



SHOT IN THE ARM

Covid-19 vaccination drive to start in India on Jan 16

3 cr healthcare, frontline workers to get shots first

NEW DELHI

INDIA will launch its Covid-19 vaccination drive from January 16 in what Prime Minister Narendra Modi has called the world's largest inoculation programme with priority to be given to nearly three crore healthcare and frontline workers.

The decision, the government said on Saturday, was taken at a high-level meeting where Modi reviewed the status of Covid-19 and vaccine preparedness across states and union territories. "After the detailed review, it was decided that in view of the forthcoming festivals including Lohri, Makar Sankranti, Pongal, Magh Bihu etc, the Covid-19 vaccination will start from 16th January 2021," it said.

After healthcare and frontline workers, priority will be given to those above 50 years of age and the under-50 population groups with co-morbidities, together numbering around 27 crore, a government statement said.

Later, Modi tweeted that India will take a landmark step forward in fighting Covid-19 on January 16. "Starting that day, India's nationwide vaccination drive begins."

Priority will be given to our brave doctors, healthcare workers, frontline workers including Safai Karamcharis (sanitation

workers," the prime minister said.

India had recently granted emergency use authorisation to two vaccines, Oxford's Covishield being manufactured by Serum Institute in India and Bharat Biotech's Covaxin. Both vaccines, the statement from the Health Ministry said, have established safety and immunogenicity.

More than 1.5 lakh people have died so far. However, the spread of the virus has lessened in a big way in the country as the daily number of new cases has dropped to less than 20,000 from a peak of almost 98,000 in September last year. However, the overall caseload for India is the second-highest in the world after the US, which has reported more than 2 crore cases so far -- almost double of India's cumulative tally. India tops the global charts for recovery with more than 1 crore having recuperated after contracting the deadly virus.

In the review meeting, Modi was also briefed about the Co-WIN vaccine delivery management system, a unique digital platform that will provide real-time information of vaccine stocks, their storage temperature and individualised tracking of beneficiaries of the Covid-19 vaccine. This platform will assist the programme managers across all levels through automated session

Starting that day (Jan 16), India's nationwide vaccination drive begins. Priority will be given to our brave doctors, healthcare staff, frontline workers including Safai Karamcharis

2,24,190 active cases of coronavirus in the country which constitutes 2.16 per cent of the total caseload so far of over 1.04 crore
The Ministry of Health

India tops the global charts for recovery with more than 1 crore having recuperated after contracting the deadly virus

More than 79 lakh beneficiaries have been already registered on the **CoWIN app**

Approved Vaccines
Oxford's Covishield being manufactured by **Serum Institute in India and Bharat Biotech's Covaxin**

2 'Made-in-India' vaccines ready to save humanity

World waiting for India's vaccines, watching how it runs world's biggest vaccination drive: PM

NEW DELHI

NOTING India's image as the world's pharmacy, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said it is ready with two locally manufactured Covid-19 vaccines to "protect" humanity, and asserted the world is not only waiting for them but also watching as to how the nation runs the globe's biggest vaccination programme.

In his address at the inauguration of the 16th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) Convention, Modi also said that if democracy



is most strong, vibrant and lively anywhere in the world, it is in India despite the grim forecasts about its survival in the country at the time of independence.

He urged Indian diaspora to use more and more made-in-India products, saying it will inspire confidence among those living

around them to use these items as well. Indian diaspora has a crucial role in boosting 'brand India' as the country advances towards self-reliance, the prime minister said.

Talking about India's fight against the coronavirus pandemic, he said the country is among the nations with the lowest fatality rate and the highest recovery rate. "Being the pharmacy of the world, India has supplied important medicines to all those in need in the world in the past and is also doing so now. The world is not only

allocation for pre-registered beneficiaries, their verification and for generating a digital certificate upon successful completion of the vaccine schedule. More than 79 lakh beneficiaries have been already registered on the platform, the statement said.

As the vaccinators and vaccine administrators comprise a crucial pillar of the vaccination exercise, their training process was also detailed out in the meeting, and it was noted that 2,360 participants were trained during a national-level exercise (training of trainers) comprising state immunisation officers, cold chain officers, IEC officials and development partners among others.

Continued on Page 4



Ten newborn babies perish in Maharashtra hospital blaze



Women stand in a corridor at the Bhandara General Hospital, where a fire broke out, in Bhandara district, on Saturday

BHANDARA

IN a horrific tragedy, ten newborn babies died after a fire broke out at a neo-natal care ward of a state-run hospital at Bhandara in eastern Maharashtra in the early hours of Saturday. The staff managed to rescue seven of the 17 babies in the ward.

While the cause was suspected to be a short circuit or malfunctioning air-conditioning unit and the state government ordered probe by fire experts, a BJP leader alleged that there were complaints about power fluctuations in the ward, but no action was taken. Those responsible shall not be spared, Chief Minister Udhav Thackeray said.

A fire audit of all the hospitals in the state has been ordered, he informed. Calling the incident "heart-wrenching and mind-numbing", Thackeray said a new wing for children had been opened at the district hospital in 2015 and it will be probed whether a fire audit of the new building had been carried out. He also announced aid of Rs 5 lakh for family members of deceased babies. The deceased infants -- eight girls and two boys -- were aged between one month and three months, a doctor said.

State health minister Rajesh Tope told reporters that three of the ten infants died of burn injuries while seven others died of suffocation caused by smoke.

Trust, Reliability & Service
Synonymous with Kapil Chits

KAPIL GROUP

Visit Us: www.kapilchits.com

KAPIL CHITS

SMALL SAVINGS GROW BIG WITH KAPIL



Indian-American Sabrina Singh named WH Dy Press Secretary

NEW YORK



INDIAN-AMERICAN Sabrina Singh, a long-time aide to US Vice-President-elect Kamala Harris, has been named White House Deputy Press Secretary in the incoming administration, according to a statement released on Friday by the Biden-Harris transition team.

Sabrina Singh was earlier a senior spokesperson on the Mike Bloomberg presidential campaign and National Press Secretary for Cory Booker's presidential campaign.

In roles prior to that,

she served as Deputy Communications Director for the Democratic National Committee, Spokesperson for American Bridge's Trump War Room and Regional Communications Director on Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign. She has also worked at SKDKnickerbocker, served as Communications Director for Rep. Jan Schakowsky and worked at various Democratic committees.

In the weeks after the US election results were announced, several Indian-Americans have been appointed to important posts by Biden and Vice-President-elect Kamala Harris.

Twitter dumps Trump forever

WASHINGTON

TWITTER has announced that it had permanently suspended the account of outgoing US President Donald Trump due to "risk of further incitement of violence". The unprecedented move by the California-based social media platform comes two days after his supporters stormed the Capitol, bringing disgrace to the country and its democratic institutions. Five persons, including a woman and a police officer, have died. "After close review of recent Tweets from the @realDonaldTrump account and the context around them -- specifically how they are being received and interpreted on and off Twitter -- we have permanently suspended the account due to the risk of further incitement of violence," Twitter said in a statement on Friday. (PTI)

Woman power flies high around the world

All-woman cockpit team to fly historic inaugural San Francisco-Bengaluru flight

NEW DELHI

AN all-woman cockpit crew will fly into Indian aviation history on Saturday when it operates the inaugural San Francisco-Bengaluru flight, going over the North Pole and taking the Atlantic route to reach the Karnataka capital at the other end of the world.

"This will be the longest commercial flight in the world to be operated by Air India or any other airline in India...The total flight time on this route will be of more than 17 hours depending on the wind speed on that particular day," Air India said in a statement.

The direct distance between the two cities at opposite ends of the world is 13,993 km with a time zone change of



All women cockpit crew consisting of Capt Zoya Aggarwal, Capt Papagari Thanmai, Capt Akansha Sonaware & Capt Shivani Manhas will operate the historic inaugural flight between Bengaluru & San Francisco.
Union Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Puri

around 13.5 hours, an Air India official said. "Air India's woman power flies high around the world," Union Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Puri said on Twitter. "All women cockpit crew consist-

ing of Capt Zoya Aggarwal, Capt Papagari Thanmai, Capt Akansha Sonaware & Capt Shivani Manhas will operate the historic inaugural flight between Bengaluru & San Francisco," Puri said.

Flight AI176 will depart from San Francisco in the USA at 8.30 pm (local time) on Saturday and land at the Kempegowda International Airport at 3.45 am (local time) on Monday. "Captain Zoya Aggarwal is an accomplished pilot with a flying experience of more than 8000 hrs and command experience in a B-777 aircraft of more than 10 years and more than 2500 flying hours," the national carrier said.

The flight will operate with a Boeing 777-200LR aircraft VT ALG with a seating capacity of 238 seats, including 8 First Class, 35 Business Class, 195 Economy class configuration besides four cockpit and 12 cabin crew, Air India said. (PTI)

"A premium Co-Living Space"

PROPERTY MULTIPLIER
WITHOUT ADDITIONAL INVESTMENT

KT Residency approved by **ITS RERA** | Approved No. PO2400001598

SAFE

AFFORDABLE

NO MAINTENANCE

Earn extra sft*

9% to 11% Returns

Assured rental income for 20years

+91 95337 76694

www.ktresidency.com | sales@kapilproperties.com

STATE REPORTS TO CENTRE OVER HURDLES IN VACCINE DRY RUN

Inclusion of State Ministers, legislators and other elected public representatives in the first list of vaccination programme urged



State Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar participating in a video conference with Union Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba from New Delhi on Saturday

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

THE Telangana government has informed the Centre about the hurdles encountered in the dry run of vaccination process through the CoWin App, which has been brought into force to monitor the vaccination programme nationwide recently. In the video conference conducted by Union Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba from New Delhi on Saturday, Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar explained

the challenges faced by the authorities in the conduct of dry run for the proposed vaccination from January third week. The official brought to the notice of Rajiv Gauba about the confusion in identifying the vaccination centres due to some changes in the PIN (post index numbers) of the particular area. In some cases, the vaccination centres were not shown accurate on the official app, Somesh said, requesting the centre to ensure no confusion in the identification of venues during the vaccination

programme. The Chief Secretary also urged the Union Cabinet Secretary to include the State Ministers, all legislators and other elected public representatives in the first list of vaccination programme. He also put the demand to include health workers working in gram panchayats in the Front Line Warriors list and administer vaccine to them. The official explained the State's preparedness for the universal vaccination programme which is likely to be launched from January 16 onwards.



MAUD Minister KT Rama Rao speaking after handing over 2BHK flats in Baghlingampally on Saturday. Union Minister Kishan Reddy is also seen

Every eligible person should get 2BHK: Kishan Reddy

BJP leaders stage dharna for not inviting the newly-elected corporators to the event

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

UNION Minister of State for Home Affairs G Kishan Reddy stressed the need for housing for all eligible poor in Hyderabad. He participated in the distribution of double bedroom houses along with Municipal Administration and Urban Development Minister KT Rama Rao at Lambada Basti in Baghlingampally.

Kishan Reddy said that there were many homeless poor in Musheerabad, Amberpet and other areas in the city and there was a need to ensure housing for every eligible person.

Responding to the same, KT Rama Rao said that the State government has taken up the programme with a noble cause and sought the Centre's help in providing 2BHK houses to the poor. KTR said that once the elections were over, the Centre and State should rise above politics and join hands for the implementation of the schemes like housing for poor.

Earlier, tension prevailed at Baghlingampally when the local BJP leaders staged a protest alleging that the officials have not followed the protocol by not inviting the newly-elected BJP corporators to the programmes. They expressed objection to inviting the outgoing corporators to the programme and raised slogans against the Municipal Minister.

Soon, the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) officials present explained that the existing council was not dissolved, and following the protocol, they have invited the sitting corporators. Police deputed at the venue tried to disperse the protesting BJP leaders.

Meanwhile, BJP BC Morcha national president Dr K Laxman criticised KTR for playing cheap politics by going on an inauguration spree of development projects taking along the corporators, who have been rejected by the people based on their performance in the recently-held GHMC elections.

CBI books Coastal Projects Limited for duping banks of Rs 4,736 cr

- Firm obtains loans from various banks by submitting fabricated documents
- CBI conducts searches at the residences and offices of accused in Hyderabad and Vijayawada
- Recovers several incriminating documents and other material evidence of the alleged fraud

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

THE Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has registered a case against the city-based firm, Coastal Projects Limited, and its chairman and others for allegedly causing a loss of Rs 4,736.57 crore to a consortium of banks. According to a press release issued by the CBI, the case was booked after a complaint was received from the State Bank of India on behalf of other member banks, i.e., IDBI bank, Canara Bank, Bank of Baroda, Bank of Maharashtra, Punjab National Bank, Union Bank of India and Exim Bank. It has been alleged that the accused in connivance with unknown public servants and others defrauded the banks and obtained huge loans, but failed to repay the loans due to which the account became a Non-Performing Asset (NPA) on January 25, 2017 and reported as fraud on February 20, 2020. It has also been alleged that the borrower company based at Hyderabad during the period 2013-18 had indulged in fabrication of books of accounts, manipulations of financial transactions to show unrealisable invoked bank guarantee amounts as realisable investments, falsified details of promoters' contribution, converted receivables from related parties to investments to siphon off banks funds, cheating the SBI and other consortium member banks. Based on the complaint filed by the banks, the CBI conducted searches at the residential and official premises of the accused at Hyderabad and Vijayawada leading to recovery of several incriminating documents and other material evidence. Further investigation is going on, read the CBI release.

Eatala opens new Oncology Block at NIMS

Lauds MEIL's services for upgradation of medical and medical facilities

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

THE redeveloped Oncology wing at the Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences (NIMS) was inaugurated by Medical and Health Minister E Rajendar here on Saturday. The Minister complimented the MEIL (Megha Engineering and Infrastructure Limited) Chairman PP Reddy and Director Sudha Reddy for extending financial assistance to develop the new facility.

Appreciating MEIL's philanthropy, he said that the company has made it possible for the cancer patients to receive treatment at NIMS through the redeveloped Oncology block. The facilities at the redeveloped centre are on par with corporate hospitals. With the modernising of the government hospitals in the State, the Telangana will



Health Minister E Rajendar along with MEIL Chairman PP Reddy and Director Sudha Reddy after inaugurating new Oncology Block at NIMS in Hyderabad on Saturday

soon be a medical hub in the country, he added.

The MEIL chairman said he would also develop the Orthopaedic ward in NIMS and the Durgabai Deshmukh Hospital too. MEIL has been at the forefront for its humanitarian-

ism and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The redeveloped Oncology block at NIMS is a small step to provide better healthcare facilities to the poor and needy cancer patients. NIMS Director Manohar was also present.

TS should seek GI tag for more products: Governor

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

GOVERNOR Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan has called for the global promotion of unique local products.

At a virtual inauguration of Geographical Indications Festival of India (GIFI) and the Virtual Expo of the GI products, organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), the Governor said, "We need to explore the global promotion to our products with Geographical Indication at the global level as they are distinct and region-specific and represent our great tradition, art, craft and food. Intellectual property rights and geographical indications play a vital role in ensuring uniqueness to our products. We need to be aggressive in applying for geographical indications and intellectual property rights for our products."

The Governor stated that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's clarion call to be 'Vocal for Local' would contribute to

- Says the State needs to be aggressive in applying for geographical indication and intellectual property rights for the region-specific products
- Virtually inaugurates the Geographical Indications Festival of India and the Virtual Expo of GI products



the rural economy and which in turn would strengthen the country's economy. Referring to Telangana's tally for only 15 GI products, the Governor said that applications should be sent for seeking Geographical Indication for more number of products from the State.

TJS chief demands Ambedkar's photo on new notes

HANS NEWS SERVICE
JANGAON

TELANGANA Jana Samithi (TJS) chief Prof Kodandaram demanded Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar's image on the currency. He said that Ambedkar's book 'Problem of the Rupee - Its Origin and Its Solution' has influenced the then British rulers in the conceptualisation of Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

Speaking at a rally organised by the Ambedkar Photo Sadhana Samithi, here, on Saturday, the TJS chief said that Ambedkar's book depicted the problems faced by Indian currency and argued for the stabilisation of monetary affairs and exchange rates during British Raj and it eventually led to the formation of RBI.

Babasaheb, a multi-faceted personality as an economist, politician and social reformer who advocated political rights and social freedom for Dalits deserves his photo on Indian currency. Further, Prof Kodandaram demanded the Central government to print Babasaheb's image on new currency notes.

TRS likely to field tribal leader to retain Sagar seat

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

TELANGANA Rashtra Samithi chief K Chandrashekar Rao is likely to spring up a big surprise ahead of Nagarjunasagar bypoll by announcing a candidate from the Tribal community, whose votes are crucial for victory in the constituency.

The party leadership has been deliberating on the ideal candidate and strategising to regain the seat. The bypoll to Nagarjunasagar constituency has been necessitated after sitting MLA Nomula Narasimhaiah recently died after prolonged illness. Sources in the ruling TRS said that the party was exploring all possible chances to win the election and once again show its supremacy to its rivals, the BJP and the Congress.

Sources said that the TRS chief might take the decision to announce a tribal candidate from Nalgonda district. The name of Ramchandru Naik is prominently heard, said sources. The party leadership is taking opinion of

- There are over 45,000 tribal voters in the constituency whose votes are crucial for the victory of the party candidate
- After Dubbaka drubbing, party giving a second thought to fielding Nomula Bhagat, son of Narasimhaiah

leaders on the prospects if Naik could be announced as its candidate. Sources said that the leaders seem to have told the TRS chief that Naik could be an ideal choice as he was a non-controversial leader.

Ramchandru Naik started his career from CPM and later joined Telugu Desam. He joined the Praja Rajyam Party (PRP) and contested the 2009 elections. However, he had to join Congress after the merger of the party, but remained

silent. Before the 2014 elections, he joined the TRS and presently is the chairman of district Rythu Samanvaya Samithi.

The party leaders said that he had a good image in the constituency and if given a chance, he could even win from the constituency. The idea is to attract the tribal votes who can decide the fate of the candidate in the constituency. There are 1.25 lakh voters from the SC, ST and Yadav communities, including 45,000 tribal voters. Party leaders said that he could garner support of 75 per cent people in the constituency if he was made the candidate.

The first choice of the party for Nagarjunasagar has been Nomula Bhagat, son of Narasimhaiah. However, after the bitter experience in Dubbaka bypoll, the party is giving a second thought. In Dubbaka, S Ramalinga Reddy's wife Sujatha was given the ticket, but she lost it. In this scenario, the party feels that Naik's candidature could give a good chance for the party to regain the seat.

CM prod on sheep distribution

About 30,000 beneficiaries have already been identified in the State

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

THE sheep distribution programme, which has been put on hold due to the corona pandemic, would be resumed soon in Telangana. Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao on Saturday instructed the officials concerned to restart the first phase of sheep distribution and complete it immediately.

The programme was launched in the State to distribute sheep on 75 per cent subsidy to the beneficiaries among the Golla Kuruma community and the first phase of programme was deferred during the last stage due to the corona pandemic. About 30,000 benefi-

ciaries have already been identified in the State. The Chief Minister instructed State Animal Husbandry Minister T Srinivas Yadav to take necessary action to reach the bene-



File Picture

fits to the needy under the scheme. KCR also decided to start the second phase of the programme from next financial year and announced that funds for the programme would be allocated in the State Budget to be introduced in March this year.

UTTAM TAKES POTSHOTS AT KCR, DUBS HIM AS 'TUGHLAK'

Congress leader Jeevan Reddy fires a salvo at KCR for giving up the fight against the controversial farm laws introduced by the Centre recently

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

TELANGANA Congress senior leader T Jeevan Reddy created a sensation by calling Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao a 'transgender' and the TPCC president N Uttam Kumar Reddy branded KCR as 'Tughlaq'. The Congress leaders alleged that the TRS chief took U turn on his resolve to fight against the Union government and fell

on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's feet during his recent visit to New Delhi.

Participating in the day-long 'Rythu Deeksha' conducted by the Congress here in the city, Jeevan Reddy fired a salvo at KCR for giving up the fight against the controversial farm laws introduced by the Centre recently. He warned the Telangana farmers would revolt against the State government if remunerative prices



TPCC president N Uttam Kumar Reddy addressing gathering at the day-long 'Rythu Deeksha' at Dharna Chowk on Saturday

is not provided to the farming community. "After returning from the Delhi, the CM turned as transgender", the Congress

leader commented. TPCC President and Nalgonda MP N Uttam Kumar Reddy also slammed KCR for

backtracking against the new farm laws. The Chief Minister not only announced open support to Centre's anti-farmer laws, but also decided to scrap the procurement centres to purchase agriculture produce. He accused KCR govt of pursuing anti-farmer policies and said that the Chief Minister was ruling like a 'Tughlaq'.

Uttam disputed the claims made by KCR that the State government suffered a loss to the tune of Rs. 7,500 crore on the procurement of agricultural produce and sold the same at lower prices in the open market.

He said the TRS and BJP were two sides of the same coin and they were practising 'Gali Mein Kushti aur Delhi Mein Dosti' (Fighting in lane & friendship in Delhi) policy.

A-G writes to SC Secretary General seeking review of virtual hearing set up

SUMIT SAXENA
NEW DELHI

THE Covid-19 pandemic necessitated a re-imagining of how access to justice can be ensured in the backdrop of an unprecedented health crisis. In a swift response, the Supreme Court went virtual since March 23. But it has not been a smooth ride so far, as the virtual hearing set up has miffed both judges and lawyers.

Earlier this week, Attorney General K.K. Venugopal made some scathing observations on

the virtual court set up and said the system needs to be "re-viewed".

The A-G has written a letter to the secretary general of the Supreme Court citing issues with the existing virtual court system. The A-G's office confirmed that he also had a meeting with officials from National Informatics Centre (NIC) and asked them look into these issues. An official in the A-G office said that the NIC had assured him that they will examine the existing system.

Lawyers have often com-



plained about issues with the virtual hearing set up in the top court: screen going blank, issues with lawyers been put on mute, echo during hearing, and others.

On January 5, the A-G who

was appearing before a bench headed by Justice L. Nageswara Rao, was unmuted when the matter had come up on the docket. The A-G had requested the control room to unmute him during the previous matter. He termed it very disturbing and told the bench the system needs to be reviewed.

Speaking to IANS, senior advocate Chander Uday Singh, who was part of the proceedings in the matter on January 5, said the top court has adopted a bizarre system, where the judges have ceded the control of

their courtroom to the control room, which handles the functioning of the virtual hearing.

Citing the open court virtual functioning of the Kerala High Court and the virtual set up of Bombay High Court, Singh added these courts are doing very well in taking up matters through video conferencing.

On the same day, another bench headed by Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul expressed its "exasperation" over the poor functioning of the virtual court system. The bench also drew a sharp comparison between the

system in the top court with the system functional in the Delhi High Court, where the latter had no such problems.

"We at the inception must note our exasperation at the inability of the virtual court system to work satisfactorily in the Supreme Court while there is no such problems in the Delhi High Court next door," said the bench also comprising Justices Dinesh Maheshwari and Hrishikesh Roy.

The three-judge bench which was hearing a special leave petition in a criminal case directed

the secretary general to look into this issue as it was becoming very difficult to continue with proceedings in the virtual courts in an appropriate manner.

"We have been since yesterday trying to cope with the problem of disconnections, resonance of voices even when there is a single person arguing. It is difficult to understand this despite more licences stated to have been taken. The only voice we hear is the resonance of our own voices," said the bench in its order.

'Total 90 persons detected with new UK mutant strain'

NEW DELHI

THE Central government on Saturday said that a total of 90 persons have been detected with the new 'more transmissible' UK coronavirus mutant strain. They are kept in physical isolation in health facilities.

"Total number of persons infected with the UK mutant strain of Covid-19 now stands at 90 in the country," the Union Health Ministry said in a statement.

According to the ministry, all the 90 persons have been kept in a single room isolation in designated healthcare facilities by the respective state governments. Their close contacts have also been put under quarantine.

"Comprehensive contact tracing has been initiated for co-travellers, family contacts and others. Genome sequencing on other specimens is also on," the ministry added.

On Friday, a flight from United States landed in Delhi with 246 passengers on board amid concerns about the mutant strain that emerged in Britain.

The flights from the UK resumed on Friday after the government suspended all the services



on December 23.

On December 29, a total of six UK returnees were found to be positive with the new variant genome. These were the first cases to be reported by the country after the United States.

The tracing and testing were initiated after the British government announced that a newly identified strain of the virus was found in their population which is up to 70 per cent more transmissible.

Notably, the new UK Variant has already been reported by Denmark, Netherlands, Australia,

Italy, Sweden, France, Spain, Switzerland, Germany, Canada, Japan, Lebanon and Singapore.

From November 25 to December 23 midnight, about 33,000 passengers disembarked at various Indian airports from UK. All these passengers are being tracked and subjected by States and UTs to RT-PCR tests.

The Union Health Ministry further stated that the situation is under careful watch and regular advice is being provided to the states for enhanced surveillance, containment, testing and dispatch of samples to labs. (IANS)

'China ready to work with WHO Covid-19 probe team'



BEIJING

CHINA is ready to receive a World Health Organization (WHO) expert team which would conduct investigations into the origins of the novel coronavirus, a senior health official said here Saturday.

China and the WHO have reached a consensus on specific arrangements of the investigation with four video conferences, Zeng Yixin, deputy head of the National Health Commission, told a press conference.

He added that Chinese experts were waiting for their WHO counterparts' arrival.

Once the WHO experts complete their procedures and finalise the schedule, Chinese experts will go to Wuhan, where the virus originated in December 2019, with them to conduct the investigation, Zeng said.

He stressed that China's position on the WHO investigation is positive, open and supportive, and the country hopes such joint efforts would help deepen the understanding of the virus and better prevent in-

fectious diseases in the future.

Zeng's announcement came after the WHO claimed earlier this week that a team had been denied entry to China.

The world body said that two members of the team were already en route, adding that the problem was a lack of visa clearances, the BBC reported.

On Tuesday, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said that he was "very disappointed" that China had not yet finalised the permissions for the team's arrivals "given that two members had already begun their journeys and others were not able to travel at the last minute".

In response however, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying told the BBC "there might be some misunderstanding" and "there's no need to read too much into it".

The WHO has been working to send a 10-person team of international experts to China and it was announced in December 2020 that the investigation would begin in January 2021. (IANS)

Cong to gherao Raj Bhavans on Jan 15 in support of farmers



NEW DELHI

IN a move to put pressure on the government over the three farm laws, the Congress on Saturday said that it has decided to organise 'Kisan Adhikar Divas' in the country and will gherao the Raj Bhavans across all states on January 15.

Addressing a press conference here, Congress General Secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala said: "Congress chief Sonia Gandhi has decided that in support of agitating farmers the party will organise Kisan Adhikar Divas in its party offices and will also gherao the Raj Bhavans in the state headquarters on January 15."

According to party leaders, the decision was taken at the virtual meeting of the party's General Secretaries and state in-charges with Sonia Gandhi earlier in the day.

Surjewala said the time has come that the central government needs to understand the warning of the farmers because they have now decided to fight till their last breath if the three laws are not repealed.

Surjewala said that the party will organise protests and agitations on January 15 that will include a march to the Raj Bhavans, to demand repealing of the three farm laws.

He slammed the government for asking the farmers to approach the Supreme Court and said, "People of the country have elected the government and not the Supreme Court."

The Congress General Secretary said that in the last 73 years it is for the first time that a government is asking farmers to approach the Supreme Court.

"Those who are not ready to take their responsibility are asking farmers to knock the doors of the Supreme Court.

Mayawati reiterates demand for repeal of Central farm laws

LUCKNOW

AMID the protest by farmers against the three Central farm laws at the borders of the national capital, Bahujan Samaj Party National President Mayawati has once again raised the demand for withdrawal of the new farm laws.

Mayawati on Saturday tweeted saying, "The talks between the farmers protesting on the Delhi borders for quite some time, and the Central government failed once again yesterday (January 8) which is a matter of grave concern. I urge the Centre once again to address the problem expeditiously by accepting the demand of the farmers to withdraw the new Union farm laws."

Earlier, Mayawati had written that the Central government must immediately withdraw the three farm laws and must not adopt a high-handed attitude but be sympathetic towards the protesting farmers.

The farmers leaders on Friday said the Union farm laws would have to be repealed, only then they would end their protest. (IANS)

"People of the country have elected the government then why does the government want to send farmers somewhere else.

"These three farm laws were made by the government in Parliament and not the Supreme Court. Then why is the government passing its responsibility to the court," the Congress leader said.

BSF hands over 6 to Pakistan Rangers

CHANDIGARH

THE Border Security Force (BSF) deployed in Punjab's Amritsar sector apprehended six Pakistani nationals, who inadvertently crossed the border and entered into Indian territory, and later handed them over to the Pakistan Rangers on Saturday, the BSF said.

During questioning, it came to notice that they had crossed over to Indian territory inadvertently on Friday evening. Nothing objectionable was recovered from them.

The BSF approached the Pakistan Rangers and lodged a protest on the issue. On the request of the Pakistan Rangers, the apprehended Pakistani nationals were handed over to Pak Rangers at about 5.30 p.m. on humanitarian grounds, it said in a statement.

Last year also, six Pakistanis who inadvertently crossed the border were handed over to the Pakistan Rangers by the BSF, Punjab Frontier, on humanitarian grounds. (IANS)

NHPC signs MoU with IREDA

KARUN SHARMA
NEW DELHI

NATIONAL Hydroelectric Power Corporation Limited (NHPC) on Friday signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Ltd. (IREDA) through video conferencing to expand NHPC's Renewable Energy Projects footprint in the country.

The MOU was signed by Abhay Kumar Singh, CMD, NHPC on behalf of NHPC Limited and Pradip Kumar Das, CMD, IREDA on behalf of IREDA. The occasion was graced by Director (Technical), Director (Finance) and Director (Projects) from NHPC and Director (Technical) from IREDA.

In line with Hon'ble Prime

Minister's vision of development of 175 GW of Renewable Energy by 2022 and 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' NHPC has undertaken an ambitious plan to make a significant imprint on RE landscape of the country through development of 7.5 GW of Renewable Energy (Solar-Terrestrial & Floating and Wind) in the next three years.

Towards achieving this objective, NHPC has already successfully commissioned renewable capacity of 102.5 MW (Solar-Terrestrial & Rooftop and Wind) on ownership basis and has contracted 2000 MW as Intermediary Procurer basis (Facilitator Mode) at one of the most competitive tariff with planned commissioning by 2021.

Besides a 155 MW Solar-Ter-

restrial & Floating capacity in final stages of award another 2.9 GW of Solar Capacity (Floating 500 MW and 2400 MW Solar-Terrestrial) is under various stages of development. The geographical spread of these projects is pan India.

Signing of MOU heralds a transformational opportunity for NHPC AND IREDA to work together towards forming a perfect synergy between both the organisations. IREDA shall undertake techno-financial due diligence of renewable energy and energy efficiency/conservation projects for NHPC. It will also serve to facilitate knowledge and technology transfer and provide consultancy & research services, which will contribute to driving sustainable development of the country.



'Goa BJP committing atrocities like Pak did in Bangladesh

PANAJI

FORMER Goa RSS chief Subhash Velingkar on Saturday said the BJP regime in Goa was as vengeful as the atrocity-ridden regime of Pakistan in erstwhile East Pakistan (Bangladesh).

Velingkar also said despite his numerous agitations and anti-government campaigns against past Congress regimes in the state, the Congress leadership had not launched a vendetta against its opponents, like the incumbent regime led by Chief Minister Pramod Sawant.

The former Goa RSS chief's comments come two days after his son Shailendra Velingkar was booked and arrested under non bailable sections, including attempt to murder, for his participation in protests against an upcoming IIT-Goa campus in North Goa's Melaulim village, which turned violent on Wednesday.

"The current BJP regime takes revenge on people who believe in the same political ideology, sim-

ply because they oppose some of the government's decisions. This is just like the atrocities committed by Pakistan on their

own people in Bangladesh, when it was erstwhile East Pakistan and a part of the same country. This government is similar," Velingkar told reporters.

The former state Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief's son is one of the more than 20 people who have been booked for attempt to murder, deadly assault, criminal conspiracy, among other non bailable sections following the violence on Wednesday at the proposed Indian Institute of Technology-Goa campus site in Melaulim, located around 50 km from Panaji.

Subhash Velingkar has said that top Goa BJP leaders have been running a vendetta campaign against him, ever since he took on former Defence Minister and ex Goa Chief Minister late Manohar Parrikar over policies promoted by the latter's state



government from 2012-2019, which the ex-RSS chief has maintained were against state and national interest.

"I can relate from experience. I am against the Congress. I believe that the Congress has sold the country outright. I was the RSS chief when the Congress was in power in Goa. We expanded the RSS during the Congress tenure. But the Congress has never targetted us or took revenge despite all kinds of allegations we levelled against them," Velingkar said.

"Even today, I am on good terms with Congress leaders, although they know I am their political opponent. But their regime was not blood thirsty. They did not exact revenge on their own people, like this regime does," Velingkar said. Chief Minister Pramod Sawant has justified the attempt to murder case filed against all the accused persons who have incited violence.

"So many police personnel including women had to bear injuries because they were attacked by sticks, sharp weapons. Some of them even flung masala-laced water in the eyes of the police. How can you treat police like this?" Sawant said.

AP staff unions decry poll schedule release

- Announce that they will boycott the election duties in view of pandemic and vaccination programme
- Appeal to the SEC to re-examine its decision to conduct panchayat polls
- Threaten to move courts to get the elections postponed

AMARAVATI

AS expected the release of schedule for panchayat elections by the State Election Commission kicked up a controversy with ruling YSRCP leaders and ministers denouncing the 'unilateral decision' by the State Election Commissioner Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar. On the other hand, state government employee associations on Saturday expressed strong objections to the announcement of polls schedule and said that they cannot take part in the election duties in view of the pandemic and vaccination preparations.

Addressing media persons here, AP JAC Amaravati Revenue Service Association state president Bopparaju Venkateswarlu, expressing concern over the differences between SEC and state government, said criticised that the SEC had released the schedule even as the chief secretary explained the situation and expressed the inability of the government to conduct polls.

The association leader said that nearly 6,000 state employees



APNGOs president N Chandrasekhar Reddy addressing the media at the union office in Vijayawada on Saturday

were afflicted with coronavirus. As the government employees have to conduct elections amidst Covid pandemic, the SEC should reconsider its decision. He made it clear that the employees are not ready to discharge their election duties.

AP Police officers' Association state president J Srinivasa Rao expressed concern over the sudden release of panchayat election schedule. In a statement, he said 109 police men lost their lives due to coronavirus while discharging their duties and 14,000 personnel were infected. He said police have to be vaccinated on priority basis as per the Central government guidelines. He appealed the SEC to reconsider its decision.

Meanwhile, AP Teachers Association leaders said that they will boycott the panchayat election duties. They said that they were not ready to participate in election process as second wave of coron-

avirus was underway. The teachers associations stated that they will be busy with Covid vaccination programme.

APNGOs association state president N Chandrasekhar Reddy said that chief secretary has informed the SEC of the inability of the state government to conduct panchayat elections at this juncture. Describing release of election schedule "undemocratic", Chandrasekhar Reddy claimed that Covid spread after elections in Hyderabad and Bihar.

He said people were afraid of elections amidst scare of UK strain and bird flu. He said if necessary, they would approach courts and boycott the election duties. Stating that nine lakh employees were discharging duties, he questioned would the SEC assure safety to employees' lives as several hundreds of employees had lost their lives due to corona.

WHAT MSMEs, YOUTH WANT FROM UNION BUDGET?

As Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman prepares the Union Budget-2021 amid the pandemic-induced economic slowdown, *The Hans India* spoke to a section of MSME representatives and youth on their expectations. Several respondents called for relaxed norms for loans, cut in taxes on raw material and other incentives. Youth are hoping for measures for liberal credit facilities to launch new units and enhancement of skills.



The micro, small and medium enterprises (entrepreneurs in the district demand inclusion of their requirements in the upcoming Union Budget, which include lower interest rate of 4 per cent on bank loans which is in vogue in Western countries. We also want 25 per cent Central subsidy or equity participation. Also, need marketing and technical support for exports. Bank loans should be extended without collateral security for fresh engineering graduates who come forward for setting up small and micro-enterprises under credit guarantee scheme. These measures would strengthen the MSME sector.

Seshanjeneyulu, president, Anantapur Chamber of Commerce



Many youth are expecting sops in the forthcoming Union Budget as the BJP government in its last year's Budget has not announced any packages or benefits for starting self-employment units. As there are no jobs to the unemployed, many youth are thinking to setup own units for their survival and also to create employment. In this backdrop of economic activity seriously affected with Covid and lockdowns, this is the time the Centre announce a major stimulus to rejuvenate the activity in business and industrial sectors to boost the employment.

DLM Ganesh, B.Tech., Rajamahendravaram



The Union government's insufficient budget allocations to sectors related to youth are hampering their prospects. Many youth are planning to stand on their own feet by starting own units and for it, necessary funds should be allocated in the ensuing Budget. They have ideas and enthusiasm but are lacking funds.

R Anjaneya Sharma, a graduate, Rajamahendravaram



The youth who aspire to set up small scale industries want loans without collateral. Despite the government announcing such sops to the MSME sector, the banks are not giving loans without security, thus pouring cold water on the ambitions of the entrepreneurs. The Industrial Training Institutes in the state must be upgraded and redefined to suit the requirements of the small and medium enterprises. The ITIs should be the most happening places for the youth who aspire to set up new industrial ventures or work in a industrial unit.

Yarava Prakash, printing machine operator, Anantapur



The Central government in its upcoming budget should address problems of MSME units with both banking and non-banking financial institutions with regard to loans for the units established by the youth. In the budget, the government should simplify the procedure for credit by easing collateral security norms. Intensive awareness drives are required to promote and MSME units across the nation to reduce unemployment.

Boddu Bhaskara Rao, Haripuram, Srikakulam.



Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are contributing 29 per cent to GDP besides providing jobs to youth in both urban and rural areas in large numbers. The government needs to reduce different taxes on MSME units in the Union Budget to promote the sector. It has to implement 59-minute loan portal strictly as MSME unit owners are not getting loans within 59 minutes as promised by the government.

Juttu Rukmangadhara Rao, Mandasa, Srikakulam.



The government's youth policy needs a major revamp in the aftermath of Covid-19 pandemic. Only if the industrial sector gets a major push they can generate more employment through which the economic activity will surge. More self-employment opportunities are to be created through simplification of the procedures and reduction in taxes. The income tax rates and interest rates are to be reduced drastically in view of the Covid crisis.

P Munendra Babu, private business, Tirupati



One of the most burning issues in the country is the unemployment problem. After getting educated, they were desperately looking for employment opportunities. The Central government should focus on this issue as the problem has become even more severe during the Covid pandemic. Now, there is an urgent need to create employment opportunities in the public sector as well as motivating the private sector with various incentives to induce employment.

M Veera Sekhar, private employee, Tirupati.



Government always aims at encouraging new firms while ignoring the existing units. The services of various industries towards the nation and people should be properly recognised by announcing various sops for them. With this, we are of the view that it is always better to start a new venture instead of going for expansion. Also, there should be some difference between those who pay GST regularly and the defaulters. The role of foreign investment in the paper industry should be reduced and the domestic sector be encouraged.

Galla Rajasekhara Naidu, MD, Srinidhi Raja Packaging Solutions Pvt Ltd, Tirupati.



Concession in raw material procurement and relaxation in GST should be considered for the MSME sector. In times of the pandemic, many small and medium industries have suffered a severe blow. To help them overcome it, the government should consider concrete measures to help the MSMEs stay afloat. Hope, the ensuing budget will provide them relief in terms of tax exemption as well as other concessions as that will aid in sustaining in a highly competitive scenario.

N Seshagiri Rao, MD, Visakha Electrodes Private Limited



The government should come forward to provide relief to the MSMEs in the form of concessions. As the sector has already been hit badly due to the pandemic, this will go a long way in bringing it back on track. The raw material cost has gone up beyond the common man's reach and there is a need to bring it down so that the manufacturing industry will survive at least in future. Until the situation returns to normalcy, the government should consider tax relief to save MSMEs, especially amid economic slowdown.

A Krishna Balaji, president, Visakha Autonagar Small Scale Industrialists Welfare Association



The Budget should focus more on solving unemployment problem. It should explore ways to divert surplus labour in agriculture sector to allied sectors like food processing and agro-based industries. Similarly, micro, medium and small enterprises should be promoted in the country to generate employment in both rural and urban areas. Loans should be sanctioned to small entrepreneurs who deserve and having skills to run the industries. It should also announce schemes to enhance skills of the youth so that they can earn livelihood and participate in nation building.

T Sarath Chandra, managing director, Sarath Chandra IAS Academy, Vijayawada



Youth are neglected by successive governments in the union budget. Sports should be encouraged and more allocations be made for the development of infrastructure. All countries in the world need healthy and fit people, who can develop the nation in all spheres. The Central government has identified 64 types of sports and games and provided reservation in the government jobs. But, many departments are giving jobs to the sportsmen and sportsmen of some selective games like volleyball, hockey, chess, athletics, cricket only. This tendency should be changed and talented youth of other sports should also be encouraged. The government should announce innovative schemes to generate employment and provide livelihood.

D Naveen Kumar, general secretary, Soft Tennis Association, Vijayawada.

AP moves HC to halt polls

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

THE state government on Saturday moved the House Motion petition online in the High Court challenging the release of panchayat election schedule by the State Election Commission (SEC).

However, the High Court decided to take up the hearing on the issue on Monday, January 11. It may be noted that the SEC earlier issued proceedings to conduct the panchayat elections in February and the state government approached the High Court.

The High Court directed both the SEC and state government to sit together to come to an understanding on the issue and directed the government to send three senior officials to the SEC to discuss with him on the issue. As per the High Court orders, chief secretary Adityanath Das and two other senior officials met the SEC on Friday evening. The SEC explained the necessity of conducting panchayat elections by taking Covid precautions.

However, the chief secretary expressed inability of the state government to conduct elections as the employees will be busy with Covid vaccination programme as per the Central government guidelines. In a surprising development, the SEC released election schedule a few hours after the departure of the officials. Stung by the sudden development, the state government approached the High Court to stall the election schedule.

CM has nothing to do with polls: Naidu

AMARAVATI

TDP national president N Chandrababu Naidu demanded that the elections should be conducted under the supervision of Central forces. Addressing party leaders through a video conference on Saturday, Naidu said village volunteers should not be involved in elections and demanded the annulment of unanimous elections held in the past and fresh notification issued to all local bodies. The TDP chief questioned the role of Chief Minister in conduct of elections. "SEC is an autonomous body.

Wants the elections be conducted under the supervision of Central security forces

CM has no power whatsoever on the functioning of SEC," he said.

He expressed objection over posting to Telangana cadre officer Srilakshmi and giving chief secretary post to Adityanath Das against whom cases were pending. The TDP president expressed objections to the statements against the election schedule by the followers of Chief Minister. He said the officials and police should conduct the elections in an impartial manner.

SEC issues guidelines code

AMARAVATI

THE State Election Commission (SEC) on Saturday issued guidelines on model code of conduct to be observed from the announcement of election and until the completion of election process. As per the guidelines, the code will be in force in rural areas during local body elections. Announcement of new projects, programmes or concessions or financial grants in any form or promises thereof or laying of foundation stones which have effect of influencing the voters in favour of the party in power is prohibited. The commission mentioned several do's and Don'ts for guidance of candidates and political parties.

SHOT IN THE ARM

Continued from P1

More than 61,000 programme managers, two lakh vaccinators and 3.7 lakh other vaccination team members have been trained so far as part of training at states, districts and block levels, it said. Three phases of dry runs have been conducted across the country, with the third dry run conducted on Friday across 615 districts covering 4895 session sites in 33 states and UTs. The Health Ministry said the entire vaccination exercise is underpinned by the principles of people's participation (Jan Bhagidari); utilising the experience of elections (booth strategy) and universal immunization programme (UIP). No compromise on existing healthcare services, especially national programmes and primary health care, and of scientific and regulatory norms besides other SOPs will be made, and the vaccination programme will be marked by an orderly and smooth implementation driven by technology. Earlier at an event, Modi had said that the country is ready with two 'Made in India' vaccines, and asserted that the world is not only waiting for them but also watching as to how India runs the globally largest vaccination drive. (PTI)

2 'Made-in-India' vaccines ready to save humanity

Continued from P1

Lauding the contribution of Indian diaspora to the country they live in, Modi said he spoke to a number of heads of states in recent months, and they especially noted as to how Indians, be it doctors, paramedics or other citizens, have served their society.

Modi said he felt very proud about the praise for Indian diaspora and also lauded them for their contributions to the PM-CARES Fund, which has been used to boost health infrastructure in the country. He also urged Indian missions abroad and the diaspora to work to prepare a portal to feature those members of the immigrant Indians who had an important role in the country's freedom struggle.

He said India is using technology to defeat corruption and crores of rupees are being directly transferred to beneficiaries' bank accounts. India has shown in the field of renewable energy that a developing country can also take the lead, he said, adding the country's mantra of 'one sun, one world, one grid' is appealing to the world.

"When India got Independence, it was said that such a poor and under-literate country will disintegrate, and democracy was impossible here. Today's truth is that India is united and if democracy is most strong, vibrant and lively anywhere in the world, it is in India," he said.

Modi told the Indian diaspora that the country always stands with them and pointed out that over 45 lakh people were rescued under the government's Vande Bharat mission during the pandemic. Earlier, the keynote address at the 16th PBD Convention 2021 was delivered by chief guest Chandrikapersad Santokhi, the President of Suriname. The theme of 16th PBD Convention 2021 is "Contributing to Aatmanirbhar Bharat". (PTI)

Naidu slams arrest of kirana traders

AMARAVATI

TDP national president and former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Saturday condemned the manner in which the police were targeting the Arya Vyasya kirana shop owners at Ramalayam temple in Yetigairampeta village in Golugonda mandal in Visakhapatnam district.

Naidu termed it as unfortunate that even the temple priest's name was included in the FIR that was registered out of clear political vendetta. The two shop owners, Poliseti Kanaka Rajju and Poliseti Santosh, were taken into custody, detained at the police station and were being persecuted in the name of the cases.

- Alleges that police foisted false cases against shop owners at Ramalayam temple in Yetigairampeta village in Visakhapatnam dist
- Expresses concern even priest's name has been added in FIR

In a statement here, the TDP chief deplored that even the elderly shop owners aged around 69 years, who had been rendering their services in front of the temple for many years, were not being spared. Alarming, the accused persons were being branded as the TDP sympathisers in order to target them. What's more, some local forces were indulging in

a vicious political campaign against the targeted traders.

The TDP chief condemned the Jagan government's failure to arrest the real culprits responsible for the ongoing attacks on temples, priests and idols all over the state. Over 140 attacks took place on temples but the police failed to take action. Now, the police arrested innocent persons by attributing political motives to them. He said photo evidence was available that a local YSRCP leader was involved with the culprits in an offence there adding that there were suspicions whether the YSRCP leaders were behind the filing of false cases against the innocent traders.

AP Minister sees 'own agenda' behind SEC move

AMARAVATI

AGRICULTURE minister K Kannababu lashed out at SEC Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar for the decision to go ahead with polls at a time when the coronavirus is still raging and infecting people, including the new second wave emerging with the new strain.

"Everybody knows that Kumar is acting on somebody else's behest along with a personal motive. What is unfortunate is that he is putting people's lives at risk," said Kannababu in a statement. The minister alleged that Kumar is behaving in such a way that he wants his agenda to prevail at any cost, disregarding public health.

"At a time when there was no coronavirus effect, he postponed the polls. Now when the state government is highlighting that there is Covid and vaccination... even curfews in some cities, he has still unilaterally declared elections, indicating that he has a personal agenda or somebody else's influence on him," Kannababu opined.

He questioned why Kumar did not conduct elections during the previous TDP regime.

Farmers got raw deal, alleges TDP

AMARAVATI

TDP national general secretary and former minister Nara Lokesh on Saturday asked the YSRCP government to explain how the farmers of the state could celebrate the festival season with joy and happiness when Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy had not fulfilled any single election promise till now.

Lokesh mockingly said that the festival celebration was being seen abundantly in the Jagan's family media but not in the eyes of the farmers. In the name of each and every programme, crores of public funds were given to the YSRCP media through advertisements but no remunerative prices were given to crops. In a statement here, he former minister said that meaningless rules and scanty purchases by the government had dealt a severe blow to the cultivators of almost all crops in Andhra Pradesh. The Government regulations and guidelines had only become a curse for farmers and a blessing for the middlemen. Even for the food grains purchased, no payments were being made to the farmers. As of now, there were a whopping Rs 2,574 crore pending dues to the paddy farmers.

Decrying cases filed against journalists, Lokesh asked how the police could target the media persons for just writing stories on demolition of idols at Lakshmi Narasimhaswamy temple at Singarayakonda in Prakasam district. Registering cases against journalists and those who gave information would happen only under the oppressive "Raja Reddy constitution", he said.

- Lokesh says no festive joy in farmers' eyes under Jagan rule
- States Rs 2,574 cr dues have not been paid to paddy farmers

The tumultuous tenure of Trump

What happened at Capitol Hill was capital shame. Citadel of democracy was rocked by ruffians and culprit of clarion call was none other than President himself. It has dented democracy badly. Trump had made his intentions clear long time back but nobody could imagine that his rants may die natural deaths once courts rule it out. Courts did rule it out and all those 60 lawsuits filed failed to win anywhere barring one suit. This should have buried the ghost of voters' fraud but he had gone bit too far even after losing court cases.

Trump who came briefly to pacify protesters was actually comforting them and not condemning them. By doing this he has achieved nothing. He wanted to show that people of America believes in voter fraud and are ready to rock parliament to stall anointing Biden. He was sadly mistaken, congress though shaken by these wanton acts of violence, congregated again to ratify Biden's election, more as a solidarity and to show the world that mobocracy in America has no place.

Now it is hotly being debated that Trump should be allowed to complete this term or not. His speech before the riots is being scrutinised by AG for possible action against him. He faces the charges of incitement and acts of highly irresponsible actions while sitting in office. Speaker



Nancy Pelosi is seriously contemplating that if Cabinet don't sanction his impeachment, then Congress can move it.

With Trump losing Senate in rerun of two seats in Georgia to Democrats, who already have majority in lower house, chances of his impeachment becomes prominent. If it happens, Trump may become the first President to be impeached for inciting violence and for reckless behaviour. Georgia had been traditionally Republicans stronghold but the

way Trump was ranting about voters fraud and told Georgian Republicans that they were complicit in the fraud. He told them that they don't matter. With his senseless tweets he demoralised his party stalwarts and lost the elections.

Trump if impeached and indicted by Congress loses out his only chance at Presidency in 2024. 74 millions People who voted for him have genuine concerns and deserves better than this. All they wanted to fight it out

by legal means and not by trampling down the very oath which gives them right to challenge.

Trump's mindless tweets have cost Republicans the Senate thus giving complete control of government, Democrats can get through budget and any tax hikes without Republican nod. Now it's free run for the Democrats. It's bad for democracy in absence of any checks and balances.

Trump who is backed by Supremacists and gun lobby will have tough time to waddle

through scores of lawsuits and legal troubles. GOP may have second thoughts supporting him after he exits office. What he had done can't be undone now. His legacy is in shackles and it will be too embarrassing to revisit it for anyone.

With Facebook and Twitter suspending his account, he has already become the first when a sitting President is barred from two important social media sites for incendiary and provocative posts. By exhorting people to Capitol Hill and subsequent violence in which a ex-navy lady and a police officer had died, shall make his bid for re-election in 2024 in tatters.

World has witnessed with awe what happened in DC but Congress decision to hold assembly and ratify Biden's election was a landmark act. It gave a strong message that threat from 'domestic terrorists' is over and they are in control. Trump is left with no option but to concede defeat gracefully and walk into sunset without provoking Congress to remove him with disgrace and contempt. Speaker Nancy has already threatened to invoke 25th Amendment to impeach him if he doesn't resign on his own.

Trump has already made history of infamy, what more he wants now. America is starting a new chapter on January,20th, hopefully ending Trump's tumultuous tenure.

Ashok Goswami, New York

Saurav Ganguly and health consciousness of Indians

Saurav Ganguly gets a heart attack at the age of 48 and everyone reels into shock. May he get well soon. He is one of my most favourite cricketers. However, the public reaction remains curious. His celebrity doctors make statements to undergo regular check-ups like CT scans 'available in every street of India' to prevent heart attacks. Cooking oil companies withdraw advertisements featuring Saurav in the face of trolls. The media coverage is at maddening levels.

A good healthy diet, regular exercise, and stress control are keystones to live a full and happy life in the material world. Is human life, or for that matter, any form of life, immortal? At some point, all life ends. Predicting and preventing an event a decade earlier still prolongs life but does not stop death.

There are many genetic factors for any person, perhaps equivalent to fate, which would at some point lead to health problems despite the best in diagnostic and treatment modalities.

A good lifestyle is a necessity to live a good life and not to stop any adverse events, including death. Ageing still stays unconquered by all medical advances. At a great philosophical level reaching Advaita, the best way not to age, have problems, and die is not to be born at all. But, at a more mundane level, it is well to remember that fitness does not



equate to good health. There are strong voices that decry the 'complete health-checks'. If you run a person through a significantly large number of tests, then every person is bound to be diseased.

A wise person once commented that the progress of medicine is bringing more people into the ambit of sickness. An abnormal lipid profile, consisting of a host of numbers and ratios, is almost a new normal. And there are medicines for all the numbers and ratios. Maybe the intention is good, but the consequences are decidedly not so.

Testing in the absence of symptoms may not be always a prudent decision in matters of health. Screening programmes have had a chequered and sometimes controversial place in the history of medicine.

If one is feeling healthy and is ready to face the world physically and mentally when the sun rises, a routine health check may become a reason for unnecessary drugs and procedures with its attendant problems. They may also have serious psychological issues. There are always exceptions, of course, which only prove the rule.

Dr Pingali Gopal, Warangal

The virus as superhero

SUKUMARAN C V

Dear novel coronavirus,

I am a great fan of yours. You are the real hero of the twenty-first century for many reasons. I am trying to list below the feats by which you have achieved your superhero status.

It has been nearly a year since I started reading your name every single day in newspapers and hearing it every day in TV news. We can change the TV channels if we don't like a particular news reader or if we feel the news channels present their views as news and I often do so.

Sometimes I am infuriated with all the news channels for their vulgar sensationalising the news and I skip the news channels altogether and go to movie channels. But whether I choose this or that news channel, whether I choose this or that movie channel, I can't escape from hearing your name again and again. In news channels you are mentioned both in news and ads.

In movie channels you are mentioned in the ads that are screened more than the time the movie takes to end. There are the ads of plywood companies that say their plywood kills viruses including you; there are the ads of bath-soaps and handwashing lotions that say the soaps and lotions kill viruses including you; there are ads of washing machines that say the washing machine kills you; there are ads of floor cleaning lotions that say the lotion kills viruses including you.

I really admire you for helping a plethora of diverse companies to make profit by 'killing' you

while you infect many thousand people every day. What a superhero you are! The companies kill you and make profit and you are not killed and continue to infect and kill people.

The advertising companies don't know that they are trying



to kill a superhero who single-handedly masked the entire world. They don't know you are a braveheart who taught even Mr. Trump not to play with you. They don't know the stupendous feats you have achieved as nobody else has achieved in our recent history. You have closed the schools for nearly a year, you have stopped the overcrowding for functions and the unnecessary spending in the name of marriages and other such functions.

You taught the people that marriages can be solemnised simply. You taught the people to depend on locally available food items. You taught the people not to rush to hospitals and swallow pills for the silliest of reasons and ruin their health.

And you stopped the political gatherings and processions that used to be an unavoidable public

nuisance. You have altered our lives in a way that was not even imaginable ten months ago. Just as you have changed our life in many ways, you exposed our illogical and unreasonable outlooks and notions too.

We have heard the chanting

"go corona, go"; we have heard people say drinking cow urine will make us immune against you; we have heard (in Kerala) turmeric and gooseberry juice will ward you off. And we have heard the 'faithful' people say that you are sent by God to punish the humans for their crimes against God!

Dear virus, you may ask me for what crimes and against which God. My answer is: "I don't think the humans have committed and commit crimes against gods; but I think the humans have committed and commit heinous crimes against humans in the name of gods and you have taught the whole humanity how inconsequential the humans and their gods are by making the humans shut their temples and churches and mosques and stop their overcrowded religious rituals and ceremonies in fear of you."

PAST AND PRESENT

Encountering a snake at home

H NARAYANAN

Engrossed in teaching aeronautics to the students in a private engineering college where I was a lecturer post my retirement from Air Force I received a message from the front office of our institution that my missus wanted me at home right away to drive out a snake that had accessed into our house. Soon ensuring that another member of the faculty stands in for me in the class for the rest of the period I took permission from the Principal and got back home-----about three kilometers away from the college-----riding my scooter, like a streak across the not-so-dense traffic in the suburb.

Hardly had I opened the gate when my wife who was alone at home came rushing from inside gasping for breath and rapped out that a snake, unnoticed by her landed on her right arm, jumped down

and wriggled in a wink into the next room when she was entering the room adjacent to the entrance and sliding the door curtain open. Sighing deeply, she added that the venomous reptile might be lying holed up under one of the wooden racks or steel trunks in the room when I asked her where it had gone.

Switching quickly over to my boots-issued to me when in Air Force, I entered the room armed with a stout stick and set about launching an out and out shake-down for the venomous creature, gingerly moving the trunks and racks one by one.

All my tedious efforts to find the reptile proving futile, I felt utterly done in and sat in the hall at my wit's end not knowing how to get the dreaded intruder out of the house. Parking myself on the sofa in the hall as I began contemplat-

Switching quickly over to my boots-issued to me when in Air Force, I entered the room armed with a stout stick and set about launching an out and out shake-down for the venomous creature, gingerly moving the trunks and racks one by one

ing the means of either killing or expelling it out of the room it occurred to me that pearls of garlic could do away with serpents.

Rushing straight to the provision shop on the main road about a stone's throw from our house I bought a quarter kilogram of the strong-smelling stuff and scattered them all over the floor in the room. Chilling out on a chair in the hall for



about half an hour for the garlic to disseminate its effects around, I picked up the threads of search for the reptile holding the stick aloft and ready to scrag it the moment it came into my sight. Shocked I stood for a moment at the sight of a thick, black cobra measuring not less than four feet long lying still on the floor within an ace ahead of me as I stirred a big wooden box.

By nothing but a providential interposition the venomous creature that was stirred from its position on the curtain rod spared my missus from a deadly sting when she was sliding the curtain.

The clean environs around our house notwithstanding, how the snake accessed a room and climbed to the top of the door, kept us racking our brains till we turned in at an unearthly hour in the night.

Stop undermining Indian scientists

This refers to your editorial, 'Approval for Covaxin raises eyebrows'(dated 7th January,21). It will be good for government and Health ministry to address all those questions being raised by many people about the trial and process of phase-III. It will boost public confidence. If Govt is sure, then to boost public confidence, first doses shall be taken by PM, Home minister and other ministers. No harm in doing so. This act will Certainly bell the cat.

Well, India's scientists have once again proved that they can rise to the occasion. India's success story in introducing Covid Vaccine in record time deserves all around praise and not scepticism. Naysayers are once again casting their long shadows and busy planting suspicion and deceit but are likely to bite dust as it happened during surgical strike on Pak terror camps. The Drug Controller of India's approval after due diligence have given go ahead for emergency use. This remains India's greatest scientific achievement.

Why there is so much cynicism over this 'Made In India' vaccine? Because there are vested interests who want India to buy their vaccines at steep prices and not be able to use their home developed vaccine. If Indian vaccine proves to be more effective than other vaccines they not only lose their face but billions of dollars as well which they hope to harvest in marketing their

vaccine in India and several third world countries as well. So funnelling money through NGOs, some media outlets and to various political parties through donations seems to be at display. Already foreign media is already in campaign mood to denigrate Indian vaccine. At stake is India's \$6 billion worth market.

Opposition leaders are busy planting doubts in general public's mind about the efficacy, accuracy and its cur ability. It's anyone's guess whose bidding they are doing to undermine India's moment of glory. India media is also in cahoots with them in giving them prime time and front line headlines but are mentioning and printing only in small notes fall out of Pfizer vaccine.



It's a deliberate attempt to undermine growing status of India as first rate exporters of medicine, medical equipment and world's largest capacity to produce vaccine. Bharat Biotech has world class lab which has developed vaccine and can stand the test from any independent international agency but the point here is why should we doubt integrity of our scientists when country like US and UK are busy defending their companies. Our opposition have once again failed nation in their duty to be on the right side of national agenda. Their only motive seems to put Modi's head on chopper even at the cost of national pride. Propaganda that it's 'BJP vaccine' may be used against its opponents and Muslims is as absurd as Brazil's PM Bolsonaro's stupid assertion that vaccine may result humans into crocodiles and women will grow hairs. India needs to be alert to safeguard its interests against motivated and vested interests. This is not to suggest that Indian vaccine is above probity and questions. Biotech MD and Serum India is comprehensively expelling doubts about its efficacy. We should not become a laughingstock by failing our scientists and medical prowess without giving them a fair chance to prove their credentials. People we don't want to be vaccinated must not be forced to do it. Confidence should never be one-way street.

Bholey Bhardwaj, Mumbai

Covaxin and our people's lives

Modi's vaccine politics is a testament to the fact that India's biotech-ICMR-made 'Covaxin' is allowed to be used before the completion of the third phase of clinical testing. Saying that this domestic vaccine is 'India's pride' and 'a decisive turning point in the war on the corona', Modi and his men are chanting the same thing. The failure of the Modi government to tackle the Covid-19 epidemic and keep the economy from further deteriorating into crisis is a foregone conclusion. It would be unethical to see the Covaxin vaccine being used as a weapon to cover these up. It is dangerous to allow a vaccine for emergency use in this way while in the third stage test.

There is no dispute about it when it comes to the polio vaccine. No one objected to the approval of the Central Drug Standards Agency (CDSCO) for the 'Covishield' vaccine developed by Serum. The government's irresponsible attitude is the reason for the controversy over Covaxin. While 26 thousand volunteers have to be tested, so far only



23 thousand have been launched. The third phase of those experiments will take two to 10 months to come to fruition. How did the subject matter expert committee of the Central Drug Control Agency approve it in the meantime without waiting so long?

It's about messing with people's lives. Not only political parties but also scientists and health professionals are objecting to this. The Covishield vaccine, already made of serum-oxford Astra Zeneca, is available in up to five million doses. So why not be patient until it is de-

termined that the Covaxin is safe and has no side effects? How much is the government paying for the purchase of this vaccine? Many questions like these emerge. The government must answer for this.

The vaccine is expected to be administered first to medical and security personnel who have been on the front lines of the war on Covid. Do doctors fall victim to experiments before any data on the final trials of this vaccine is revealed? Government haste should not become a lifeline for the people. It is ridiculous for the Modi govern-

ment to claim victory over the corona epidemic with the Covaxin vaccine. Out of a total population of 130 crore in the country, only three crore people will be vaccinated in the first episode.

It is unknown at this time what he will do after leaving the post. Vaccination programs are already underway in countries such as the United States and Britain. However, the Covid cases did not stop there. Corona cases, India's second highest death toll in the world, is a testament to the Modi government's incompetent management in tackling the rampant corona epidemic. The bankrupt neo-liberal policies pursued by the Modi government have further fuelled the corona boom. Stimulus schemes announced during the corona period benefited corporates more than the public.

For the first time in the history of post-independence India, the country's economy fell into negative growth. GDP fell from 8.3 per cent in 2016-17 to minus 9.5 per cent in 2020-21. According to the

CMIE survey, 15 crore people lost their jobs during the Corona period. Unemployment has taken a severe form. The living standards of the people have dropped drastically. On the one hand such a miserable situation on the other hand the wealth of the 15 richest people in the country increased by 14 per cent during this period. Under these circumstances, protests and agitations are intensifying across the country. The struggle of millions of farmers across the Delhi border over the last 40 days against the three laws that leave farmers and agriculture to the mercy of corporates is a sign of growing resistance to neo-liberal policies. The working class has staged two massive strikes over a period of ten months against the anti-labour policies of the Modi government. There is dissatisfaction among people from all walks of life over the failures of the Modi government. Modi is in an insane paradise if he thinks he can cover up his failures by intercepting Covaxin.

Dr N Khaleel, Warangal

ALERTING COVID-19 SPIKES TWO WEEKS IN ADVANCE

SHAKOOR RATHER

SURVEILLANCE of untreated wastewater can warn officials about an impending spike or decrease in Covid-19 cases up to two weeks in advance, according to a study conducted by scientists at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Gandhinagar. The researchers, including those from Gujarat Biotechnology Research Centre (GBRC), explored the association between the SARS-CoV-2 genetic load in wastewater and the number of COVID-19 cases at the district level in Gandhinagar, to establish if wastewater surveillance can be an effective tool to warn about the disease early.

"This is the first ever proof based on weekly surveillance in India that unravels this early warning capability of wastewater surveillance for Covid-19," Professor Manish Kumar from the Department of Earth Sciences, IIT-GN, who led the study, told PTL. "The results are very encouraging, and we are planning to share them with the authorities," said Kumar, adding that it is the need of the hour that officials should take up wastewater-based epidemiology (WBE) as a policy intervention for Covid-19 mitigation plan.

Professor Prosun Bhattacharya, from KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden agreed that wastewater surveillance should be made a part of Covid management not only in India but even globally to have a stringent control of the prevalence of the SARS-CoV-2 infections. "This study led by IITGN team strongly suggests that WBE surveillance must be made a mandatory step in a national health surveillance programme, especially as an integrated part of Covid-19 pandemic monitoring," Bhattacharya told PTL. "This will help the water authorities to identify the hotspots in a city to provide up to 2 weeks of time lead for improvising smart and demand driven interventions for Covid-19 management," he added. Bhattacharya noted that wastewater surveillance from the domestic flights would also be a critical step to follow in order to track the mobility of the population who are the potential carriers of SARS-CoV-2 for eventual disease spreading.

Kumar also claimed that WBE can help monitor the efficacy of vaccines against Covid-19 after they are rolled out. "Wastewater surveillance can be in place for monitoring the condition of wastewater coming out from key buildings like the Parliament or Secretariat or south block in Delhi to compare the situation in the pre and post anti-Covid-19 vaccine era," he explained. Conducted in collaboration with the Gujarat Pollution Control Board (GPCB), the study has been posted on the preprint repository medRxiv and is under review in the journal Environmental Research.

The research builds on a study conducted by the team in May last year in Ahmedabad, wherein the team demonstrated the first-ever successful detection in India of the genetic material of SARS-CoV-2 in wastewater. The latest study analysed SARS-CoV-2 RNA in the 43 samples from four wastewater treatment plants during August 7 to September 30 period, last

IIT Gandhinagar conducts study on wastewater surveillance



Professor Prosun Bhattacharya, from KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden agreed that wastewater surveillance should be made a part of Covid management not only in India but even globally to have a stringent control of the prevalence of the SARS-CoV-2 infections

COVID-19

15 States, UTs have positivity rate below national average

A total of 15 states and Union Territories have a cumulative Covid-19 positivity rate below the national average of 5.79 per cent with Bihar having the lowest positivity rate of 1.44 per cent, the Health Ministry said on Saturday. Over 18 crore total Covid-19 tests have been conducted in the country till date with over 9 lakh tests in the past 24 hours alone, the Health ministry said in a statement around noon. It said India's Tests per Million (TPM) stand at 1,30,618.3.

"With the increase in testing infrastructure, the TPM has also increased exponentially," The Health ministry said 15 states and UTs have a positivity rate less than the national average with Bihar having the lowest positivity rate at 1.44 per cent. The 15 states and UTs are Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Mizoram, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Daman and Diu, Assam, Punjab, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Odisha, Telangana, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya and Jammu and Kashmir.

The ministry said progressive countrywide expansion in testing infrastructure has played a crucial role in the steep rise of testing numbers. "With 2,316 testing labs in the country including 1201 government laboratories and 1115 private laboratories, the daily testing capacity has got a substantial



boost," it said. "India has demonstrated an exponential increase in the number of Covid-19 cumulative tests. It has crossed the landmark of 18 crore (18,02,53,315) total tests today. 9,16,951 tests were conducted in the last 24 hours," the Health ministry said. It said high level of comprehensive testing on a sustained basis has also resulted in bringing down the national positivity rate. "The cumulative rate continues to decline as total tests cross 18 crore. The national cumulative positivity rate is 5.79 per cent today. It has reduced from 8.93 per cent to 5.79 per cent in a span of five months," the ministry said. The ministry said 22 States/UTs have better tests per million population than the national average. "Thirteen States

and UTs have lower tests per million population compared to the national figure, indicating the need for higher testing in these regions," it said. The third massive countrywide mock drill conducted on Friday for checking the readiness of all preparations and simulating a seamless and glitch-free vaccine administration, covered 4,895 session sites across 615 districts in 33 States/UTs, the ministry said. India's Covid-19 tally of cases climbed to 1,04,31,639 with 18,222 new infections reported in a day, while 1,00,56,651 people have recuperated so far pushing the national recovery rate to 96.41 per cent as on Saturday, according to Union Health Ministry data. (PTI)

year. Influent or untreated part of wastewater was collected from each plant, twice in a week at first, followed by weekly collection for two months.

A total of 43 influent wastewater samples were thus collected in the period from the four plants. Three target genes of SARS-CoV-2 were considered and presence of two or all genes in a specific sample was considered as 'positive' for Covid-19. The researchers said a total of 40 samples out of 43 were found to be positive i.e. having at least two genes of SARS-CoV-2. They then did a time-based comparison of official, documented cases of Covid-19 with the percentage change in genome concentration in the samples.

Professor Ryo Honda, associate professor at Kanazawa University, who is leading a task force on wastewater surveillance in Japan, said the

study has important implications for WBE of COVID-19 in India. "In Japan we also explicitly found the WBE potential to predict the COVID-19 cases where SARS-CoV-2 was detected even when the number of reported cases was less than 1 per 100,000 people," Honda told PTL. "Wastewater surveillance for the athletes' village has been proposed as one of the key elements for COVID-19 risk management during the upcoming Tokyo Olympic 2021," Masaaki Kitajima, from Hokkaido University, added. Experts say WBE is a promising approach to understand the status of disease outbreak in a certain catchment by monitoring viral load in wastewater.

"We detected SARS-CoV-2 genes in the wastewater first and patients were then back-traced before the symptoms appeared," Aaron Bivins, from the

University of Notre Dame, a key member to create Global Collaboration on WBE of COVID-19, said. The US federal government has worded a contract for monitoring of wastewater coming from one third of the US population," he said. Studies have reported that the novel coronavirus is present in the faeces of infected individuals.

Genetic material (RNA) from the virus has been found in sewage entering treatment plants. Because treatment plants collect wastewater across large regions, measuring the level of RNA in untreated wastewater may provide a valuable insight into the percentage of people infected within a region, the researchers said. Using RT-PCR tests, researchers can detect the novel coronavirus with high sensitivity, Kumar added.

Disincentives to creativity and today's youth

SAMUDRALA VK

YOUTH are crucial for the success of any country. They are the catalysts for change. Going by the demographical numbers of India, it is no wonder that India's future is in the hands of young generation. Historically, India has failed to tap the creative potential of its people due to several reasons.

The overall development of an individual in any nation depends upon social, economical, political, historical and cultural factors. Earlier, in India, societal forces like caste and religion acted as impediments not only for the progress of an individual but also the society. Caste hierarchy, an offshoot of varna system, defined the roles and responsibilities of an individual based on his/her birth. This system decimated the creative quotient of people from the lower castes and the untouchables.

Caste system, which is characterised by inequality and rigidity, is one of the reasons for India's backwardness. Lasted for almost 2500 years with no chance for the reformation and renaissance as happened in Europe

after the dark ages, caste system made India's social fabric largely static and made knowledge and ideas untransferable.

In Europe, with the rise of modern political thought, the social and economic relations between the serfs and feudal lords were dismantled and individuals were freed from the shackles of serfdom and ignorance. Western nation-states were successful in freeing the society from the religious dogmas and stereotypes. Liberated individual acts according to his/her conscience and would play a pivotal role in the progress of society.

Soon after the Bolshevik revolution, the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) centred its plan agenda around the youth. The then Soviet leadership was aware of the fact that in order to compete with the western economies it is not only important to industrialise the Soviet Union on par with the western block but also to capitalise on the strength of young population. It took measures for the all-round development of an individual and emphasized on co-operation rather than competition.

On the one hand, it encouraged technical education and on the other hand it equally inspired arts streams to support the creative freedom of an individual. The Soviet Union, as a part of its planned development programme, designed its educational framework not only to meet the workforce and skill requirements of core industries but also to harness the true potential of an individual.

Freedom, till now, has been viewed from the political lens. Yes, political freedom guarantees an individual from the excesses of state (political authority) and provides an individual with certain rights. But, freedom cannot be confined strictly to the political space. The real freedom empowers an individual to search for the truth. There is a direct relation between the personal freedom and the creativity. Creative minds need political as well as personal freedom to realise their potential.

In India, out of the box and creative thinking are being viewed as signs of an abnormal and unacceptable behaviour. Creativity and innovation form the bedrock of development. The prevailing social norms and stereotypes have been killing the creative appetite of young minds. In addition to the existing unwritten norms, the fear of failure is hampering the young generation to venture into the new and unconventional paths. Creativity is something different that we cannot fix it in an existing hyper-competitive environment and market oriented education system.

Now, it is the market rather than an individual that is deciding the career paths and future. In addition, what ails the current young population of India is the social and parental pressure as a result of expectations. Parents have been pushing their unfulfilled dreams onto their children. Due to the parental and peer pressure, the teens have been opting the academic courses that are not according to their tastes and wishes. Coaching centres, schools, colleges and online ed-tech companies have been banking

on the emotional weakness of parents. The existing framework of education and its inflexibility has been restricting the young generation to choose a career course according to their passion and ability.

With the advent of neo-liberalism, education has turned into a commodity. Like every other sector in the capitalist economics, education and

knowledge is seen as an easy profit-making industry. Obviously, there would be more buyers in this segment as every parent would dream to deliver a better life to their children.

Earlier, in India, the social status of an individual was linked to his/her caste. Now, the social status of an individual is decided by his/her qualification. Rather than viewing the education as a tool of enlightenment or as a process of transforming an individual it has become a normal or routine exercise. Market-driven educational system has forced the Indian youth into a mindless rat race to grab ranks or percentages. This phenomenon has been defeating the very purpose of acquiring the knowledge or education. In fact, knowledge is multi-dimensional. One can acquire it in many ways. Theoretical and academic learning is one aspect of it. When we think of the youth, the things comes to our minds are novelty, energy, freedom, creativity, unyielding and do or die attitude. Unfortunately, at present, market capitalism has been hijacking the minds of India's youth.

In the past, social factors like religion, caste and cultural norms cumbered the free thinking of an individual but now market has been dictating the minds and aspirations of young populace. The growing tendency among the youth of ending their lives for preposterous reasons is a cause for concern and this can be attributed to the unregulated market. If this trend goes unchecked, nation will have to pay a hefty price.

(The author is Director, Samudrala VK IAS Academy)

How will NY resolutions in a co-Covid world be?

VIVECK VERMA

IN a rat-race, we forget to empathise with our parents, friends and fellow beings and often participate in harmful social and interpersonal spirals. This New Year, in a co-Covid world is a most suitable opportunity to deal with estrangement, conflict and negative feelings in our close circles and create spaces of safety, comfort and relief.

Every New Year is a moment in time to start afresh, to take stock of things and to transform favourably. We make New Year resolutions for the same ends, and they, indeed, are ways towards new beginnings and worthy changes. However, what happens to these new beginnings when the world in which they are imagined gets turned upside down by a pandemic? We live in a co-Covid world and the past year made us go through unimaginable situations and cope in astounding ways. As 2021 arrives in such drastically altered circumstances, what should a New Year resolution look like?

In a poll conducted by Vancouver Sun, 47 per cent of voters said that they would not make a New Year resolution for 2021 and another 14 per cent were unsure. Indeed, looking ahead after the world has been ravaged by Covid-19 seems more difficult than usual. There is no going back after a pandemic, but if we choose to make resolutions, after all,

they will differ from all usual scenarios we have known.

One fundamental way in which the pandemic has changed the perspective on life in general is through showing us the limits of material resources. In the face of a virus with no containment or cure, the richest of the rich had to curtail movement and access to services.

In a capitalist, materialist world where most individuals resolve to increase their earnings and accumulate capital, this is a most noteworthy development, as the promise of a good life gets detached from material benefits. If my New Year resolution one year ago was to ensure a spike in my salary or buy a new house, I now know that they will not be sufficient to combat the uncertainties the world is beset with. Resolutions, aims and ambitions cannot be the same in a co-Covid world, as the rewards we vie for no longer promise the same satisfaction and security.

On a more personal, intimate level, individuals had to face isolation and combat their specific physical, mental and emotional challenges. The simultaneity of isolation with a limiting of what material resources can provide left us with no choice but to reassess our lives and think of things which truly matter. We have had to reconsider, re-think and reorient our priorities when faced with unprecedented changes. Ac-



cordingly, a New Year resolution for 2021 should certainly reflect the ways in which we have grown in times of disease and precarity.

On a most significant level, we should resolve to ensure emotional and spiritual well-being. When posh cars and big houses fail to respond to our most important needs, it is a good idea to do some soul-searching and rediscover what makes us satisfied.

Any goals we set to improve ourselves cannot do without what makes us human. New Year resolutions, this year, in-

evitably have to be about our emotional and spiritual core, because external bounties fall short when it comes to strenuous times.

Some sample resolutions

To begin with, one can simply resolve to spend more time with one's family and loved ones and foster more substantial and organic bonds. Human resilience cannot survive without community and solidarity and thus, forming better connections with people close to us can do us a lot of good.

In a rat-race, we forget to empathise with our parents, friends and fellow beings and often participate in harmful social and interpersonal spirals. This New Year, in a co-Covid world is a most suitable opportunity to deal with estrangement, conflict and negative feelings in our close circles and create spaces of safety, comfort and relief.

In a similar vein, it is also a worthy resolution to take care of one's physical and mental health. Well-being cannot be imagined without a good mental landscape and bodily soundness. When a pandemic leads us to isolate ourselves from people and leaves us with nothing but our bodies and selves, we must take care of them and ensure that they stay in fine fettle.

Exercises, diets, therapy, getting to know our mindscapes and physiques better are all steps in the right direction which accentuate how we can contribute to the world and the society, as individuals.

Away from materialism

Most importantly, we must move from materialistic and superficial aims to become more soul-oriented. A massive predicament like Covid-19 makes us understand that we need to importantly transform our lives and seek happiness and fulfilment. We must ask ourselves what we truly want and get to

know our needs and responses better.

If we know what is eating away our soul, we can effect change at a most fundamental level and embrace empowering transformations. We must discard soul-sapping feelings and acts and move towards joy, contentment and peace. On the whole, this New Year, in the face of a global crisis, we must learn, reflect and emerge as better, revitalized beings.

A co-Covid world may bristle with challenges and uncertainties, but it also is an opportunity to take gigantic strides, to innovate and radically transform lives. A quote by Lyndon B. Johnson sums up the potential our future holds: Yesterday is not ours to recover, but tomorrow is ours to win or lose."

The right New Year resolutions, our personal goals of improvement will create all the change we need. While making resolutions, we must not overlook our souls and our relationships with people, as in the face of uncontrollable trouble, they are all we have and we must do them justice. With the correct stepping stones, we can march to a future that brims with fulfilment and achievement. This new year, having learned and grown massively last year, we can and must make a difference!

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

QUIZ NO.
155

HANS BIZ QUIZ

10 JANUARY IN BUSINESS HISTORY

1. Identify the Oil Company that was incorporated in Cleveland, Ohio, on 10 January 1870 and gained monopoly and control over ninety percent of U.S. refineries and pipelines by the 1880s?

- a) Standard Oil Co. b) ESSO
c) Exxon d) Chevron

2. Milton Parker was born on 10 January 1919. Which iconic delicatessen chain was co-owned by Parket, the American businessman?

- a) Lindy's b) Katz's Delicatessen
c) Carnegie Deli d) Zabar's

3. Roy Edward Disney, son of Walter Elias Disney, took birth on 10 January 1930. After graduating from Pomona College in 1951, he began working for Walt Disney Productions as an assistant director and producer. Which famous film series did he first produce?

- a) Melody Time
b) True-Life Adventure
c) Fun and Fancy-Free
d) The Three Caballeros



4. The American former professional boxer and entrepreneur George Edward Foreman born on 10 January 1949. During the 1990s, Foreman signed a deal with Salton Inc to put his name on a piece of kitchen equipment in exchange for royalties equivalent to 45% of the profits. What is the equipment known as?

- a) George Foreman Grill
b) Foreman Mixer Grinder
c) George Edward Foreman Flask
d) George Microwave

5. Dr. Simone Bagel-Trah, a German businesswoman and microbiologist born on 10 January 1969. Which board did she serve as a member, supervisor, or advisor?

- a) HSBC Trinkaus & Burkhardt
b) Bayer AG
c) Commerzbank, Heraeus
d) All of the above

6. On 10 January 1862, the American inventor, industrialist Samuel Colt passed away. Samuel Colt established Colt's Manufacturing Company. Which firearm was first manufactured by Colt's company?

- a) Colt Paterson revolver
b) Colt Walker revolver
c) Colt M1911A1 pistol
d) Colt First Model Ring Lever rifle

7. Sir David Robinson died on 10 January 1987. The British entrepreneur and philanthropist built a business renting radios and televisions. To which premier institution he donated £18 million to establish a new college in his name?

- a) University of Edinburgh
b) University of Oxford
c) University of Cambridge
d) University of Manchester

8. Jean Elizabeth Morrison Pigott, a Canadian politician and CEO of her family's business, breathed her last on 10 January 2012. She was one of only three women CEOs in Canada in the early 1970s. Identify her company?

- a) Borges Foods Ltd
b) Morrison Lamothe Inc
c) McCain Foods Limited
d) Arthur Pigott Foods Inc

9. The first great Texas oil gusher was discovered at a well in Texas on 10 January 1901. The oil exploration and the economic development it generated in the state became known as the Texas oil boom. Identify the oil field?

- a) Kelly-Snyder field in western Scurry County
b) Spindletop in Beaumont
c) Spraberry Field, Permian Basin
d) The Yates Oil Field, Pecos

10. On 10 January 1990, which two companies merged to form a mega Media business?

- a) Time Inc and Warner Communications
b) AT&T Inc and Time Warner Inc
c) AT&T Inc and DirecTV
d) NBC Universal and Fox Inc

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

KEY

Q1: A Q2: C Q3: D Q4: B Q5: D Q6: D Q7: C Q8: B Q9: B Q10: B

Sticky inflation, rising crude oil prices **key risks** for GDP

Our MF product portfolio is sharply defined, says Tata Asset Management chief

KUMUD DAS

What is your view on the ongoing market rally?

The market rally has been supported by two drivers - (i) liquidity driven by lower rates globally and (ii) bounce back in corporate earnings as cost cuts, tail winds in certain sectors like IT/pharma and lower-than-expected stress in financials. Corporate earnings have more to go in our view as economic revival gains ground. In fact, the Covid crisis has reinforced the view that the corporate earnings (of top 250 companies) did better than economic growth as the brunt of the slowdown has been borne by smaller/unorganized players. What impact this has on consumption remains to be seen. Lastly while the large caps, as indicated by Nifty forward PER of 21x, seem to be in the fair value range, an economic recovery led by liquidity and manufacturing revival will lead to broadening of the rally.

According to you, the flow of FPI will continue until what time?

India has been one of the rare countries where one, the fiscal deficit seems better managed despite a strictest lockdown and two, the Covid infection rate has not gone up despite visible increase in human interactions and economic activity. That is helping to attract flows from FPI. In addition, the premium of Nifty 50 over MSCI EM is still at around 45 per cent, not excessive as compared to the last 10-year history. One of the key risks from Indian equities point of view is higher crude prices and inflation.

Recently all asset classes like equity, debt and gold have wit-

Gold is more of an insurance at this stage in case there is a second wave or runaway inflation or any other unforeseen risk. At present valuations, equities will deliver returns in line with earnings growth although investors should increase exposure to funds which have exposure to mid/small cap

nessed a rally. In this scenario, what would be your advice to your retail investors?

Gold is more of an insurance at this stage in case there is a second wave or runaway inflation or any other unforeseen risk. At present valuations, equities will deliver returns in line with earnings growth although investors should increase exposure to funds which have exposure to mid/small cap. Sector funds like pharma, infrastructure and banking also have the potential to generate above-average returns.

So far only two fund houses, UTI & HDFC, have gone public. Is Tata MF likely to get listed?

As of now, we don't have any such plans.

Of late, SEBI has come up with its circulars on rebalancing of the portfolios of multi-cap funds and introduction of flexi-cap fund. What will be its impact on the industry as a whole and Tata MF in particular?

Our product portfolio is sharply defined. SEBI circulars with respect to multicap funds are to move the industry towards true labelling. I think each fund house will chart out their own way on which way to go i.e. whether to stay multi cap or change to flexicap. We will be renaming Tata Multicap Fund to Tata Flexicap Fund.

What is your company's plan to ensure more and more retail participation in the capital market?

We understand the mutual fund penetration is still very low. We are expanding our digital distribution through various fintechs. Voice, Video and Vernacular are at the heart of our marketing strategy. For retail participation, it is imperative that content reaches them in a manner that quite literally speaks their language. We have been pioneers in simplifying MF to the average Indian through our Prof. Simply Simple. This

SEBI has come up with its circulars on rebalancing of the portfolios of multi-cap funds and introduction of flexi-cap fund. **"Our products are sharply defined. We will be renaming Tata Multicap Fund to Tata Flexicap Fund," Prathit Bhobe, CEO & MD, Tata Asset Management tells Bizz Buzz in an exclusive interview**



property is only getting stronger with every passing day.

What steps have been taken by Tata MF to curb mis-selling?

Mis-selling arises out of 2 things: product benefits get overstated or risk gets understated. We ensure that product risk reward pay offs are clearly communicated and follow it up through repeated training engagements.

With headline inflation being persistently above the comfort zone of RBI, when do you foresee the reversal of interest rate and its impact on the MF industry?

We are of the view that rates have come off sharply over the last 1.5 yrs. RBI has comforted bond markets by keeping rates low and regularly doing OMOs, operation twist and so on. However, what poses some concerns are sticky inflation and crude prices rising. We fear fiscal slippage due to pandemic, which may

lead to much higher borrowing in the next fiscal and yields could possibly inch up.

Any new plan in the offing at Tata MF?

We are working on some exciting ideas and will approach the market when we are ready.

What will be your message to the retail investors in the present scenario?

2020 has been a whipsaw year with very sharp drawdown in March and a dramatic recovery more recently. Timing the market is very difficult. Staying true to ones' asset allocation, investing regularly through SIPs and not chasing past returns are key.

Tata Balanced Advantage is an all-season equity fund which automatically shifts between debt and equity basis a time-tested model. One can consider investing in the fund which is ideally suited for retail investors.

We understand the mutual fund penetration is still very low. We are expanding our digital distribution through various fintechs. Voice, Video and Vernacular are at the heart of our marketing strategy. For retail participation, it is imperative that content reaches them in a manner that quite literally speaks their language



Freedom among top 5 cooking oil choices

Ipsos Urban Consumer Sentiment Survey 2020 rates the Hyderabad-based brand

HYDERABAD

Freedom Healthy Cooking Oils, a leading brand of edible oil, has been recognised among the urban Indian consumers' top 5 cooking oil choices in the Ipsos Urban Consumer Sentiment Survey 2020.

This highlights the consumer's preference for the brand through an independent third-party survey, as they appreciate the quality, consistency and trustworthiness of Freedomedible oil brand, in spite of its presence in selected geographies across India.

The survey was conducted to understand the change in consumer perception towards brands amid Covid crisis. The survey carried out over 4,000 respondents from 15 cities, across the country with a list of well-known brands from 51 categories. The respondents were asked to choose their most preferred brands based on the criteria of price, quality, trustworthiness etc. While the price remained a factor of concern, consumers were willing to pay more for hygienically produced food products that have been consistent with their quality and brand messaging, which are what instilled a sense of trust in the brands.

P Chandra Shekhara Reddy, Vice President, Sales & Marketing, Freedom Healthy Cooking Oils, said "We are delighted to be recognized as most trusted brands in cooking oils & consumer's top choices in edible oil. We thank our customers for their trust, unflinching support and patronage of Freedom brand over the last decade.

How new IBC provision makes liquidation process smoother

AMIR BAVANI

One of the more arduous tasks in the liquidation process under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (IBC) has been the realisation of peculiar assets such as sundry debts, including refunds from Government and its agencies; contingent receivables, disputed receivables, sub-judice receivables, disputed assets (where legal ownership is not clear), and assets underlying proceedings for preferential, undervalued, extortionate credit and fraudulent transactions. Since these assets are not easily realisable and are often associated with an indefinite waiting time frame, they are referred to as 'not readily realisable assets' (NRRA) as reflected by the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) in their Discussion Paper on Corporate Liquidation Process dated August 26 this year.

NRRA in terms of value and time are quite uncertain which has led to difficulties in swiftly closing the liquidation process of a corporate debtor within the prescribed timeline of one year as mandated by Regulation 44(I) of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (Liquidation Process) Regulations, 2016 ('Liquidation Process Regulations'). The liquidator is expected to act with a sense of urgency in completion of the liquidation process to ensure that the creditors are able to realize the maximum possible value of the assets of the corporate debtor as the longer such assets are withheld from being realized, the more their value depreciates to the detriment of the stakeholders. Hence, the presence of the NRRA in the liquidation estate serves as a hindrance to this goal.

To facilitate quick closure of the liquidation process, ensure realisation of maximum possible value by the stakeholders, and accommodate creditors who may not be willing to wait for completion of liquidation process for realization of debt, IBBI inserted Regulation 37A to the Liquidation Process Regulations on November 13, 2020. This newly inserted provision specifically allows for the liquidator to assign or transfer a NRRA to a

person eligible to submit a resolution plan in the resolution process of the corporate debtor in accordance to Regulation 31A in a transparent manner.

IBBI in their Discussion Paper indicated that it is worth considering assignment of NRRA for whatever amount the market is willing to pay and distribute the same among stakeholders and close the liquidation process swiftly. Additionally, the liquidator can assign statutory rights of action to third

over the assets and any action related thereto. The assignment would also include the transfer of all the legal rights, remedies and power to bring the action to an end (such as settlement) without the interference of the assignor (liquidator).

Differing from this, assignment with recompense facility will allow the liquidator to assign the asset with an initial price. Any subsequent net discovery (i.e. value realised less costs incurred in the



The amendment is undoubtedly a welcome move as the newly inserted provision of Regulation 37A allowing the assignment of NRRA further ensures a clean and efficient close of the liquidation process in an expedited manner

parties to benefit the stakeholders when the liquidation estate is insufficient to fulfil the debts.

So the course of action is that the liquidator is to first attempt to sell the assets at the first instance, failing which they may assign or transfer an asset to any person, in consultation with the stakeholders' consultation committee (SCC), and failing which they may then distribute the undisposed of assets amongst stakeholders in accordance to Regulation 38 of the Liquidation Process Regulations, with the approval of the Adjudicating Authority.

To undertake the assignment of NRRA, as suggested in the Discussion Paper, there exists two options i.e. absolute assignment and assignment with recompense facility.

In absolute assignment, assignment of NRRA will be absolute and the assignee would have right

recovery process) of the value over and above the initial price would be shared between assignee and the assignor, as per terms of the assignment. If the liquidator assigns a right of action for a share of the winnings or any similar terms which are less than absolute, the corporate debtor or the liquidator are exposed to a claim for adverse costs in the event of an unsuccessful claim. Thus, the liquidator has to be cautious in the terms of assignment agreement and needs to take adequate safety measures with regard to unsuccessful action while opting for an assignment agreement with recompense facility. Such a cautious approach may entail sharing only in a successful recovery and the assignee bearing the costs of an unsuccessful action. Additionally, the liquidator has to account for distribution in the terms of assignment, in case the share of assign-

ment proceeds is received later than the dissolution of the corporate debtor.

For an effective assignment, the IBBI in their Discussion Paper recommended that the liquidator deliberates assignment of NRRA with the SCC, who may have access to relevant records and information such as the existence of valid cause of action, its value, action to be taken to recover such value, probability of the defendant entering into settlement, assessing if the assignment is in the best interest of the creditors and corporate debtor, reasonableness and fairness of the assignment, market evaluation and other available alternatives.

Regulation 37A implemented the recommendation of the IBBI and mandated that the SCC is consulted in accordance to Regulation 31A prior to such assignment or transfer. Interestingly, while the SCC may advise the liquidator, the advice of the SCC is not binding on the liquidator. Thus, after the consultation with SCC the liquidator can take a decision contrary to the views expressed by SCC, provided the reasons for taking a contrary decision is recorded in the report submitted to the Adjudicating Authority.

Overall, the liquidator has to act in a fair, reasonable manner in good faith, in the best interest of the liquidation estate, seek maximum consideration for assignment, consult the SCC, not to transfer the asset to a person not eligible to submit a resolution plan as under Section 29A of IBC and undertake the assignment ideally through auction or otherwise on arm's length basis.

The amendment is undoubtedly a welcome move as the newly inserted provision of Regulation 37A allowing the assignment of NRRA further ensures a clean and efficient close of the liquidation process in an expedited manner with the effective dissolution of the entity and realization of the assets attained in its maximum without the burden of prolonged pending uncertain recoveries of NRRA.

(The author is an advocate & Principal Associate, Dhir & Dhir Associates)

India needs to improve quality standards: Munjal



India has to become a significant exporter if it has to become a key player in global trade and the country's industry and businesses want to stand up and be counted to meet the ambitions

He, however, added India must ensure that the new technologies are only used as tools and not get driven by it as the country also has the need to ensure that "million and million" its citizens are productively employed. "...it should be done for the right reason. So it is both sides actually operating. For India, it is also an essential requirement and it can serve a great need in the world as well," Munjal added.

Reiterating the significance of exports, Munjal said, "In some sense is also a part of the Aatmanirbhar movement that if India has to become a key player then India has to become a significant exporter." Stating that the Indian market is an amazing learning place, he said, "It is a nursery that we must all train and learn. We have to be competitive across the globe. Somebody making brass components in Moradabad, some engineering components in Rajkot or a bicycle component in Ludhiana all have to compete with those in Brazil and the US and other places."

India's self-reliance campaign must not by any stretch of imagination be taken as a move 'towards isolating itself', but to be a part of the global value chain, it must improve standards, skill levels, consistency and service levels to consumers and customers, Hero Enterprises Chairman Sunil Kant Munjal said on Saturday.

Speaking at the 25th Wharton India Economic Forum, he said India has to become a significant exporter if it has to become a key player in global trade and the country's industry and businesses want to stand up and be counted to meet the ambitions.

Stating that there are two aspects that must be kept in mind regarding Aatmanirbhar campaign and global competitiveness, he said, "One is for India to become better at what it does is absolutely essential but Aatmanirbhar must not by any stretch of imagination be taken as India's move towards isolating itself. That's a very important point that we must all remember."

He further said, "India wants to be a part of a global value chain. India and Indian industry, and Indian business wants to stand up and be counted." The other, Munjal said, "We have to remember that for India to be a part of the global value chain we have to improve our standards, we have to improve our skill levels and we have to improve both consistency and service levels to consumers and customers." Citing the example of how Japanese goods were once derided for low quality, he said, "Then Japan in the 70s became the greatest manufacturing machine in the world."

Same thing happened to Taiwan, South Korea and China after that, he added. Munjal said today India has the "the amazing capability of the underlying technological platforms having got strengthened in the last few years, which allow robotics, machine learning, artificial intelligence to come in, alongside what we were doing to enhance the capabilities".

Australia take charge, stretch lead to 197

SYDNEY

AUSTRALIA took charge of the third Test on the third day at the Sydney Cricket Ground as they first secured a 94-run lead in the first innings by bowling out India for 244 runs and then going to stumps at 103/2 to stretch their overall lead to 197 runs.

Steve Smith was unbeaten on 29 while Marnus Labuschagne was 47 not out at the draw of stumps.

The Indian team, which witnessed Rishabh Pant and Ravindra Jadeja not take field in Australia's second innings due to injury, had earlier folded for 244 in their first innings.



India's Rishabh Pant (right) receives treatment to his arm after he was hit while batting during play on day three of the third cricket test between India and Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground, Sydney, Australia on Saturday. He was, however, replaced by Wriddhiman Saha as the rules allow a wicketkeeper to be replaced by a fellow wicketkeeper in case of an injury

Resuming at 96 for two, the Indians lost their last eight wickets for 148 runs in the first two sessions as the Aussies bowled extremely accurately on a placid surface.

Pace bowler Pat Cummins was the wrecker-in-chief taking four for 29.

India though had lost just two wickets in the first session and managed to score 84 runs in that pre-lunch period as Cheteshwar Pujara (50) and Pant (36) looked to resurrect the innings following the early loss of skipper Ajinkya Rahane (22) and Hanuma Vihari (4).

But post-lunch, they succumbed to the new ball as the Aussie pace duo Josh Hazlewood and Cummins kept an immaculate line and length.

Cummins was the first to get under India's skin as he hit Pant on his elbow. The left-handed wicket-keeper-batsman seemed to have got rattled after that and went for an expansive drive off Hazlewood only to edge it to first slip.

Pujara was the next to fall, in the next over, as he nicked a back-of-the-length delivery from Cummins to wicketkeeper Tim Paine.

That opened up the tail. R. Ashwin and Navdeep Saini followed soon after and so did Jasprit Bumrah.

India had lost four wickets for 15 runs to lose track

Jadeja's absence will hurt, he builds pressure on batsmen: Pujara

SYDNEY

RAVINDRA Jadeja's ability to bowl dot balls that can put pressure on the opposition will be missed, said India No. 3 batsman Cheteshwar Pujara after the left-arm spinner could not take field in Australia's second innings due to injury to his left thumb.

Jadeja took a blow to his left thumb off a Mitchell Starc delivery. The all-rounder had picked four wickets in Australia's first innings and effected a run-out from the deep to send back centurion Steve Smith. He followed it up with a fighting 28 not out in India's first innings.

"It is never easy when you lose a bowler especially someone like Ravindra Jadeja who got four wickets in the first innings and who can keep bowling from one end and can land the ball at one spot all the time. He is someone who puts lot of pressure on the batters as he bowls a lot of dot balls. He is very valuable on the field, not just as a bowler but as fielder also. Losing him is a blow," said Pujara.

The India batsman, who scored 50 off 176 deliveries on Saturday, said that the Indian bowling without Jadeja is a bit weak especially with the presence of youngsters. India are already missing Mohammed Shami, Umesh Yadav and Ishant Sharma.

While Ishant didn't travel to Australia as he was not match-fit, Shami and Umesh got injured during the first two Tests.

Mohammed Siraj, who replaced Shami in the eleven, is playing his second Test while Navdeep Saini, who replaced Umesh, is playing only his first Test.

"If you look at our bowling line-up, we have some guys who are playing their first and second Test. They are learning, they are getting better at bowling. Our fast bowling line-up, they are slightly inexperienced. It is a



good opportunity for them to learn and get better at what they are doing," said Pujara

"The management and (captain) Ajinkya (Rahane) have spoken to the bowlers. You can't put a lot of pressure on them. It is Saini's first game and Siraj's second. Yes, they are bound to make mistakes at times. You just have to allow them little more time to settle in and especially if you are bowling in Sydney... it is not easy. So I wouldn't put too much pressure on them... They have to learn a few more things and I am very confident that they will learn," added Pujara.

He, however, said that the Indian bowling needs to show discipline especially in Jadeja's absence.

"To be honest, it (Jadeja's absence) does affect at some point because we are left with only four bowlers and that puts little extra pressure... we need to show a little discipline in our bowling... but overall we are doing the best we can," he said. "The first session will be crucial for us, we will definitely put up a better show tomorrow morning".

The 32-year-old right handed batsman said that the Aussies were very difficult to score off as they maintained a good line and length.

"I thought they bowled good line and lengths, they had a fair idea of this pitch. So I think you should give credit to the way they bowled because I felt they didn't give too many loose balls," he said. (IANS)

SCOREBOARD

Australia 1st innings: 338 all out
India 1st Innings (overnight 96/2)

Rohit Sharma c and b Hazlewood -----26
Shubman Gill c Green b Cummins -----50
C Pujarac Paine b Cummins -----50
Ajinkya Rahane b Cummins -----22
Hanuma Vihari run out -----4
R Pant c Warner b Hazlewood -----36
Ravindra Jadeja not out -----28
R Ashwin run out -----1
Navdeep Saini c Wade b Starc -----3
Bumrah run out -----0
M Siraj c Paine b Cummins -----6
Extras: (lb-2, w-5, nb-2) -----9

Total (All out in 100.4 overs) -----244

Fall of wickets: 70-1, 85-2, 117-3, 142-4, 195-5, 195-6, 206-7, 210-8, 216-9
Bowling: Starc 19-76-1-1, Hazlewood 21-10-43-2, Cummins 21.4-10-29-4, Lyon 31-88-70-0, Labuschagne 3-0-11-0, Green 5-1-11-0.
Australia 2nd Innings
David Warner lbw Ashwin -----13
Will Pucovski c (sub)W Saha b Siraj -----10
Marnus Labuschagne batting -----47
Steven Smith batting -----29
Extras (lb-1, nb-3) -----4
Total (For 2 wkts, 29 Overs) -----103
Fall of Wickets: 1-16, 2-35
Bowling: Jasprit Bumrah 8-1-26-0, Mohammed Siraj 8-2-20-1, Navdeep Saini 7-1-28-0, Ravichandran Ashwin 6-0-28-1.

Indian officials allege Bumrah, Siraj racially abused



SYDNEY

INDIAN cricket officials have apparently alleged that fast bowlers Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj were racially abused by the crowd at the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG) on Saturday.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) and the stadium security officials were involved in a long discussion with Bumrah, Siraj and members of the Indian team management after the end of the third day's play at the SCG.

Ajinkya Rahane, the India skipper, was also seen having a discussion with the security officials.

A report in Australian newspaper, the Daily Telegraph, stated, "It's understood Indian officials say the pair have been abused by members of the public for the past two days, and believe the abuse has been racist in nature... amid suggestions a crowd member at the Randwick end of the ground abused Siraj who was fielding at fine leg at the time."

"In another instance while the match was still continuing, Indian staff walked around behind where Bumrah was standing in the outfield and spoke to the star quick," the report added.

India had previously been involved in a racism controversy on their tour of Australia in 2008 although in that case, Andrew Symonds had alleged that Harbhajan Singh had called him a monkey which the Indian player and the team denied. (IANS)

FIFA to test concussion substitutes at Club World Cup

PARIS



WORLD football governing body FIFA announced on Friday that the use of concussion substitutes will be tested at the Club World Cup in Qatar in February.

According to a FIFA statement, it will "trial additional permanent substitutions for cases of actual or suspected concussion" at the seven-team tournament, which will be

the first time that concussion substitutes will be allowed in an international football competition.

In the Qatar Club World Cup, scheduled to be held from February 1 to 10, a team can use one more substitute per match for players' suspected concussion in addition to the team's five regular substitutes, Xinhua news agency reports.

FIFA said it could reduce the pressure on medical personnel to make a quick assessment and send a strong message that "if in any doubt, the player should be withdrawn".



KBFC look to their misfiring forwards to rediscover their form against JFC

VASCO (GoA)

FIFTH-placed Jamshedpur FC are looking to get back into the top four of the Indian Super League (ISL) with a win over Kerala Blasters at the Tilak Maidan Stadium on Sunday.

Jamshedpur are on 13 points after nine games and a victory against Kerala could push them to third spot. They have lost just two matches -- the second-lowest tally in the league.

Indian domestic season gets underway on Sunday with Mushtaq Ali T20

NEW DELHI: The Elite A, B and C matches of the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 tournament will start from Sunday at Bengaluru, Kolkata and Vadodara. The tournament is the first of the Indian domestic season that has been pushed back due to the Covid-19 pandemic. All the teams had to undergo a week-long quarantine ahead of the tournament. Schedule for Sunday:

Elite Group A matches in Alur (near Bengaluru): Karnataka vs Jammu and Kashmir; Railways vs Tripura; Punjab vs Uttar Pradesh.
Elite Group B matches in Kolkata: Assam vs Hyderabad; Odisha vs Bengal; Jharkhand vs Tamil Nadu
Elite Group C matches in Vadodara: Baroda vs Uttarakhand; Chhattisgarh vs Himachal Pradesh; Gujarat vs Maharashtra

Jamshedpur looking to get back into top 4 with win over Kerala



No doubt, the 1-0 victory over playoff contenders Bengaluru would have boosted their morale. But one thing that Coach Coyle wants is that his side doesn't get carried away at this stage of the season.

Kerala, on the other hand, have thus far been below par this season and come into the match after a 4-2 defeat to Odisha FC. It was the first win that Odisha recorded this season and it left Kerala second last on the league table. Jamshedpur coach Owen Coyle, however, feels Kerala have been unlucky and his team has to be wary of their opponents.

"If you look at Kerala's games, they have been very unlucky. The other night, they lost 4-2 but Kerala could have easily scored 5-6 goals," Coyle said. "When teams have had disappointments this way, they can be very dangerous, so we have to make sure we're ready for that."

Kerala coach Kibu Vicuna believes his side

The rule-making body, International Football Association Board (IFAB), had approved the use of concussion substitutes in December 2020, claiming to protect the player from a potential second blow to the head.

England's Premier League announced later that it would allow two concussion substitutes per team in one match since the beginning of 2021. Other major European football leagues and the Chinese football league have not revealed whether they will adopt similar measures. (IANS)

MATCH RESULT Bengaluru FC lose to SC East Bengal 0-1

are still in contention for the playoffs. Vicuna found success at Bagan with an attacking and possession-based brand of football, but has found it tough to get results with an injury-marred Kerala side, who have claimed just one win. However, the Spaniard refused to attribute Blasters' poor results to his style.

"It is not a question of style," Vicuna said. "The team (I had at Mohun Bagan) is different, the players are different." (IANS)

TODAY'S MATCHES

Chennaiyin FC vs Odisha FC at GMC Stadium Bombolim 5pm
Jamshedpur FC vs Kerala Blasters FC at Tilak Maidan Stadium 7.30pm

AFC hails China's preparations for Asian Cup China 2023

BEIJING: Asian Football Confederation (AFC) general secretary Windsor John has spoken highly of China's preparations for the 2023 Asian Cup amid the COVID-19 pandemic, voicing his confidence in China to "deliver a tournament to remember". "The AFC has been working closely with the Local Organising Committee (LOC) as well as the Chinese Football Association (CFA)," John said in an online interview on Friday, Xinhua news reports. "The co-operation between all parties has been smooth. We have seen some great progress already in key areas since the AFC and CFA hosted the Asian Cup 2023 Kick-Off Meeting in July 2019," he added. According to the AFC, the Joint Kick-Off Meeting was held in Beijing in January 2020, which built an effective working relationship to guide venue construction.

Warne, Symonds mock Labuschagne on air, broadcaster apologises

SYDNEY

KAYO Sports, a streaming arm of Cricket Australia's broadcast partners Fox Sports, was forced to apologise after commentators and former Australia players Shane Warne and Andrew Symonds made derogatory remarks about batsman Marnus Labuschagne.

Kayo said that Warne and Symonds, who were preparing to commentate on a Big Bash League (BBL) match between Adelaide Strikers and Melbourne Renegades, were unaware that the stream had gone live. "Our stream started early and caught some unacceptable comments. On behalf of @kayosports and the commentary team, we unreservedly apologise," Kayo tweeted.

The conversations started with Warne suggesting that Labuschagne should be handed the ball during India's second innings on Friday after which Symonds mockingly suggested Labuschagne had ADD, presumed to be attention deficit disorder.

"Give Marnus a bowl," Warne said. "Do something, that or his ADD," Symonds then said which drew laughter from Warne who replied: "Jesus, it's annoying. 'No!!!' [imitating Labuschagne batting] Just f**** bat properly."

Symonds then said: "You'll have to give him the hogpile, mate, if you keep that s*** up, we're gonna squash your guts out of your a***."

Warne had during the first Test in December been criticised for referring to India batsman Cheteshwar Pujara by the nickname 'Steve' that was used for the latter by teammates at Yorkshire during Pujara's stint with the team in County cricket. Former Yorkshire players and employees led by former captain Azeem Rafiq had said, while filing a legal complaint against the team for discrimination and harassment on the grounds of race, that the nickname was used for every person of colour. (IANS)



Mohammedan start I-League campaign with 1-0 victory over Sudeva

KOLKATA

ALI Faisal's 58th minute strike helped Mohammedan Sporting start the I-League campaign with a 1-0 win over Sudeva Delhi at the Salt Lake Stadium on Saturday. Faisal pounced on a defensive error from Sudeva's defence to slot the ball into the exposed goal.

Sudeva started the match well and defended the set-pieces that came Mohammedan's way in a cagey first half. Kean Lewis got the first shot on target in the seventh minute for Sudeva but Mohammedan's goalkeeper Mohammad Rafique Ali Sardar managed to hold on to the ball.

Mohammedan's Raphael Onwrebe had the best chance of the first half when he received a precise low cross from Suraj Rawat in the 17th minute but the Nigerian failed to put the ball into the empty net.

Sudeva came out with more intent in the second half, looking for leaks in Mohammedan's defence. Ajay Singh, however, was left isolated at times playing as a lone striker upfront.

The breakthrough came much against the run of play for Mohammedan SC in the 58th minute when Ali Faisal pounced on a defensive error by the Sudeva backline and slotted it into the back of the net. The sheer power of the strike beat custodian Rakshit Dagar, despite him getting a hand on the shot.

Sudeva Delhi FC went on the offensive and searched for the equaliser, committing bodies in attack to salvage points off the match. Kean Lewis's cross in the 80th minute failed to find the head of a Sudeva player inside the box. Although half-chances came in plenty for the Delhi outfit, a clear goal-scoring opportunity failed to crop up. (IANS)