

Womenia

Eat right while making merry

I have been regaling in Christmas spirit ever since the start of December. The minute I turn on the Christmas carols I can hear the rustle of wrapping paper, the touch of the tulle frocks I was forced to wear as a child and the strong waft of cinnamon in the air. The mention of Christmas is incomplete without the mention of food. You are probably used to devouring the kulkul, marzipan and plum cakes around this time of the year but let's not lose out on health in this merry making. Here are a few wholesome foods I will be serving for Christmas dinner and you should too.

Pumpkin-walnut soup

This festive soup, rich in flavours is the perfect entrée. Fibre and Anti-oxidants from pumpkin and the healthy fats from walnut make this a hearty combination.

Barbequed sweet potato

A side of potato is integral for any grand meal and this one is no exception. Sweet potato is low on the gly-

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caemic index and full of Vitamin A and C. Barbeque it with your favourite seasoning and enjoy! Mains – Here arrives the star of show, Turkey is a lean meat with less animal fat and can be lightly roasted to give



Naini Setalvad

you a juicy main that is high in protein and full of flavour. Another protein rich option is a baked fish placed on a bed of lemon and fresh herbs. For those would prefer to skip out on the meat, you could do a hearty shepherd's pie stuffed with vegetables, lentils and a fluffy potato top.

Dessert

Give into your sweet tooth and indulge in these desserts guilt free. As strawberry is in season, dress it up with some yogurt and you have yourself a probiotic and fibre rich strawberry and cream. Another popular dessert we make at home is overnight soaked prunes and figs. This digestive cleanser is a truly a guest favourite.

Snacks

You are bound to watch a Christmas movie and snack on some goodies while you are at it. Be-

fore you use up all the popcorn to decorate your tree, save some of the low calorie snack to munch on. Cinnamon coated nuts like almonds and cashews are a great way to get in protein and food fats.

Spiced wine

On this joyous occasion, many would like to celebrate with some red wine. I would suggest that you make some spiced wine by bringing red wine to a boil and adding cinnamon, star anise, cloves and orange peel to the mix. The spices in this concoction act as digestive aids which are much needed after this Hedonistic meal. I wish you a very merry yet healthy Christmas. Make the right food choices and find yourself automatically on the 'Nice list'.



Eco-friendly gifting ideas

Christmas is a time for enjoyment, merrymaking, and spending quality time with our near and dear. It is extremely dubious that we would like to compromise a bit of that day's enjoyment for the sake of our environment. However, we have to pay attention to our environment while celebrating moments. Ami Sata, Founder of Amouve, organic bedding and bath brand in India, said, "Make this Christmas merrier by giving some eco-friendly & sustainable gifts to your loved ones. Here are some simple and sustainable ideas for you to check that will surely put a smile on everyone's face."

Find the Family heirlooms

Family heirlooms can make memorable Christmas gifts when presented with thought and originality and might be the perfect gift for your loved one. It will be a very personal gift for that hard-to-shop-for relative. It implies re-gifting or handing it down to the younger generation to preserve and enjoy it in the years to come.

Go & explore the local

You don't have to spend a fortune on eco-friendly products. Always explore the local shops & vendors who sell quirky products. These are best to save your pockets and to keep up with your style standards. Hanging planters, jute bags, clay idols, handmade paper cards are some of the best picks from local shops. These can be easily sourced and can be recyclable.

Pick for organic bed and bath products

Gift your loved ones a set of organic bedsheets and towels that would reduce the carbon footprint and contribute towards a sustainable lifestyle. Nowadays, it is easier to get organic home furnishings from your nearby store or online sites. They come with a diverse collection of printed cotton bed sheets and fitted bed sheets made of the softest and chemical-free organic cotton. A wide range of pillows like neem infused pillow, memory foam pillow and organic kapok are high on the chart related



to sustainable trends. Do not hesitate to grab a set of premium eco-friendly bedsheets and bath towels if you're looking for a thoughtful gift for those dear to you.

Grab a few stainless-steel straws and bottles

Grab some reusable stainless steel straws and bottles for your friends or colleagues. These would be helpful for them to keep their first step towards a sustainable friendly future. Also, such metals aid in their health as it keeps water warm or cold for a long time. Though usage of straw is neglected, through this, a new change can happen.

It's time to discover new makeover trends for Christmas, new year

Richa Aggarwal, beauty expert, Cleopatra Salon & Makeovers speaks on how to celebrate festivals like Christmas and New Year in times of Covid -19, as women get an auspicious occasion to get dolled up and celebrate

ASKARI JAFFER

Someone has accurately said that beauty is when you appreciate yourself and eulogise it with all the bliss. And what better days to applaud one's beauty than festivals like Christmas and New Year, a festival celebrated by everyone around the country. Festivals like Christmas and New Year have a very special place in women's lives, as they get an auspicious occasion to get dolled up and celebrate. Just like metropolitan cities women in tier 2 cities are all psyched to acknowledge the witching week AKA last week of December with all enthusiasm.

According to them, even in times of COVID -19, women can glam it up and relish the time of partying and celebration by following certain measures. With each passing year, the vibrancy and ethnicity in the makeup and hairstyles of women in tier 2 cities are evolving and paving the way for fresh trends and looks. Just like women of metropolitan cities, girls and women in Tri-City are also framing new horizons in style trends.

According to Richa Aggarwal, beauty expert, Cleopatra Salon & Makeovers says, "Believe me if I tell you that starting from new year party to in the year 2021 women and girls are going to try the most vibrant hues of looks shades of blues, yellows, poppy orange, dark greens and would go all out to experiment with a rainbow of colours. They are going in a happy mode and cheery spirit and that's going to be reflected through their makeovers."

The rainbow eye look

You can pick multi-shades in matte or shimmer



finish and apply with a shading brush and blur the colours into a soft and seamless gradient. This is going to suit any kind of dress you opt to wear western attire or Indo western look.

This eye makeup will give you an edge over the others and will let your eyes create a proclamation on their own. In addition to different shades, you can also do a little experiment of your own with this eye look by adding white eyeliner to it, and to give it a more culminated look, add mascara if you want to jazz up your eyes further.

The pop-of-colour look

Coloured faux eyelashes or coloured eyelash extensions, or hues of contrasting eye shadows are the actual secrets in making your eyes pop. Also this mermaid/pop of colour look has already taken the internet by storm, so what is stopping you from trying this funky yet glamorous look this festive season. Be it false eyelashes or real ones you can pull off this pop of colour eye look on either of them just by different shades of mascaras. All you have to do is opt for any colour of your preference and select two or three more colours and you will be good to slay.

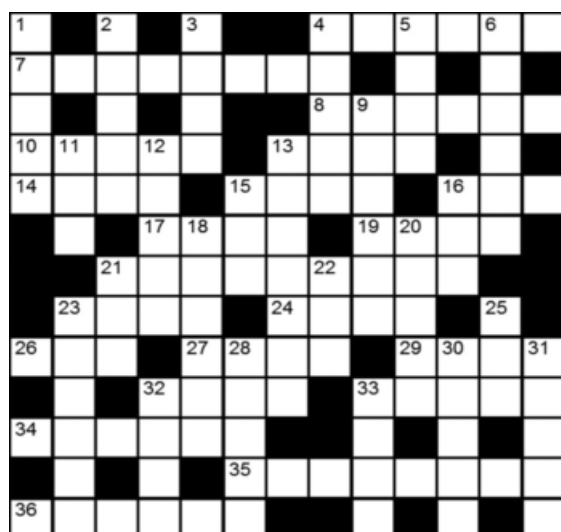
Airbrush for smooth base

With the high amount of sanitisation happening one needs to be sure of the brushes as well that whether they are being properly sanitized or not. So to fix the problem of sanitising the brush every time one can easily go for an airbrush, it will not only fix the problem but is also very easy to use. Now that technology has taken over the makeup industry as well, why not take advantage of it.

Fusion hair braids

You can accentuate your beauty by complementing these looks with some very ethereal yet fancy hairdos, however, you may choose to go minimalist or go extreme.

Going for a western hairdo with traditional makeup is another way to don the appearance of millennial women, achieve the look with a french twisted ponytail, fishtail braid, puff fishtail braid, side-parted bun, or simply a messy boho braid, don't forget to add a touch of glitter to any hairstyle you go for.



SOLUTION TO DECEMBER 23

CROSSWORD

Across

- 4 Off course (6)
- 7 Hung around (8)
- 8 Resides (6)
- 10 Husks of grain (5)
- 13 Frozen rain (4)
- 14 Make dirty (4)
- 15 Subsequent (4)
- 16 Glass container (3)
- 17 Cain's brother (4)
- 19 Catch of fish (4)
- 21 Attitude of mind (9)
- 23 Young salmon (4)
- 24 Bankroll (4)
- 26 Yang's opposite (3)
- 27 Adjoin (4)
- 29 Heroic story (4)
- 32 Bibliography abbr. (2,2)
- 33 Normal (5)
- 34 Hunting dog (6)
- 35 Preoccupied with (8)
- 36 Trust (4,2)

Down

- 1 Groups of countries with common aim (5)

Across

- 2 Red Sea peninsula (5)
- 3 Chain of rocks (4)
- 4 Large antelope (5)
- 5 A Scottish dance (4)
- 6 Befitting a son or daughter (6)
- 9 Inside (6)
- 11 Fireplace shelf (3)
- 12 A dashing style (5)
- 13 Of service or assistance (7)
- 15 Novel (3)
- 16 Protrude (3)
- 18 Chew out (6)
- 20 Mountain range (5)
- 21 Goods vehicle (3)
- 22 Not in (3)
- 23 Buccaneer (6)
- 25 By way of (3)
- 28 Truncheon (5)
- 30 Rhythmical beat (5)
- 31 Glaswegian river (5)
- 32 Get a glimpse of (4)
- 33 Eye part (4)

SUDOKU



SOLUTION TO DECEMBER 23

Comfortable fashion lookbook hacks for party

While outfit plans may come and go, the need to outshine everybody else stays put in your head. Fast forward to a few days before Christmas and you can be spotted running around frantically, in the ultimate quest for your perfect Christmas look.

Embellished sweaters

Dazzle everybody around you with bejewelled sweaters that leave a statement behind! If you're willing to go all out, pick sweaters studded with stones in your choice of patterns and designs. For a more modest look, opt for sweaters that are embellished around the neck or sleeves, leaving little room for the need of additional accessories!

Bomber jackets

Bomber jackets have had a long run in the world of warm wear. Versatile in terms of design, weight and material, bomber jackets are a great way of looking cool and unbothered during this bitter cold.

Leather blazer

Biker jackets move on, the leather blazer is now reigning supreme. The hottest new trend in winter wear, leather blazers are a great way of staying trendy, sophisticated and toasty warm this cold season. Subtle, nude hues work like magic for daytime looks, while darker, more saturated tones such as forest green, navy blue or black can be donned for nightly affairs.

Statement knits

The season to make statements, tis' the season to turn heads. Fun, verbose knits are all the rage in this cold weather when functionality and style demand to be partnered up. Big chunky knitwear in interesting colour combinations and striking patterns is ticking all fashion boxes this season, and we are so on board. Pair a larger than life sweater with tailored, skinny bottoms and throw in some heels for good measure, and you're ready to rock a simple yet utterly chic look.





The year
that
wasn't



JAN >> << DEC

JANUARY

Australian bushfires



Country faced one of its most devastating wildfire seasons as the blazes continued from December 2019 into the new year and burned a record 47 million acres, displaced thousands of people and killed at least 34 people.

Fatal strike

January 3: A U.S. drone strikes Baghdad International Airport and kills Iranian general Qasem Soleimani, leader of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Quds Force on January 3, sparking tensions between U.S. and Iran. Days later, 56 people are killed in a stampede at Soleimani's funeral.



Prince Harry and Meghan Markle quit royal family

January 8: The Duke and Duchess of Sussex shocked both sides of the pond on Jan. 8 when they announced they were stepping down as "senior" royals.



Kobe Bryant's death

January 26: The legendary Los Angeles Lakers player was killed along with his daughter, Gianna, and seven others when their helicopter crashed in Calabasas, Calif., on Jan. 26.



FEBRUARY

Harvey Weinstein verdict

February 24: The disgraced Hollywood kingmaker was convicted of raping an aspiring actress and sexually abusing a TV and film production assistant. The verdict was celebrated by his dozens of accusers and their supporters as a watershed moment for the #MeToo movement.



'Parasite' sweeps the Oscars

February 9: Bong Joon Ho's film took home the most awards, landing Best Picture, Best Director, Best Original Screenplay and Best International Feature Film. It marked the first time a non-English-language movie won Best Picture.



Stock market crash 2020

March 9: The coronavirus pandemic triggered a global recession as numerous countries went into lockdown. The Dow Jones industrial average suffered its worst single-day point drop ever on this day.



March 24: The 2020 Olympics in Tokyo are suspended until 2021. India and United Kingdom go into lockdown. Trump tweets that the "cure" cannot be "worse than the problem itself" and calls for country to reopen on Easter Sunday. FBI agents shoot dead man suspected of plotting attack on Missouri hospital treating coronavirus patients. New York passes 20,000 coronavirus cases.

March 26: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson diagnosed with coronavirus. Global cases pass 500,000. The U.S. passes China and Italy in number of cases and passes 1,000 deaths.

MARCH

Kim Jong Un death rumours

May 5: The North Korean supreme leader fuelled speculation that he was either gravely ill or dead after he missed events commemorating his grandfather Kim Il-sung on April 15. He reemerged 20 days later in photos released by state media at a ribbon-cutting ceremony. The despot, however, faced a new wave of scepticism over his health in August when a South Korean official claimed all of the appearances were faked and he was in a vegetative state.



MAY

Black Lives Matter protests



May 25: The police-involved killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor this year sparked a wave of peaceful — and sometimes violent — demonstrations and riots across the world to demand an end to police brutality and racial injustice. More protests erupted in August when 29-year-old Jacob Blake was shot by a Kenosha, Wisconsin, cop and paralysed from the waist down.

West Coast wildfires

Deadly wildfires erupted from California to Washington state, burning millions of acres and displacing hundreds of thousands of people since mid-August.



OCTOBER

Trump tests positive for Covid-19

October 2: President Trump announced on October 2 that he and first lady Melania Trump tested positive for coronavirus. He was hospitalised for three days at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center before he was discharged to continue his recovery at the White House.



DECEMBER

More news revealed behind scientist's death



December 2: In late November, Iran's top nuclear scientist, Mohsen Fakhri, was killed in what appeared to be an assassination. On December 2, a top US official reported that the assassination was carried out by Israel. The official has refused to say whether the Trump Administration knew about the attack or helped support it.

Covid-19 vaccine rollout



December 5: On December 5, the UK officially approved the Pfizer vaccine, announcing that the first shots will be given out starting next week. The vaccine is 95% effective in preventing the worst of coronavirus. On December 5, Russia began its vaccination program in Moscow.

NOVEMBER

Joe Biden becomes President-elect

November 7: Joe Biden became the 46th president of the United States, defeating President Trump with a critical assist from his birth state, Pennsylvania, which delivered the votes to propel him to victory and end one of the most contentious elections in recent memory.



AUGUST

Kamala Harris chosen as Democratic VP candidate

August 11: Joe Biden announced that he selected the California senator as his running mate, making her the first black woman and the first Asian woman on a major party's presidential ticket.



Chadwick Boseman's death

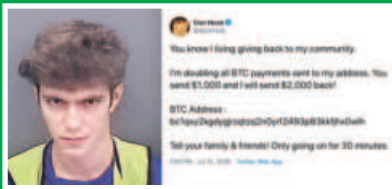
August 28: "Black Panther" actor Chadwick Boseman died at age 43 after a four-year battle with colon cancer. His death on Aug. 28 shocked fans, since he had completed several blockbuster films while keeping his diagnosis private.



JULY

Twitter hack

July 15: A group allegedly spearheaded by a Florida teen Graham Clark took over the Twitter accounts of prominent business and political figures — including Joe Biden, Bill Gates, Elon Musk and Kanye West — in a bitcoin scam.



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Will the mindset change?

“WHEN women move forward, the family moves, the village moves, and ultimately the nation moves,” said the first prime minister of India Pt Jawaharlal Nehru. Have women in India really moved forward? The politicians would say yes, they have moved forward.

Whether it is the narrow lanes of Uttar Pradesh or remote areas of Andhra Pradesh or any other state for that matter you can see small self-help groups running business. Try to ask some probing questions, they will reel out statistics of how benevolent the government has been and how they were giving more funds than their predecessor Government to their “Akkas or Chelliammas”. (Elder and younger sisters).

But the real question is have we really succeeded in making the concept of SHGs grow into major business enterprises? Did they achieve their entrepreneurial dreams? The answer would be a big No.

Many women did prove that they are better entrepreneurs than their male

counterparts. But governments across the country from Kashmir to Kanyakumari view them more as vote banks and have done nothing to giving the kind of handholding, technology upgradation or skill development and they did not create necessary marketing potential.

All governments feel that allocating some money in the budget giving it with great fanfare in the names of the Chief Ministers of the day is a great achievement. Women in rural areas, especially, are a potential goldmine when it comes to entrepreneurship and must be encouraged through skilling and handholding.

Women SHGs have proved that they can use capital and labour in a more efficient manner than men. But unless the government takes the initiative to encourage and see that these micro enterprises grow, we cannot claim that women in this country had really moved forward.

We are living in a system where even when women who get elected as public representatives by the virtue of the reser-

vations the Constitution has provided are not allowed to work independently by their husbands and the top leadership of the parties. For political gains, some of them get into top positions like Home Minister or Deputy Chief Minister but they are given no powers to function independently.

Indian economy needs a thriving MSME sector along with a coordinated effort from the policymakers, associations, and the family members so that women can play significant role in giving a new dimension to Indian industrial sector. India women need to be exposed to the same opportunities as men.

A lot of change must be brought in for women to make significant impact in the field of entrepreneurship. Mindsets cannot change overnight. Women must consciously learn to be more aggressive, more vocal and venture out of their comfort zones. Of course, they cannot do it on their own. They need the support of investors, educators and other organisations that will promote them.

At the same time a lot of change has also to be brought in the mind sets of men, particularly the law makers. Minds of the men cannot change so easily.

These days it has become a fashion for all whether it be the people in power or the officials including some top civil and police officials to claim that they are number one in the country.

How can everyone be number one is something which the common fails to understand. Our CMs and PM need to explain. First and foremost, the law makers should learn to see women also as human resources. Men should come out from an environment where they tend to discourage women and extend necessary family support. Many women have strong entrepreneurial ambitions. Greater political will should be shown to augment their motivation and empower them.

The political executive should stop treating women groups as vote banks and should come up with better and more honourable solutions to see that women can overcome the key challenges in converting their start-up companies into profitable units. The problems they mostly face is regarding generating funds and marketing their products. If we fail to harness the potential of women, then what Nehru said will remain a slogan which the politicians will repeat on every Women's Day.



Pak-India relations plumb new depths in 2020

SAJJAD HUSSAIN

THE relations between Pakistan and India plumbed new depths in 2020, a year marred by periodic verbal duels, summoning of diplomats and rhetorics by Prime Minister Imran Khan, who is facing mounting pressure from the Opposition to step down in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic that has battered the country's fragile economy.

Bilateral ties suffered a series of blows in 2019 after Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) terror group killed 44 CRPF soldiers in Pulwama, prompting India to carry out air strikes on terror training camps in Balakot. The relations nose-dived further following the abrogation of Article 370 of India's Constitution in August 2019 that revoked the special status of Jammu and Kashmir. The move angered Pakistan, which downgraded diplomatic ties with India and expelled the Indian High Commissioner in Islamabad. Pakistan also snapped all air and land links with India and suspended trade and railway services.

With no thaw in the frosty bilateral relations, the year 2020 saw periodic war of words over the issue of Pakistan-sponsored cross-border terrorism. In June, India asked Pakistan to reduce the staff in its mission in New Delhi by half and announced a reciprocal trimming of staff strength in its high commission in Islamabad. India said its decision to downgrade the diplomatic ties was based on instances of involvement of Pakistani officials in "acts of espionage" and "dealings with terrorist organisations".

Over the past 12 months, Pakistan made several futile attempts to raise the Kashmir issue at the international forums and drum up support against India. New Delhi has categorically told the international community that the scrapping of Article 370 was its internal matter. It also advised Pakistan to accept the reality and stop all anti-India propaganda. Pakistan, however, adopted escalatory measures by intensifying ceasefire violations along the Line of Control, where the armies of the two sides regularly targeted each other, resulting in casualties.

Pakistan's Foreign Office tried to keep up pressure on India by regularly summoning its diplomats in Islamabad and issuing press statements about the alleged ceasefire violations by the Indian Army. Islamabad also accused New Delhi of "politicising" the deliberations at the meetings of the Paris-based Financial Action task Force, a global money-laundering watchdog.

The FATF decided to retain Pakistan on its 'grey list' till February 2021 as it failed to fulfill six key obligations, including failure to take action against two of India's most wanted terrorists - Jamaat ud-Dawah chief Hafiz Saeed and JeM head Masood Azhar. In 2020, Saeed was sentenced for a collective imprisonment of 21 years on terror financing charges in four cases, a move experts described as an attempt by Pakistan to improve its global standing and to wriggle out of the FATF's grey list.

During the year, both sides also failed to agree how Kulbhushan Jadhav, on death row in Pakistan, should be represented in his review appeal in the Islamabad High Court against his conviction by a Pakistani military court for alleged spying. India says that Pakistan has failed to respond on core issues pertaining to the case. The only window of hope for bilateral cooperation was provided by the outbreak of the COVID-19 and joint efforts by members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) to contain the deadly virus. But Islamabad mostly used the high-level meetings to raise the Kashmir issue and other bilateral matters. India slammed Pakistan for raising the Kashmir issue during SAARC video-conference meeting, saying Islamabad "misused" the occasion as it was not a political platform, but a humanitarian one.

Due to the deep mistrust between Islamabad and New Delhi there was no forward movement in bilateral ties in 2020, according to Dr Ashfaq Ahmad, Assistant Professor in International Relations Department of Sardar Sarbajit University in Punjab province. The chances for any change for broader cooperation between the two sides were slim in 2021, he said. On the domestic front, Prime Minister Khan faces a serious challenge as the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) - an alliance of 11 Opposition parties - set a January 31 deadline for him to step down or face a "Long March" to Islamabad.

The PDM held massive rallies in major cities to seek Khan's ouster and press the powerful military to stop interfering in politics. The Pakistan Army has denied meddling in politics. Khan also denies that the Army helped him win the election in 2018. Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz supremo Nawaz Sharif has repeatedly blamed Army chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa and ISI chief Lt Gen Faiz Hameed for Pakistan's current situation. The government is trying to get Sharif, who has refused to return to Pakistan, deported from the UK after the three-time premier was allowed to go to London for treatment.

For the first time in 68 years, Pakistan's economy contracted in the outgoing fiscal year with a negative 0.38 per cent due to the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic coupled with the already weak financial situation before the deadly infection hit the country. Islamabad has approached its all-weather ally China to once again bail out the country from the economic woes while bolstering its bilateral defence ties. Advisor on Finance Abdul Hafeez Sheikh, releasing the Pakistan Economic Survey 2019-20, said the economy suffered massively due to the pandemic, which forced the government to impose lockdown for several weeks.

The vital role parks play in our lives

TALKING OF MANY THINGS



Dr Mohan Kanda

ONE of the major concerns which humanity is addressing today is unbridled urbanisation. For the first time in history, more than 50 per cent of the world's population now lives in towns and cities. By 2050, this number is expected to increase to 66 percent. The shift from rural to urban areas, mainly in Africa and Asia, is on account of poverty and related socio-economic factors.

For the most part, the rapid expansion of cities is not informed by a sound land use planning strategy with regard to the limitations of the supportive infrastructure. The resulting human pressure has highly damaging effects on forests, landscapes, as well as green areas in and around cities, contributing to health hazards. The resultant environmental impact is intensified by climate change and leads to increased atmospheric pollution, decreased availability of food and resources, as well as increased poverty and frequency of extreme climatic events.

As cities become more and more populated and challenges relating to climate change and pollution are being viewed with anxiety, the importance of parks and their potential to help address critical urban infrastructure and public health issues is being increasingly recognised in the effort to build healthy, livable and sustainable habitations.

Parks are emerging as important public health solutions in urban communities. Evidence from research has confirmed that parks, gardens, urban forests and green spaces, promote health and wellness. They also contribute to the effort at providing a balance between development and environment. Studies have shown that they encourage people to exercise and also aid quick recovery from illnesses and surgeries.

Parks not only provide precious lung space for cities and improve the physical and psychological health of people, but also

make cities more attractive for living and working. Many of them also provide recreational opportunities, especially for children. As they attract large numbers of people, they increase the value of the properties in the surroundings.

With changes in the pattern and quality of social compulsions, childhood experiences are undergoing significant changes. Absence of leisure for outdoor play and increasingly sedentary lifestyles, are causing a disconnect from the natural world. Parks and green open spaces offer a significant avenue of relaxation, socialisation and entertainment for the elderly also.

The majority of the elderly reside in their own homes or with relatives. Whether in a facility or at a personal home, particular symptoms of decrease in the quality of life begin to show in them over time. The symptoms include boredom, helplessness, and loneliness. Fortunately, many, if not all, of these symptoms can be improved with gardening and exposure to outdoor spaces.

Large parks, well-kept with playing fields and greenery where people can enjoy walking or cycling, contribute significantly to active lives and avoidance of chronic diseases. Equally important is the role of small parks and nature spaces for health. Jogging and brisk walking in clean surroundings are widely accepted as the ultimate stress busters.

According to a study from 2010, time spent outdoors makes people feel "more alive." Bonding with Mother Nature can lead to an increased sense of vitality and energy, which in turn can help boost resilience to physical illness.

Many studies have confirmed the beneficial impact of urban-area vegetation on ambient air quality as it contributes to containment of air pollution. Trees and other plants often do a better - and cheaper - job of scrubbing pollution from the air than technological solutions, according to a study led by an Ohio State University engineer. Trees can help mitigate some of the negative impacts and social consequences of urbanisation, and thus make cities more resilient to these changes.

Well-maintained parks can also serve as tourist attractions, be showcased as community signature pieces and act as a marketing tool for cities to attract businesses and conventions. When a modest fee is charged for entry and the facilities provided,



they can also become self-sustaining economically. The trees in a park also absorb a lot of water from the ground, thereby reducing the flow of water into overburdened storm water pipes, thus reducing the expenditure on the management system of drains.

A city with well-planned and well-managed green infrastructure becomes more resilient, sustainable and equitable in terms of nutrition and food security, poverty alleviation, livelihood improvement, climate change mitigation and adaptation, disaster risk reduction and ecosystems conservation.

In the cities based in the tropics, urban open green spaces are of particular importance as they offer shading and cooling, to mitigate the urban heat island effect and with regard to air pollution.

Citizens of the twin cities remain indebted to the public spirited initiative of K Vijay Bhaskar Reddy the then Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, and the spontaneous reaction of the then Prime Minister PV. Narasimha Rao, who combined to convert 300 acre plot of forest land, belonging to the family of the Nizam, in the heart of the metropolis into a National Park - literally overnight, and in a dramatic manner to overcome pressure from non-officials and officials alike. People, literally in the thousands, swarm the place for walks - many as early as 4 am. So popular has it become over time that, when it was shut down for a short while recently, while (following the lock down in the wake of the Covid - 19 virus), there was a collective cry of disappointment in the city.

Wherever I have been in the world, one of my first of tasks has been to locate the nearest park for walking and jogging. I enjoyed the fruits of such an investigation in many places from metropolises such as New York and London, through cities like Brasilia and Ahmedabad to small district towns like Chittoor in Andhra Pradesh.

The Cubbon Park in Bangalore, the Public Gardens in Hyderabad, the Nehru Park in Chanakya Puri, New Delhi and the Botanical Gardens in Chennai are examples of lush green parks which offer most of the advantages we have just noted.

A somewhat relatively less known benefit of parks is their ability to act as great levelers. When for instance, did you think about the political persuasion, religious faith or racial background of the persons you met in parks in recent times? In fact, it is quite common to see people getting together to participate in community events (such as laughter clubs or office picnics) organised in parks irrespective of their economic status or social backgrounds. Clearly parks and open spaces have a significant role as instruments of social connection.

Parks, and their importance to the various aspects of social and economic life, have gained so much importance internationally that some vast networks have sprung up to promote the idea of raising, promoting and maintaining them in good shape.

One of the earliest was the International Federation of Park and Recreation Administrations (IFPRA) which was started in 1957, in London, at the 1st World Congress in Park Administration. It ceased to exist, when merged with the International Urban Parks and Green Space Alliance (Parks of Life) to create World Urban Park (WUP), a new international organisation representing the vibrant urban parks, open space and recreation sector.

At a time when urban growth will see 70 percent of the world's population living in urban areas by 2050, sharing knowledge and

providing a collective voice for all people and organisations engaged in green cities, open space, recreation, health and related activities is vital.

In similar lines the Parks Action Group (PAG), was launched in the UK as part of the government's response to the House of Commons Communities and Local Government Select Committee report into the future of parks and green spaces to help England's public parks and green spaces meet the needs of communities now and in the future. PAG includes experts from the world of parks and green spaces and is tasked with bringing forward proposals to address some of the issues faced by public parks and other green spaces across England.

There has never been a time, in the history of mankind when the people of the world did not face one threat or other. Despite all the strife and conflicts that have always divided the world, a spirit of cooperation and unity invariably came to the fore in times of crises and ensured that those challenges were overcome.

What we have discussed in this column today, however, is the sort of thing that should become a continuing concern that needs to inform the effort of countries across the world to provide to people an environment that will enable them to stay active and healthy.

The species of homo sapiens is known to be the only one that is capable of endangering the environment that protects and sustains it. Creation of green, open and thickly vegetated spaces, however, is one method of mankind showing to itself that it is capable of doing the opposite thing too!

(The writer is former Chief Secretary, Government of Andhra Pradesh)

performing particularly well in Jammu where it won six districts. This is the first democratic exercise in the region since the Centre revoked J&K's special status and reorganised it into two UTs in August 2019 and is a crucial opportunity to open a new political dialogue in the Union Territory. For the BJP, aside from a strong showing in Jammu, for the first time, the party won three seats from the Valley's Srinagar, Pulwama and Bandipora districts. In these places, we wouldn't get a single person to hold the BJP flag in the past. It was indeed a victory for democratic election process in the valley.

CKR Nathan, Ghaziabad

Unjustified honour

US President Donald Trump and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi are known for following the saying "I scratch your back and you scratch mine" as proved during "Howdy Modi" and "Namaste Trump" events (legion of merit' award for Modi, December 23). There is no justification that Trump announces an award to Modi, whose government failed in many fields

and the statistics of economic slowdown, falling GDP, rupee and increasing unemployment, farmers suicides, bad loans prove the same. We should accept the fact almost all nations, rich and poor, have failed before the unknown creature coronavirus and so do not deserve any awards and honours.

Kshirasagara Balaji Rao, Hyderabad

Crackdown on loan apps

DURING the lockdown many lakhs of employees lost their jobs and it was sudden and because of Covid-19 restrictions only few were able to get their jobs. The financial difficulties have attracted many unemployed to these loan apps which forced them to take loans as there was no option left for their survival and later they were in trap of the loan apps which humiliated the persons who have taken loans from these apps. The government should intervene and should ban those apps and should file FIRs against those cheaters for harassing innocent people as many lost their lives.

Kanagiri SN Prasad, Hyderabad

LETTERS

Divine justice, at last!

IT is justice for Sr Abhaya after 28 years since she was murdered in a Catholic convent in Kottayam district in Kerala. The case stirred the conscience of all believers irrespective of religion in the state as vicious moves were afoot to portray the murder as a case of suicide. There were attempts initially to hush-up the case by the Church heads by the local police, judiciary; and even after the CBI took over the case, there were roadblocks being created in the case as precious evidence was destroyed with malicious intentions.

As they say, the God Almighty has innumerable eyes; as the murder that was being committed on Sr Abhaya has been witnessed by a petty thief- Adacka Raju who was exploring the con-

thehansreader@gmail.com

vent for some worthwhile thing to steal. Raju proved to be the only eyewitness to the crime, who did not swear from his stand in the face of threats and inducements promised to him, despite being a thief in the eyes of society, whom the judge had no reason not to believe.

The perpetrators of the murder of Sr Abhaya - Sr Sephy and Fr Thomas Kottoor are now bare before the law of their crime that was flesh driven, whom the special CBI court pronounced as guilty for the murder committed.

K V Raghuram, Wayanad

Victory for democratic election process

THE Gupkar Alliance, a group of six regional parties, including the National Conference (NC) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), has emerged as the frontrunner in the maiden District Development Council (DDC) polls in Jammu and Kashmir. The alliance, at the time of writing, has won 96 seats while the BJP has emerged as the single largest party with 70 seats,

Pinarayi versus Guv

KERALA Governor Arif Mohammed Khan declined approval for a special assembly session to discuss and pass a resolution against the three contentious central farm laws. This was just to antagonise the centre and its farm policies. The decision to convene the special one-day session was taken by the CPI-M led LDF government at a Cabinet meeting presided by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.

The session would not be held as the Governor did not accord sanction. The government had in December last year convened a similar special session of the assembly, which passed a resolution demanding scrapping of the controversial Citizenship (Amendment) Act, becoming the first state in the country to take such a measure then. Thus, the Kerala government is trying to misuse the power, despite the fact that the farmers in Kerala are very happy with the benefits they get from the government.

M R Jayanthi, Muringathery, Kerala

LOCAL BODY POLLS

AP High Court directs AG to write letter to SEC in 3 days

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

THE High Court directed the Advocate General (AG) to write a letter to the State Election Commissioner within three days citing the objections of the State government over the conduct of the local polls.

A counter affidavit filed by the State Election Commission (SEC) on the conduct of local body elections was heard in the High Court on Wednesday. The AG of Andhra Pradesh told the court to consider all the issues listed over the conduct of elections in the State. He said that not only the election date but also the month in which the elections are to be held should

- Tells AG to specify the State govt's objections over the conduct of polls
- Also directs the Chief Secretary and other officials involved in the conduct of elections to discuss the issue with the State Election Commission
- The High Court reserves its judgment on petitions filed in connection with the local body elections

be discussed in the petition.

The High Court also directed the Chief Secretary to government and State officials involved in the conduct of the elections to discuss with the Election Commission. The High Court

reserved its judgment on petitions filed in connection with the local body elections to be conducted.

The State Election Commission proposed to conduct the local body elections in February to which the State government objected considering the coronavirus situation in the AP. The State government also plans to conduct the Covid-19 vaccination programme shortly and this might clash with the conduct of the elections, it stated.

SEC had earlier filed a petition in the High Court challenging the interlocutory petition filed by the State government seeking to suspend the proceedings issued by the SEC for conducting the local polls.

Ensure village, ward secretariats function effectively, officials told

- ▶ CM Jagan asks them to monitor the performance of employees at the secretariats
- ▶ Call centre No.1902 should be displayed at every secretariat as it will help in securing the feedback from people
- ▶ Necessary arrangements should be made as the duties of Sub-Registrars will also be carried out at the secretariats
- ▶ In all, 3.95 lakh employees are working in 15,004 village/ward secretariats across the State



Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy holding a review meeting on village and ward secretariats at his camp office in Tadepalli on Wednesday

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

CHIEF Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has directed the officials to monitor the performance of the employees of village and ward secretariats and ensure that the secretariats function effectively.

During a review meeting on village and ward secretariats here on Wednesday, the Chief Minister said that 1902 Call Centre number must be displayed at every village/ward secretariat and this setup is for the registration of public issues

and grievances.

This arrangement would be useful to get feedback on the performance of the staff of the Secretariats, he said.

The Chief Minister directed the officials to make arrangements as the duties of sub-registrars are also to be carried out within the village secretariat. He said the engineering assistants in village/ward secretariats should be given training and tests should be conducted after the training and added that they would complete the probation period only if they qualify the test.

Tests should be conducted

once in every three months. He said village-level agriculture committees should also be set up and as they already exist at the mandal, district and State levels; there is flexibility to coordinate with them.

The officials said 3.95 lakh staff is working in 15,004 village/ward secretariats across the State. The Chief Minister was informed that the village/ward secretariats system is being lauded across the country and there were enquiries from several States and the Central government as well.

Chief Secretary Nilam Sawh-

ney, Chief Commissioner of Land Administration Neerab Kumar Prasad, Special Chief Secretary of Water Resources Aditya Nath Das, Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister Praveen Prakash, Principal Secretary of the Village and Ward Secretariats Ajay Jain, Principal Secretary (Health) Anil Kumar Singhal, Special Chief Secretary of Finance SS Rawat, General Administration Secretary Shashi Bhushan Kumar, School Education Principal Secretary Buditi Rajasekhar and other officials were present.

RT-PCR tests to be conducted on people arriving from UK

- Govt directs District Collectors to track such passengers and take necessary precautions
- An RT-PCR test will be conducted on all passengers arriving from the UK and those testing negative need to undergo a mandatory 14-day home quarantine, according to Health Commissioner Katamaneni Bhaskar
- However, those testing positive will be shifted to hospitals

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

THE State government has ordered for full-scale screening and testing of people coming into the State from the United Kingdom, following the detection of a new strain of Covid-19.

Britain and few other European countries imposed fresh restrictions after a new strain of the coronavirus was found that is consid-

ered being 70% more infectious. India has also suspended flights to and from Britain till December 31 to prevent the spread of this new strain of the coronavirus.

An RT-PCR test will be conducted on all passengers arriving from the UK and those testing negative would have to undergo a mandatory 14-day home quarantine, according to an order issued by Health Commissioner Katamaneni Bhaskar. Those testing positive will be shifted to hospitals.

As there are no direct flights to AP from the UK, people are coming in after landing in Hyderabad, Chennai or other major cities using connecting flights or other modes of transport.

Orders have been issued to all District Collectors to track such passengers, conduct RT-PCR tests and take necessary precautionary measures. The fresh State Covid-19 order follows a directive from the Union Health Secretary on Monday. Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, who chaired a high-level meeting on the health sector on Tuesday, asked the officials to be on the alert and gear up in the wake of reports of a possible second wave of Covid-19.

Come with open mind, will talk: Farmers to Centre

Continued from P1

"We have already told Union Home Minister Amit Shah that protesting farmers will not accept amendments," farmer leader Shiv Kumar Kakka said. "Farmer unions are ready to talk to the government and are waiting for the government to come to the table with an open mind," said Swaraj Abhiyan leader Yogendra Yadav.

All India Kisan Sabha leader Hannan Molla claimed the government wanted to tire the farmers out so that the protest would end.

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

However, the protesting farmers have expressed apprehension that the new laws would pave the way for eliminating the safety cushion of Minimum Support Price and do away with the mandi system, leaving them at the mercy of big corporates. The government has repeatedly asserted that the MSP and Mandi systems will stay and has accused the Opposition of misleading the farmers.

AP leads in ULB reforms

Continued from P1

In view of the resource requirement to meet the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, the Centre had on May 17, 2020 enhanced the borrowing limit of the States by 2 per cent of their Gross States Domestic Product (GSDP).

Half of this special dispensation was linked to undertaking citizen centric reforms by the States. The States get permission to raise additional funds equivalent to 0.25 per cent of GSDP on completion of reforms in each sector. The four citizen centric areas identified for reforms were "Implementation of One Nation One Ration Card System, Ease of doing business reform, Urban Local body/utility reforms and Power Sector reforms".

On successfully undertaking the ULBs reforms, Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh have been granted permission to mobilise additional financial resources to the tune of Rs.4,898 crore through open market borrowings. Out of these, Andhra Pradesh has received permission of

Rs 2,525 crore, while Madhya Pradesh has been permitted to mobilize additional Rs 2,373 crore.

Reforms in the urban local bodies and the urban utilities reforms are aimed at financial strengthening of ULBs in the State and to enable them to provide better public health and sanitation services. Economically rejuvenated ULBs will also be able to create good civic infrastructure. The reforms stipulated to achieve these objectives are: Andhra Pradesh has also issued an Ordinance to amend the Municipal corporation Act, 1995, the Andhra Pradesh Municipalities Act, 1965, the Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation Act, 1979, the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation Act, 1981 and the Andhra Pradesh Municipal Corporations Act, 1994 to effect the reforms.

Besides additional borrowing permissions, the States completing three out of the four reforms are entitled to get additional financial assistance under the "Scheme for Financial Assistance to States for Capital Expenditure".

New AP CS calls on CM



Chief Secretary designate Aditya Nath Das meeting Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy at his camp office in Tadepalli on Wednesday

Chief Secretary
Nilam Sawhney will
retire on Dec 31 and
subsequently Das will
take over as the new
Chief Secretary

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

CHIEF Secretary designate Aditya Nath Das met Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy at the latter's camp office at Tadepalli on Wednesday.

Accompanied by DGP Gautam Sawang, Aditya Nath Das thanked the Chief Minister. Chief Secretary Nilam Sawhney will retire on December 31 and Adityanath will take over as the new Chief Secretary.

AP CM arrives on 3-day visit to Kadapa

HANS NEWS SERVICE
KADAPA

AS part of his 3-day visit to Kadapa district, Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy along with his wife YS Bharathi and other family members arrived here by a special flight on Wednesday evening. Later, the Chief Minister accompanied by Deputy Chief Minister Amritha Basha and Collector Ch Harikiran went to Idupulapaya by a special helicopter. The Chief Minister was accorded a warm welcome at Idupulapaya by the district in-charge Minister A Suresh, Kadapa MP Y S Avinash Reddy, Chief Whip G Srikanth Reddy, MLAs Dr Venkatasubbaiah, R Siva prasad Reddy, M Sudheer Reddy, K Srinivasulu, K Sridhar Reddy, MLCs Jakia Khanam, K Narasimha Reddy, Joint Collector M Gouthami and others.

Tense atmosphere prevails as MLA, ex-MLA trade charges

HANS NEWS SERVICE
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM

TENSIONS flared in Anaparthi and Bikkavolu mandals of East Godavari district on Wednesday due to political differences between YSRCP MLA Dr S Suryanarayana Reddy and former TDP MLA N Ramakrishna Reddy. As a precautionary measure, the local police enforced Section-144 in both the mandals to ensure law and order.

As per reports, Anaparthi MLA S Suryanarayana Reddy said that he would expose corruption in the mining in the region that took place during Ramakrishna Reddy's tenure as MLA. He also

said there was proof based on the RTI filed to prove corruption against the TDP leader.

In this context, MLA Suryanarayana Reddy and his wife reached Bikkavolu and took oath at the Vinayaka temple there. At the same time, Ramakrishna Reddy along with his wife also reached the temple and took oath in the same temple leading to mild tension in the place.

Police said that both the groups were given permission to enter the temple but with restrictions. Leaders of both the parties announced that police were allowing only five people to accompany them as they approached the temple.

West Bengal shows 'Mamata' to Telugus

Continued from P1

The TDP said it was good to see the TMC government announce Telugu as an additional official language of the State even as the YSRCP government preferred promotion of English from the primary school level that has led to a controversy in AP with the matter reaching even the Supreme Court.

Telangana bristles at mutated coronavirus

Continued from P1

The health profile of people who were infected earlier was being monitored closely. Officials said that the state Health Department made necessary arrangements to deal with the situation in case there was a second wave of corona. Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar is monitoring the preparedness of every department in coordination with Health secretary Syed Ali Murtaza Rizvi.

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DELHI THURSDAY 24 DECEMBER 2020

BIZ BRIEFS

Glenmark in pact with Menarini

GLENMARK Pharmaceuticals on Wednesday announced that its Swiss subsidiary, Glenmark Specialty SA, entered into an exclusive licensing agreement with Menarini Group (Menarini) for commercializing its innovative nasal spray Ryaltris which is a novel fixed-dose combination nasal spray of an anti-histamine and a steroid, indicated for treatment of symptoms associated with seasonal allergic rhinitis (SAR) in patients over 12 years of age across 33 countries in Europe, including the Balkan region. “We are excited to partner with Menarini for Ryaltris across Europe as they have a proven track record in partnering and commercialising respiratory products in the region,” said Achin Gupta, Executive Vice President, Business Head EMEA-L, Glenmark Pharmaceuticals.

SIDBI's new initiative

SMALL Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI), partnered with Shri Gurudeva Charitable Trust (SGCT), Andhra Pradesh to help needy differently abled persons Swavalambis (entrepreneurs). The first phase of this programme commenced on the occasion of 'International Day of Disabled Persons' where artificial limbs, street vending carts and other appliances were provided by SIDBI to 50 differently abled via SGCT. Till now, 100 needy people were benefitted with necessary support to stand on their own feet and earn their own bread. Vasantharao Satya Venkatarao, Deputy Managing Director of SIDBI, said, “As a responsive development institution, SIDBI has always been laying thrust on livelihood avenues for youth, unserved, underserved.”

Realme unveils smart watches

REALME on Wednesday rolled out two smart watches, expanding its AIoT portfolio. Flagship realme Watch S Pro, priced at Rs 9,999, comes with stainless steel with 3.5cm AMOLED touch screen with advanced always-on display, 15 sports modes, 5 ATM, GPS sensor and a large 420mAh battery. Besides, realme Watch S, which is priced at Rs 4,999, features a 3.3 cm large colour touchscreen, heart rate and SpO2 monitor and 16 sports modes. Madhav Sheth, Vice President, realme and Chief Executive Officer, realme India and Europe said: “The first version of the realme Watch was the most shipped model in two consecutive quarters - Q2 and Q3 2020. With the realme Watch S series, we are entering the premium smartwatch segment, and are confident that our consumers will appreciate our new offering.”

My UV's new product

MY UV One has developed pocket sanitizer which has ultraviolet (UV-C) lights that kill bacteria and viruses when held at a distance of 7 cm from any surface in 40 seconds. This has a state-of-the-art Tilt sensor that allows the device to sanitize surfaces and also prevent unintended and accidental UV ray exposure of the human skin. It has a battery capacity of 300mAh and can produce 70 flashes with one charge. Kavin Kumar Kandasamy, the company's founder and CE, said, “UV One sanitiser is novel to our country and is essential for every individual as they step out of their homes. These products would also help us stay fashionable. We have developed the product so as to be portable and chargeable.”

CAIRN GAINS IN INDIA'S ₹10K-CR RETRO TAX CASE

International tribunal rules in favour of UK oil major, asks India to pay up \$1.4 bn

NEW DELHI

INDIA has been ordered to return up to \$1.4 billion to Cairn Energy plc of the UK after the central government lost an international arbitration over the retrospective levy of taxes.

A three-member international arbitration tribunal, which also comprised a nominee of the Indian government, unanimously ruled that India's claim of Rs 10,247 crore in past taxes over a 2006-07 internal reorganisation of Cairn's India business was not a valid demand. India, it said, “failed to accord the Claimants' (Cairn Energy's) investments fair and equitable treatment” under the bilateral investment protection pact the nation had with the UK, it said in a 582-page order.

The tribunal ordered the government to return the value of shares it had sold, dividends seized and tax refunds withheld to recover the tax demand. The government was asked to compensate Cairn “for the total harm suffered” together with interest and cost of arbitration, according to the order. While the order does not contain a provision for challenge or appeal against the award, the government said it will study the arbitration award and “will consider all options and take a decision on the further course of action, including legal remedies before appropriate fora.”



Cairn, according to people aware of the matter, can use the arbitration award to approach courts in countries such as the UK to seize any property owned by India overseas to recover the money if the award is not honoured. In a statement, Cairn Energy said it had been awarded \$1.2 billion damages plus interest and costs. Sources said including \$200 million of interest and \$20 million of arbitration cost, the total amount payable by the Indian government is \$1.4 billion (about Rs 10,500 crore). This is the second loss the government has suffered in three months over the retrospective levy of taxes. In September, UK's Vodafone Group won an international arbitration against the demand of Rs 22,100 crore in taxes. However, Cairn was the only company against which the government took action to recover retrospective taxes. During the pendency of the arbitration, the government sold Cairn's near 5 per cent holding in

Raise capital, lend more: RBI Guv tells banks Urges banks to make provisions against bad loans proactively

MUMBAI

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das has asked banks to take proactive measures to strengthen their resilience and lending capacity by raising capital, the central bank said in a statement on Wednesday.

During a two-day meeting with heads of banks, including the private sector lenders, the Governor emphasised on the need to remain vigilant and make provisions against bad loans proactively. Das had held similar meetings in May as well. He had also met with representatives of other financial institutions like NBFCs and microfinance lenders.

The RBI, in its statement, said Das held meetings with the MD & CEOs of public sector banks and select private sector lenders on Tuesday and Wednesday, respectively, through video conferencing. The meetings were also attended by the RBI's deputy governors. During the meetings, Das touched upon the current economic situation and emphasised on the importance of the banking sector in supporting the ongoing revival in economic activities, RBI said.

With specific reference to the financial sector, he highlighted the measures taken by the central bank since the onset of the pandemic to stabilise the economy and ensure financial stability. “With regard to the banking sector, he reiterated the need for banks to re-

Shaktikanta Das

Shaktikanta Das meets with representatives of other financial institutions like NBFCs and microfinance lenders

main vigilant and take proactive measures to strengthen their resilience and lending capacity by raising capital and making provisions proactively,” the RBI said.

Assessment of the current economic situation and outlook; and monetary policy transmission and liquidity situation too came up for deliberations. The release further said credit flow to different sectors, including stressed segments and MSMEs, was also discussed. Other issues which came up for discussion included progress in the implementation of resolution framework for Covid-related stressed assets; progress in making the identified districts in states/UTs 100 per cent digitally enabled; strengthening and enhancing the capacity and efficiency of IT infrastructure and systems; and improving grievance redress mechanisms. (PTI)

RBI cautions public against unauthorised lending apps

MUMBAI

THE Reserve Bank on Wednesday cautioned the public not to fall prey to the growing number of unauthorised digital lending platforms and mobile apps.

In a release, the RBI noted that there have been reports about individuals/small businesses falling prey to such unauthorised platforms and apps which promise quick and hassle-free loans. Reports also refer to excessive rates of interest and additional hidden charges being demanded from borrowers; adoption of unacceptable and high-handed recovery methods; and misuse of agreements to access data on the mobile phones of the borrowers, it added. “Members of public are hereby cautioned not to fall prey to such unscrupulous activities and verify the antecedents of the company/firm offering loans online or through mobile apps,” the RBI said. The central bank also asked customers to never share copies of KYC documents with



unidentified persons or unauthorised apps and “report such Apps/Bank Account information associated with the Apps to concerned law enforcement agencies.” Besides, the Sachet portal (https://sachet.rbi.org.in) can also be used to file an online complaint. Legitimate public lending activities can be undertaken by banks and non-banking financial companies registered with RBI and other entities who are regulated by the state governments under statutory provisions.

The Reserve Bank has also mandated that digital lending platforms which are used on behalf of banks and NBFCs should disclose name of the bank/NBFC upfront to the customers. (PTI)

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Ramky Enviro inks deal with Abu Dhabi firm

HANS BUSINESS HYDERABAD

RAMKY Enviro Engineers Limited (REEL) signed a ten-year contract with “The Centre of Waste Management” (CWM-TADWEER) in Abu Dhabi on December 22. The project is a part of CWM-TADWEER's initiative to promote sustainable waste management in an environmentally friendly waste treatment complex named ‘Eco Park’.

In the opening ceremony, H E Salem Al Kaabi, Director-General of Tadweer announced that Ecopark is set up with an investment of AED100 million. One of the facilities is owned & operated by Al Ahlia waste treatment LLC, which is a joint venture firm of Ramky Enviro Engineers Middle East FZLLC and AH Investment Abu Dhabi. The project aims at managing the medical and hazardous waste in Abu Dhabi and Al Dhafra Region.

Markets rally for 2nd day, Sensex up 437 pts

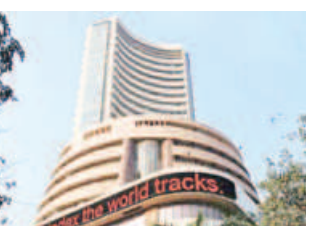
IT, FMCG stocks sparkle amid firm global cues

MUMBAI

THE Sensex and Nifty defied gravity for the second straight session on Wednesday as investors scooped up IT and FMCG shares amid a firm trend in global markets. A recovering rupee and global drugmakers' assertion that their Covid-19 vaccines will work against a new coronavirus strain the UK further shored up investor confidence, traders said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex rallied 437.49 points or 0.95 per cent to close at 46,444.18. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty surged 134.80 points or 1 per cent to 13,601.10. HUL was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, spurring 2.67 per cent, followed by Infosys, M&M, SBI, ITC, IndusInd Bank, Bajaj Finance, Asian Paints, Bharti Airtel and TCS.

Only four index components closed lower -- Titan, PowerGrid, NTPC and HDFC, shedding up to 0.81 per cent. Global markets were largely positive after drug compa-



nies like BioNTech, Moderna and AstraZeneca exuded confidence that their Covid-19 vaccines will be effective against the new virus strain reported in the UK.

However, gains were capped after US President Donald Trump hinted at vetoing the \$900 billion economic aid package passed by the Congress due to the “ridiculously low” \$600 aid for individuals. “Market is continuing its rally amidst concerns over new virus strain, lockdown and weak global cues, fuelled by IT, mid and small caps.

The additional stimulus announced in the US did not gain much momentum in the global

market as the quantum of the benefit was well-factored, but Europe and emerging markets are maintaining the buoyancy. “In the coming days, the market will also focus on Brexit trade deals which is expected to be finalised soon and fall-out in the economy due to strict lockdown,” said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services. All sectoral indices ended with gains. BSE realty, metal, IT, telecom, teck, FMCG and industrials indices surged as much as 3.97 per cent. In the broader markets, the BSE midcap and smallcap indices rallied up to 2.65 per cent.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Shanghai, Seoul, Hong Kong and Tokyo ended on a positive note. Stock exchanges in Europe were also trading with gains in early deals. Meanwhile, the global oil benchmark Brent crude futures rose 0.12 per cent to \$50.14 per barrel. The rupee snapped its two-day losing streak to settle higher by 8 paise at 73.76 against the US dollar.

Defaults on rise in retail loans

Credit card, loans against property segments most affected, says Cibil report

MUMBAI

RETAIL credit has experienced an increase in serious delinquencies, with loans against property and credit cards being the most affected segments, a report by a credit information bureau said on Wednesday.

As of August-end, the loans overdue for over 90 days in the credit card segment were 0.51 per cent up from the year-ago period at 2.32 per cent, while the same for the loans against property was 0.34 per cent up at 3.96 per cent, Transunion Cibil said. “Credit cards delinquency rates reflected the wider economic slowdown, salary cuts and job losses caused by the pandemic. Further, credit cards often have a lower payment

priority, with consumers choosing to pay other credit accounts first,” the bureau said.

For LAP, a product generally used by small businesses as working capital finance, delinquencies had already been on the rise prior to Covid-19. It, however, said that the delinquency picture is “complicated” and will take time to emerge as the lagged effect of financial conditions, relief programs supported by lenders, and shifts in payment priorities of consumers play out. It can be noted that the Reserve Bank had announced a moratorium on loan repayments for six

months ending August 2020, under which a loan account cannot be termed as a non-performing asset (NPA) for non-payment. The central bank had later introduced a loan restructuring scheme across all categories for borrowers impacted by the pandemic.

However, bankers have been saying that there has not been a high amount of requests for loan recasts. The bureau said in the case of auto loans and personal loan segments, there has been an improvement from a delinquency perspective. From a lending institution perspective, retail loans extended by

non-bank finance companies (NBFCs), which typically take riskier loan bets, reported a 0.49 per cent increase in delinquencies in August as compared with the year-ago period, while the same improved 0.28 per cent for state-run lenders and 0.10 per cent for their private sector counterparts. It said the shape of recovery in retail-credit markets will be very much influenced by the ability to contain the spread of the pandemic along with consumer and lender resiliency.

Retail advances growth for the system slowed to 2.5 per cent in August (compared with the year-ago period of August 2019), as against 8.9 per cent in May this year and 16.7 per cent in February, it said.

iPhone shipments to hit record 21% growth

NEW DELHI

APPLE is likely to break previous sales records during its fiscal first quarter (October-December period) as the iPhone 12 is set to bolster global quarterly shipment growth for all iPhones to 21 per cent year-over-year (YoY), industry tracker Counterpoint Research said on Wednesday.

Record iPhone shipments for the fourth quarter will be driven not only by North America but also India, China, Japan, and countries in Europe, said the report.

“What we're seeing is a combination of things driving iPhone growth globally,” Peter Richardson, Global Head of Research at Counterpoint, said in a statement. These include pent up demand



for a new 5G iPhone with both operators and consumers hungry for the new iPhone products, attractive prices on the iPhone 12 aided by bountiful promotional offers.

“iPhone SE sales also helped momentum together with iPhone 11 longevity, and solid Singles Day, Black Friday and Cyber Monday performance,” Richardson said.

Although Apple's October-November 2020 global sell-through was down YoY, it declined by only low-single digits. (IANS)

TS seeks ₹5k cr from Centre for Pharma City, NIMZ

KTR urges Industries Minister to allocate 50% of project cost in Budget for next FY

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

Municipal Administration and Urban Development Minister KT Rama Rao on Wednesday urged Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goel to allocate special funds in the upcoming union budget 2021-22 for various projects in the State.

KTR requested Goel in a letter for projects such as Hyderabad Pharma City, NIMZ (Zaheerabad), National Design Centre (NDC), and setting up of Industrial Corridor in Telangana.

He thanked the Centre for including Hyderabad – Warangal, and Hyderabad – Nagpur Industrial Corridors by NICDIT and for considering funding the initial two nodes for the Hyderabad Pharma City (HPC) and National Industrial Manufacturing Zone (NIMZ), Zaheerabad. The estimated project cost for taking infrastructure development in these two nodes is about Rs 3,000 and Rs 2,000 crores respectively.

Rao said that the State government was keen on the development of these two projects on a fast-track basis. He requested the Union Minister to allocate funds to the extent of at least 50 per cent of the project cost in the budget estimates for 2021-22. He said that the Government of Telangana was

Telangana govt keen to fast-track both the menioned projects

- ❖ Pharma City getting great response from domestic and global cos
- ❖ Rs 870 cr sought for Natl Industrial Manufacturing Zone in Budget



❖ Liberal funds requested for first National Design Centre in city



developing Hyderabad Pharma City (HPC) project as the 'World's Largest Integrated Pharma park' to promote domestic manufacturing of pharmaceutical in line with the 'Make in India' and 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat' initiatives of the Union Government and to consolidate the leadership position of India in the pharmaceutical sector.

The project will be first-of-its-kind featuring state-of-the-art Infrastructure, common facilities including Zero Liquid Discharge (ZLD) based Common Effluent Treatment Plant (CETP), integrated solid waste management facility, district heating, cooling systems, Logistic Parks, Global Pharma University, Regulatory fa-

cilitation cells, Common Drug Development & Testing Laboratories, Startup/ SME Hub, etc. The project has received an overwhelming response from both domestic and global companies to set-up manufacturing units. Overall investment potential of the project is estimated to be around Rs 64,000 Crore with employment generation of 5.6 lakh jobs (direct and indirect), KTR said.

The minister said that the state government had sought funding to the tune of Rs 4,922 crore from the Centre towards the development of External and Internal Infrastructure development as per the NIMZ guidelines. "Given the National importance of the project, I

would like to request you to kindly consider a budget provision to the tune of Rs 870 crores in the Budget for the financial year 2021-22 to support the development of Hyderabad Pharma City," said Minister KTR.

In another letter, Minister KTR requested budget allocations for the National Design Centre (NDC) and stated that Hyderabad was proposed as the preferred location for setting up of the first National Design Centre (NDC) by DPIIT. He also mentioned that his team was working closely with DPIIT to understand their vision of the centre and have already submitted a Detailed Project Report with inputs from all National Institute of Design (NIDs).

City police crack landmark cases even in a Covid year

Professionalism to the fore despite gruelling challenges: Commissioner

CHAND AHMED
HYDERABAD

THE year 2020 was not a normal one, as the world had to face the wrath of Coronavirus, which caused many deaths and created a sense of widespread fear among the public. The police force played a tremendous role in ensuring stringent lockdown, facing all odds. They went beyond call of duty across the city, attending to various non-assigned needs of the public. However, even in such unprecedented times, they could achieve breakthrough in some sensational cases.

Speaking to The Hans India, Hyderabad Police Commissioner Anjani Kumar said that the police department takes pride in professionalism and the sheer example is its dedication shown in solving the cases.

Citing a few sensational cases, wherein issues were resolved in record time, the top cop noted, "A two-month-old infant was rescued by the Falaknuma police in nine hours after she was kidnapped by three persons. Similarly, the Mangalhat police busted a gang of three within 14 hours and rescued a girl aged four months. The trio intended to use her for begging, but she

The most sensational case was the arrest of six persons from Bihar and recovery of diamonds worth Rs.1. 5 crore. Another gang of four from the same State was nabbed and 1.25 kg gold worth Rs.1 crore was seized. Also, the mysterious double murder case was solved

—Anjani Kumar, Hyderabad Commissioner

was freed within a record time. In another instance, the Afzalgunj police rescued a girl (3) and arrested two kidnappers."

"The West Zone Task Force nabbed four persons who were involved in hawala transaction and seized Rs.3,75,30,000 and four vehicles. In another case, a fake army officer was arrested for cheating 17 bridal families. He had collected Rs. 6.6 crore from the victims. Also, the Task Force officials nabbed a gang of four and recovered a Durga idol and a stone claimed to be Nagamani, which they intended to sell for Rs. 1 crore. A gang of five burglars was arrested and a total cash of Rs.1,28,02,000 was recovered, he stated.

Kumar listed the seizure of

various brands of smuggled imported cigarettes worth Rs. 1.03 crore being sold in City. Three professional automobile lifters were arrested for stealing 77 bikes worth Rs 1 crore. The vehicles were recovered. The Task Force also arrested a four-member fake currency gang and recovered property worth Rs 8.5 lakh from their possession.

The most sensational case was the arrest of six persons from Bihar and recovery of diamonds worth Rs 1.5 crore. Another gang of four from the same State was nabbed and 1.25 kg gold worth Rs 1 crore was seized. Also, the mysterious double murder case was also solved in a short span of time, the city Police Commissioner noted.

'Inaction against hate speeches worrisome'

Congress demands a white paper on status of hate speech cases

HYDERABAD

THE Congress party has alleged that lack of action by Telangana police in the cases of hate speeches, against BJP and MIM leaders is causing an atmosphere of communal hatred across Telangana.

Hyderabad City Congress Committee (HCCC) minorities wing chairman Sameer Waliullah in a statement on Wednesday said that the police have registered cases against Telangana BJP President Bandi Sanjay and MIM MLA Akbaruddin Owaisi on November 28 for the hate speeches they delivered during the campaign for

GHMC elections. He demanded the TRS Government to issue a white paper on the status of action taken in these cases.

"A BJP leader has built his entire political career by giving hate speeches against a particular community. Similarly, one MIM leader never faced action despite being booked under dozens of such cases. Telangana Police are adopting a very casual approach in dealing with the cases as they are being pressurised. Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao should allow the police officials to act as per the law," he added.



Sameer Waliullah

Nomination of three MLCs challenged

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

THE High Court bench comprising of Chief Justice Raghavendra Singh Chauhan and Justice Bollam Vijayen Reddy on Wednesday heard a plea filed by T Dhangopal Rao challenging the recent nominations of three MLCs, Goret Venkanna, Baswaraj Saraiah and Boggarapu Dayanand Gupta under Governor Quota. The High Court on Wednesday issued notices to the State government and three nominated MLCs directing them to file the counter-affidavits within four weeks. The Chief Justice bench directed the Advocate General Banda Shivananda Prasad to accept the notices.

Petitioner Dhangopal challenged that as per the Telangana Cabinet's decision, the three MLCs have been nominated without following the law laid down by the Allahabad High Court in the matter of nominations of MLCs in Governor Quota.

Further, the petitioner submitted that according to Article 171 (3) (e), 5 of the Constitution, the Governor shall, at her discretion, appoint 1/6 of the members of the State Legislative Council. However, these members must be proficient in various fields. The High Court adjourned the matter for four weeks.



Plea seeking arrest of Patancheru MLA dismissed

HYDERABAD

THE High Court single judge bench of Justice P Naveen Rao on Wednesday dismissed the plea filed by a vernacular journalist Guguloth Santosh Naik seeking the arrest of Patancheru MLA G Mahipal Reddy. Justice Rao pronouncing the orders mentioned that unless the investigation was

completed and report reached, the court could not direct the State police to arrest the alleged accused. In the plea, the petitioner alleged that the MLA had reportedly threatened him of dire consequences for exposing his alleged role in the encroachment of land in his constituency. The Court opined that the plea is not maintainable and dismissed.

PV HAILED FOR REFORMS ON 16TH DEATH ANNIVERSARY

HYDERABAD

VARIOUS leaders cutting across their party lines hailed the services rendered by former Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao to the country. They termed PV as a compass to the country. The leaders made these remarks on the occasion of the 16th death anniversary of the former PM.

PV Narasimha Rao would remain etched in the country's history forever as a staunch reformer, Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao said on Wednesday. Recalling the former premier on his death anniversary, he said the country was enjoying the results of reforms ushered in by PV in education, economy, land, administration and other sectors. The CM noted that the Rao's firm attitude in internal security and external affairs, diplomacy had strengthened



Congress leaders Uttam Kumar Reddy, Geetha Reddy and others paying tributes to former Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao on his 16th death anniversary at PV Ghat in Hyderabad on Wednesday

Photo: Srinivas Setty

ened the country's unity. Rao further said his government was conducting PV's year-long centenary with a lot of responsibility and respect and as a befitting tribute to the polyglot, multi-faceted great

administrator. Assembly Speaker Pocharam said that PV was not a leader but a force and added that the thoughts and views of PV would always remain with the people of



Ram temple fund drive from Jan 15



Dubbaka BJP MLA Ragunandhan Rao presenting a cheque to Alok Kumar, the central working president of VHP and national convener of Shri Ram Janma Bhoomi Mandir Nirman Nidhi Samarpan Abhiyan, in the city on Wednesday.

HYDERABAD

THE Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) plans to reach out to over 9,000 villages and more than three crore people in Telangana as part of its fund-raising drive in the country for construction of Lord Ram temple in Ayodhya, its central working president Alok Kumar said here on Wednesday. The pariahad has resolved to extend all cooperation to Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Theerth Kshetra Trust for collecting monetary offerings from Hindus. Its activists will reach out to over 11 crore families, comprising 50-55 crore people in over four lakh villages across the country, for their contribution, he told reporters. The campaign to collect funds

would commence from January 15 and continue till February 27.

In Telangana, VHP plans to reach out to 40 lakh families for the temple construction. Full transparency would be maintained in the fund collection. There would be five volunteers in each team and they would report to a depositor. All collections would be deposited in the bank account of the Kshetra within 48 hours. Asked if VHP plans to collect funds from abroad, Kumar stated that presently it will raise from within India, as they don't have necessary approval for accepting funds from overseas, as of now, though they have applied for it.

Abandoned quarries become death traps

SRINIVAS GUDUPALLI
RANGA REDDY

THERE are many abandoned quarries in the outskirts of Hyderabad in places like Shamshabad, Kothur, Himayath Sagar, Ibrahimpatnam and along the Outer Ring Road. The open pits at the quarries have become death traps for the people. These quarries are a huge threat to the people and so many innocent people have lost their lives at these quarries.

In the last six years, 21 people have lost their lives after drowning in these stony quarry pits.

Recently, two children have drowned in these pits in Mekaguda village. Several people have visited the abandoned quarry near Hi-

mayat sagar in order to swim in that water, but they were not aware of the depth of the quarry water and drowned. There are many legal and illegal stone quarries operating in the State and they are left open after finishing the work. These quarries have become death traps for the people.

The quarries are not only an environmental hazard but also a huge threat to the people. But the officials are neither taking any measures to stop the illegal mining nor preventing the people from visiting those abandoned and dangerous quarries. This negligence of officials has led to many accidents and mishaps at the quarries, as a result innocent people have lost their lives.

TS sees 635 new Covid cases

HYDERABAD

TELANGANA registered 635 fresh coronavirus cases, taking the tally to nearly 2.83 lakh while four fatalities pushed the toll to 1,522. Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) accounted for the most number of cases with 115, followed by Rangareddy 57 and Medchal Malkajgiri 49, a government bulletin said on Wednesday providing details as of 8 pm on December 22. Over 2.74 lakh people recovered from the disease so far. As many as 6,627 patients are under treatment and 45,609 samples were tested on Tuesday. Cumulatively, over 65.66 lakh samples have been tested. The samples tested per million population was nearly 1.76 lakh, the bulletin said. The case fatality rate in the state was 0.53 per cent, while it was 1.5 per cent at the national level. The recovery rate in Telangana was 97.12 per cent, while it was 95.7 per cent in the country.

Farmers will get Rythu Bandhu aid soon: Sabitha

HANS NEWS SERVICE
RANGA REDDY

EDUCATION Minister Sabitha Indra Reddy laid the foundation stone for the construction of DCCB building and inaugurated Rythu Vedika in Maheshwaram on Wednesday. While the construction works of DCCB building to be taken at the cost of Rs 65 lakh, the Rythu Vedika in Sirigiripuram village has been

constructed at a cost of Rs 22 lakh. Informing that the State government would be depositing amount under Rythu Bandhu Scheme in farmers' accounts throughout the State shortly, the Minister said a total of Rs 7,300 crore has been sanctioned for the purpose and Rs 375 crore would be deposited into 3.10 lakh farmers' accounts in the district.

"Rythu Vedikas are being con-

structed throughout the State to bring awareness about the new technology, techniques and skills in the farming sector. Nearly, 2,604 Rythu Vedikas are being constructed with a budget of Rs 600 crore across the State," Sabitha informed. Ranga Reddy Zilla Parishad chairperson Anitha Reddy, DCCB chairman Manohar Reddy and other local leaders and officials were also present.

Bedi quits Delhi cricket body over Jaitley’s statue at Kotla

NEW DELHI

LAMBASTING the DDCA for deciding to install a statue of its late former President Arun Jaitley at the Feroz Shah Kotla ground, spin legend Bishan Singh Bedi has asked the body to remove his name from the spectators' stand, named after him in 2017. Lashing out at the Delhi and District Cricket Association's (DDCA) culture, which he alleged promotes nepotism and puts "administrators ahead of cricketers", Bedi also renounced his membership of the body. He made the demand in a scathing letter addressed to DDCA President Rohan Jaitley, the son of the late politician, who was a minister in the BJP-led NDA government and died last year owing to multiple health issues. "I pride myself as a man of immense

tolerance and patience...but all that I'm afraid, is running out. DDCA has truly tested me and forced me to take this drastic action. "So, Mr President I request you to remove my name from the stand named after me with immediate effect. Also, I hereby renounce my DDCA membership," Bedi wrote in his letter. When contacted for a response to Bedi's letter, the DDCA declined any comment. Jaitley was DDCA president for 14 years, from 1999 to 2013, before quitting cricket administration. The body plans to have a six-foot statue of him installed at the Kotla to honour his memory. DDCA had named one of the stands after Bedi in November 2017 along with Mohinder Amarnath. "I've taken this decision with sufficient deliberations. I'm not prone to



disregard the honour that was bestowed upon me. But as we all know with honour comes responsibility. They feted me for the total respect and integrity with which I played the game. "And now I'm returning the honour just to assure them all that four decades after my retirement, I

still retain those values. " Putting his decision in context, Bedi wrote that he was never a fan of Arun Jaitley's working style and always opposed any decision that he did not agree with. "My reservations about the choice of people he hand-picked to run the day to day affairs of DDCA is well known. I remember walking out from a meeting at his residence whence he was unable to throw out a rowdy element using terribly foul language. "I think I was too head strong...too Old school...& too proud an Indian cricketer to be co-opted into the corrupt darbar of sycophants Arun Jaitley mustered at the Kotla during his stewardship." Bedi said it pains him that even the current leadership follows the culture of "fawning obseance". "After the

Feroze Shah Kotla was named hurriedly & most undeservingly after Late Arun Jaitley my reaction then was maybe somehow good sense might prevail to keep Kotla sacrosanct. "How wrong I was. Now I gather a statue of Late Arun Jaitley is going to be installed at the Kotla. I'm not at all enamoured with the thought of a statue of Arun Jaitley coming up at Kotla." Bedi said since the late administrator was primarily a politician, it's the Parliament which needs to "remember him for posterity." "This is not a rhetorical assessment but a factual appraisal of his time at DDCA. Take my word, failures don't need to be celebrated with plaques & busts. They need to be forgotten." Citing examples of how great cricketers were honoured in in other

countries, Bedi said, "People who surround you presently will never inform you that it's WG Grace at Lord's...Sir Jack Hobbs at the Oval...Sir Donald Bradman at the SCG...Sir Garfield Sobers at Barbados & Shane Warne of recent vintage at the MCG...who adorn their cricket stadia with the Spirit of Cricket never out of place..."...Sporting arenas need sporting role models. The place of the administrators is in their glass cabins. "Since DDCA doesn't understand this Universal cricket culture, I need to walk out of it. I can't be part of a stadium which has got its priorities so grossly wrong & where administrators get precedence over the cricketers. Please bring down my name from the stand with immediate effect."

INDIA PLAN TO OUTBOX AUSTRALIA

MELBOURNE

DETERMINED to leave behind the embarrassing defeat in the series-opener, the Indian team, under stand-in skipper Ajinkya Rahane, switched its focus to red-ball cricket on Wednesday with Shubman Gill and others grinding it out during a net session ahead of Boxing Day Test. Gill, who was not considered for the opening Test despite scoring 43 and 65 in the pink-ball warm-up match, looked in good nick as he along with Mayank Agarwal honed his skills at the nets, indicating that the duo could be the opening combination for the second Test. The 21-year-old Gill also opens for Punjab in the Ranji Trophy and could be favoured over struggling Prithvi Shaw, who returned with scores of 0 and 4 in the two innings at Adelaide. KL Rahul, who received the backing from the legendary Sunil Gavaskar for the opening slot, too had a long stint at the nets. Also back at the nets was spin all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja, who had missed the first Test due to concussion. Jadeja went for an hour-long spell at the nets during which he bowled

to his Saurashtra teammate Cheteshwar Pujara. He again returned for a second stint later, an indication that he could be included in the playing XI for the Boxing Day Test. India were bowled out for their lowest-ever score of 36 in their second innings in the eight-wicket loss to Australia in the pink-ball Test. With skipper Virat Kohli returning home for the birth of his first child, Rahane will now have to take the onus of inspiring the team to script a turnaround. The practice session begun with head coach Ravi Shastri giving a pep talk to the team members, who stood in a circle at the MCG. "We are in Melbourne and now as the red-ball Tests start, it is time to regroup. #TeamIndia," BCCI wrote on its twitter handle. Shastri also had a chat with Rishabh Pant, who came out to bat at the nets ahead of Wriddhiman Saha. Pant, who had smashed a 73-ball 103 in the warm-up, may replace Shah



Rahul static at 3rd, Kohli improves

DUBAI

KL Rahul retained his third position, while India skipper Virat Kohli improved a rung to the seventh spot in the ICC men's T20I player rankings for batsmen. In fact, Rahul and Kohli are the only two Indians to feature in the top-10 list of players rankings in all three categories -- batsman, bowlers and all-rounders. With 816 points, Rahul is behind Dawid Malan (915) and Babar Azam (820) in the list, while Kohli has 697 points in his kitty. Kohli is ranked inside top-10 in all the three formats, being at the top position in ODI batting rankings and occupying the second place in Test batting chart.

in second Test even though many believe the veteran wicketkeeper should be given one more chance. With Mohammed Shami ruled out of the remainder of the series with a fractured forearm, Mohammad Siraj and Navdeep Saini were seen bowling to Rahane alongside Shardul Thakur as the trio look to stake claim for the third pacer's slot. Batting coach Vikram Rathour, mean-

Warner, Abbott to miss second Test

STAR opener David Warner and pacer Sean Abbott were on Wednesday ruled out of the second Test against India, beginning here Saturday, because of a mix of injuries and COVID-19 protocols. Both Warner and Abbott were outside the team's bio-secure hub to get treatment for their respective groin and calf injuries. The duo was flown out to Melbourne ahead of schedule on Saturday due to concern's over the recent outbreak of coronavirus in Sydney's northern beaches. "While neither player has been in a specific 'hotspot' on Sydney's northern beaches as outlined by NSW Health, Cricket Australia's biosecurity protocols do not allow them to rejoin the squad in time for the Boxing Day test," Cricket Australia said in a statement.

while, had a word with young Shaw, who is under tremendous pressure to retain his place in the XI after his below par show in Adelaide.

‘Can’t really compare myself with Ashwin’

MELBOURNE

ACE Australian spinner Nathan Lyon says he and India's R Ashwin are similar yet different type of bowlers, so comparisons should not be made between the two. Lyon spoke highly of Ashwin, who he says stands out with his variations. "Ashwin is a world-class bowler, to be honest. I have watched him a lot especially when I had gone to tour India and the subcontinent to try and learn of him. But he is a very cagey bowler, he has got all the variations," Lyon said. "He's very cagey with the way he changes his pace, so he is a very talented bowler. We are similar in a way but we are very different as well, so I can't really compare myself to him. I think his records speak for his own, so hats off to Ashwin," said the 33-year-old off-spinner. Ashwin has been India's premier off-spinner, who has taken 370 wickets from 72 Tests. Lyon himself is close to touching the milestone of 400 Test wickets. He has taken 391 wickets from 97 Tests. Asked if he would have any preferable choice for his 400th Test wicket, Lyon said that it doesn't matter to him. "Doesn't worry me, if it's (Mayank) Agarwal or (Jasprit) Bumrah, or whoever, batter of bowler, doesn't worry me whatsoever, just it would be nice feather in the cap to get there," he said.



Five-month pregnant woman completes 10k run

BENGALURU

ONE of the many amazing stories of the TCS World 10K Bengaluru 2020 is a five months pregnant woman completing the race in just 62 minutes. Ankita Gaur completed her TCS World 10K run, despite being five months pregnant. Ankita, who has been running regularly for the past nine years, feels running is like breathing, and it is something which comes naturally to her. "This is something I have been doing for the past nine years, almost every day. You know, you wake up and go out for a run. Of course, there are times, when you are injured or unwell, you have to take a step back. Otherwise, I have been running regularly for nine years, so this is something, which is like breathing for me. It comes to me very naturally," she said.



Ankita Gaur

"Apparently, running is actually very safe. It's a good exercise to run during pregnancy. Also, if you look at the American Council of health, everything is recommended that if you are a runner, it's absolutely okay. In fact, they recommend you to run. It is very good for the development of the baby, so of course, I wanted to go," Ankita added. An engineer by profession, Ankita has been running TCS World 10K since 2013. She has also participated in over five-six international marathons such as Berlin (three times), Boston, and New York. "I thoroughly enjoyed the app-enabled race too. It was very user friendly, once you started the app, it calculates the elapsed time and shows you that as a result. Like how it happens in a real race," she said. On being asked about how she prepared for this year's event, Ankita said, "I have been doing easy running regularly for like 5-8 km, very slowly. I run and walk while taking breaks because obviously, now I am five months pregnant, so my body is very different compared to what it was. Earlier I have won medals in TCS 10K, but this time I couldn't as I had to take breaks and walk."

When quizzed about her family's reaction, she said, "Initially, my mother was a little unsure about it. I would say she has always encouraged me to continue with sports. So, when I told her that the doctor had given the green signal, she was absolutely fine with it. And, my dad is super supportive, he is proud of me that I am still running, and he's been a sportsperson himself, so he encouraged me. Moreover, my husband has also been absolutely supportive and has been with me all the time. Even when we went to ask the doctor, he was with me. Hence, I would say, I am very lucky in that way."



Messi surpasses Pele's milestone

BARCELONA

LIONEL Messi broke Pelé's all-time scoring milestone for their clubs by netting his 644th career goal for Barcelona, while Atlético Madrid beat Real Sociedad 2-0 to increase its lead of the Spanish league. Messi, who helped Barcelona win 3-0 at Valladolid, had equaled Pelé's all-time scoring tally on Saturday. His 643rd career goal for Barcelona since his 2004 debut matched Pelé's tally for Santos from 1957-74. In a meeting between the front-runner and the sensation of the league this season, Atlético put on another dominant performance to show why it is the early title favorite. Diego Simeone's team took full advantage of its best scoring opportunities and its defense remained airtight from start to finish. Mario Hermoso headed in a free kick by Yannick Carrasco to put the visitors at San Sebastián ahead four minutes after halftime. Marcos Llorente put the result beyond doubt in the 74th with a powerful strike from the edge of the area. Atlético moved three points clear of second-place Real Madrid. Sociedad was left in third place at six points adrift. The Basque Country club had led the league earlier this season but has now gone six rounds without a victory. Barcelona stayed in fifth place at eight points behind Atlético. Atlético has one more game to play than both Madrid and Barcelona and three more games to play than Sociedad. Messi scored his team's final goal at Valladolid as Barcelona excelled in an experimental lineup by coach Ronald Koeman.

Mahesh stars in Kakatiya Cup

WARRANGAL

MAHESH 5 for 13 helped his team Nirmal Thunders outplay Suryapet Sunrisers by 69 runs in the Kakatiya Cup, hosted by Telangana Cricket Association in Warrangal.

RESULTS

Tandur Tigers vs Indur Icons
Indur Icons: 110/9 in 20 Overs (Fahad Ameer 32(34b, 3*4), Mirza Asad Baig 20(21b, 2*4) Bowling - Kalyan 3/26),
Tandur Tigers: 113/4 in 12.5 Overs (Vinay Raj 28(19b, 4*4,1*6), Kalyan 22(16b, 4*4), Bowling - Ashan 2/20)

Nirmal Thunders vs Suryapet Sunrisers
Nirmal Thunders: 176/3 in 20 Overs (Yashwanth 67(50b, 7*4, 2*6), Ramu 52(40b, 8*4, 1*6) Bowling - Avinash Kails 1/10)
Suryapet Sunrisers: 107/10 in 14.4 Overs (Manish 33(28b, 5*4, 1*6) Bowling Mahesh - 5/13, Yashwanth 3/16)

Nirmal Thunders vs Bhongir Badshaws
Nirmal Thunders: 127/5 14 Overs (Ramu 69*(35b, 7*4, 3*6), Bowling - Kranthi 1/23)
Bhongir Badshaws: 110/5 in 14 Overs (Ramesh 43(41b, 4*4), Vinay 42(32b, 3*4) Bowling - Yaswanth 1/23)

Medchal Giants vs Tandur Tigers
Medchal Giants: 70/10 in 17 Overs (Manne Sourav 22(20b, 3*4), Bowling - Rajesh 4/21, Kalyan

3/11)
Tandur Tigers: 71/3 in 10.2 Overs (G Shashi Vardhan 34(23b, 6*4) Bowling - M Akshay Raju 3/17)

Bhongir Bradshaw's Vs Singareni Blasters
Bhongir Bradshaw: 151/7 in 20 Overs (Ramesh 54(49b, 3*4,1*6), Pavan Kumar 25(23b, 4*4) Bowling- Manoj Kandula 2/22
Singareni Blasters: 101/10 in 18.1 Overs(Mohd Imamuddin 23(25b,4*4) Bowling - Sachin 3/25)
Shatavahana Warriors Vs Indur Icons
Shatavahana Warriors: 143/8 in 20 Overs(AV Kumar 38(38b,6*4), Jagadeesh Chada 34(29b,3*4,1*6) Bowling - Md Gouse 2/22)
Indur Icons Score: 109/7 in 20 Overs (Ashan 46(43b, 4*4,1*6), Bowling - Srikanth 3/16)



Mahesh 5/13 for Nirmal Thunders

Why Natarajan used as a net bowler? Luck eluded India in first Test against Australia: Sachin Tendulkar

NEW DELHI

FORMER India skipper Sunil Gavaskar has hinted at a divide within the Indian team, saying that treatment meted out to bowlers like R Ashwin and T Natarajan is biased as there are "different rules for different players". The former India opener said that Ashwin has hinted at a divide within the Indian team because of his forthrightness. He also took a dig at the India skipper Virat Kohli, who got permission to leave the tour of Australia to attend the birth of his child, while T Natarajan who became father during the IPL playoffs is yet to see his daughter. "For far too long Ashwin has suffered not for his bowling ability of which only the churlish will have doubts, but for his forthrightness and speaking his mind at meetings where most others just nod even if they don't agree," Gavaskar wrote in his column for Sportstar. "Any other country would welcome a bowler who has more than 350 Test wickets and not to forget four Test match centuries, too. However, if Ashwin doesn't take heaps of wickets in one game he is invariably sidelined



T Natarajan

for the next one. That does not happen to established batsmen though. Even if they fail in one game they get another chance and another and another but for Ashwin the rules seem to be different," he added. Gavaskar added that Natarajan has been forced to stay back only as a net bowler even though the limited-overs series, of which he was a part, ended almost a fortnight back. "Another player who will wonder about the rules but, of course, can't make any noise about it as

he is a newcomer. It is T. Natarajan. The left-arm yorker specialist who made an impressive debut in the T20 and had Hardik Pandya gallantly offering to share the man of the T20 series prize with him had become a father for the first time even as the IPL playoffs were going on. He was taken to Australia directly from the UAE and then looking at his brilliant performances, he was asked to stay on for the Test series but not as a part of the team but as a net bowler. Imagine that," wrote Gavaskar. "A match winner, albeit in another format, being asked to be a net bowler. He will thus return home only after the series ends in the third week of January and get to see his daughter for the first time then. And there is the captain going back after the first Test for the birth of his first child. That's Indian cricket. Different rules for different people. If you don't believe me ask Ravi Ashwin and T. Natarajan," he further wrote. Lack of experience of the Indian players cannot be cited for the team's crushing eight-wicket defeat to Australia in the first Test in Adelaide, but Luck eluded Virat Kohli's boys, points out former India captain Sachin Ten-

dulkar. "They have dealt with pressure situations. Barring Prithvi [Shaw], and possibly Mayank [Agarwal], all the players have played enough. Virat, Ajinkya [Rahane], Cheteshwar [Pujara] and [Wriddhiman] Saha have been around while Hanuma Vihari, compared to these guys, has played less. So, players have the ability to soak that pressure and they did their best," Tendulkar told IANS in an exclusive interview. "But sometimes you also need luck to be on your side. And as I said there were not a number of occasions when the [Indian] batters were getting beaten and continuing to bat without losing wickets. That did not happen. The edges were going straight to fielders and they were carrying," he emphasised. India inexplicably capitulated for 36 -- their lowest ever total in Test cricket. "In the [Australian] first innings, there were a number of edges but the ball didn't carry to fielders. I remember, at least three times the ball didn't carry. In the second innings, the wicket had become harder, and there was more pace and bounce in the surface. There wasn't exaggerated off-the-seam movement," said Tendulkar.