failing to resolve the deadlock.

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Shah to chair Southern Zonal Council meet in Tirupati

AMARAVATI: Union Minister Amit Shah will chair the 29th Southern Zonal Council meet scheduled to be held in the temple town of Tirupati on March 4.

"Chief Ministers, Lieutenant Governors of 8 States/UTs in the Southern Zone will participate along with their respective Chief Secretaries, Advisers and other senior officers in keeping with important agenda items. Approximately around 100 dignitaries and officers are expected to participate in this meeting. The Southern Zonal Council comprises Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Puducherry as members and Union Territories Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep as Special Invitees.

As the host State, the AP government is requested to make requisite logistical arrangements for the meeting, including reception, security, transport, boarding and lodging among others.

Police ready to ensure fair polls, says DGP

VIJAYAWADA: Director general of police (DGP) D Gautam Sawang said the police department was well prepared for the panchayat polls to be held in 655 mandals in four phases on February 9, 13, 17 and 21 respectively. He said the polls will be held for 1,30,749 panchayat wards in 13,133 village panchayats in the state. ► P4

RAMRAJ

COTTON

SHOWROOM INAUGURATION

Date : 07.02.2021, Sunday

Time : 9.00 am

Venue : 3/8, Ground Floor, Sunil Towers, Opp. More Hyper Market, Ramamurthy Nagar, Bengaluru - 560 016.

SEC orders confinement of AP Minister to home

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

IN a rare occurrence, the AP State Election Commission on Saturday issued orders to the Director-General of Police to ensure that Minister Minister for Panchayat Raj and Rural Development P Ramachandra Reddy is 'confined' to his home till February 21 for his alleged remarks against the commission.

Panchayat polls in the State are scheduled to begin from February 9 and will go on till February 21 in four phases.

State Election Commissioner Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar, in his order, said the Commission had carefully looked at various alternatives and avenues of remedial action and was invoking its plenary powers under Article 243K of the Constitution and directing the DGP to 'confine' the Minister for Panchayat Raj and Rural Development to his residential premises till completion of Gram Panchayat elections, which would con-

clude on February 21. The orders issued are in the nature of reasonable restrictions and are essentially preventive measures, taken recourse to ensure free and fair elections and to enable the voters to exercise their franchise freely "uninfluenced by threats and intimidation", the Order said.

According to the SEC Order, the Minister, in a press conference on Thursday,



warned that Collectors and Returning Officers not to obey the instructions of the "madcap Election Commissioner" and if they do so (preventing forced unanimous elections), action will be taken against those officials and they will be blacklisted after the polls are over.

Reddy also allegedly attributed political motives to the SEC, saying Ramesh Kumar was favouring the opposition Telugu Desam Party with a view to get a MP or MLC seat in future.

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It took blood & sweat to set up Vizag steel

RANI DEVALLA
VISAKHAPATNAM

THE fears of the thousands of employees of the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP), which had a glorious past, have 'come true' with the BJP-led NDA government proposing to privatise the industry. The move has come as a bolt from the blue for the employees, triggering unrest among them who took to streets to register their protest.

In a show of solidarity, trade unions, people's representatives and political parties in the district as well as the State joined hands in support of the agitated employees of the plant.

In the past, the 'Visakha Ukku Andhrula Hakku' movement had spread its tentacles across the combined Andhra Pradesh, and

now, the protestors exhibited their might uniting together to put up a collective fight against the Centre's proposal to privatise the Rashtriya Ispat



File photo of PV Narasimha Rao dedicating the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant to the nation. (R) File photo of former AP CM Kasu Brahmananda Reddy offering juice to break the 20-day hunger strike by former MLA T Amrutha Rao in Visakhapatnam

Nigam Ltd (RINL) and approve 100 per cent strategic disinvestment of GoI shareholding in RINL.

When the move was

made to establish a steel plant, the then Union government constituted an expert committee to identify a suitable site for the purpose. Apart from Visakhapatnam,

mega steel plant. However, the then government preferred the City of Destiny for setting up the plant. The former Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Sastry too



favoured it and had directed the authorities concerned to go ahead with the decision. After his demise, Indira Gandhi succeeded him.

It was then the demand to establish the steel plant in other States grew louder. With this, the Visakha Ukku Andhrula Hakku movement gained momentum. Gun-tur-based T Amrutha Rao had launched a hunger strike right in front of the Collectorate in Visakhapatnam. The movement had gained further steam ever since, drawing people from across the united Andhra Pradesh. Led by the freedom fighter and the then MP Tenneti Viswanadham, the joint action committee had played a proactive role in the battle.

To suppress the State-wide movement that witnessed different protests like 'bandh', 'hartal', 'rasta roko' and hunger strikes, the government did not hesitate to order firing on protestors. Continued on Page 4

Ganta quits to save VSP

VISAKHAPATNAM: The



Centre has not only failed to give promised facilities to Visakhapatnam and Andhra Pradesh but instead decided to hand the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP) over to the private management, pointed out MLA Ganta Srinivasa Rao in Visakhapatnam on Saturday. After tendering his resignation letter from his MLA post to the AP Legislative Assembly Speaker, Visakhapatnam North Constituency MLA said he had decided to quit in support of the ongoing agitation against the Centre's move to privatise the VSP.

PM pitches for world-class judicial system

AI TO HELP MAKE JUDICIAL SYSTEM FUTURE-READY, SAYS MODI

GANDHINAGAR

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said the possibility of using artificial intelligence (AI) is being examined to improve the efficiency and speed of the judiciary in the country.

Modi was virtually addressing an event in Ahmedabad, marking the diamond jubilee of the Gujarat High Court. The Prime Minister also released a commemorative

postage stamp marking 60 years of the Gujarat High Court.

He said that along with the country the judicial system of India also stood up in the fight against Covid and improved. "I thank the Supreme Court of India for giving legal sanctity to video conferencing and teleconferencing which has speeded up the e-proceedings in all courts. We are proud to say that our Supreme Court



Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks during the diamond jubilee celebrations of Gujarat High Court, via video conferencing, in New Delhi

has become the largest Supreme Court in the world with maximum hearings through video conferencing. Our high courts and district courts are also hearing cases through video conferencing even during the difficult times like Covid."

"It is a matter of satisfaction for us that the Law Ministry, under the E-Courts Integrated Mission, by setting up the digital infrastructure has

helped our courts to work virtually. The Digital India Mission is rapidly modernising the judicial system of the country. More than 18,000 courts in the country have been computerised," said Modi.

Commenting on the possibilities of using Artificial Intelligence in the judicial system, Modi said, "To make our judicial system future-ready, the use of AI is being explored. The use of AI will

not only improve the efficiency of the judiciary but will also speed up the entire system. In all these efforts, the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' campaign will play a major role."

The Prime Minister said, "Working with the National Informatics Centre (NIC), the e-committee of the Supreme Court is working towards improving the efficiency of the judiciary."

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Union Minister of State for Finance Anurag Singh Thakur addressing the media in Hyderabad on Saturday

All sections hailed Union Budget: Anurag Thakur

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

UNION Minister of State for Finance Anurag Singh Thakur said that except some opposition parties, all sections of people in the country are appreciating the Union Budget for the financial year 2021-22.

Addressing media here along with State BJP Chief Bandi Sanjay Kumar on Saturday he said that the increased budgetary allocations to the SC, ST and other socially backward classes have been increased of 51.65 per cent, from the previous FY.

Rs 8,000 crore for 750 new Ekalavya schools in the agency areas and 100 new Sainik schools have been proposed.

Giving further details of allocations on welfare and social security fronts, the Minister said that the UPA had allocated Rs 30,000 crore during its tenure for Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGA). However, the NDA under Prime

- ₹8,000 crore for 750 new Ekalavya schools in the agency areas and 100 new Sainik schools have been proposed.
- NDA govt under Prime Minister Narendra Modi allocated ₹73,0000 cr for MGNREGA while UPA allocated ₹30,000 cr during its tenure

Minister Narendra Modi has allocated Rs 73, 0000 crore.

Similarly, allocations for the micro-irrigation, Kisan Samman Yojana, besides, the price of MSP have been increased by 43 per cent and the NDA government had procured 8.5 lakh metric tons of good grains. Also, he said the Centre had taken up connecting 1000 mandis, to the e-market last year and it was proposed to connect 1000 more during the ensuing FY, he said.

On the health economy, he said that currently, India has fore reserves of over USD 590 billion, the highest ever, up by USD 119 billion over the previous year, as against an external debt is USD554 billion. In turn, making, making the country a net creditor.

Also, rolling out the details of an increase in the GST collections, Anurag Thakur said that the country is witnessing a ‘V’

shaped recovery post Covid-19.

The economy is witnessing a V-shaped recovery and that is why in the last four months we have seen GST collection of more than one lakh rupees per month.

He said a transparent budget has been presented with an estimate of Rs 34.42 lakh crore, an increase of over Rs 4 lakh crore from the previous year.

Responding on the disinvestment of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, the Minister said that disinvestment does not mean putting all the PSUs on sale. Instead, the Centre will decide from time to time. However, it is based on the NITI Ayogs recommendations on strategic and non-strategic categories. He said that if there is any miscommunication about the privatisation of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, then, steps will be taken to hold talks with the stakeholders.

TSBIE warns colleges not to link exam fee with tuition fee

HYDERABAD

THE Telangana State Board of Intermediate Education (TSBIE), Secretary Syed Omer Jaleel on Saturday asked the principals of all the junior colleges in the State not to link the examination fee of the Intermediate Public Examinations (IPE), March-2021 with the tuition fee. In a statement here on Saturday, he said that in continuation to its earlier directions on January 30, the junior college principals are asked to strictly implement its directions not to link the tuition fee with the IPE-2021 examination. Examination fee from the students should be accepted unconditionally. Any deviations noticed will be viewed seriously, the Board warned.

BJP success forced KCR to come out of Pragati Bhavan: Saagar Rao

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

BJP Telangana State, chief Spokesperson K Krishna Saagar Rao said his party has successfully brought Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao out of Pragati Bhavan, the rat-hole he was quite comfortable in, without having to actively govern the State by being physically accessible to common people.

In a statement here on Saturday, he said that after seven years of misgovernance, CM KCR and his party are facing the wrath from people. And, KCR has been forced to pull his head out of clouds and come to the ground, at last.

Successive electoral wins of BJP in Dubbaka and GHMC elec-



Saffron party leader says that after seven years of misgovernance, CM KCR and his party are facing the wrath from people

tions have changed political status-quo in Telangana State. Being the party president KCR did not

even campaign in Dubbaka, nor did his son Minister KT Rama Rao, such was their arrogance, he added. The BJP leader said that his party has rattled KCR so much, that he has started his by-election campaign in Nagarjunasagar two months ahead of the notification of the election. The fear of loss is visible to all.

BJP believes the damage control exercise of KCR will yield no positive results, as the course correction at this stage, after seven years is not possible. KCR has let down, and failed both the State and his party, as Chief Minister and party President.

BJP foresees a spectacular electoral victory both in Nagarjunasagar bye-election and MLC elections.

State top cop takes Covid jab

DGP SAYS THAT THEIR DEPARTMENT IS READY TO DRIVE OUT THE FEARS OF THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OVER THE SAFETY OF THE VACCINE

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

STATE Director General of Police M Mahender Reddy Saturday took Covid-19 vaccine shot on the first day of the launch of the vaccination drive for police and revenue department employees. The DGP visited a PHC in Tilaknagar to take the vaccine. The staff of the centre administered the vaccine to the DGP. Speaking on the occasion, he said that the vaccine was very safe and added that there should not be any kind of fear about the vaccine. He said that



State DGP M Mahender Reddy taking the Covid vaccine in Hyderabad on Saturday

their department was ready to drive out the fears of the people of the State on the issue. He said that the police and the Health department staff had rendered relentless services during Covid-19 pandemic. The Health department of

the State has made elaborate arrangements to administer the vaccine to 1,88,402 employees of police and revenue department of the State. The vaccine drive for private and government staff of the State was over on Friday.



Lack of facilities in ambulance leads to infant's death

HANS NEWS SERVICE
SHADNAGAR

AN infant allegedly died in an ambulance due to lack of facilities while being shifted to Hyderabad for better treatment on Saturday. The infant was born a week ago in Mahabubnagar hospital.

As per the information, Lakshmi, a woman from Mahabubnagar, gave birth at a hospital in Mahabubnagar a week ago. However, doctors said that the baby was suffering from a respiratory ailment and suggested to shift the child to Niloufer Hospital in Hyderabad for better treatment. The baby died on the way in Thimmapur in Shadnagar constituency on the way to Hyderabad in ambulance. Lakshmi said that her child died as there was no facility to sit in the ambulance and also no facility of oxygen and basic first aid. The relatives of Lakshmi said that the officials should take serious action against the incident.

Drug peddlers caught, 3kg ganja seized

HANS NEWS SERVICE
SHADNAGAR

THE Special Operation Team arrested drug peddlers and seized 3 kg of ganja in Shadnagar on Saturday.

According to the SOT inspector Venkat Reddy, police raided a tea stall after getting tip off and handed over the weed to the local police station. The raid was carried out under the auspices of SOT Cyberabad inspector Venkat Reddy, along with other SOT officials and Shadnagar police.

PPP in city services will spell disaster for TSRTC: Ex-director

HYDERABAD

UNION leader and former board director of TSRTC M Nageswara Rao said that the Union government's decision to run city bus services with public private participation would spell disaster for the Corporation. The former Union leader found fault with the Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman that a new scheme was being envisaged under the public private partnership in city transport services. "To enable and encourage private players is a dangerous move and will spell disaster to the very entity of RTC and pave way to the privatisation of the Corporation in the end," said Nageswara Rao. Rao further said that the Central government should provide funding as per its 33 per cent share in the TSRTC. If the State government provides a fund of Rs 3,000 crore, the Centre should provide a matching grant of 33 per cent, he said.

FGG wants CID inquiry, action on Indiramma housing scam

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

ALLEGING serious irregularities in implementation of Indiramma Housing Scheme and also attempts to close the case, the Forum for Good Governance demanded the Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan to direct the government for quick CID inquiry and action against the responsible.

The FGG Secretary M Padmanabha Reddy alleged that there were serious irregularities in the implementation of the housing programme. He said in the year 2009, the government issued GO 266 on April 19, and constituted teams to conduct integrated door to door surveys at village level in the entire state. The survey revealed that 1.95 lakh ineligible beneficiaries were allotted houses violating rules and an amount of Rs 235.90 crore were paid to these

The FGG Secretary M Padmanabha Reddy alleges that there are serious irregularities in the implementation of the housing programme

ineligible beneficiaries.

Padmanabha Reddy said that the survey revealed that in all 508 employees were found involved in the scam and out of which 150 employees were placed under suspension and 68 employees were removed. About 294 non-officials like Sarpanchs etc were also found involved. Criminal cases were filed against 85 officials and 94 non-officials. The government ordered recovery of Rs 235.9 crore under Revenue Recovery Act, but there was no record to show that the recovery was made and no follow up action was taken to pursue 179 cases registered against officials and non-officials.

The CID inquiry covering 36 villages involving 22,000 houses, found that 1,022 houses were

found not constructed but payments were made. The FGG went to court and the court directed CID to complete the inquiry within 10 months from the date of judgment on January 1, 2016.

Padmanabha Reddy said that inspite of clear orders from the High Court, the inquiry is not completed nor any action was taken against the officials and non-officials. He said that if the culprits of Indiramma housing scam were not brought to book there was a possibility that such scam may repeat in double bedroom houses taken up by the Telangana government. The FGG wanted the Governor to direct the government to take up quick inquiry and also take steps to recover the amounts illegally paid to non existence houses.

Edn Minister lays stone for CC road works

HANS NEWS SERVICE
RANGA REDDY

EDUCATION Minister Sabitha Indra Reddy laid foundation stones for CC road works and HDP pipeline works with an estimated cost of Rs 2.40 crore at Navayuga colony, Sita colony, Sai Nagar, Sai Krishna colony, TRS Nagar, Sai Balaji colony, Sai Krishna enclave in Badangpet Municipal Corporation limits on Saturday.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister Sabitha said that Chief Minister KCR is taking special interest in the State development. The TRS government has been striving for the develop-

ment of the people and introduced several welfare schemes for the betterment of the people. Rs 23 crore have been sanctioned for laying trunk lines to reduce the problem of water overflow during the rainy season. Rs 7 crore have been sanctioned for the beautification of lakes and proper measures will be taken to stop flow of drainage water into the lakes, She added. Badangpet Municipal Corporation Mayor Parijatha Narasimha Reddy, Deputy Mayor Ibrahim Shakar, Commissioner Krishna Mohan Reddy, corporators Ram Reddy, Srinivas Reddy and other local leaders and officials participated in the programme.



Officials flayed for not distributing wheelchairs to beneficiaries

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

BJP OBC Morcha national president K Laxman lashed at the State government for stocking up the wheelchairs without distributing to the physically challenged persons.

The BJP leader along with the party corporator visited a community hall in Adikmet and inspected the wheel chairs meant for the distribution for the physically challenged persons remained stored there for the last three years. He alleged that the government do not have the kind of interest it has on collecting commissions from the contractors when it comes to implementation of housing for the poor and even distribution of cycles meant for the physically challenged per-

sons. He said that the wheelchairs stored in the community hall have been gathering dust. He asked who has given the authority to the authorities to waste the wheelchairs procured spending public money.

He also criticised the government for not providing reservations for the physically challenged in the government jobs and educational institutions and not filling the backlog posts of physically challenged. Laxman said that wheelchairs and other hearing aids will be distributed to the beneficiaries at BJP office in Musheerabad on February 16. Local Corporator Sunitha Prakash Goud and Rastra Vikalanga Sangam president K Nageswara Rao and Musheerabad BJP convenor Ramesh also were present.

‘Welfare schemes just to remain in power disastrous’

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

TELANGANA BJP Chief Bandi Sanjay Kumar said that the trend of implementing welfare schemes to garner votes to play vote bank politics to remain in power neglecting the development is seriously affecting some States.

Kumar participating at a pro-

gramme organised by the Laghu Udyoga Bharati along with the Union Minister of State for Finance Anurag Thakur Singh said when the Covid-19 spell wreck to every major economy in the world the Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi had presented a budget that would lead the country to put on the growth trajectory.

Appreciating the Anurag Thakur Singh for his dynamic leadership and attentiveness in resolving issues when brought to his notice, the BJP State chief said, some political parties are making allegations on the budget. But, so far the TRS party has not criticised it, it shows that it is happy with the Union Budget. Neither, "Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao nor the Finance Minister T Harish Rao has

so far criticised the budget. I hope they are satisfied with the outcome of the budget," he added. However, he asked the intellectuals not to remain silent when some State government have been trying to implement welfare schemes, not for the welfare of the people but to keep their power intact or to gain power. The silence of intellectuals to development pose disastrous to the State and people, he said.

Flood victims stage protest in front of GHMC office

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

FLOOD victims protested in front of GHMC head office demanding justice as they did not get any help from the government.

A group of flood victims of Basheerbagh staged a protest at GHMC head office here on Saturday. The victims had lost their houses in the recent floods and they visited several government offices for relief but in vain. Hence, to express their grievances to the officials and demand

for the justice they held a protest.

"Due to the recent floods we lost our houses and the officials told that they will allot a house for them. Though we visited several offices and we did not receive proper response from the officials. I request the officials to look into the issue and allot a house for us" said a flood victim.

Lakshmi, another flood victim said we visited officers regarding our house issue and none of them helped. During the floods we received Rs 10,000 but the officials at that time promised to allot the houses also to those who lost during floods.



China grants conditional approval to 2nd Covid-19 vaccine

K J M VARMA
BEIJING

CHINA has granted conditional approval for its second COVID-19 vaccine, ahead of the expected emergency approval from the WHO for two of its jabs that would enable the country to step-up global supplies of the shots. China's drug regulator has given approval for the conditional mass use of the coronavirus vaccine produced by Chinese pharmaceutical firm Sinovac Biotech. Sinovac Biotech announced on Saturday that CoronaVac, an inactivated vaccine candidate against COVID-19, received authorisation from the National Medical Products Administration for conditional mass use in China. It is the second locally made vaccine to be given conditional approval. Beijing authorised the state-owned Sinopharm's vaccine in December.

The conditional approval was based on the results of the overseas Phase-III clinical trials of

CoronaVac. Final data from the trials has not been made available yet and the results of its efficacy and safety require further confirmation, state-run Global Times said, quoting a Sinovac statement.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) on Friday said two Chinese vaccines are "in a very advanced stage" of its Emergency Use Listing Procedure (EUL) assessment. The vaccines, produced by Sinovac and Sinopharm, are among the four vaccines in very advanced phase of approval, Mariangela Simao, assistant WHO Director-General for Access to Medicines, Vaccines and Pharmaceuticals, said in Geneva. A team of experts from the WHO are now already in China, and they "will start inspections next week" as they are currently in quarantine, she said. So far, only the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine has received EUL approval. Two other vaccines -- Britain's AstraZeneca and South Korea's SK Bioscience -- are also being as-



essed, Simao said. According to WHO, 238 candidate vaccines are being developed worldwide -- 63 of them in clinical trials in various countries. China is currently testing 16 vaccines which are in different stages of trials. It has vaccinated over 32 mil-

lion people at home so far. China has offered to provide 10 million COVID-19 vaccines to COVAX, a global initiative, which aims at ensuring that middle and lower-income countries get timely access to coronavirus vaccines. (PTI)

Chinese whistleblower doctor honoured on death anniversary

WUHAN (AP)

THE message was tucked into a bouquet of chrysanthemums left by a mourner at the back of Wuhan Central Hospital to honour a Chinese whistleblower doctor who died from the coronavirus a year ago. It was simply the number of a Bible verse: Matthew 5:10. "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," the verse reads.

A year ago Sunday, Dr. Li Wenliang died from the virus first detected in this Chinese city. A small stream of people marked the anniversary with visits to the hospital Saturday, some leaving flowers. The 34-year-old ophthalmologist was one of eight whistleblowers who local authorities punished early on for "spreading rumours" about a SARS-like virus in a social media group. His situation, eventually made public in media reports, made him a potent symbol for the perils of going against official messaging in China. The Chinese public embraced Li, whose presence online had painted a picture of an ordinary person. His wife was pregnant and he was soon to be a father. He sent the "rumour" because he wanted to warn others. The public also watched as he fell ill with the disease he was warning them about, eventually worsened, and died. Li's death was initially reported by Chinese state media on the night of Feb. 6, 2020, but the outlets quickly withdrew their reporting. Some hours later, in the early morning of February 7, Wuhan Central Hospital announced his death. Chinese people grieved his death, online and offline. It wasn't until last month that China finally allowed a WHO team into the country to investigate the pandemic. Wuhan for the most part has returned to normal, with shopping malls and streets crowded, and there is little visible evidence of the suffering the city went through. Still, a few of its residents mourn quietly. Li's death is still a sensitive topic, and his family has refrained from giving media interviews.



Business as usual at Singhu border as action shifts to other highways

NEW DELHI

IT was business as usual at the Singhu border as national and state highways across the country barring Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand observed a three-hour 'chakka jam' on Saturday. The protest site on the Delhi-Haryana highway, the epicentre of the ongoing farmers' agitation, saw routine everyday activities like preparation and distribution of langar food, farmers making motivational speeches from stages, and tractors blaring rustic songs as the action shifted to the other national highways, albeit for a brief period in the day.

"We are happy to share the spotlight with other highways. We have been holding the fort for over two months and will continue to do so. It is good that today farmers from across the country are demanding the repeal of three farm laws," said Manmeet Bajwa (34), who has been camping at Singhu for the past 20 days. The Sanyukt Kisan Morcha, an umbrella body of the farmer unions protesting the three farm laws, on Friday called



Farmers block a road at Singhu border during their 'chakka jam' protest as part of the ongoing agitation over new farm laws, near New Delhi on Saturday

for roads and national highways to be blocked between 12 noon and 3 pm throughout the nation except in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

Singhu border, which looked more crowded than before as more tractors and farmers made their way to the protest site, witnessed a heightened vigil by the security forces on the occasion. Drone cameras, multilayered barricades, nail-studded roads and barbed wires -- now put atop the many heavy-metal barricades as well -- were used as precautionary measures by the police to ensure that the kind of violence witnessed on Republic Day trac-

tor parade is not repeated. The strength of security personnel, including the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) and Rapid Action Force (RAF), deployed at the site was also increased.

I don't know why they have to beef up the security to this level when we have said we won't be observing the chakka-jam here. It only tells about the lack of trust between the administration and the farmers," said Navjot Heer from Punjab's Patiala district. "And in case they are doing this to simply scare us down, then they can try as hard as they can but they just won't succeed," said the 25-year-old. (PTI)

NEW DELHI

OVER 56 lakh people have been inoculated till now and there has been no case of serious or severe adverse event following vaccination or death attributable to the vaccination till date, the Union Health Ministry said on Saturday. Of the 56,36,868 beneficiaries vaccinated, Additional Secretary in the Union health ministry Manohar Agnani said 52,66,175 are healthcare workers and 3,70,693 are frontline workers whose vaccination started on February 2. He further said that 54.7 per cent of the healthcare workers registered on the Co-WIN app have been vaccinated.

On Saturday, Agnani said total 2,20,019 beneficiaries were vaccinated. He said there was no case of serious or severe AEFI or death attributable to vaccination till date. "No new case of hospitalization or death reported in the past 24 hours," he added. Agnani said 13 states and UTs, including Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Tripura, Uttarak-

India developing 7 more COVID vaccines: Harsh Vardhan

KOLKATA

UNION Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Saturday said that the country is developing seven more COVID-19 vaccines and also working on further vaccine development to inoculate every citizen of India. He said the Centre does not have any immediate plan to make the vaccines available in the open market and a decision will be taken as the situation demands. The COVID-9 inoculation process for people aged above 50 will start in March, he told reporters. "We are not dependent only on the two vaccines as the country is



working on seven more indigenous vaccines. "Simultaneously, we are also working on the development of more vaccines because India is a huge country and we need more players and research to reach out to everyone," he said. Three of the vaccines are in the trial phase, two are

in the pre-clinical stage, one is in phase 1 and another in phase 2, the Union health minister said. "The COVID-19 inoculation process for people above 50 years of age will start next month," he said. Recently, COVID-19 vaccines are being administered on an emergency basis, under full observation and in a controlled manner. If the vaccines are released in the open market, there won't be any control over them. The decision will be taken as the situation demands," he added. (PTI)

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, HARI SINGH S/O SHRI BHAGWAN DASS R/o H NO.84, JATAV MOHALLA, AZADPUR VILLAGE, DELHI-110033, HAVE SVERED ALL RELATIONS AND DISOWNED MY BOTH SONS NAMELY ROHIT KUMAR aged 21 years & (II) Mr. BHAGIRATH aged 18 years FROM ALL THEIR ASSETS, MOVEABLE & IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES due to their hostile behavior if anybody dealing with him I will not be responsible for their any act. That it is my true and correct statement.

Paharganj: A location of historical significance

PURNA SINGH

PAHARGANJ, literally meaning hilly neighbourhood, owing to its proximity to the Raisina Hills, where the Rashtrapati Bhawan stands today, is a neighbourhood of Central Delhi, located just west of the New Delhi Railway Station.

The place which has historical significance of being a principal grain market in the 18th century to being included in plan for a new imperial city, Paharganj has always been in news. It was an important suburb during the Mughal period. Located just outside the Ajmeri Gate of the walled city, it was one of the five main markets of Delhi. It was also a tax collection centre for emperors.

The place had its name carved in the history of Mutiny papers of 1857 as Jaisinghpura and Shahganj. Paharganj is also home to the historic Qadam sharif Dargah, dedicated to the footprint of Prophet Mohammed, originally built by Firuz Shah Tughlaq, a 14th-century Sultan of Delhi. The area underwent massive transformation after the inauguration of New Delhi Railway station which changed the entire landscape of Pa-

harganj.

With the advent of railway station, there arose a need for eateries, hotels and other things for travellers. Drastic changes have taken place in Paharganj since it had become primarily a densely populated residential and commercial area, filled with budget hotels and restaurants for domestic and foreign tourists.

The whole main bazaar is lined with shops full to the brim with books, music, jewellery, bags, clothes, shoes, incense, textiles, wooden statues, and handicrafts and what not. Textile shops offer bags, bed spreads, cushion covers, wall hangings, etc. The hand-made jewellery beaded necklaces and bangles in every shape, size and colour which predominantly attract the women segment of our society.

Another popular product here is incense sticks, incense cones and Indian tea. There is a book market where you can get a variety of books both new as well as used ones which cater to the needs of the students as well as readers of all ages.

Being close to the railway station, the place is abode to domestic and foreign tourists. The whole tourism industry, hoteliers, currency exchange

points and eateries thrive on them. The pandemic has of course impacted them but now things are slowly returning to normal.

While interacting with The Hans India, Raja Ram of Hotel Hari Piorko said, "Due to pandemic the number of foreign guests had fallen from hundred bookings a day to ten or twelve. Paying salaries and meeting expenditure to run the hotel had become a difficult task.

Dinesh Kumar, who has been a textile businessman said he has been there for more than 25 years but never saw such bad times. People are now opting more for online shopping. It has been three days now that my shop has not done bonhi (first sale of a day). Problems are there and they don't cease to surface in the coming days too."

Paharganj is also known for delicious food, local dhabas, and Israeli cafes. Rishabh Garg said, "Restaurants are completely empty, very few people come to eat though they were strictly following Covid guidelines like checking body temperature, sanitising hands, wearing of caps, sanitisation of kitchen at regular intervals, cleaning of vegetables etc.



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STEEL PLANT SALE JUSTIFIED?



It is a very unwise decision, economically, socially and politically, of the Centre to think of privatising our Visakhapatnam Steel Plant. Freedom fighter and former MP Tenneti Vishwanadham, whom I had the privilege of meeting, would have been greatly disappointed if he were alive. If the VSP is not doing well, the Centre has to be blamed for not sanctioning captive mines and starving it for funds. Also, fall in steel prices around the world is due to Covid-19 pandemic followed by other factors. But certainly, privatisation is not the solution at all.

Dr Nadiminty Sreeramachandra Sastry , Rtd Prof, Veterinary and Animal Sciences and writer



VSP is the result of intensive agitations conducted by then leaders and intellectuals. After establishment of the plant, a number of skilled and unskilled in people from north coastal AP districts are getting jobs. With an ulterior motive of selling off the plant, the BJP government at the Centre is making false propaganda against it which should be opposed by all the people of north Andhra.

B Someswara Rao, Srikakulam city.

As the youth we participated in the movement for Vizag steel and it is really painful to know that the government is privatising it. However, the company is in losses due to the decisions taken by the powerful people in it for the benefit of other companies. I welcome the government's move to sell stake in it since the private firms investing in it will make sure that the employees have some discipline and dedication.



G Suryanarayana Murthy, Ongole, Prakasam district

Privatisation of Vizag steel plant will be a great loss for the entire Andhra Pradesh. It was sanctioned after so many struggles and sacrifices of people of AP. Thousands of farmers lost their homes and lands for this plant. Now we can't allow it to be privatised. The state government should put in all possible efforts to retain the plant which is the property of the state.



P Manoj Kumar, student, Bobbili (Vizianagaram district)

Furious Peddireddi says SEC 'lost his mind'

Reacting angrily to SEC Ramesh Kumar's fiat that he be confined to home till election process is over, the Panchayat Raj Minister accuses SEC of crossing his line and interfering in the duties and rights of public representatives



HANS NEWS SERVICE TIRUPATI

EXPRESSING his ire at State Election Commissioner Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar for ordering his confinement to home, panchayat raj minister Peddireddi Ramachandra Reddy said the SEC had lost his mental balance and that was why he was issuing such gag orders. "As panchayat minister I have every right to move outside to execute the election works as well as participating in official programmes. I have already moved a privileged motion seeking action against the SEC Ramesh Kumar to protect the dignity and rights of members of Legislature. The SEC has been crossing his limits and damaging the image of public representatives," he fumed while addressing the media at his house here on Saturday. He said Ramesh Kumar was not a straightforward and upright

persons since his college days when he was studying in Tirupati and alleged that he was acting as per the directions of TDP president N Chandrababu Naidu. "So far I have not received any notice from police on my confinement. Anyway, all days are not of TDP or SEC. After March 31, Ramesh Kumar will realise his mistakes. He is interfering in the duties of public representatives and is overacting. He is there to protect democracy, but in practice he is destroying the traditional democratic practices like unanimous panchayat elections," Ramachandra Reddy said. Later, Srikalahasti MLA Biyapu Madhusudan Reddy also criticised the SEC for 'over reacting' in the name of elections. "Confinement of minister Ramachandra Reddy is a joke. What is this? We are not in Pakistan. SEC working wearing of Chandrababu Naidu's mask," he said.



DGP Gautam Sawang and other officers addressing the press at DGP office at Mangalagiri on Saturday

Police ready to ensure fair polls, says DGP

HANS NEWS SERVICE VIJAYAWADA

DIRECTOR general of police (DGP) D Gautam Sawang said the police department was well prepared for the panchayat polls to be held in 655 mandals in four phases on February 9, 13, 17 and 21 respectively. He said the polls will be held for 1,30,749 panchayat wards in 13,133 village panchayats in the state. Addressing the media at the state police office on Saturday, the DGP said the police had identified 8,555 sensitive villages and 6,254 hyper sensitive villages in the state and added that utmost care was being taken to maintain law and order in these villages.

- 8,555 sensitive and 6,254 hypersensitive villages have been identified across the State
- Drones, bodycams will be used to keep a vigil on anti-social elements
- Sawang says 1,122 route mobile parties have been formed, 199 check posts installed as part of the poll security

Sawang said the police department would use drones, body cameras to keep vigil on the anti-social elements and to ensure free and fair elections. Unauthorised weapons would

be seized and the police bound over 1,47,391 persons and booked 12,779 other cases related to bandobust. He said clear instructions were given to the police in the ground level to prevent any untoward incident and ensure maintenance of law and order during the polling. He said 1,122 route mobile parties formed and 199 check posts were installed as part of the polling security in the state. The DGP informed that Special Enforcement Bureau stepped up vigil to check the flow of liquor and cash. So far no untoward incident related to the polls had taken place in the state and the police were on duty in the ground level, he added.

It took blood & sweat to set up Vizag steel

Continued from P1

Meanwhile, to end the 20-day-long hunger strike taken up by Amrutha Rao, the then Chief Minister Kasu Brahmananda Reddy went to Delhi and appealed to Indira Gandhi to intervene. Based on her assurance, the hunger strike was called off by Amrutha Rao. However, by then, many had lost their lives in the protest. Officially, 32 people from across the state, including 12 from Vizag, five each from Vijayawada and Guntur and two from Vizianagaram had died while fighting for the cause. This apart, 17 agitators were said to be injured in the police firing in Vijayawada. Also, 23 protestors were injured in the police firing in Mahabubnagar. In addition, scores received injuries in the lathi-charge. After the prolonged struggle, 22,000 acres of land were acquired from 64 villages to set up the steel plant in Visakhapatnam. It took two decades to establish the plant in the City of Destiny. The plant that has a glorious past now employs 18,000 permanent staff, 21,000 outsource employees and another 60,000 are indirectly employed by the company. With the Centre's proposal to privatise the plant, the future of all these employees is now at stake. Speaking to The Hans India, grandson of Amrutha Rao, who was the force behind Visakha Utkuk Andhrula Hakku movement, T. Mohan Gandhi says, "The establishment of steel plant is a result of many sacrifices, including my beloved grandfather Amrutha Rao. We will not remain a mute spectator and watch the Centre handing over the VSP to the private player. On February 14, BJP State president Somu Veerajulu said that he would take the issue forward to the Centre to reconsider its proposal. Based on that, we will take a stand on the next course of action."

Oct 2 deadline to repeal farm laws

Continued from P1

Farmers' around-the-clock sit-ins in cold weather have already led to several deaths among them. The farmers believe that the new laws undermine their livelihood and open the path for the corporate sector to dominate agriculture. The government, on the other hand,

maintains that the new laws will give farmers more options in selling their produce, lead to better pricing, and free them from unfair monopolies. The laws passed in September are meant to overhaul antiquated procurement procedures and open up the market, the government has claimed.

PM pitches for world-class judicial system

Continued from P1

"While maintaining tight security, work is on to develop cloud-based infrastructure." "The Gujarat High Court has been the first state court to livestream court proceedings in the country and a long held discussion on the concept of open courts has been materialised. The e-filing of cases in the courts across the country has also brought about a new paradigm shift in the judicial system. The unique identifier code, the QR code given to each cases, has strengthened the National Judicial Data grid and through that the ease of justice is improving. Through this, not only is the ease of living improving but the ease of business is also improving. The ease of business has given confidence to foreign investors who are assured that their judicial interests will be secured," he added. "To help the common man get speedy justice, e-Seva centres are being opened in the high courts and the district courts of the country. The e-Lok Adalat is now the new normal. Junagarh had the first e-Lok Adalat." Modi released a commemorative postage stamp marking the completion of 60 years of the establishment of the Gujarat High Court. Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad and Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani were also virtually present at the event along with Judges of the Supreme Court and Gujarat High Court and members of the law fraternity of Gujarat.

Phase-3 process starts

- 3,558 panchayats in 19 divisions will go to polls in the phase
- Nominations will be accepted from 10.30 am to 5 pm till Feb 8
- Polling will take place from 6.30 am to 3.30 pm on Feb 17, counting from 4 pm the same day



AMARAVATI

NOMINATIONS for the third phase of the four-phase panchayat elections in the state started on Saturday. Though panchayat elections are supposed to be held on a non-political basis, every move in these elections is happening discreetly under the direction of political parties, with lakhs of rupees being allegedly spent to influence voters. Candidates are openly carrying the flags and insignia of political parties such as Jana Sena, YSRCP and TDP. Set to last for three days, nominations will be accepted between 10.30 am and 5 pm. Display of ward-wise electoral rolls of gram panchayats by the returning officer will begin on the same day as nominations in all the four phases of the elections. Nominations for sarpanches and ward members for the third phase will be accepted till 5 pm on Monday, February 8.

Only two persons will be allowed to accompany the candidates for the nomination. The third phase election will be held on February 17 from 6.30 am to 3.30 pm, and the counting of votes will start from 4 pm on the same day. Nineteen revenue divisions will go to the polls in the third phase: Srikakulam, Palakonda, Vizianagaram, Paderu, Rampachodavaram, Yetapaka, Jangareddigudem, Kukurunuru, Machilipatnam, Gurazala, Kandukur, Gudur, Naidupet, Adoni, Kurnool, Ananthapuramu, Rajampet, Kadapa and Madanapalle. As many as 3,558 panchayats will go to the polls. Meanwhile, people who filed their nomination for the first phase election have started campaigning and also received their election symbols. Candidates and their supporters are visiting each and every house in the villages to ask for votes. To familiarize

Polling hours extended

AMARAVATI

THE SEC has increased the hours of polling during panchayat elections in order to observe precautionary measures at polling stations due to Covid pandemic. The commission said that the polling will be conducted from 6.30 am to 3.30 pm. It gave permission to close the polling at 1.30 pm in panchayats Maoist-affected areas on security grounds based on the proposals sent by district collectors. SEC secretary K Kanna Babu said the closing time of poll in respect of Left-wing extremist areas of East Godavari district, which include seven mandals in Rampachodavaram revenue division and four mandals in Yetapaka revenue division, has been changed from 3.30 pm to 1.30 pm. The commission secretary said exemption has been given to pregnant and lactating women employees and differently-abled persons from the election duty. The voters, sarpanch and ward member candidates are showcasing their symbols. Panchayat elections were originally supposed to be held in 2018 when the tenure of the local bodies ended.

Sajjala slams SEC for order on Peddireddi

AMARAVATI

GOVERNMENT Advisor (Public Affairs) Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy came down heavily on State Election Commissioner N Ramesh Kumar for his order confining panchayat raj minister Peddireddi Ramachandra Reddy. Speaking to media persons here on Saturday, Ramakrishna Reddy said that the SEC had been creating hurdles to ruling party leaders during the present panchayat elections. He condemned the orders of SEC on confinement of Ramachandra Reddy for questioning the SEC's actions. He said that the SEC has been 'over acting' crossing his purview. Everyone knows that under whose direction the SEC Ramesh Kumar has been acting, he said. Ramakrishna Reddy said the SEC had cancelled the unanimous election declaration in Chittoor and Guntur districts violating rules. The SEC should explain how the unanimous elections becomes wrong, he said adding that the state government was going to file a petition in High Court against the actions of Ramesh Kumar. Alleging that he had been acting as an agent of TDP



- Says the govt will move High Court on actions of SEC
- Wonders who unanimous elections are wrong
- Warns that he will face 'consequences' after retirement

chief Chandrababu Naidu, he said that the SEC should act impartially. He warned that Ramesh Kumar would face consequences after retirement for his wrongdoings. He said Chandrababu was an expert in using the government systems and he was using the State Election Commission now.

SEC orders confinement of AP Minister to home

Continued from P1

Reacting to SEC's order, Reddy said he just watched the news in TV channels and if the DGP has to implement the SEC's Order, he can do it. "I am not opposing it. I am only saying that these kinds of gag orders issued by the SEC in connivance with TDP supreme Chandrababu Naidu indicate that the SEC has gone mad," he said. "People will

certainly teach them lessons for this," Reddy told reporters. Several YSRCP leaders condemned the SEC's Order. However, these measures will not prevent the Minister from accessing medical aid and such other exigencies warranting inevitable movement as deemed reasonable, the SEC said. During such occasions, he would be allowed to travel, but not

have access to media or to his supporters and followers, the SEC said. Also this order does not prevent Reddy from disposing of official papers in any manner or incapacitate him in discharging his legitimate responsibilities as a Minister, it said. A senior police official of Chittoor, the native district of Reddy, when contacted, said they have not received any Order on the confinement.

Delhi put under heavy security blanket

Continued from P1

However, in view of the Republic Day violence that had left 500 security personnel injured and one protestor dead, the Delhi Police had made additional measures, including tightening security and intensifying vigil across the city and its border points. Security forces were deployed at important junctions across the national capital, including Red Fort and ITO, which had witnessed violence during the January 26 tractor rally organised by the protesting farmers. Multilayered barricades, barbed wires and nail-studded roads at the protest sites were also part of the precautionary measures taken by the police force. The police also monitored content on social media to keep a watch on those spreading rumours against the force, officials said. Earlier in the day, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC), in a series of tweets, informed commuters that multiple stations have been closed. "Security Update Entry/exit gates of Mandi House, ITO and Delhi Gate are closed," it tweeted. The DMRC later tweeted

that entry and exit gates of Vishwavidyalaya station were also closed. "Entry/exit gates of Lal Quila, Jama Masjid, Janpath and Central Secretariat are closed. Interchange facility is available. Entry/exit gates of Khan Market and Nehru Place are closed," it tweeted. In the evening, the Delhi Metro stated that entry and exit gates of all 10 metro stations closed in view of 'chakka jam' had been re-opened, and normal service had resumed. At all the three main protest sites, farmers camping there for over 70 days were busy with routine affairs and there was not much activity on Saturday. Deputy Commissioner of Police (East) Deepak Yadav said although the protestors had maintained that they would not enter the national capital, the security force as a precautionary measure had made adequate arrangements to maintain law and order. "There are additional deployment of pickets at all the border points. All vehicles are being checked thoroughly at the entry and exit points of pickets and borders. Additional buses had been taken and extra barricades put up at the picket points across the city," he said.

AP has itself to blame for VSP privatisation move

V Ramu Sarma makes an in-depth study in his column. 'Visakha vukku Andhrula Hakku' a slogan reverberated in every town and village of Andhra Pradesh in 1966/67. Students were in the forefront of movement. Today's one season/ one political party politicians - who have no emotional attachment with anyone and anything except their political future - may simply say that plant would remain there, would not fly any where but what makes all the difference is promoted by whom? Whether managed with spirit of selfless service or selfish profit?

As rightly said captive iron mines once allocated to VSP, turnaround is definitely possible. It's possible for public sector also to turnaround performance when it's possible for private players. VSP, a city by itself should remain a crown jewel in Navaratnas and shouldn't fall in the hands of a private player. More so when employees are willing to mobilise funds required. Public sector managements did not evade bank loans and fly away to foreign countries to escape from legal proceeding in India. It's only the private Vijays, Neeravs and Lalits who have had that 'privilege'.

— G Sivaramakrishna, Hyderabad

A proposal to privatise the Visakha Steel Plant (VSP) comes like a bolt from the blue as it was not mentioned in the recent budget speech of Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. But came to light through a Twitter by the Secretary of Public Investment. However it is a dent to the pride of Andhras as it was realised after the sacrifices of nearly 30 people including politicians and students, who agitated under a slogan "Vishaka Ukku Andhrula Hakku."

It should be remembered that privatisation process was com-



menced a few years ago when it was taken out from the maintenance of SAIL and giving it to corporate entity called Rastriya Ispace Nigam Limited (RINL). It is come to know that the VSP is to be handed over at throw away price to the South Korean steel giant POCSO or Adani group. It is right to mention here the corporate entity would start real estate business after acquiring the plant by taking the advantage of large chunks of its lands instead of manufacturing steel. Consequently nearly 40000 employees would face the brunt directly and lakhs of people indirectly.

It should be remembered that with Rs 5000 crore investment the Union government earned tens of thousands crores as taxes. So, to overcome the oft-cited losses for privatisation the government should bring back the VSP to SAIL from RINL and allot captive iron ore mines to it. In this way one and only steel plant can be saved that established on shore based. Moreover it is a prestige for AP as well as Vizag city which is going to be Executive Capital.

— Pratapa Reddy Yaramala, Tiruvuru

That the Central Government decided to privatise Visakha-

patnam steel plant, one of the Navaratnas among public enterprises is unfair. It's not a white elephant to get rid of, but a golden goose which is starved and deserves to be taken care of. It has no own captive mines for uninterrupted supply of raw material. It has been on the path of expansion. So the ongoing losses cannot be shown a cause to prove it a losing enterprise. It can be turned a profit making entity with a little help and political resolve. Of course, to strengthen the public sector would be the right step in the direction of self-sufficient Bharat.

— Dr D V G Sankararao, Nellimarla

The decision of selling the Rastriya Ispat Nigam Ltd at Visakhapatnam is quite arbitrary by the central Government. For getting the plant at Vizag a prolonged battle was fought and lot of lives were lost in 1970. This decision has been opposed by entire Andhra people. The central government instead should have appointed a committee of experts to probe into the continuous losses of the plant and after that it should have been declared as a sick industry and after probing any viability plan it should have

been implemented. The State government should protest the decision tooth and nail and pass a resolution in the assembly and send it to the centre. If you go on privatising all public sector organisations including banks the government will not have any role on the development of the country. The Centre should release a white paper stating the reasons for the privatisation of VSP in detail and release it to media, so that public would be able to know the facts and then react. This type of unilateral decisions is not good for the Indian economy. At any cost the VSP should not go into the private hands.

— TSN Rao, Bhimavaram

It is not just Vizag steel plant alone, many PSUs, including nationalised banks have become white elephants. Thanks to defective policies of successive governments; also lack of work culture of workers and political attitude of trade unions (February 6). Under such circumstances, governments have no option but to go for privatisation. It is amusing political parties promote privatisation, while in government and oppose the same when they are in opposition. Such double standards need to be put an end and both private and private sectors are made to work in a competitive environment.

— Kshirasagara Balaji Rao, Hyderabad

Anything can happen only in A.P. because the state is politically weak. We have no time to give a thought to any issue except internal fights. Tamil Nadu could fight for Jallikattu by all political parties in spite of their differences and achieved what they want. We lost major ports, iconic Andhra bank etc. A.P people should give a thought for their collective welfare without political support.

— P R Vittal Rao, Hyderabad

PAST AND PRESENT

A matter of perception

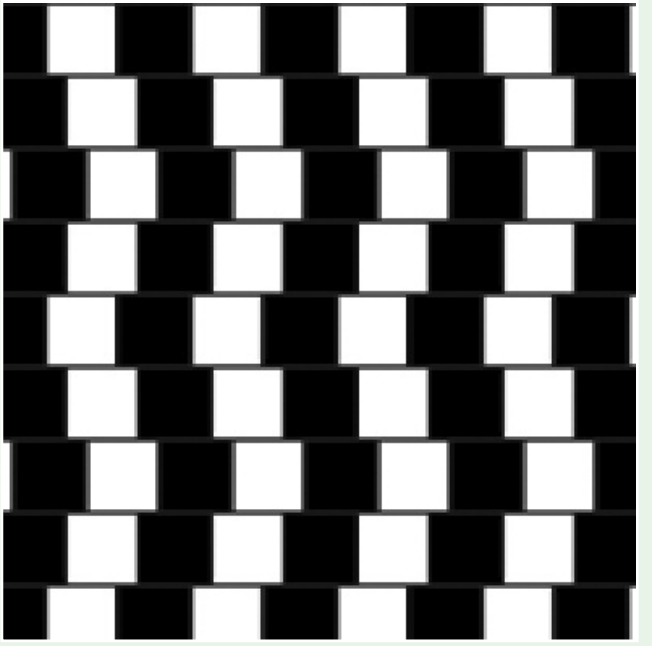
ANIL KUMAR PATNAIK

MY Didi responded to its rattle respectfully and replied the crow to wait and left for her kitchen from the mid of our chit-chatting, during my last visit to her. My perplexity grew deeper, she moved to her rooftop with a plateful of rice. As she returned, I questioned her, feeding birds is noble but you responded it in a dignified way, what is that? I could not get you...

Always she answered me truthfully and cleared my speculations lucidly. She took a deep breath, and started - 'Seven years back I was transferred to my present school, which is 8 km from here. The very first day, the bus took me to the next stoppage which is 200m away. As I entered my Headmaster welcomed me and comforted me with his suave behaviour, introduced me to other colleagues. As the official hours ended, he came to the stoppage and informed the driver to stop the bus near to the school, whenever I board it.

As days passed, he became a father figure. Breakfast get-togethers, small parties, tiffin sharing were our daily chores. His enthusiasm for the flora and fauna of the school was praiseworthy. None of us availed a French leave during his time for his empathetic behaviour which motivated us to work collaboratively. Once your brother in law came to pick me up, he saw him, invited him to the office, offered a cup of coffee from a nearby hotel, I was unaware of his hospitality. He treated my husband as his son in law.

He retired fifteen months back. In the last month of his tenure, we, colleagues were not in our elements. His farewell was heart-rending, each one of us cried a lot, we bid him adieu with tears in our eyes. Never I felt so much of pain in my career spanning 26 years. Three months back his



only son sent a message to our school that he developed issues in his kidneys, getting his treatment from the nephrologist of the nearby town. Two of our male colleagues visited him in the hospital, there to he inquired about the whereabouts of all his then subordinates and school.

It was a winter night and about 10 p.m., someone knocked on the door, as your brother in law opened, with two of my colleagues, my HM was standing. He said, "Daughter I was relieved yesterday from the hospital, I met others, just thought of seeing you." As he came in, he asked, "Give me a one-fourth cup of milk, just wanted to have it from your hands." He talked for a few minutes, blessed me, and left. Three days later, I received the information about his sad demise, he succumbed to kidney failure. My sister wiped out her tears, completely choking by this time.

She continued - his son requested all of us to attend his twelfth-day ritual. As we reached on the day of the ritual, his son came running and entreated us to show some-

thing. A number of crows was sitting over food plates that were offered as part of the ritual. His son repeated "I offered food before one hour, till now not even a single crow was seen, as you all came, just see, my father came with all his friends and relatives. Every day he used to talk about each one of you, even in the hospital bed too, he talked about his staff. He must be very happy now, as you all came."

By this time tears rolled down from her cheeks, I could see her lamentation as she left to her kitchen and called me for lunch. I went up to the rooftop, the crow finished the rice plate just like it's its prerogative, rubbed its beak, and sipped water that was kept in a pot, cawed, and flew to perch in a nearby tree.

Sometimes it is difficult to decipher human perceptions related to certain events, it may be a coincidence or result of resolute faith. The divine has its way of manifesting the aspiration of souls. My Didi had prepared my favorite delicacies, which were ready on the table...

Inculcating the reading habit

We are all aware of that reading has so many advantages and bring more changes in the child. The outbreak of pandemic Covid-19 has altered the schedule of academic institutions and made everything related to the young generation helter-skelter. The online class instruction has made the children more gadget-loving people with curbed reading habits. This will bring more psychological and behavioural changes among the young and provoke them to commit easy faults. It is noticeable that the young lads commit most of the crimes of today because they are influenced by social media glorification about insensible acts. To produce more emotionally balanced analytically strong young people there is a dire need to inculcate reading habits that will rationalize their thought.

Reading is going to be administered in four stages with a definite time frame such as i) Preparatory stage (November



2020 to January 2021), ii) Foundational stage (February 2021 to April 2021), iii) Advanced stage (May 2021 to July 2021) and iv) Valedictory stage (August 2021 to November 2021). By the completion of these four stages, a child may evolve as a voracious reader with better comprehension. The design of this program and its perfect execution will surely bring great changes among the children. It is a great decision of Andhra Pradesh Samagra Siksha Abhiyaan that has taken the initiative to motivate the entire student tribe of Andhra Pradesh from third to 10th classes, which instil great behavioural and psychological traits.

— E Gajendra Nath Reddy, Badvel

Farmers' protest reaching a point of no return?

This has reference to your editorial on "The changing contours of farmers agitation" (Feb, 6). The farmers agitation is being blown out of proportion. Politicians are playing a spoil sport. Every political party, including the Congress, want to take credit of addressing their sufferings. But they did not do it when they were in power. The farmers problem differs from state to state. This problem is being internationalised as a matter of concern. Opposition and the so called social activists are doing vote bank politics. The situation has become very sensitive and volatile. A situation has been created wherein the opposition are the real champions of the farmers.

Now both the stake holders, the farmers and the government are in tenterhooks. No one wants to give in. The government still says its doors are open. Even the Supreme Court advise had also fallen on deaf ears. This will take the protest of the farmers to a point of no return. The opposition, instead of solving the problem, are instigating the farmers. They should see that the problem is resolved early without playing politics.

— Sravana Ramachandran, Chennai

This refers to 'Rihanna, Greta back farmers' protest' (THI, February 4). Twitter has reverberated with hash tags and comments from some foreign celebrities like

Rihanna - singer and performer, Meena Harris - niece of US Vice-President Kamala Harris, Greta Thunberg - climate activist, Jim Costa - US house foreign affairs committee member, Lilly Singh - Youtuber, Rupri Kaur - poet, Rush - rapper, Mia Khalifa - former adult star, Vanessa Nakate - Ugandan climate activist and a host of others, who came in support of farmers' protest against farm laws. Later on, MEA gave a strong statement that it will take legal action against twitter if those comments are not removed immediately.

Film stars Akshay Kumar, Ajay Devgn, Kangana Raut Producers Karn Johar and Ekta Kapoor, cricketers Sachin Tendulkar, Virat Kohli etc., came in support of the government stand immediately. Earlier the Government disconnected internet connectivity and erected makeshift walls, planting huge metal spikes on roads and deploying concertina wire fences at the farmers' agitation sites just outside Delhi. Bharatiya Janata Party's think tank of Modi-Amit Shah solved decade long problems like Ayodhya issue (Ramjanma Bhumi-Babri Masjid controversy), Kashmir issue etc., But the farmers' agitation is becoming dicey day by day with nobody budging from earlier stands and becoming a thorn in BJP's flesh. It is better not to prolong the stir on the part of both the sections in the interest of the nation and also preserve Indian image in the international community.

As such, social media flooded with international support coming from unexpected quarters including international celebs for farmers protest was shocking because their uncalled for remarks posted is meant only to disturb peace and disharmony in the society. How-



— V Nagendra Kumar, Hyderabad

Though the farmers protests by and large is peaceful, the fact that it escalated after R-day mayhem due to vested interests extending support to farmers with an eye to polarise and break India. A preliminary probe into the source of Powerpoint toolkit by environment activist Greta Thunberg's accidentally tweet reveal Canada-based pro-Khalistan organisation's aim is to damage India's interests.

As such, social media flooded with international support coming from unexpected quarters including international celebs for farmers protest was shocking because their uncalled for remarks posted is meant only to disturb peace and disharmony in the society. How-

ever, what was more annoying is the social media twitter agog with inflammatory content targeting the indian prime minister in the garb of activism which is nothing but is a recipe to anarchy and therefore condemnable in strongest terms.

Obviously, foreign ministry blasting the vested interests who are trying to mobilise international support against India and for destabilising a popularly elected democratic government by warning the social media giant Twitter to remove inflammatory content is apt because it is an internal issue and outsiders have no business to make comments on India's internal matters. In the same breath, the foreign ministry drawing an equivalence to Republic Day violence and the Capitol Hill insurrection in the wake of

President Biden backing the new farm laws and further adding that reforms are imperative for attracting more foreign investments, a sequel to economic growth cannot be brushed under the carpet even though farmers issue is an internal affair of a nation.

At the same time, the farmers problem unfortunately receiving undue international attention is getting more aggressive after infiltration of vested interests who are only keen to drag the issue rather seeing farmers and government arrive at an amicable solution. As the sensationalist social media hashtags comments aimed only at inciting farmers and inflicting more damage, the government is issuing an ultimatum to twitter after it refused to comply its request is absolutely right and as well a reminder to social media that it cannot escape serious consequences for its actions.

All said and done, desi celebs and ministers slamming disgruntled elements by dismissing the false and fake propaganda has also sent a strong message that such irresponsible comments cannot deter India's unity built on a strong foundation. Now that, the farmers issue has reached a boiling point, Prime Minister cannot disregard and drag the farmers problems further by taking concetete steps to resolve the issue on priority in the interest of farmers and nation at large.

— K R Srinivasan, Secunderabad

Along the roads, along the footpaths, we find overhead cables of all sorts. These are laid by Electricity Board, Telephone department, Cable TV operators, Internet Service Providers etc. As the demand for such services has increased many folds and a number of competitors have emerged, each company lays its own cables; even private colony streets and by lanes are not spared. Even in a new colony that is just few months old, the ugly scenes of tangled overhead cables may be seen. Service Providers' greed to reach each and every house has become a menace and a concern, why, I shall tell you shortly.

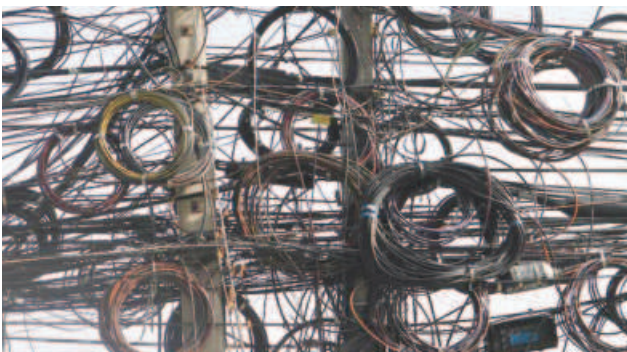
The cables are laid without any concern for standards,

safety or regulations. All poles originally meant for electrical distribution or only telephones are abused without any permission or approval. When an ISP lays these cables, he keeps future expansion in mind and leaves a large bundle of extra cable at each pole. The clutter and chaotic condition of these dozens of cables close together must be seen to be believed. Here is the real problem: These cables, as they are not securely laid, get snapped often.

A lorry carrying goods stacked beyond reasonable heights will easily cut these cables. Even sim-

ple rains or a strong wind plays havoc. ISPs compete among themselves by resorting to unfair practice of deliberately cutting away the Internet cables of competitors every now and then. They do it in the night.

This causes disruption of service for a couple of days, every time the cables are snipped. In my area, within a ra-



dius of one kilometre I have Reliance, Tata, Beam, BSNL, Drishti and many more. They live prey-

ing upon each other and poaching other's customers. I was a victim of unreliable Internet Connection, not because my ISP, but because of nefarious activities of his competitors. The problem became so acute that I had to switch over to another ISP who runs underground

hang out in the most disgusting manner everywhere.

Another major concern is that the cut cables of varying lengths overflow from footpaths onto streets, lying haphazardly. Such wires get entangled by bicycles, walkers and others. Road users may trip and fall and get injured. Whenever I walk and observe this clutter, I take pains to pull and put back such lose cables back to poles, or otherwise secure them in such a way they won't cause any harm. Scout and NCC volunteers should be trained to tackle this menace in their locality. How can we solve

this menace? No one would remove (steal) these cut wires as it does not merit re-sale to raddi wala. Public are afraid and do not know whether they are energized cables that may give some shock. ISPs and others simply lay another pair of cables and leave the broken ones as it is. They do not collect it back. Some kind of a firm action from Municipal authorities is required. Those who own the poles (APCPDCL, BSNL and others) may interfere and prohibit ISPs from using their poles or lay down rules for proper usage. Solution to this problem is not easy. But if affected persons raise their voice often someone might be listening.

— P Vyasamoorthy, Secunderabad

Cricket's maiden World Test Championship being taken lightly

YAJURVINDRA SINGH

THE most significant and important reason of the India-England four-match Test series will be for one of the sides to ensure they qualify for the inaugural World Test Championship (WTC) final. Unfortunately, this wonderful initiative by the International Cricket Council (ICC) went completely into a tail spin because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The simple point calculation system went totally awry because the schedule could not be met and a simpler formula of percentages came into play.

The battle for a place in the final is between the four top teams that at present rule the world of cricket -- India, England, New Zealand, and Australia. New Zealand have already qualified as their nearest rival Australia opted out of the tour to South Africa, leaving India a favourable chance to qualify -- if they beat England convincingly at home.

One does understand that the loneliness of the bio-secure bubble and the concern of catching the dreaded virus has had a major mental effect on a cricketer. This has been relayed by some of them through personal interviews. However, for countries not to play their best XIs at a time when qualifying for the WTC final is at stake is simply not acceptable.

This truly shows that the inaugural WTC has no significant value among the cricket playing countries. Test cricket is not as lucrative a commercial venture as the limited-overs version of the game, but to give it a step brotherly treatment does not augur well. The recently completed India-Australia Test series showed how absorbing, challenging, and competitive Test cricket can be, and the skills, guts, and patience it requires to do well.

The young enthusiastic Indian and the ardent followers finally did get to understand and enjoy the conventional form of the game. The series against England will be extensively followed as In-



dian fans have finally grown to enjoy Test cricket. However, the importance of what it means to be the ultimate cricket champion team needs to be far more advertised and talked about in order to give Test cricket that pride of place. The ICC has to play a much greater role in projecting their newly structured Test championship.

The first Test match between India and England in Chennai, beginning on Friday, has finally brought cricket back to India after the Covid-19 pandemic. The chance of qualifying to play the WTC final in June in England for both the sides will provide the series that additional luster and interest.

England have to beat India convincingly to qualify whereas India are far better placed to do so. This is why one is surprised that England have -- and are planning to -- rested some of their frontline performers during this important series. This also shows how unconcerned England are as regards the WTC final which will be played in their own backyard.

An India-England series has always been a highlight for fans of both countries. India's Test cricket started in 1932 against England, and visits by teams tour-

ing India since 1880s have been the historical milestones that have been etched in Indian cricket.

India, after their terrific win against Australia, look to be the favourites, especially at home. One cannot underestimate this England side, especially after their convincing away win against Sri Lanka recently. India, definitely have a stronger batting line-up but England boast of a world class pace attack. A side that has James Anderson, Stuart Broad, the dreaded Jofra Archer, and Ben Stokes cannot be taken lightly.

England have also equipped themselves with three finger spinners in their squad, to add to their bowling attack. This would, therefore, need the Indian batsmen to play at their best. The England bowlers are capable in just one good session to bring disaster to a batting side. Sri Lanka experienced this in their just concluded Test series.

England captain Joe Root will be playing his 100th Test match and his team would be determined to give him a grand victory on this momentous occasion. England's batting will depend on not only Root but also on Jos Buttler and Ben Stokes to get them a big total to defend.

India, on the other hand, are at home but have some issues of concern in their midst. Virat Kohli will be under pressure as a captain, although his winning streak in India as a leader has been very good. The social and digital world is full of Ajinkya Rahane's leadership skills and an undue comparison has been ignited not only by the foreign press but also by some of our own Indian journalists and commentators.

The other area of concern is whether the successful stars of the last Test match in Australia be played ahead of their senior compatriots. This can lead to a healthy competition on the one hand. However, it can also go vice versa.

The winner of the series, one feels, will be the team that bats well. Both India and England have bowlers who can, in most conditions, bowl a side out in both innings, but it is the batters who will make the difference.

India need to continue with their positive attitude, a series win will not only be a boost for Test cricket, but a place in the finals of the WTC would be just the icing on the cake that the nation needs.

(Yajurvindra Singh is a former Test cricketer. Views expressed are personal)



Beggars leave behind Jaipur's streets to pick up vocational skills

ARCHANA SHARMA

AN elegant heritage building here is playing host to 33 beggars these days, who are picking life skills thanks to an innovative Rajasthan government initiative.

The ambitious project started by RSLDC in association with Sopan society is imparting new skills to these beggars who were living on the streets till now.

Says Neeraj K Pawan, Secretary (Labour, Employment, Skill, Entrepreneurship and ESI), Rajasthan Government, "Initially, we've organised a 15-day counselling session for these destitutes. After counselling, we shall start a 3-month training programme for them to ensure that the hands which were once used to beg will now be working to earn a dignified livelihood," he added.

"We have already tied with Akshaya Patra, an NGO, for their placement. We are continuing with our first and second batch and shall start our next batch after three months. Due to Covid, we have kept the numbers minimum," he added.

Initially, with the help of the police commissionerate, the Rajasthan government carried out a survey to know about the educational qualifications and interest of these beggars. "We have made arrangements for their jobs too. Most of these people are aged around 30 and

shall be trained as electricians, guards, beauticians and cooks. The Akshaya Patra Foundation is ready to give them jobs too. We shall set an example for the world by rehabilitating these beggars and bringing them to mainstream," said RK Jain, Deputy General Manager, RSLDC.

The Akshaya Patra Foundation is an NGO which strives to eliminate classroom hunger by implementing the Mid-Day Meal Scheme in government schools and government-aided schools.

Meanwhile, the building playing host to the beggars opens into a beautifully curated lawn where they perform yoga in the morning. The steps take you to classrooms where the beggars are now pursuing their education.

Donning clean uniforms, these disciplined students told IANS they were happy to be learning new skills to earn and shall return home once they have a decent job.

Says Tulsiram, an Andhra Pradesh resident, "I came here 12 years back for a mechanical job in Jodhpur. However, I was so fed up with my family tensions that I gave up my job and then was working as a labourer and begging on the streets of Jaipur. Now, am here learning computers and want to stand on my own feet and earn a decent livelihood. Then I shall return to my family."

Another beggar, Rajendra, says, "I came from Maharashtra to get medical treatment here and have been working as a labourer for the last 16 years. After the police survey, we've been taken to this centre and promised that we shall learn something new which will give us new ways to earn. I'll go back to Nagpur once I stand up on my own feet."

Says Raghupati Dasa from Akshaya Patra: "We need 50 people as and when the school starts to cook the mid-day meal for students and we have other such jobs too. Our first priority will be to recruit people from these batches. We shall follow a three pronged strategy: to find out who is inclined towards spiritual growth, who wants to follow personal hygiene related to cooking and thirdly, who wants to do a decent job? Eventually, we will recruit people as helpers, cooks, drivers and to work in our gaushala," he added.

The beggars told IANS that after waking up they do yoga followed by breakfast where they are served poha and paratha. "Then starts our counselling followed by lunch at noon. 1 pm to 2 pm is rest time then we network, play ludo, carrom and chess. Evenings are for badminton in the night, we watch movies together," said one of the beggars.

Union Budget 2021 adopts a dual approach

NOTABLE EMPHASIS ON HEALTHCARE, EDUCATION, AND APPROACH TO PERSONAL INCOME

KAVIN RAMESH PILLAI

THE Indian economy according to many economists, is going through a demand deficiency problem, where declining disposable incomes and reduction in consumer spending are hurting it. Due to stumbling or stagnant wages, the common man is struggling to cope with the steady price inflation as well as added taxation on various products. This creates a chain reaction where we see a decline in demand in the market, which leads to a reduction in production of goods and services, which in turn, results in massive job loss. We need socioeconomic policies that actually speak to the common man by boosting their disposable income and enabling them to resume consumer spending. With that, it is disappointing to see that the budget reflects two approaches, trickle-down economics which prioritises corporate interests, and welfare state policies like simply handing out subsidies. Although I agree that supplying necessities during crunch times is a must, I believe initiatives like direct cash handouts to the average Indian in order to boost their disposable income (short term) and consumer spending (long term) would truly uplift our economy from its steep decline. This way, we not only provide short term monetary relief to families for their sustenance, but we also get economists to further research into the spending habits of the Average Indian. Such data would enable future Governments to formulate better informed socioeconomic policies that speak to the Common Indian.

An Atmanirbhar Bharat will not come about if we give precedence to wealth creation of the Elite with trickle-down economics and it will not come about if we continue with simple subsidies as a Welfare State. An Atmanirbhar Bharat will only arise when we Indians are healthy, sufficiently educated and socioeconomically well placed to



support our great nation. Starting with the healthcare budget... after witnessing private and government healthcare systems crumble in the face of Covid-19, it was important to see a comeback... The 137 per cent increase from the last healthcare budget along with a separate budget for a pan-India vaccine programme is necessary, positive and bold as we need to tackle this pandemic head on. But I find it unfortunate that for another year running, the acknowledgement of the ongoing mental health crisis and budgetary assistance for the specially-abled community are sorely lacking again as majority of their corresponding welfare programmes saw their budgets slashed or unimproved upon. This reflects India's age old systematic and societal negligence towards these areas. This pandemic exacerbated these issues and yet the budget as per my reading, doesn't acknowledge or reflect that.

Regarding education, I passionately believe the only way forward is to boost expenditure as we need to focus on educating our population to transform our nation into a progressive society that harbours the most productive workforce. And yet, on the backdrop of perhaps the biggest jolt to modern education, our government proposed to cut the budget by 6000 crores, one of the

largest budget cuts... Does that mean the implementation of the new and ambitious National Education Policy (NEP) is far cheaper than the outgoing education system? I am not sure... But on a positive note, I applaud the government's proposal to establish a central university in Ladakh. I hope established and iconic educationists like Sonam Wangchuk are actively involved as advisors in this development.

Having keenly followed the farm bill legislations and farmers' protests, it's a surprise to see the government's commitment to the APMC by promising to create and invest in 1000 more mandis! This in my humble opinion, sends off a confusing message... But nonetheless, this is a positive step because I believe we need more well-functioning government mandis to cater towards majority of small farmers before we can efficiently rely on a freer market. The Niti Aayog itself noted similar observations in a 2017 report, where they highlighted an improvement in farmer income in the states of Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh where better functioning government mandis were coupled with an influx of private investment and competition.

The author is currently pursuing BA (Hons) in History and International Relations, IILM University, Gurugram

SONG OF PROTEST



Myanmar nationals living in Thailand sing a song while holding images of deposed Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi outside Mandalay Food House in Bangkok, Thailand on Friday

3 in 4 Indian professionals to actively look for new job in 2021

THE job market is set to become more competitive this year as three in four Indian professionals are likely to consider changing jobs or actively look for a new roles in the next 12 months, according to LinkedIn Job Seeker research.

Based on 1,016 survey responses, findings show that three out of four Indian professionals will actively look for a new job in 2021. India remains resilient towards career growth as two in three (64 per cent) professionals say they are confident about their future progression while two in five think attending networking events (38 per cent), and investing in online learning (37 per cent) will be critical to landing a job in 2021, it noted.

There is a sense of professional uncertainty and worry among Indian professionals as the job market continues to get more competitive in 2021, the



research said adding that more than one-third of job seekers in India are worried about too many recruitment stages, and extensively long application documents, while three in four professionals say they have

reservations about networking. LinkedIn has launched the 2021 'Jobs on the Rise' India list to empower professionals with critical insights about the dynamic jobs landscape. The list looks at 15 fastest-growing ca-

reer opportunities that have seen the highest year-on-year growth rates in hiring based on LinkedIn data for the time frame of April to October 2020.

"This year's Jobs on the Rise India list is a reflection of how the work ecosystem and the jobs market rapidly changed in 2020. Digital transformation has continued to drive all industries, and both, tech and non-tech roles have shifted to meet the needs of a new collaborative, remote work culture," said Ruchee Anand, Director - Talent and Learning Solutions, India, at LinkedIn. Anand further noted that "the list shows us that audience builders and content creators are key to brands, HR continues to be at the heart of all operations, user and customer experience are critical in the new online world of service, and emerging tech, especially ed-tech, continues to boom." (PTI)

India's internet startups on cusp of listing

NEW DELHI

INDIA's internet startups leaders that operate business ranging from food delivery, e-commerce to online insurance are now on the cusp of listing, a report said putting their combined value at \$ 180 billion by 2025.

"The growing scale and maturity of India's internet economy is starting to create more value and investment opportunities. More than \$60 billion has been invested in India's internet startups in the past five years, with around \$ 12 billion in 2020 alone," HSBC Global Research said in a report of India's internet. It put the total sector value (ex-Fintech) to reach \$180 billion by 2025.

"Many of these leaders, who operate businesses ranging from food delivery, e-commerce to online insurance, are now on the cusp of listing," the report said. India has 42 Unicorns and over 45 soonicorns, HSBC said. E-commerce is the largest opportunity, worth an estimated \$67 billion by 2025, it said adding this was worth \$31 billion in 2019 after expanding at an impressive five-year CAGR of 39 per cent.

Amazon and Flipkart control over 80 per cent of the industry today but the contours of the competitive landscape are still evolving. "For example, Reliance Jio is set to emerge as a significant competitive threat, along with multiple vertical e-commerce players and hundreds of brands that are now delivering direct to consumers," it said.

"We see e-commerce logistics companies such as Delhivery as a lucrative opportunity." In India, 48 per cent of retail spending is on gro-

cery, compared to 15 per cent in China and 10 per cent in the US. Ed-tech is the second-largest opportunity with a market size of \$ 48 billion by 2025. Although still quite fragmented, it is one of the most profitable segments and has one of the largest total addressable markets. Food delivery is getting back on track, with gross merchandise value almost back to pre-pandemic levels.

"We expect 6 million online food orders a day by 2025. This is well behind China where 40 million orders are delivered every day," the report said. The online insurance market remains lucrative, with Policy-Bazaar likely to maintain its lead for the foreseeable future.

Meanwhile, ride-sharing faces significant challenges; travel is the most penetrated market and hotels are an untapped opportunity, the report said adding ride sharing has fallen 40 per cent from pre-pandemic levels.

"Mobile penetration, demographics, consumer awareness and convenience are the key drivers of most internet sub-segments. Still, despite strong growth, companies need to continue to invest to 'incubate' the market and work on cultural inhibitions," it said. For instance, food delivery volumes are 1/20th of China's, leaving massive scope for growth, but companies will still need to invest in growing the food ordering culture.

"For the gig economy, the regulatory regime has yet to evolve. We see particular risks for ride-sharing, ed-tech and gaming industries. Recent regulations/guidelines for ride-sharing reflect these risks," the report said.

'52% millennials keen on overseas holiday'

MUMBAI: With vaccination drive against Covid-19 gathering steam across the world and restrictions on movements easing gradually, many millennials are keen on taking an international holiday this summer, according to a survey.

Things are looking up for 2021, as 52 per cent millennials are eager to take an international holiday this summer as Covid-19 vaccine ushered in hope that the end to the pandemic is on the horizon, according to a survey by BOT'T (Business of Travel Trade) Travel Sentiment Tracker.

The survey was done online with over 6,000 millennial travellers across the country during January 2021. As per the survey, 75 per cent millennials would prefer to go to foreign destinations with fewer Covid-19 cases while 71 per cent would opt for destinations with defined protocols for the pandemic to avoid unnecessary hassles. The industry finds survey findings encouraging for the travel industry. The findings, they believe, will generate more confidence in an industry, which is currently disappointed by being ignored in the Union Budget. "However, inbound and outbound are two verticals of travel that go hand in hand. We hope the government will look into opening up borders in India soon, and so will other countries," Travel Agents Association of India president and the Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality Vice Chairperson Jyoti Mayal opined.

The survey also showed that 62 per cent millennials would prefer Thailand, followed by Singapore (58 per cent), UAE (52 per cent), Maldives (46 per cent) and Saudi Arabia (40 per cent) in the short-haul category of foreign destinations. Malaysia and Indonesia are chosen by 39 per cent millennials each followed by Sri Lanka (36 per cent), Bhutan (31 per cent), Turkey (28 per cent) and Seychelles (24 per cent) coming close among the top preferred short-haul foreign destinations, it noted.

'Timely execution, delivery of realty projects our strength'

Kolte-Patil CEO says the company has moved away from the developer mindset of land aggregation

VINCENT FERNANDES

How is the real estate industry shaping up post Covid?

Most of the branded developers with stronger balance sheets and a focus on providing superior customer experience have recovered well and neared pre-Covid level performance in terms of sales, construction and collections. While the overall volumes may have decreased this year, performance of leading players shows early signs of a Covid-led consolidation taking place.

What the government should do to incentivise real estate sector?

The government has to step in and curb the cartelisation of raw materials like cement and steel. This is necessary especially when the government aims to reign in home prices.

How has your company evolved over the years?

Over the recent few years, while maintaining our dominant position in Pune, we have diversified our geographical footprint with strong bookings growth in Bangalore and significant portfolio additions in Mumbai. We have moved away from a developer mindset of land aggregation and focused on operating like a manufacturing and services company. Further, we have continued to augment our quality standards, customer centricity and execution capabilities. Thus, recently we were acknowledged as India's most trusted brand in the 10th edition of TRA's Brand Trust Report in the 'Construction' super category that includes real estate companies as well as EPC contractors, ahead of many prominent companies in the sector.

Customer centricity with a sharp focus on quality and innovation and longevity is part of the Kolte-Patil DNA where we service customers with a 'You on Priority' and 'We Care' approach, says **Gopal Sarda**, Group CEO, Kolte-Patil Developers Limited. Prudent investments in technology has enabled faster construction, data-driven decision-making, reduction in customer service time, integrate systems and truly deliver an omni-channel experience to customers who trust us with their hard-earned money. We are committed to delighting customers through timely delivery and execution. Gopal Sarda shares with **Bizz Buzz** on how the real estate industry is shaping up and the impact of the industry on the economy



Gopal Sarda, Group CEO, Kolte-Patil Developers Limited



How is the company gearing for 2021?

Despite such an uncertain year, we expect to report healthy cash flows and a strong balance sheet in FY21. Building on FY21, we expect to report a strong improvement in financial and operational parameters in FY22. We have recently launched a new project 'Universe' in our Life Republic Township in

Pune and the initial response has been quite encouraging. We have an exciting year ahead with new launches across the three cities where we are present. These include five launches in Pune, three in Mumbai and one in Bengaluru amounting to a total saleable area of 3.1 msf.

How important is the real estate industry to the economy?

Real estate contributes close to 6-7 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) in India and this share is expected to grow to double digits in a few years. There are multiple allied industries like building materials, lighting, cement and steel linked to the health of real estate. Hence, the sheer volume of jobs created by the sector makes it one of the most important industries. And this is all the more reason real estate needs to be accorded the infrastructure status by the government; as well as be included in the priority lending list of banks.

What technological changes you see that could change the industry?

The industry is already more digitised and data-driven than it was in pre-Covid times and this will only further increase. Incremental improvement in lead management, CRM and virtual reality technologies which shorten the lead to sale cycle is expected to change the industry.

Tech ties up loose ends in social sector

Culture of coexistence, transparency and partnership can be significantly enabled by technology



Viiveck Verma

The social sector, comprising non-governmental organisations, social enterprises, CSR regimes and other significant entities has always been an arena for taking stock of, and improving the general well-being of the society and the economy. In recent times, nothing has highlighted the significance of the social sector like the Covid-19 pandemic. It created a crisis that drew responses from the government, civil society, NGOs and other social actors on an unprecedented scale and revitalised our interconnectedness in the world.

However, the social sector does not have the neatest of integrities as there are unchecked divergences among the government, NGOs, corporate social responsibility (CSR) models and social enterprises. Government regulations often limit NGOs, civil society often responds to governments and social actors with hostility. The list of troubles in the social sector is long, and it is worth pondering what could be done to ensure better cooperation among various actors operating in it.

Cooperation in the social sector has acquired new meanings in a co-Covid world. The Indian Express among other sources reported how in March 2020, Prime Minister Narendra Modi called on social welfare organisations and NGOs to assist the government during the lockdown by ensuring basic necessities to the underprivileged, providing medical and protective gear, and helping with awareness campaigns on social distancing. This was barely a small development, as governments and other actors in the social sector often find each other at log-heads. In 2016, as The Times of India reports, licenses of 20,000 NGOs were cancelled by the gov-



One fruitful direction to take most certainly is technological innovation. While technology energised our lives and kept us afloat during the pandemic, it can most urgently improve coordination and trust within the social sector

ernment due to alleged violation of the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA). Therefore, in times where cooperation is recognised as an utmost necessity and yet, distrust is prevalent among the actors in question, we must devise ways to tidy up the mess and build a cohesive system of association.

The answer to these conundrums must be sought through ways that ensure transparency and collaboration among governments, social enterprises and NGOs. One fruitful direction to take most certainly is technological innovation. While technology energised our lives and kept us afloat during the pandemic, it can most urgently improve coordination and trust within the social sector by facilitating connectivity amongst different parties in question and ensuring that important developments such as changes in regulations and introduction of programmes are effectively communicated.

If governments are apprised of what NGOs, CSR models and enterprises intend to roll out, regulations

can be made in accordance with them, and can be implemented while keeping all stakeholders in loop. Such a culture of coexistence, transparency and partnership can be significantly enabled by technology which can counter the material and bureaucratic troubles that burden the social sector.

Technology can be a powerful tool to streamline the finance and transparency aspects in the social sector. As Joy Sharma and Sudeep Gupta note in a December 2018 article on Qrius, social organisations acquire funding through four major sources - the government, donations from individuals, international aid and corporate sponsorships. Regulatory acts often limit international aid, as the quantum of funding received by the Indian social sector from international agencies fell to Rs 6,499 crore in 2016-17, from the Rs 15,299 crore it received in 2014-15. CSRs have helped with funding but the massive funding gap has not been bridged. Furthermore, it is common knowledge that legal and technical loopholes

often lead to disputes between NGOs and governments.

Online platforms provide a safe space for seamless flows of funds to NGOs, for CSR activities and to other entities, while keeping track of the money. Technological innovation and digitisation can help keep data in a stable manner and facilitate quick assessments of impact, alongside keeping track of efforts by NGOs and other players in the field. Since all of this happens on platforms accessible to most people, concerns around opaqueness are suitably handled. On a related note, when it comes to impact, as opposed to groundwork and physical campaigns, online campaigns can garner significant amounts of attraction and are a good way to outline what work is being done to the public. This also enables quick feedback and restructuring of programmes based on it. Moreover, technology ensures connectivity with the rest of the world in an era of globalisation and maximises impact across borders, widening the scope for collaboration and influence. All of this counters the major problem of distrust in the sector, as efficiency and transparency are jointly emphasised.

The Bridgespan Group's 2018 report on eight bold philanthropic initiatives in India found that collaboration is a key catalyst for driving social impact. Thus, it can be safely remarked that actors in the social sector, ranging from NGOs to corporate philanthropic ventures acknowledge the need for cooperation, partnership and collusion. Technology can tie the loose ends in such an endeavour by ensuring immediate transparency, efficacy and responsiveness.

Without technology, a locally and globally relevant social sector is unimaginable and all actors in this domain must utilise the wonders it can reap. We must employ technology to elevate impact, minimise hassles and invigorate the social sector, to radically uplift and fashion glorious scenarios for social well-being.

(The author is founder, Upsurge Global, and Senior Advisor, Telangana State Innovation Cell)

QUIZ NO. 159

HANS BIZ QUIZ

7 FEBRUARY IN BUSINESS HISTORY

1. Thomas Andrews Jr. took birth on 7 February 1873 in Ireland. Andrews is best remembered for designing which marvel of modern engineering?

- a) Pearl Harbour
- b) RMS Titanic
- c) Vanguard-class submarine
- d) Belfast shipyard

2. Harvey Samuel breathed his last on 7 February 1938. The American businessman and the founder of a famous Rubber Company named his company after his last name. Identify?

- a) Firestone
- b) Bridgestone
- c) Falken
- d) Dunlop

3. John Deere founded Deere & Company, one of the largest and leading agricultural and construction equipment manufacturers globally. He was born on 7 February 1804 in Vermont. What did John begin his career as?

- a) Truck Driver
- b) Gas station attendant
- c) Blacksmith
- d) Motor Mechanic

4. A Wang, the Chinese American computer engineer and co-founder of computer company Wang Laboratories, was born on 7 February 1920. Which company acquired Wang Laboratories in 1999?

- a) Genpact
- b) Caggemini
- c) Cognizant
- d) Getronics

5. Born on 7 February 1935, Herbert H. Kohl became a noted American politician and businessman after the founding of Kohl's department stores chain. Which Professional Football Team did Kohl buy in 1985 for \$18 million and sold for \$550 million in 2014?

- a) Los Angeles Lakers
- b) Boston Celtics
- c) Milwaukee Bucks
- d) Houston Rockets

6. Henry Engelhard Steinway died on 7 February 1871. His company Steinway & Sons pioneered in manufacturing which musical instruments?

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



- a) Piano
- b) Saxophone
- c) Trumpet
- d) Acoustic Guitar

7. Singapore businessman Ong Sam Leong died on 7 February 1918. What did he supply to phosphate mines on Christmas Island from China that made him a legendary billionaire businessman?

- a) Pork
- b) Noodles
- c) Coolie labor
- d) Explosives

8. The Russian engineer designed numerous Soviet airplanes and gliders for both civilian and military use. Identify the founder of Antonov Aircraft Company, who was born on 7 February 1906?

- a) Oleg Antonov
- b) Nikolai Amosov
- c) Victor Glushkov
- d) Oles Honchar

9. American social critic and novelist Sinclair Lewis was born on 7 February 1885 was in Minnesota. He received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1930. Identify his work?

- a) Main Street
- b) Babbitt
- c) It Can't Happen Here
- d) All of the above

10. On 7 February 1812, British novelist Charles Dickens took birth in Portsmouth, England. He is known for examining social inequalities through his works. Which of the below is not his work?

- a) Faithful and Virtuous Night
- b) Oliver Twist
- c) Nicholas Nickleby
- d) David Copperfield

KEY

1B 2A 3C 4D 5B 6A 7C 8A 9D 10A

BIG JOE LANDS ‘DOUBLE BLOW’ as India attack gets ‘Root’ed to reality

Visitors reach 555/8 on Day 2; England looking to bat another hour on Day 3: Stokes

CHENNAI

SKIPPER Joe Root continued to torment the Indian spinners with a majestic double century that placed England in a commanding position and scuttled home team's chances of enforcing a favourable result in the first Test here on Saturday.

England ended the day two at an intimidating 555 for eight, built around Root's 218 that was result of a near nine-hour effort in which he faced 377 balls. Root became the first cricketer to score a double hundred in his 100th Test but more importantly it was an innings that will be archived for future generations as a ready reference on how to play spin on Indian pitches.

The pace of his innings on the second day was a bit in contrast to how he played on the first day when he was the enforcer and Dom Sibley the grafter. On the second morning, it was Ben Stokes who entered the stage and made it his own with big hitting. He smashed 82 off 118 balls with 10 fours and three sixes and let Root rotate the strike in their 124-run stand.

Worse, England didn't declare after being well past 500 which was like driving home a point and piling on the misery on an Indian team which has now been shaken up on a track where nothing happened for two days.

While Root will be lauded for sure for his second double hundred in last three Test matches, it was Stokes, whose counter-attack deflated the home team. He started by coming down and lofting Ravichandran Ashwin over long for a six and then used the giant stride to slog sweep the senior off-spinner for a boundary.

In fact, Ashwin (2/132), who was brilliant over two days, was only a bit rattled when Stokes gave him the charge. Although Root hit Ashwin for two sixes -- the second one bringing up his fifth career double hundred for the England captain -- it was Stokes who gave him and the other spinners a big charge. Also the only one who played Ishant Sharma with some degree of confidence was Stokes.

While Root defended well against the veteran pacer, it was Stokes, whose on-drive and square drive off successive deliveries from the pacer did change his skipper Virat Kohli's facial complexion, which remained grumpy for the most part of the day.

Ishant (2/52) bowled as best as he had in any unfavourable conditions, something that the scoreboard wouldn't perhaps tell. The veteran of 98 Tests finally got a couple of wickets at the fag end of the day but his performance with old ball on one of the flattest tracks will be remembered for a long time.

The pace never dropped even when he was well past bowling his 20th over as the tattered old ball would consistently tail in. But Ishant, Ashwin and Jasprit Bumrah (2/81)'s good work was undone once again by rookie Washington Sundar.

And Shahbaz Nadeem (2/167) for all his experience at the domestic level for a decade and half, probably understood that he probably is a bit less-skilled when facing a team full of quality players of spin. His wickets column would read that he had got Stokes and Root but it was well after they had accomplished what they had set out to do.

Root and Stokes showed how to stay low and try and take

the ball below the eye-line. Since the duo couldn't build a lot of pressure from one end, the onus was always on either Ashwin or Ishant or Bumrah to strike and keep the pressure.

Root's strike-rate against pacers was in mid-30s and against spinners, it was in the high 70s, underlining his dominance against Washington and Nadeem.

They gave away easy singles and doubles to Root, who scored 130 runs in singles, doubles and that odd triple apart from hitting 19 boundaries and two sixes. And not to forget the runs that he had to run for his various batting partners during the course of the England innings. (PTI)

England skipper becomes first player to score 200 in 100th Test

CHENNAI

ENGLAND skipper Joe Root became the first cricketer to notch up a double century in his 100th Test, touching the milestone on the second day of the first Test against India, here on Saturday.

The 30-year-old reached his double hundred when he lofted India spinner Ravichandran Ashwin for a six over long-on in the second session on day two of the series-opener. "First batsman in the history of Test cricket to score a double century in his 100th Test - JOE ROOT. Sensational innings from the England skipper!," the International Cricket Council (ICC) tweeted.

Former Pakistan skipper Inzamam ul Haq, who hit 184 against India in Bengaluru in 2005, held the previous best score in the 100th Test.

Root's 218-run knock ended when he was trapped in front of the wicket by spinner Shahbaz Nadeem. This was Root's fifth double century.

He joined the likes of compatriot Alastair Cook, South Africa's Graeme Smith and India's Rahul Dravid, who all have five double tons. (PTI)

“ He is in phenomenal form. Makes it look very, very easy, the way he plays spin and dominates spin. Is incredible to watch. I don't think we have had an England batsman ever play spin the way he does. He's got an answer and option for everything thrown at him. He is such a delight to watch

—Ben Stokes

Root, Stokes revive ‘sweep’ memories for India, Shastri

CHENNAI

ENGLAND'S past successes over India in India have come with the aid of sweep shots and they used the same stroke to grind the Indian slow bowlers on a flat, batting-friendly MA Chidambaram wicket here on Saturday. Skipper Joe Root got to his fifth double century, becoming the first player to get to the figure in his 100th Test. On Friday, he had waited for 50 balls before employing the sweep which he had used quite successfully during the tour of Sri Lanka. But once in and settled, he used it to great effect trying to spoil the line and length of India bowlers.

Ben Stokes joined in and swept quite a few balls to the boundary as the Indian bowlers struggled.

Former India wicket-keeper Kiran More tweeted on Saturday, "Saw #GrahamGooch sweeping @RaviShastriOfc and #ManinderSingh during the 1987 @cricketworldcup semi-final. Then @KP24 used reverse sweep quite effectively in 2012 to set up Test series win, now @root66 and @benstokes38 doing similarly to negate spinners #IndvEng #cricket."

The current India coach Ravi Shastri, a former left-arm spinner, was part of the 1987 World Cup semi-final against England as Graham Gooch scored 115 and Mike Gatting hit 56 and used the sweep to good effect. England made 254 for six and

won the match by 35 runs to enter the final. More was part of India's 1987 World Cup team and had a good view from behind the stumps.

Then in the 2012-13 tour, both Alastair Cook (562) and Kevin Pietersen (338) scored heavily in the four-Test series to help England clinch the series 2-1. Both used the sweep to good effect. Root had, on the eve of the first Test, said that he learnt playing the sweep as a youngster because he wasn't physically very strong.

"For me as a young lad, I was very small. It took me a long time to grow and develop physically. So I had to find a way of getting the ball off the square against the spinners in particular. There wasn't any pace to work with. And the sweep shot was the one shot that I could actually generate the most power with. So learning to play that very well was pretty much the only scoring option for my junior career," explained the England captain ahead of his 100th Test. (IANS)

SCOREBOARD

England 1st Innings

Rory Burns c Pant b Ashwin-----33
Dominic Sibley lbw b Bumrah -----87
Daniel Lawrence lbw b Bumrah -----0
Joe Root lbw b Nadeem-----218
Ben Stokes c Pujara b Nadeem-----82
Ollie Pope lbw b Ashwin -----34
Jos Buttler b Ishant -----30
Dominic Bess batting -----28
Jofra Archer b Ishant-----0

Jack Leach batting -----6
Extras: (b-2, lb-16, nb-19) -----37
Total (For 8 wkts in 180 overs) --555
Fall of wickets: 63-1, 63-2, 263-3, 387-4, 473-5, 477-6, 525-7, 525-8
Bowling: Ishant Sharma 27-7-52-2, Jasprit Bumrah 31-4-81-2, Ravichandran Ashwin 50-5-132-2, Shahbaz Nadeem 44-4-167-2, Washington Sundar 26-2-98-0, Rohit Sharma 2-0-7-0.

NorthEast looking to get into top four with win over Hyderabad

VASCO (GOA)

NORTHEAST United have closed the gap on the top four and can momentarily take third place if they beat Hyderabad FC in their

next match in the Indian Super League (ISL) at the Tilak Maidan Stadium on Sunday.

Fifth-placed NorthEast are unbeaten in their last five games and are level on points with Hyderabad, who are fourth, and FC Goa in third place. They had won three matches in a row, including a 2-1 win to end Mumbai City's 12-game unbeaten run, before drawing 2-2 with Goa in their previous match.

Hyderabad also stand a chance at taking third place. They are unbeaten in their last 7 matches, and beat Chennaiyin FC 2-0 in their last match. NorthEast have scored 21 goals, the second-highest tally in the league, but have not kept a clean sheet in nine matches.

Their recent run of results hasn't gone unnoticed by Hyderabad coach Manuel Marquez.

"The work of Khalid (Jamil) is very good because it's not easy to win against Mohun Bagan, Jamshedpur and the other day when you are twice down against Goa to equalise the game (2-2)," he said.

"I think the most important thing is that Khalid gives the players

With third place in sight, Manuel Marquez wants to win all three points against NEUFC

RESULT

Odisha FC lose to ATK Mohun Bagan 1-4

confidence. They play with a good organisation in defence and have very good players in attack. Of course, we will have options to win the game if we play to our style."

To increase their chances of winning, Hyderabad will have to keep a tight leash on midfielder Federico Gallego, who has been key to NorthEast's attack. The Uruguayan has scored 4 goals and contributed as many assists besides creating the most chances for his side.

Head coach Jamil believes their recent progress has been down to the team effort.

ISL STANDINGS

CLUB	M	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
Mumbai City FC	15	10	3	2	22	8	14	33
ATK Mohun Bagan	15	9	3	3	20	10	10	30
FC Goa	15	5	7	3	21	16	5	22
Hyderabad FC	15	5	7	3	20	16	4	22
NorthEast United FC	15	5	7	3	21	20	1	22
Bengaluru FC	16	4	7	5	19	19	0	19
Jamshedpur FC	15	4	6	5	14	17	-3	18
Chennaiyin FC	16	3	8	5	11	16	-5	17
Kerala Blasters FC	16	3	6	7	20	27	-7	15
SC East Bengal	15	2	7	6	12	20	-8	13
Odisha FC	15	1	5	9	14	25	-11	8

Gannon, Oz's star against India at Perth 1977, no more

PERTH



FORMER Australia fast bowler Sam Gannon died on Saturday. He was 73.

Gannon represented Australia in three Test matches during the World Series Cricket era, highlighted by a debut in front of his home fans at the WACA Ground in 1977. He bowled first change behind Australia's new ball attack of Jeff Thomson and Wayne Clark, claiming match figures of 7-161 as Australia defeated India by two wickets.

Gannon played two more Test matches for Australia before returning to state duties. By the time of his retirement as a player during the 1978-79 season, the left-arm paceman had claimed 117 wickets across 40 first-class games and formed part of three successful Sheffield Shield-winning squads during a golden era of Western Australian cricket.

Gannon was also heavily involved in cricket administration, most notably in his roles as vice-chair and chair of the Western Australian Cricket Association for more than a decade, during which time he was instrumental in devising and executing the redevelopment plans for the WACA Ground. "Australian and Western Australian cricket has lost one of its great leaders in Sam Gannon and, on behalf of everyone at Cricket Australia, we send our sincere condolences to Sam's family and friends," said Earl Eddings, Cricket Australia chairman.

Perth Scorchers took the field against Sydney Sixers on Saturday night wearing black armbands in Gannon's memory. (IANS)

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