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Sanitation drives ordered in ULBs amid rising Covid cases

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

MUNICIPAL Administration Minister KT Rama Rao on Saturday asked all the municipal commissioners to have special focus on sanitisation in all Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and take up spraying of disinfectants like Sodium Hypochlorite on war footing and also complete vaccination for the frontline warriors within two to three days.

The Municipal Administration department issued a circular to all the Municipal Commissioners after the Minister interacted with the senior officials including Principal Secretary Arvind Kumar, CDMA N Satyanarayana and GHMC Commissioner Lokesh Kumar over a phone call in the wake of the spike in Covid-19 positive cases across the State.

The Minister asked the Municipal Administration officials to initiate special sanitisation drives and spray Sodium Hypochlorite in GHMC and all other municipalities on a war footing. "Utilise all available

- Minister KTR instructs municipal officials to lay special focus on sanitisation in all ULBs
- Directs them to use Pattana Pragathi funds for sanitisation drive
- Calls for conduct awareness campaigns on Covid safety precautions
- Strictly penalise those not wearing masks

vehicles for spraying of Sodium Hypochlorite. If needed, hire additional vehicles for spraying. Utilise the Pattana Pragathi programme funds for special sanitisation drive," said the Minister, while asking the officials to ensure sanitation staff is equipped with protective gear, hand gloves, sanitisers, etc. The Minister directed the officials to put entomologists from the Municipal Administration department on high alert and also cancel leaves of employees until further notice. He also asked the MA&UD department officials to coordinate with the Health department and act according to the situation.

"Conduct awareness campaigns about safety precautions to be taken to combat Covid. Ensure citizens wear masks all the time in public spaces," said the Minister. The Minister directed the officials to ensure all the remaining frontline workers from the MA&UD department are administered the Covid vaccine immediately.

The officials informed the Minister that the vaccination drive for all the employees of GHMC would be completed in another day and the vaccination drive for all the employees from the municipal corporations across the State would be completed within the next three days.

Hyd Mayor calls upon staff to take vax jab

Attends the special vaccination drive held for journalists and GHMC staff

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

CITY Mayor Gadwal Vijayalaxmi reviewed a special vaccination programme at Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) head office for journalists and employees on Saturday.

Around 120 members were vaccinated on the day including journalists and GHMC staff. Speaking on the occasion, the Mayor said that everyone should take the jab and follow Covid norms. She appealed to the frontline workers and journalists, who had taken the vaccine shot on the day, to take the second dose on the prescribed date. The process of vaccinating the sanitation workers and GHMC staff was continuing, she added. As per GHMC officials, till date 22,894 staff was vaccinated out of 24,948. The GHMC could not vaccinate all of its staff as some of them were on leave.

The LB Nagar Zone has a total of 4,288 workers, of them 4,083 have been vaccinated till date. In Khairatabad zone, 4,447 workers were vaccinated out of 4,993 workers. Similarly in Serilingampally, out of 2,630 workers, 2,408 were vaccinated. In Kukatpally zone, 3020 workers were vaccinated including other staff out of 3,772 workers. In Secunderabad zone, out of 4,798 members, 4,641 were vaccinated and in Charminar zone, 3,543 workers were vaccinated.

Adhere to norms, stay safe: Health Director to people

State Health Director G Srinivas Rao warns that infections can rise manifold in next six weeks if people fail to strictly adhere to Covid safety norms



Despite ardent pleas to follow Covid protocols, a few youngsters seen not wearing masks giving least priority to safety norms, in Hyderabad on Saturday

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

THE new strains of corona virus are fast spreading in the State. In just two weeks, positive cases have been doubled in the State, said State Health Director G Srinivas Rao, warning that the infected count could increase manifold in the next six weeks if people fail to adhere to the safety norms.

The official said that corona crisis in Maharashtra was one of the reasons for

the fast spread of virus in the Telangana State and the new strains developed were a cause of big worry. The government was making all out efforts to improve the medical infrastructure and provide treatment to all infected persons in the government hospitals, he added.

Ruling out lockdown and night curfews, he appealed to the people to strictly follow Covid safety norms in the wake of increasing corona cases in the State. He said that measures would also be taken to supply adequate medicines in Covid hospitals.

Respect the Constitution; Don't deride Election Commission

LEGAL CIRCLES
DR HC UPADHYAY

THIS appeal is addressed to all parties irrespective of their colour, region or status. The appeal is simple: Please respect the Constitution of India and different bodies created under it. It is necessary to do so because the Constitution is the harbinger of our country's growth and prosperity. It is a document reflecting the hopes and aspirations of the largest democracy in the world. On the other hand, different organs created under the Constitution are its hands and legs to realise the lofty ideals enshrined in the Constitution. Therefore, due respect to the constitutional bodies and other statutes is necessary. It is not the case of respecting one individual or organisations attached to such a body, but it is a question of the maturity of minds.

Today, when the elections at different levels are underway, more often than not the Election Commission at the Centre as well as at State level is targeted by the political parties; mostly those who are on the losing track. The allegations of discrimination, bias and being a puppet in the hands of ruling parties do not halt there but also engulf the police, security and even defence forces, besides other departments of the government.

Such a trend, unfortunately of late, has been growing, which is a matter of great concern. The political differences, compulsions and opportunism become the motive behind such reckless, baseless and uncharitable allegations against the Constitutional bodies and government arms. Indeed, the need of the hour is to exercise restraint by all the concerned political parties, candidates and their supporters.

In fact, going by the experience of so many elections, it appears that the tendency to deride and defile the Constitutional bodies and the people occupying Constitutional positions goes un-arrested because there are no built-in safeguards, leave alone stringent provisions in the Constitution to arrest such tendencies. No doubt, the Constitution in a dignified manner speaks of the citizens' duties; but these provisions are merely in the form of advisory and not mandatory. The political parties understand only the language of danda. Therefore, unless stricter penal provisions are inserted in the Constitution such elements, be in politics, business and industries or services cannot be set right. The freedom of expression cannot be allowed to percolate down to be the criminal freedom of expression thereby endangering the very soul and body politic of the nation.

SC advices caution while passing interim orders

A three-judge bench comprising Justice DY Chandrachud, Justice MR Shah and Justice Khanna has observed that the High Courts should restrain themselves from passing the interim orders of 'not to arrest' or 'no coercive steps to be adopted' when the investigation of a case was in progress and the facts were hazy and the entire evidence was not before the High Courts. The apex court issued a slew of guidelines while disposing of the case titled, Neeharika Infrastructure Pvt Ltd vs State of Maharashtra by its order of April 13.

SC guidelines on cheque bounce cases

The cheque bouncing law, as it is known to a common man is on the way of refining. As a first step towards this direction, on April 16, a Constitution bench headed by the Chief Justice of India (CJI), while accepting several recommendations of Amici Curiae, issued several guidelines to courts in a suo motu case titled: Expeditious Trial of Cases Under Section 138 of Negotiable Instruments Act. Following are some of the guidelines among others:

- The High Courts to issue practice directions to the Magistrates to record cogent and sufficient reasons before converting the complaints u/s.138 of the NI Act from summary trial to summons trial.
- Inquiry shall be conducted on receipt of the complaints u/s.138 of the Act to arrive at sufficient grounds to proceed against the accused when such accused resides beyond the territorial jurisdiction of the court.
- For the conduct of inquiry under Section 202 of CrPC, evidence of witnesses on behalf of the complainant shall be permitted to be taken on affidavit. In suitable cases, the Magistrate can restrict the inquiry to examination of documents without insisting for examination of witnesses.
- Suitable amendments are recommended to be made to the Act for provision of one trial against a person for multiple offences u/s.138 of the Act committed within a period of 12 months, notwithstanding the restriction in Section 219 of CrPC.
- The High Courts are requested to issue practice directions to the trial courts to treat service of summons in one complaint u/s. 138 forming part of a transaction, as deemed service in respect of all the complaints filed before the same court relating to dishonor of cheques issued as part of the said transaction.
- The apex court reiterated that there is no inherent power of trial courts to review or recall the issue of summons. However, this does not affect the power of the trial court u/s. 322 of CrPC to revisit the order of issue of process in case it is brought to the court's notice that it lacks jurisdiction to try the complaint.

BJP to change its strategy to stop TRS winning juggernaut from rolling

Tells the party cadre and leaders to make sure saffron party wins the ensuing polls to 7 ULBs

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

THE State unit of Bharatiya Janata Party, which is facing a tough competition from the ruling Telangana Rashtra Samithi, has decided to go all out in the ensuing polls to seven Urban Local Bodies, including the Khammam and Warangal municipal corporations.

The State BJP led by its chief and Karimnagar MP Bandi Sanjay Kumar is to take stock of the party's electoral strategy for the civic body polls. Riding high on its electoral gains in Dubbaka bypoll and the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) elections, the party has stepped up its campaigning during the two graduate MLC elections. After the debacle in MLC elections, the party feels that the ruling party is making all out efforts to cut short the momentum picked up by the BJP.

According to party sources, "The earlier strategy is to transform the electoral gains in Dubbaka bypoll and the GHMC elections and build up a space for the party across the State to project itself as an alternative to the ruling TRS."

However, the ruling party has applied brakes to the BJP juggernaut

winning the two graduate MLC elections. Besides, the party also hopes high on winning the Nagarjunasagar Assembly bypoll. However, feels, "It cannot be ruled out ending up in giving a tough fight, if not winning the seat," said a senior party leader.

Against this backdrop, the party sees that it has better chances to come up with flying colours in ensuing polls to ULBs, and decides to gear up its party leaders and cadre plugging the existing gaps within the party.

Secondly, the party sources said that it is yet to fine tune its strategy for the Khammam Municipal Corporation (KMC) to take head-on with the ruling TRS.

The serious issue that the party currently facing is that, earlier, the TRS has to sweat it out to stop the BJP's surge. But, now it is steadily stepping up its grip to disrupt the BJP's strategy to use every election as a building block to its Mission 2023.

Now, it is the turn of the BJP to ensure TRS does not succeed in its attempts to rock BJP's agenda of Mission 2023. For this, the party feels to change its strategy on how to deal with the evolving political scenario which it no longer can take it for granted, the party sources said.

SIDDIPET MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Harish pulling all stops to see TRS wins polls again

The Finance Minister releases a document on the comprehensive development of the municipality

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

WHILE Telangana Rashtra Samithi working president KT Rama Rao is already working day and night to clinch victory in the elections to seven municipal bodies, party senior leader and Finance Minister T Harish Rao is all pulling all stops to help TRS win Siddipet municipal elections again.

Harish is ahead of all his political rivals in finalising the political strategy. He initiated political moves to win the elections and had already announced candidates to some wards. Further, a special development agenda for the municipality is being announced as part of TRS election manifesto before the polls to be held on April 30.

It can be recalled that the State Election Commission has announced the poll schedule for seven municipal bodies includ-



ing Khammam and Warangal municipal corporations and also Siddipet municipality. In the last elections, TRS has won 22 wards out of 34. Under the delimitation, the number of wards have been increased to 43. The total number of voters in the poll-bound municipality are 1,00,653 of which 50,767 are women voters.

Harish has recently released a document on the comprehensive development of Siddipet municipality, which has explained the efforts made by

State government to promote the urban local body as a role model in local administration, improvement of civic amenities and creation of employment by promoting food processing units, establishment of IT Tower etc.

Ever since the notification for the conduct of election released, the TRS leader has been dedicating his whole time to prepare a political strategy to win majority of wards. Party sources said Harish would hold big rally before the election in the municipality. The opposition Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party are already struggling to find a good leaders to field against TRS as Harish was making political moves to ensure TRS victory.

"After Dubbaka drubbing, Harish wants to display his strong leadership in Siddipet which is considered as his political fortress," sources in the party said.

‘Convergence of traditional knowledge, tech must for sustainable agriculture’

P Manasa of BTech Agricultural Engineering bags seven gold medals, while K Padma Sree, BTech Food Science & Technology bags the PJTSAU Outstanding Student gold medal for extraordinary performance in academics, extra and co-curricular activities across all the faculties of the university

- Governor Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan attends the 5th convocation of PJTSAU
- Says Covid-19 pandemic once again highlighted the need for promoting organic farming
- Urges agri graduates to help tribals cultivate their lands

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

GOVERNOR Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan emphasised the convergence of traditional knowledge and modern technology in agriculture.

Addressing in the capacity of the Chancellor of Professor Jayashankar Telangana State Agriculture University's fifth convocation held on virtual mode here on Saturday, she said that research in agricultural universities was vital to make agriculture sustainable and to double the income of farmers.

The convergence of modern technology and traditional knowledge is needed for sustainable agriculture and to ensure food security for future generations, she said.

Referring to the goals of Atma Nirbhar Bharat, Dr Tamilsai stated that sustainability and self-



Governor Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan attending the fifth convocation of Professor Jayashankar Telangana State Agriculture University on Saturday

reliance in the agriculture sector were vital to realise the objective of self-reliant India.

The Governor said that the Covid-19 pandemic had once again highlighted the need to promote organic farming on a massive scale to protect nature. Citing the findings of a recent survey carried out by the Raj Bhavan in select primitive tribal areas in Bhadrachalam district, she said that people belonging to the primitive tribal group, Kondareddys, were not cultivating their lands though they were having lands and huge backyards.

"I call upon the young agricultural graduates and agricultural universities to create awareness about farming and help them (tribal people) cultivate their lands. This would help them become economically empowered

and improve their nutritional status," she added.

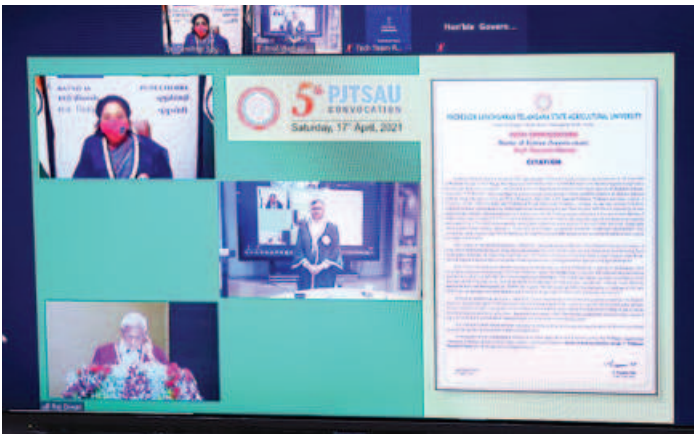
The Governor exhorted the young agricultural graduates and researchers to have a new perspective of thinking and promote innovation in tune with the demands of the fast-changing world.

She lauded the farmer-friendly initiatives launched by the State government to turn the State into the "Rice Bowl of India."

The Governor appreciated the PJTSAU for setting up Innovation Centre and Agricultural Hubs to promote research, innovation and entrepreneurship in agriculture.

On the occasion, she conferred NITI Aayog member Ramesh Chand, who was the chief guest at the convocation, with the honorary doctorate.

The Governor, who took part in the virtual convocation from



Varsity vice-chancellor Dr V Praveen Rao speaking at the convocation ceremony that was held virtually

Puducherry, also presented degrees to the graduates and researchers and medals to the winners.

Prof Ramesh Chand, Member of NITI Aayog, while delivering his fifth convocation address lauded the Telangana government for making huge investments and efforts to improve the irrigation facilities in the State. "The potential created must be optimally utilised," he said, asking the University to develop crop sequences and a package of technology to raise the current intensity of crops in the State.

Dr V Praveen Rao, Vice-Chancellor, PJTSAU had presented the report of the university activities and explained the new initiatives of the university in teaching, research and extension activities as well as special measures taken up

during COVID -19. He also told about the awards and accomplishments received during the fifth convocation period. Dr Rao told the university has developed and released seven high-yielding varieties in various crops.

During the convocation, 21 PhDs, 148 MSc, 1 MTech and 517 under graduate students were present and 29 gold medals were presented to the under graduate and post graduate students for their extraordinary performance in academics. P Manasa of BTech Agricultural Engineering graduate had bagged seven gold medals and K Padma Sree, BTech Food Science & Technology, Rudrur bagged the PJTSAU Outstanding Student gold medal for the performance in academics, extra and co-curricular activities across all the faculties of the university.

THOUGHTLESSNESS OF GOVT TO TACKLE GRAVEST DISASTER

Nation paying heavy price: CWC

NEW DELHI

THE Congress Working Committee (CWC) in a statement has said that the nation is paying a very heavy price for the thoughtlessness and unpreparedness of the NDA government to tackle the gravest disaster.

The CWC statement read out by former Union Finance Minister and Congress leader P. Chidambaram said, "We regret to say that the nation is paying a very heavy price for the thoughtlessness and unpreparedness of the NDA government to tackle the gravest disaster (Covid pandemic) that has hit the country and has affected millions of families claiming 1,75,673 lives so far."

The CWC said that the Union government is passing the buck to the state governments and former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh will write to Prime Minister Narendra Modi incorporating the suggestions made at the CWC.

The CWC has asked it's state units to open helplines in the states and start working with those who need help in these tough times.

The CWC said that, "on the eve of the third lockdown, the central government passed the buck to the state governments even while retaining the power to issue orders and directions. Worse, the central government did not release sufficient funds to the state governments to fight the worst medical emergency that the country has faced."

The CWC alleged that the experts warned the country that a second save was possible and



Workers of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) distribute face masks during an awareness campaign against the spread of the Covid-19, in Mumbai on Saturday

perhaps imminent but the government was complacent. This is where the central government failed miserably and paved the way for the havoc that is being caused by the second wave of the Covid pandemic.

The CWC charged the central government with colossal mismanagement of the war against the pandemic and failure to create sufficient public awareness that a waning pandemic could be a precursor to a second wave that may be more devastating than the first wave. It also failed to rapidly scale up the production and supply of the two approved vaccines in India by providing sufficient funds and other concessions. The CWC said that the government failed to resort

to compulsory licensing and production of the two approved vaccines in other pharma manufacturing facilities in India and to universalise vaccination after health workers and frontline workers had been vaccinated in Phase I.

It also failed to get rid of pre-registration and bureaucratic control over the vaccination programme and to leave the vaccine roll-out to the state governments and public and private hospitals, to prevent, or at least minimize, the wastage of vaccine doses that stands at more than 23 lakh doses today.

The CWC said the government failed to maintain the scale and momentum of testing, tracking and tracing of infected

persons and their contacts, to grant emergency-use approval to other vaccines that had got approval in the US, UK, European Union and Japan under a misguided notion of "atmanirbhar", to allow the import of other approved vaccines manufactured in other countries to augment the supply of vaccines, to adopt a need-based, fair and equitable allocation of the vaccine doses to the various states. Official data shows that several states governed by Opposition parties got less than their fair share despite their need and failed to curb the exports of large quantities of vaccine doses to other countries. While some quantities should have been donated to small and developing

countries, the zeal to export to rich countries was unwarranted.

"It is a shame that the country with the world's largest vaccine manufacturing capacity has earned the odium of being among the most affected countries in the world," the CWC said.

The cumulative number of infections is 1,45,26,609 and the cumulative death toll is 1,75,673. By any measure, even allowing for our large population, India is among the most affected countries of the world.

"The initial response measures of the central government were ludicrous to say the least. The Prime Minister went on national television to exhort people to clang plates; and after two weeks he went on national television to exhort people to light lamps. Medical experts held back their criticism of such superstitious rites; and knowledgeable persons cautioned the government that it ought to take scientific measures to confront the pandemic," the CWC said. The party also criticised that due to the sudden lockdown there was mass reverse migration of millions of people, "some estimates place it at 3 crore people," who walked hundreds of kilometres without money, without food, without medicines and without any help whatsoever. An estimated 198 people died on the way.

The defining image of 2020 was the helpless migrant worker trudging along highways and railway lines completely abandoned by the State. It was a national humiliation, it said. (IANS)

Colour-coded stickers for Mumbai vehicles



MUMBAI

IN a unique initiative to curb unnecessary traffic on roads, the Mumbai Police have introduced 'colour-coded stickers' for all authorised vehicles which are allowed to ply in the current stringent restrictions, a top official said here on Saturday.

Mumbai Police Commissioner Hemant Nagrale said in a statement that the colour-stickers -- red, green and yellow -- are being issued free of cost from this evening by local police stations to vehicles falling under the authorised categories.

"While red stickers will be for doctors, nurses, health professionals, medical supplies, ambulances, etc, the green stickers would be for all types of foodstuffs, milk, bakery products, vegetables,

fruits, and yellow shall be for movement of people engaged in critical services like civic staff, telephones, media, et al," Nagrale said.

The measure is being taken after complaints that these service vehicles were getting stuck in massive traffic snarls, especially at toll posts entry-exits to the city.

Officials said that this course of action is intended to deter all non-authorised vehicles taking to the roads, as some people were even found going for joy-rides or long-rides, creating traffic hurdles for essential vehicles on roads and highways.

Nagrale further warned that anybody found violating the rules or misusing the colour-code stickers would be dealt with strictly and prosecuted under various provisions of the law. (IANS)

HARVESTING HIGH



Farmers use a combined harvester in a wheat field in Amritsar on Saturday

RED FORT VIOLENCE

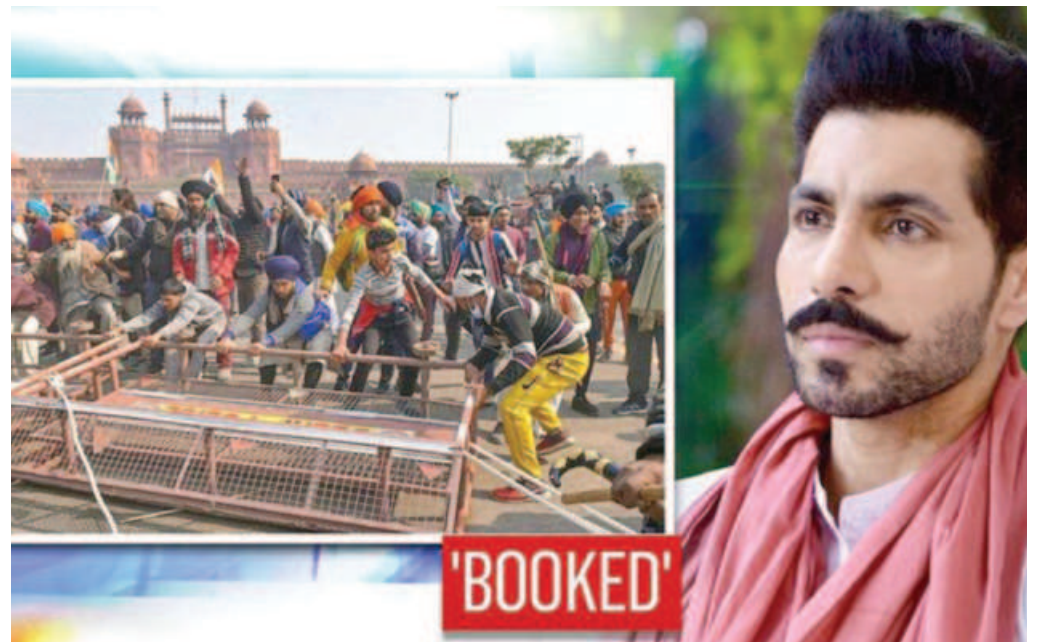
Deep Sidhu arrested again on FIR lodged by ASI

NEW DELHI

THE Delhi Police's Crime Branch arrested actor-activist Deep Sidhu on Saturday in connection with an FIR lodged by the Archaeological Survey of India for allegedly damaging public property during the farmers' tractor parade violence on Republic Day at Red Fort, officials said.

The arrest came after a Delhi court granted bail to the actor-activist arrested on February 9 in connection with the Red Fort violence. Special Judge Neelofer Abida Perveen granted relief to the accused on Friday on a personal bond of Rs 30,000 and two sureties of a like amount. The court noted that the accused was in custody since February 9, 2021, with 14 days of remand in police custody. It said that a police plea for further incarceration for the sole purpose of voice sampling was not justifiable.

While granting the bail, the



judge directed the accused to deposit his passport with the investigating officer and appear before the police station as well as the court as and when required. On January

26, thousands of protesting farmers who reached ITO in Delhi from the Ghazipur border clashed with police, the agency claimed in its FIR registered in connection with the

Red Fort violence, adding that many of them who were driving tractors reached the Red Fort and entered the monument, where a religious flag was also hoisted. (PTI)

Prince Philip funeral to celebrate service to Queen, Britain

ADITI KHANNA
LONDON

THE royal ceremonial funeral of Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, will incorporate hymns and readings chosen by the late royal himself and focus on his "unwavering loyalty" to wife Queen Elizabeth II and service to Britain and the Commonwealth. The ceremony, which officially begins at St George's Chapel in Windsor Castle with a national minute's silence at 1500 local time on Saturday, will be a religious one though without any sermons, as planned by the Duke -- who passed away aged 99 last week on Friday.

"The Order of Service for the funeral was agreed with the Duke of Edinburgh during his lifetime, and reflects the Duke's military affiliations, and personal elements of His Royal Highness' life," Buckingham Palace said in a statement on Saturday. In his reading, the Dean of Windsor will say: "With grateful hearts, we remember the many ways in which his long life has been a blessing to us. 'We have been inspired by his unwavering loyalty to our Queen, by his service to the Nation and the Commonwealth, by his courage, fortitude and faith. 'Our lives have been enriched through the challenges that he has set us, the encouragement that he has given us, his kindness, humour and humanity.'"

The Queen marked the day with the release of one of her favourite photographs of her sitting on the grass alongside her late husband enjoying a day out in Scotland. The 94-year-old monarch was married to Prince Philip for 73 years and has previously referred to him as her "strength and stay". The service at the chapel on Saturday will be led by the Dean of Windsor and prayers will be said by the Dean and the Archbishop of Canterbury. A small choir of four will sing pieces of music chosen by the Duke and, in line with the coronavirus lockdown guidelines, the gathering has been asked not to sing along as is usual congregational ceremonies. No members of the royal family will give a reading and the entire congregation has been limited to just 30 people, who will be wearing face masks and remain socially distanced.

Downing Street has said that UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, like thousand others, will watch the service on a television from his countryside retreat Chequers after he had given up his place as a guest to the royal family. Among the songs picked out is the hymn 'Eternal Father, Strong To Save', traditionally associated with members of the Royal Navy such as the Duke.

According to details of the ceremonial funeral released by Buckingham Palace earlier in the week, the Duke's



From front left, Britain's Prince Charles, Princess Anne, Prince Andrew, Prince Edward, Prince William, Peter Phillips, Prince Harry, Earl of Snowdon and Tim Laurence follow the coffin in a ceremonial procession for the funeral of Britain's Prince Philip inside Windsor Castle in Windsor, England on Saturday. Prince Philip died April 9 at the age of 99 after 73 years of marriage to Britain's Queen Elizabeth II

coffin will travel in a bespoke Land Rover designed by him, with his children and grandchildren walking alongside. Those in the procession will include Prince Charles -- the Prince of Wales, Princess Anne -- the

Princess Royal, Prince Andrew -- the Duke of York, and Prince Edward -- the Earl of Wessex and Forfar. Grandchildren Princes William and Harry, said to be somewhat estranged, will also be walking behind

the vehicle separated by their cousin Peter Phillips, the son of Princess Anne. Vice Admiral Sir Tim Laurence, the husband of Princess Anne, and the Earl of Snowdon, the son of the Queen sister, will also be among

those who follow the funeral procession. The Queen will travel in the State Bentley in the procession, behind the family members on foot, before entering by a side door to the chapel.

Inside, she will be seated by herself under the social distancing guidelines. Others on the limited guest list include Prince Charles' wife Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, Prince William's wife Kate Middleton, all of Prince Philip's grandchildren and their spouses, and the children of the Queen's sister Princess Margaret. From the Duke's German heritage, the guests include Bernhard, the Hereditary Prince of Baden; Donatus, Prince and Landgrave of Hesse; and Prince Philipp of Hohenlohe-Langenburg. The Countess Mountbatten of Burma, previously known as Lady Romsey and Lady Brabourne, who was one of Prince Philip's closest friends, will also be in attendance. There will be a significant military theme to the funeral as the procession route will be lined by representatives from the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines, the Highlanders, and 4th Battalion Royal Regiment of Scotland and the Royal Air Force. Minute Guns will be fired by the King's Troop Royal Horse Artillery from the East Lawn of Windsor Castle for the duration of the procession. A selection of military medals, picked by the Duke himself, will appear on the altar inside the chapel.

IS SHARMILA A RAY OF HOPE FOR ANTI-TRS GROUPS?

Ninth April has been a huge mental exercise for all the people in both the Telugu speaking states. We know why it is so, because Sharmila, daughter of late Dr. YS Rajasekar Reddy, the people's leader, and the chief minister of undivided Andhra Pradesh from 2004 to 2009, conducted a public meeting named 'Sankalpa Shabha' in Khammam. The meeting was a great success, and the motto behind this meeting is known to all that Sharmila, sister of the present chief minister of Andhra Pradesh, YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, is going to form a new political party in Telangana. So, thinking about the formation of new politics in Telangana by a non-Telangani is a very big



mental exercise for all of us.

Having heard the speech by her in the Khammam meeting, some people have firmly come to a conclusion that she can defi-

nately stand by them to question the ruling party, besides having her own course of action to be implemented to develop the state how it was developed by her fa-

ther, who had introduced several welfare schemes such as Arogya Sri, Fee Reimbursement, Free Supply of Electricity to Farmers, the Waiver of Farmers' Loans, and Old Age Pensions for all the eligible candidates in the state.

So, remembering the days of her father's regime, they are of the opinion that she is a ray of hope as she happens to be the daughter of a leader who could protect all the deprived people when he had been the chief minister of Andhra Pradesh. In fact, in view of lots of people, her father was not merely a politician, but a true mass leader. Thus, this is a big advantage for her being the daughter of such a kind-hearted person.

— Dr Venkat Avula, Hyderabad



School-based assessment best

School-Based Assessment will facilitate the attainment of competencies of the students and it will assess the efficiency of the teaching-learning process within the broader educational philosophy of assessment for learning. In this mode of assessment, the schoolteachers will evaluate the achievement of the students' school as their unit.

The time has ripened to end the monopoly of the examination system on the education system and to think about a better practice that will make the student more interactive and expressive. Hence the academicians should think about the school-based assessment that will reduce stress on the system and its stakeholders. Is it not correct that "While assessment has the potential to improve the learning of all the students, historically it has acted as a barrier rather than a bridge to educational opportunity. Assessments have been used to label the students and put them in dead and end tracks" (What does the research say on assessment).

— E Gajendra Nath Reddy, Badvel

Kohli should behave responsibly

Winning and losing is common in sports and games. Those who win are happy, excited and enthused and those who lose feel unhappy and get a bit frustrated. But a real good loser neither gets unhappy nor frustrated but will be ready to fight back with the right spirit and work with all efforts to win the next game. Especially in cricket which is branded as the 'gentleman's game' players will have to have maximum restraint from showing their disappointment and frustration openly. Human it is to express one's emotion on the field but when it crosses the limit and that too when watched by millions of spectators each and every expression of the player will be noted and might have its effects on the viewers.

Captain Kohli, skipper of Royal Challengers Bangalore recently got so disappointed,

losing his wicket in an IPL match against Sunrisers Hyderabad, that he hit a chair after reaching his dug-out obviously showing that the captain was visibly frustrated.

The video has gone viral on social media. Virat Kohli is a

fantastic player no doubt and he has millions of cricket fans in India and abroad. The younger generation looks upon such cricketers as role models. Expressions of anger, disappointment, frustration will be aped by youngsters who lose their game and tasks. Sometimes this can hurt themselves and others too. Players, losing their cool when things don't go their way, were there in the past too but nowadays it seems as if players are getting vexed and resort to violent antics even for trivial matters. Whether it is the gentle man's game, the scintillating soccer game or any other, players must control themselves for aren't values like gentlemanliness, gallantry, discipline and sportsman spirit worthy principles that are taught by games and players?

— M Pradyu, Kannur



BJP likely to pip TMC in Bengal

There are good chances for the ruling party at the Centre to win the polls in West Bengal and Assam. Even though BJP is facing heat wave in the country because of lockdown, the star campaigners PM Modi and Shah will fetch majority of the seats required to form the government in two States. Trinamool Congress is facing heat wave in the West Bengal state because of lockdown.

Mamata Banerjee is trying to get sympathy votes in the state by sitting in the wheel-chair and acting as is her leg is really broken. She also campaigned sitting in the wheel-chair, which will fetch some sympathy seats for Trinamool Congress, but



this time BJP will get majority seats to form the government in West Bengal state. BJP will again get back to power in As-

sam even though lockdown impacts in the state.

— V Bhagirath Kumar, Hyderabad

PAST AND PRESENT

Losing touch with Mother Nature

C V SUKUMARAN

THE atmospheric temperature in Palakkad district of Kerala is soaring high and the heavy summer showers provided great relief. When the parched earth gets the summer showers to quench its thirst, there arises a sweet smell. The smell comes from the earth when the first raindrops fall on the scorched soil. I don't think that there is anybody who doesn't like the smell. And when the monsoon starts, the rain has no smell but only music and magic.

Within days, the rain dawns the summer ravaged greenery of the earth. The rain helps the earth to cover with its beautiful dress of verdure. The creepers and the thickets appear from nowhere. The trees and plants get renewed energy, foliage and beauty. What a magic! With a sudden touch of its magic wand, the rain performs myriad wonders.

Even if the torrential rain is fearsome, at night it is a lullaby which no other music can provide us. If there is pouring rain in the early morning, no school child loves to arise and go to school. They love to lie lazily on the bed under the blanket putting their hands between their legs and listening to the music of the rains.

In my childhood, we have had many spacious open places in our village. The most spacious of them consisted of level plains or meadows, little hillocks and rocks, full of black palm trees, very big mango trees and all around the open place, along the fences of the adjacent compounds, there were plenty of large bamboos clusters. The place used to be



both our playground and the grazing ground of our cattle. And the grassland was the habitat of many ground-nesting birds including lapwings and quails. And to see this place when it rains was also an ecstatic experience. The sound of the rain drops falling on the palm leaves, the swinging of the bamboos in the wind and the sound the swinging makes, the bowing down of the rain-drenched bamboo tops, and the clearly visible slanting raindrops all over the meadows were really used to captivate and thrill me.

One of the many wonders the rain used to perform in my village was to fill the paddy fields with enough water to be ploughed for paddy transplantation. Oxen would be yoked, and ploughs would be tied to the yokes and when the pairs of oxen were made to move cutting open the fertile soil with the plough, there would prevail the smell of the soil which a farmer loves more than his life. Rain was the lifeblood of the farmer who loved paddy and paddy cultivation. And we the children were not afraid of the rain—whether it was drizzling or pouring or torrential. I used to play in the drizzling rain, in the pouring rain and in the tor-

rential rain with thunder and lightning. I am farmer's son and the rain never made me and my friends sick.

Sustainable cultivation in my village was forced to give way to cash crops and real estate business and the lower middle class people like me landed on the shore of the government 'service' sector in our struggle to survive. Now I am 'secure' as I am in the government service! And our organic relationship with the soil, rain and Nature has been snapped. We don't allow our children to play in the rain as we as children were allowed to. We say that the rain will make our children sick.

In the past, the rain was a part of our life, now it is not. Children today don't see how paddy is sown, how it sprouts, how paddy stalks come out of the plants, how it is harvested, how it is threshed. They see the rice, but they don't know from where it comes and how it comes. They only know that it is purchased and they think anything can be purchased if you have cash. They don't know that we will be able to buy the rice only if somebody produces it, only if it is cultivated, only if there are farmers and only if it rains.

Versatile Vivek no more

Tamil comedy actor Vivek passed away even before reaching 60 years. He was an ardent follower of ex-President A P J Abdul Kalam. Was involved in planting thousands and thousands of trees involving students. Have acted with almost all leading actors and have acted in 220+ movies. His comedies used to propagate revolutionary ideas and was a take on the current social system. Vivek has won many State Filmfare awards and also Padmashri.

Starting his career as a short



duty telephone operator, entering into state government service in the Secretariat with TNPS, and then entering into the film world capturing the hearts of all,

applying his actions in real life, contributing to the rationalist ideology without hurting anyone, taking tragedy in personal life in his own stride. This true artiste cum social activist is a true phenomenon very few could match. Irreparable loss to film fraternity, fans, public at large and to the environment to which his contribution is unparalleled. We are so touched by his demise. May his soul attain peace and Om Shanti.

— C K Subramaniam, Chennai

We lack good governance to address problems of people

Now there is not even an iota of doubt in the minds of people that the dreaded virus, in its second attack on Indians, is showing the signs of being more harmful than ever before by spreading its tentacles in a frightening way which is not only causing spread of infections like wildfire but also laying bare the inadequacies of our health care system which is grappling with ever increasing number of Covid patients with serious symptoms unheard hitherto. (Cases to double in Maha in 15 days: CM & Covid second wave hits Indian kids with severe symptoms - THI, 17 April).

It is highly disturbing that we are breaking all records of the world in letting the virus go berserk. Why have our political leaders, ruling classes who put a grand show before people with their empty promises, futile assurances and high decibel rhetoric failed miserably to save the health, lives, incomes from being shattered by the barbaric virus despite being warned promptly and timely by experts of pandemic containment and also by WHO?

It is glaringly obvious and evident in our country that the political leadership is more interested and is busy in luring more and more voters into its fold with deceptive electoral slogans to capture or retain power with no focus, vision, roadmap and action programme on what they are elected. (No doubt, they are

elected and are running the governments to improve living standards of people by initiating effective measures for improvement in incomes, infrastructure, education, health care, nutrition levels, safety of women and enabling environment for exercising freedoms, liberties and rights.)

It is really frustrating to see our country being shorn of good governance that addresses the burning problems of the people. Now, the social, political and economic future of India looks bleak in the wake of the dangerous slide in political management being witnessed now. Apparently, it is political mismanagement that gave more teeth to the virus to attack the people with renewed vigour to push the fragile healthcare system into chaos. It is a million dollar question whether it is the mutating virus or the political ineptitude that made the lives of toiling masses more miserable.

Whatever may be the answer, it is right time for the people of the country to realize that their enemies are not the fellow citizens belonging to other religions, other regions and other cultures. Obviously, the real enemies of Indians are poverty, pandemic, backwardness, unemployment, lack of unity, brotherhood and harmony among themselves. The faster they know this reality, the better for the future of India because that realisation and awareness of people would certainly pave the way for the misdeeds



and misadventures of political leadership being questioned by the people of mature vision and that would definitely lead not only to establish better standards in governance but also to make ruling classes accountable to their words and deeds.

— Narne Raveendra Babu, Hyderabad

Ramu Sarma's writeup "All of us responsible for this spike in Covid cases" (THI April 17) is more than a fact. The main cause of Covid spike jumping from one stage to another stage is solely attributable to negligent attitude of people. How long can governments advise and warn the people to adhere to safety norms? Wearing helmet is for personal safety while covering mouth and nose with a standard mask is for the safety of others.

Second variant wave is more

dangerous than first one. Known to this, we are adamant and connecting this contagion to many leading to hospitalisation, high expenditure and also inviting risk of death. Unbearable to bear the brunt, some distressed families are resorting to extreme steps. This is the most pathetic situation ever never faced in the past decades. This catastrophe will be recorded as an indelible big tragic era in the history of humankind.

Belief on God starts where science ends. Al-manaic pundits predict that pandemic will slowly vanish from this May end. Predictions are based on certain astronomical calculations which may be differed by other pundits and scientists. We have seen last year Ugadi Sarvari means 'darkness'

and it showed its true colour on our lives. The name of this year Ugadi is Plava means 'boat' or 'ship' which means take us to other shore safely. But sad to say the prevalent Covid infection is devouring more denizens than before. India has crossed its borders of United States and standing second after Brazil in covid affected number. We can imagine the seriousness that most of the big hospitals are converted into Covid hospitals. Reduction of cases a few months ago felt comfortable to government and that enabled India to export our vaccines to other countries and we are now running shortage as vaccination is made mandatory to above forty five age. Indiscipline among us costs

our precious lives. Whom to blame? All of us are responsible for this spike in Covid cases. There is absolutely no doubt about it. Yes the virus is air borne also as confirmed by experts. Then containing this pandemic will be very very cumbersome. Remedy is in the hands of each and every individual. Governments should also view this spiking problem seriously and initiate strict measures to extinguish this burning problem.

— Dr N S R Murthy, Secunderabad

This refers to the THI Editorial 'Disastrous times indeed! (April 17). It is true that humans have little or no control over natural disasters. But, it is imperative to learn lessons from such disasters to meaningfully prepare to face them when they occur again. But to throw caution to the winds, and be reluctant to learn from experience, will only make humans worse than the lowest strata among animals, in the animal kingdom. This is true of the Covid-19 pandemic that the country and world has been facing for more than a year now.

Such, silly and irresponsible behaviour on our part will only lead to complicating things despite the Government's sincerity and zeal to control the pandemic from the further spread. The wanton and callous behaviour on part of the general public to do exactly the opposite thing that the health experts always wanted

them to do, by way of following basic precautions against the Covid-19 - by constantly covering the nose and mouth using a mask, and not to be part of a crowd; constantly go unheeded and uncared for, by ushering in more complications and helping in the spread of the pandemic, to go out of hand as it has already happened now.

This general attitude that is being watched in several states of the country, in states like Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh by people is solely responsible for the dangerous spread of the pandemic that has resulted in more and more cases being reported in the country, and increasing deaths of people falling prey to the pandemic which has resulted in a heavy rush and a waiting list at the crematoriums making it impossible to give a decent adieu to the departed. The personal precautions and hygiene measure have to be in place as long as the situation prevails let us never, ever forget this.

Let us not do anything to defeat the well-meaning plans of the establishment in lowering the cases in the country by meaningful and rational cooperation, while goading and warning others who do not comply, and follow the basic rules in preventing in order to keep away the pandemic at an arm's length, before some kind of fool proof rescue measures emerge, worldwide.

— K R Parvathy, Mysuru

‘Whipless’ GVG’s knockout blow to ‘leash-less’ Seshan

MALLADI RAMA RAO

DR GVG Krishnamurthy, former Election Commissioner of India, passed away on Wednesday, April 14, due to age related ill-ness. He was 86. He had been unwell in recent months particularly after a fall at his Kausambi (Delhi suburb) residence.

GVG, as he was popularly known, was a lawyer by profession and training. He had authored a book on diplomacy, which has been prescribed as a must-read text in several universities across the world. During his long innings in government, GVG was close to Indira Gandhi, who had sent him to UN General Assembly as a member of Indian Parliamentary delegation once.

Rajiv Gandhi government, however, side-lined him and shunted him to the Law Commission as Member – Secretary. In the wake of Bhopal Gas tragedy, he played a stellar role in the legal team that had fought against American multinational, Union Carbide, in the American courts for a handsome compensation to the victims.

GVG’s lasting contribution is in the field of elections. As the Election Commissioner (October 1, 1993 to September 30, 1999) he stood up to the “tyranny” of Chief Election Commissioner, TN Seshan, known as the Alsatian for his style of working and speaking.

Fight with Seshan

GVG - Seshan fight became a part of Lutyen’s Delhi’s folklore, and ended up in the Supreme Court, which gave equal status to the three Election Commissioners. It was a knockout blow to Seshan, who used to stoop low (he got the phone lines cut once) to settle scores with fellow ECs, MS Gill and GVG.

When the judgement came, Seshan was in the US to renew his Green Card. A reporter asked GVG if he expected Seshan to cut short his US visit and return home.

Pat came the reply: “He can cut short everything except his tongue”. At the same presser, when asked about Seshan’s telephone number in the US, he re-



marked: “I am not anyone’s agent. Least of all a small-time vegetable seller’s”. The dig was a reference to Seshan promoting Safal frozen vegetables in a TV commercial.

Making Election Commission a three-member body was Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao’s idea to cut to size “Alsatian” Seshan, who had instilled fear in the hearts of politicians of all hues. GVG was a good friend of Rao and their friendship dates back to their time in Hyderabad. Both travelled together to Delhi and enrolled as lawyers in the High Court in the late 1950s.

“No. PV did not choose me as EC. Pranab Mukherjee and several other Union Ministers prevailed over PV to send me to checkmate Seshan”, GVG told me in a free-wheeling interview some years later. Till he entered Nirvachan Sadan, GVG and Seshan were good friends, and their two families bonded well in their cultural and spiritual quest, besides love for music.

As Election Commissioner, GVG endeared himself with the field staff – district level Election officers, who are also the district magistrates. After every election during his Nirvachan Sadan days, he wrote a personal letter to each one of them and the district police chief commending them, and made the letters a part of the personal record of the officers concerned.

Well, there is no need to say that he became a darling of the district level IAS officers across the country. This ability to build personal rapport at the ground level helped GVG to conduct a



free, fair and fearless election in Jammu and Kashmir in the post-Rao era. Prime Minister Rao wanted to hold the Kashmir election but he blocked the plan as a protest against Rao’s ways.

Prez election-Lokayukta

Whip-free Presidential and Vice-Presidential election is GVG’s lasting contribution. “A whip isn’t free and fair”, he asserted and earned the wrath of political parties in the early days of coalition era (1997) but he stood his ground, making it clear that the voters (law makers) in the Prez election cannot be forced to vote to particular candidate by party bosses by issuing a whip. This decree has since become a part of Prez election process.

GVG could have entered the Rashtrapati Bhavan in the 2017 presidential election but luck deserted him with issues like caste and North-South equation in full play.

Born in a middle-class Brahmin family at Chirala in the pres-



ent-day Andhra Pradesh, he earned a first class with Gold Medal in his quest for a law degree. As a practicing lawyer in Hyderabad, he taught in the local Law College, Shivraj Patil, who went on to become Lok Sabha Speaker and Union Home Minister, was one of his illustrious students.

Today’s Lok Ayukta institution was an idea GVG had presented at a national law meet with Jawaharlal Nehru in attendance. “Panditji asked for my paper. He took it home to study... Well, now, after so many years, Lok Ayukta has become a reality,” GVG told me.

A self-made man and a good speaker, GVG moved in the Delhi circles as a close ally of stalwarts like Krishna Menon and Damodaram Sanjivayya. He was a mentor to many upcoming leaders on the social and cultural scene in his capacity as the patron of several voluntary organisations.

He and noted Parliamentarian, Bhisma Narain Singh, who had helped Indira Gandhi in breaking up Morarji’s Janata Party were inseparable on the cultural circuit. Death of Singh a couple of years ago affected him and his loneliness doubled after he met with an accident and became confined to bed at home.

GVG leaves behind wife, Padma, a son, GV Rao, a Delhi-based senior advocate, and a daughter, who has settled with her husband in France.

(*The writer is a veteran journalist and commentator. He collaborated with GVG in his fight against Seshan)

Climate action for people and planet: The time is now

ANTÓNIO GUTERRES

In this pivotal year for humanity, now is the time for bold climate action.

The science is irrefutable and globally agreed: to stop the climate crisis from becoming a permanent catastrophe, we must limit global heating to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

To do this, we must get to net zero emissions of greenhouse gases by mid-century. Countries making up about two-thirds of the global economy have committed to do so. This is encouraging, but we urgently need every country, city, business and financial institution to join this coalition and adopt concrete plans for transitioning to net zero.

Even more urgent is for governments to match this long-term ambition with concrete actions now, as trillions of dollars are mobilized to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic. Revitalizing economies is our chance to re-engineer our future.

The world has a strong framework for action: the Paris Agreement, in which all countries committed to set their own national climate action plans and strengthen them every five years. Over five years later, and with damning proof that if we don’t act we will destroy our planet, it is time for decisive and effective action as the United Nations convenes all countries in Glasgow in November for COP26.

The new national plans must cut global greenhouse gas pollution by at least 45 per cent by 2030 compared to 2010 levels. Many have been presented already, and set out clearer policies to adapt to the impacts of climate change and boost access to renewable energy.

But so far, those plans achieve less than a 1 per cent cut in emissions. This is a true red alert for people and planet.

In the months ahead, beginning with the upcoming Leaders Summit hosted by the United States, governments must dramatically step up their ambitions – particularly the biggest-emitting countries that have caused the vast bulk of the crisis.

Phasing out coal from the electricity sector is the single most important step to get in line with the 1.5-degree goal. Immediate action to remove the dirtiest, most polluting fossil fuel from power sec-



tors offers our world a fighting chance.

Global coal use in electricity generation must fall by 80 per cent below 2010 levels by 2030. This means that developed economies must commit to phase out coal by 2030; other countries must do this by 2040. There is simply no reason for any new coal plants to be built anywhere. One third of the global coal fleet is already more costly to operate than building new renewables and storage. COP26 must signal an end to coal.

As the world moves toward clean air and renewable energy, it is essential that we ensure a just transition. Workers in impacted industries and the informal sector must be supported as they move jobs or reskill. We must also unleash the vast power of women and girls to drive transformation, including as equal participants in governance and decision-making.

The countries that contributed least to climate change are suffering many of the worst impacts. Many small island nations will simply cease to exist if we don’t step up the response. The developed countries must deliver on their commitments to provide and mobilize \$100 billion annually by:

- doubling current levels of climate finance;
- devoting half of all climate finance to adaptation;
- stopping the international funding of coal; and
- shifting subsidies from fossil fuels to renewable energy.

The G7 Summit in June offers

the opportunity for the world’s wealthiest countries to step up and provide the necessary financial commitments that will ensure the success of COP26.

While governments must lead, decision-makers everywhere have a vital role to play.

I ask all multilateral and national development banks, by COP26, to have clear policies in place to fund the COVID recovery and the transition to resilient economies in developing countries, taking into account crippling debt levels and huge pressures on national budgets.

Many local governments and private business have committed to net zero emissions by 2050, and have engaged in significant reviews of their business models. I urge all to set ambitious targets and policies.

I encourage young people everywhere to continue to raise their voices for action to address climate change, protect biodiversity, stop humanity’s war on nature and accelerate efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Time is running out, and there is much hard work ahead, but this no time to raise the white flag. The United Nations will keep flying our blue flag of solidarity and hope. This Earth Day and over the crucial months ahead, I urge all nations and all people to rise together to this moment.

(The author is Secretary-General of the United Nations)

SEEKING SUPPORT



Devotees perform rituals on the bank of Ganga river during the 'Chaiti Chhath' festival, in Patna on Saturday

Is the new Russian legislation like the old dictator’s rule?

FATIMA HASAN

When the whole world, in one sweep, is engaged in dealing with the deadly Corona virus, Russia is one country which seems to have taken undue advantage of the situation as its President Vladimir Putin has amended the Constitution to stay put in the office.

The country now has passed a legislation that allows the incumbent president to run for two more terms, thus allowing any future candidate a chance of four terms from two terms of bygone time. Now, the six-year tenure of the present Prez, if re-elected two more times, can go on till 2036 when he becomes an 84-year old. Thus, it obstructs the young generation from taking the lead and it more or less turns out to be like the old dictatorship rule or military junta that sits for years and decades.

Although the landmark decision was taken after a referendum, the regime’s rule becomes monotonous. It does not allow for more reforms and people will not experience different regimes. Moreover, it allows for lifetime immunities to the former presidents which are too bad for the nation that was once a Communist superpower.

It will also have an influence on the countries and politics across the globe. Nothing can be worse if the other countries, too, decide to adopt a similar kind of legislation. Particularly, for a country like India as there was, many a time, talk of changing our parliamentary democracy into presidential system of governance. And, if that happens, then the day is not far away for India to have such legislation in place for executive President with four terms.

On the other side, when we consider the popularity and the good moves that Vladimir has undertaken in last few years, then such legislation seems good but nobody



can be sure when mighty power can change a person into a tyrant.

Even his administration is accused of charges that Putin had led the interference programme against Hilary Clinton and in support of Donald Trump during the US Presidential elections in 2016. The annexation of Crimea under his administration is understood to mean that his foreign policy had shifted “from State-driven foreign policy” to taking an offensive stance to recreate the Soviet Union. Moreover, his policy shift is perceived as one where Putin is trying to defend nations in Russia’s sphere of influence from “encroaching Western powers.”

Just like how his former counterpart Donald Trump is known for destroying democracy, he too is labelled as ‘power grabber’ and for ‘democracy’s backsliding’ by the commentators. Also, a close look at his political journey reveals that he has been an active head of the country as Prime Minister or the President since August 1999 and that means he has already fin-

ished 21 years into administration and has now secured the office for another 15 years just like any dictator does.

Apart from this, the amendments include sweeping changes to the Constitution, including allowing Putin to run again for two more six-year Presidential terms and enshrining social measures on pensions and welfare State as well as conservative ones such as constitutionally banning same sex marriage, ensuring patriotic education in schools, prohibiting explicit mentioning of faith in God and placing the Constitution above international law. Placing the country’s interest over diplomatic relations has always been the sign of autocratic rule.

Commenting on the developments in Russian politics said Shakerel Kareemi, an observer based in USA: “When we view Putin’s political journey; he first worked for Intelligence wing (KGB) and other offices and did not actually jump into mainstream administrative role. But when he started with Pre-

iership back then in 1999, he actually very tactfully stabilised the country and revived its political and security issues. And, thus, he became popular in his handling of the internal and external affairs. But, subsequently, he started crushing the opposition and democratic institutions. So, in a way, it can be said that Russia is already under an authoritarian regime. This move is just blatant way of conforming to it.”

As one of the amendments includes the placing of domestic law over international law, Russia’s relations are bound to change with the other countries. If the media is not given free will to present the news and the other democratic institutions are not revived back to what they were, then surely Russia is again going to go back to becoming a new version of the Soviet Union within next decade. Since it is just the provision of ‘consecutive 4 terms’ and not otherwise, it is still open to the Russian citizens to choose their leader.

Indian pharma cos excel despite challenges

SANTOSH PATNAIK
VISAKHAPATNAM

EVEN after Covid-19 pandemic has cast its shadow on several sectors by hitting their finances, the Indian pharmaceutical industry has done exceedingly well. When the global pharma market is negatively grown by 1-2 per cent in 2020, there is a big surge in demand for Indian made generics owing to its quality and affordability. Drug formulations and biologicals is the second largest principal commodity being exported by India.

As per the quick estimates shared by the Department of Commerce, Government of India, drugs and pharmaceutical exports for the FY-21

(April 2020-March 2021) has touched \$24.44 billion with a record growth of 18.07 per cent. Exports during FY 2020 was \$20.58 billion with growth rate of 7.57 per cent.

"We have observed a big leap in our exports in the month of March 2021 which is \$ 2.3billion (figures for March are provisional) and is the highest among the exports of all the months of this financial year. The growth rate for this month is 48.5 per cent against the exports in March 2020 (\$ 1.54 billion). Growth rate seems relatively big as the exports of March 2020 was crunched due to lockdown across the world and supply chain disruption," said a media note issued by Uday Bhaskar, Director Gen-

eral, Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council of India (Pharmexcil).

When contacted, he told Bizz Buzz on Saturday that as per the projections, if everything goes well, the pharma sector was expected to achieve a turnover of US\$30 billion during the current fiscal. While Hyderabad has earned the name of bulk drug capital of India, Visakhapatnam, being developed as the executive capital of Andhra Pradesh is emerging as a prominent hub with Jawaharlal Nehru Pharma City developed by Ramky under PPP and big players like Reddy's, Aurobindo Pharma, Divi's, Mylan and Pfizer have set up their facilities in and around Visakhapatnam.

FTCCI, CTE to set up skill development centre

HYDERABAD

THE Federation of Telangana Chambers of Commerce and Industry-FTCCI has organised a webinar on understanding the benefits of apprenticeship for employers. Chief Guest, Navin Mittal, IAS, Commissioner of Collegiate and Technical Education, Government of Telangana has said that concept of Apprenticeship started in Germany and Australia has played an important role in industrialisation.

The FTCCI is likely to sign an MoU with Department of Collegiate and Technical Education for setting up of the skill development centre.

Eminent speakers who participated in the webinar are: Paul Edward, Assistant Director, Board of Apprenticeship Training (SR), Hyderabad Division, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Government of India and Chanda Vadde, South Regional SPoC, Retailers Association's Skill Council of India (RASCI).

Ramakanth Inani, President of FTCCI said that the National Policy of Skill De-

velopment and Entrepreneurship has been focusing on the apprenticeship as one of the key programs for creating skilled manpower in India. Industry can play a key role in improving the employability of the students by providing ap-



(L-R) Ravi Kumar, Ramakanth Inani, Navin Mittal, Bhaskar Reddy, Anil Agarwal

prenticeships in their respective organisations. Government of India has implemented Apprenticeship Act in 1961 and apprentices played a key role in industrial progress in India too during 1970s and 1980s but slowed down during the last two decades. In 2018 a huge shift has been taken from theoretical learning to practical learning. The National Skill Development Corporation has mandated industrial training as it creates hand on job experience to the apprentices.

Living in a co-Covid world - A year on

One of the most significant resurgences for us has been our ability to reconstruct



Viiveck Verma

LIVING with a pandemic has become glaringly emblematic of human resilience, as we observe one year of lockdowns imposed to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus. Covid-19 brought our dynamic and effervescent world to a halting screech and in the face of daunting challenges, human society pulled off several strategic measures. While vaccines are available at the moment, the trouble is far from over with mass vaccination and efficacy being contentious matters and the rise of a potential second wave of the viral spread. However, in hope of the crisis ending at a near moment in the future, let us go through significant changes and milestones humanity pulled off while living in a co-Covid world, with the unprecedented adversities of the pandemic.

One of the most significant resurgences for us has been our ability to reconstruct. We have rebuilt almost all structures of social engagement, and taken the time to assess our flaws in the pre-Covid realities. As we came to terms with our co-Covid existence, unimagined ways of survival and resistance were ushered in. The new normal has seen education, work and entertainment to shift to largely online domains and some innovations in this regard are worthy and likely to stay.

Office hours from 9-5 almost seem like a thing of the past with the work-from-home regime firmly in place. As Lewis Dartnell, writing for BBC notes, "What may emerge



What may emerge in the longer term is a more dynamic approach to work, combining office hours where necessary – for team meetings, for example – with remote work for solo tasks. Workers no longer need to remain within commuting distance of the office, but can live wherever most convenient or desirable

in the longer term is a more dynamic approach to work, combining office hours where necessary – for team meetings, for example – with remote work for solo tasks. Workers no longer need to remain within commuting distance of the office, but can live wherever most convenient or desirable." This would mean a general decline in troubles related to transportation, time management and the well-being of employees as they could suit their immediate requirements while working. Education is the other arena of digital innovation as classes shifted online, exams were written remotely and projects carried out through a limited reliance on physical presence and interaction. Research and studies did not stop in the face of danger, as technology enabled

us to reinvent academic endeavours altogether. As we proceed to bridge digital divides, this could be a gigantic stride in ensuring the accessibility of education to all.

The pandemic also reshaped the meaning of art and entertainment in our lives. Left with ourselves, we were compelled to rely on cinema, television, music and literature to help us stay afloat. It also caused the emergence of innovative and unforeseen creative highs. Artists derived inspiration from the crisis and presented brilliant work to the world. Consumption of art found new ways to manifest itself, as exemplified by Quartz India reporting BookMyShow claiming that they had over 750 content in-home offerings in the first three months of the lockdown. Similarly, perform-

ances from across the globe were streamed and made available to a larger audience than the limited numbers accommodated in physical spaces.

There have been noteworthy developments in the arena of healthcare as well, as Covid-19 shed light on problems with existing healthcare regimes. For instance as KPMG notes, traditionally, aged care services had not been seen as a part of the health system. Now, many governments have recognised this oversight and are taking action. With such changes and reconstructions, the post-Covid world seems to be a world with better preparedness to handle social crises in general.

In the more intimate spheres of life, reconstruction and upheaval has been the most evident. While lock-

downs caused unprecedented isolation for people and a host of difficult mental health situations, it also provided opportunities to people to reconnect with their lives and rediscover fulfilment. In the absence of immediate mobility, people could reflect on their lives and engage in not just rejuvenating their bonds with people but also in finding individual satisfaction through a number of everyday activities. The time in isolation was utilized for learning new skills, taking stock of one's health and connecting with people. Time spent outside social obligations and professional engagements allowed people to work on themselves. Consequently, post-lockdown contexts saw people continue with healthy routines and a renewed sense of responsibility and attachment with people.

In a survey conducted by Forbes, participants were asked if they would live through 2020 again and a surprising 47 percent said that they would. This is symbolic of the unparalleled opportunity the lockdowns provided despite misery and mental agony. While the struggle seems to continue with the danger of a second wave looming over our heads, we have arguably chased past the most difficult hurdle- the hesitation to restructure our lives when faced with calamity.

We currently live with the virus very much around but as our Co-Covid trajectory shows, we will live beyond it. We are a renewed, intrepid and irrepressible society which can reassess, bend and recreate our own fortune. To this end, after one year of the lockdown, we are ready for adversity and primed for a secure and glorious future.

(The author is Founder, Upurge Global, and Senior Advisor, Telangana State Innovation Council)

How 5G turning a disruptive innovation

FWA will be the most important use case of 5G in our country



L Anantharam

MORE than hundred commercial 5G Networks have been rolled out across the world in sixty countries.

5G has three technology buckets:

1. Enhanced Mobile Broad Band (eMBB)
2. Massive Machine Type communication (mMTC)
3. Ultra Reliable Low Latency communication (uRLLC)

For eMBB, Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented reality are the applications apart from high speed broadband. Fixed wireless access (FWA) will be the most important use case of 5G in our country.

Machine Type communication and Reliable Low Latency communication will have killer applications and will have many takers though they require more time to mature. Whereas, the utilisation of VR and AR technologies on 5G will be a 'reality' sooner! In manufacturing, training & education and health sectors VR/AR technologies find good applications.

MTC connects machines, sensors, actuators, vehicles, robots and drones to support a large range of applications and services. In implementation of Smart cities, this technology finds application. It will enable lot of industrial use cases like smart manufacturing, automating the shop floor, tracking of assets, automating factories etc. 5G MTC brings lot of benefits to the IOT which are not available with 4G. 5G can support a massive number of static and mobile IoT (Internet of Things) devices which have a diverse range of speed, Bandwidth and QoS requirements.

The applications of uRLLC are car platooning, remote machinery control, drone navigation, gaming and tele surgery. These applications need zero latency and 5G has near zero latency.

In 5G data rates will be 20 Gbps. The frequency bands of 5G services are classified in to FR1 and FR2 frequency ranges. FR1 (4.1 GHz to 7.125 GHz) is used for carrying most of the traditional cellular mobile traffic. FR2 (24.25 GHz to 52.6GHz) is used for short range and high data rate applications

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The frequency bands are also classified as:

- Low band 600-2300 MHz
- Mid band 2300-5000 MHz
- High band 26 GHz -28 GHz

Airwaves in 600 MHz would be relevant to India as 70 per cent people live in rural areas. This band has good propagation characteristics and requires fewer infrastructures.

For 5G network, Optical fibre or Microwave (E band and V band) back haul will be used for offloading data traffic. Spectrum in the E bands (70-100 GHz) and V band (40-60GHz) have various technological/economic benefits. 5G will utilise 3 new technologies; massive MIMO (Multi Input Multi Output), beam forming and cognitive radio (a radio that can be programmed and configured dynamically to use the best wireless channels in its vicinity to avoid user interference and congestion) to offer higher data speeds as compared to the current 4G technology.

MIMO technology in 4G involves four antennas at transmitter and receiver sections whereas massive MIMO in 5G involves sixty four antennas.

There are two technologies for implementing 5G: 3GPP RIT (Third Generation Partnership Project Radio Interface Technology) which is an international standard and TSDSI (Telecom Standard Development Society of India) RIT. 3GPP uses 700 MHz band with 6Km (ISD inter site distance).

TSDSI RIT supports large cell low mobility (LCLM) of 12Km radius. This technology is ideal for rural areas. It uses 3.4 GHz band. Hand set battery will have long life. This technology is compatible with 3GPP handsets and equipment.

For allotment of 26-28 GHz for 5G service, Department of Space (DOS) is objecting. This is ideal band for ultra high speed broadband and TSPs prefer it. 3250 MHz band width is available in this band as compared to 175 MHz in 3.5 GHz band. DOS is demanding to cut down transmission power of 5G BTS from 60 dbm to 37 dbm so that satellite services can work without any interference from 5G mobile networks. This restriction on the transmitted power of 5G BTS will reduce the hop length increasing the investment costs by 16 times making the 5G services unavailable. ITU has upheld the view of Telecom industry. Frequency/Space (spacing between 5G BTS and Satellite Earth Stations) coordination is required between DOT and DOS so that both services can coexist. For 5G, telcos would need to focus on fibre back haul which is critical. Tower fiberisation has to be improved.

5G roll out may be reality as government has reduced notice period to six months (from one year) for offering any new technology using the spectrum being put up for auction. The seven frequency bands that will be auctioned are 700MHz, 800MHz, 900 MHz, 1800 MHz, 2100 MHz, 2300 MHz and 2500 MHz. Government wants Telcos to adopt Indian core for 5G net work. All communications on a 5G Network are encrypted with keys stored in the core implying

that they can't be read by base stations. This makes the core critical from data security point of view.

5G Test Bed is ready. 5G trials are likely to start in 2 to 3 months. Spectrum will be allotted by WPC for six months for trials. These trials are essential prerequisite for building 5G ecosystem. Telcos and gear vendors are currently working on 5G use cases in health care, agriculture, automotive and education verticals. DOT is working with different ministries for setting up of India specific 5G Use Case Labs (UCLs) in areas like education, health care, agriculture and public safety. Institute of Development and Research in Banking Technology (IDRBT), an Institute under RBI, in collaboration with Department of Financial Services has come forward for setting up a 5G Use Case Lab in Banking, Financial Services and Insurance (BFSI).

Airtel has demonstrated 5G services at Hyderabad on a commercial network using 1800 MHz spectrum through Non Stand Alone (NSA) network technology sharing spectrum with 4G service. In NSA architecture, the control signalling of 5G Radio Network is connected to 4G core while in SA architecture 5G Radio is connected directly to 5G core network.

JIO is expected to launch 5G services with SA architecture in the second half of 2021. Even after the entry of 5G into Indian networks, 2G/3G/4G will continue to remain in use and it may take 10 or more years to phase out.

(The author is retired Advisor, Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Government of India)

QUIZ NO.
169

HANS BIZ QUIZ

190 Years of University of Alabama



1. In August 1819, the board of trustees met to begin planning the new University. When was the University of Alabama established through an act of the Alabama legislature?

- a) 18 April 1821
- b) 19 April 1820
- c) 18 December 1820
- d) 19 December 1822

2. More than a thousand acres were procured and allotted for the University of Alabama campus from a field of competitors on 29 December 1827. Where was the University established?

- a) Montgomery
- b) Birmingham
- c) Bessemer
- d) Tuscaloosa

3. The University of Alabama began operations with four faculty members and 94 students. Identify the date the University opened for the academic session?

- a) 20 April 1825
- b) 19 April 1828
- c) 18 April 1831
- d) 17 April 1830

4. Which famous architect designed the campus of Alabama University?

- a) Robert Adam
- b) William Nichols
- c) Cosmas Damian Asam
- d) John Soane

5. Which of the below were offered to Freshmen in the first academic year of the Alabama University?

- a) Latin, Mathematics
- b) Greek, orthography
- c) Geography, English Grammar, History
- d) All of the above

6. Identify the first president of the Alabama

University?

- a) Alva Woods
- b) Matthew Fontaine Maury
- c) William Stokes
- d) Nathaniel Thomas Lupton

7. For many years, there were no women students at the University. When did the management committee of Alabama University allow the enrolment and admit women to the classes?

- a) April 1842
- b) May 1838
- c) June 1893
- d) March 1843

8. Which Museums are not located in the University of Alabama's campus area?

- a) The Mildred Westervelt Warner Transportation Museum
- b) Neues Museum, Rodin Museum
- c) Moundville Archaeological Park, Paul W. Bryant Museum
- d) The Alabama Museum of Natural History

9. The University of Alabama is the alma mater of numerous notable people in politics, sports, business, entertainment, science, art, and literature. Which famous author is an alumnus of the University?

- a) Agatha Christie
- b) Harper Lee
- c) Charlotte Bronte
- d) Jane Austen

10. Which of the below are not University of Alabama's alumni?

- a) George Wallace, Politician
- b) E.O. Wilson, American biologist & naturalist
- c) Jimmy Wales, Wikipedia founder
- d) Larry Sanger, Wikipedia founder

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

Q01 B6 B8 C2 V9 Q5 B7 C8 Q2 C1

INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE

Buoyant RCB take on KKR, look to keep clean sheet

CHENNAI

AFTER winning two out of their first two matches, Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) would look to make it three out of three when they take on Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) in their next encounter at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium here on Sunday afternoon.

Spin will be a crucial weapon again for RCB as KKR showed their inability to cope with spin in their previous match against Mumbai Indians, giving away four wickets to leg-spinner Rahul Chahar.

RCB left-arm spinner Shahbaz Ahmed played a crucial role on a sticky pitch in the match against SunRisers Hyderabad as he made the ball turn and forced the SRH batsmen to throw away their wickets.

With KKR also possessing a very strong spin bowling line-up, the performance of spinners from the two sides could very well decide the course of Sunday's first match.

This will also be the first match of this season to be played in the afternoon and have a 3.30 p.m. start. Naturally, the dew factor will not come into play.

Match starts at 3.30pm

On the contrary, the latter part of the match could see the ball swing as the temperature dips.

RCB skipper Virat Kohli, who has got identical scores of 33 (29 balls) in the first two matches, will look to get his first half-century of the season.

It wouldn't be surprising to see KKR captain Eoin Morgan, who employed his spinners to bowl five of the first six overs against MI, use spin early against the opening duo of Kohli and Devdutt Padikkal, both of whom relish the ball coming onto the bat.



After demoralising losses DC, PBKS look for a win

MUMBAI

AFTER a disheartening loss against Rajasthan Royals, Delhi Capitals (DC) would look to get back on track against a Punjab Kings (PBKS) side that is coming off a demoralising loss against Chennai Super Kings (CSK). DC are likely to feature South African pace bowler Anrich Nortje in their match on Sunday.

Nortje, who has received the all-clear after suffering a Covid-19 positive scare, on Saturday said that Delhi Capitals don't have much to worry about despite the loss.

The Rishabh Pant-led DC side which got off to a flying start by thrashing CSK in the first match suffered a meltdown in the next match on Thursday as they lost to Rajasthan Royals despite having them on the mat at 42 for five.

By allowing RR to chase down 147 after reducing them to 42 for five, DC revealed a serious inability to finish off the match. PBKS, on the other hand, had a miserable outing on Friday night against CSK who restricted the K.L. Rahul-led Punjab franchise to just 106/8 in 20 overs and then cruised to a six-wicket win.

PBKS have been inconsistent with the bat so far. While they got off to a flying start in the first match, making 221 with stupendous batting performances from skipper Rahul and Deepak Hooda, they fell flat against the swing bowling of Deepak Chahar on Friday night.

They will have their task cut out against a DC pace bowling line-up that comprises Kagiso Rabada. Anrich Nortje, who has been cleared after a Covid-19 scare could share the new ball with Rabada although young Madhya Pradesh pacer Avesh Khan has impressed in the first two outings. PBKS's biggest concern would be the form of their opener Mayank Agarwal, who has failed in both the matches so far. (IANS)

Match starts at 7.30pm

SQUADS

Kolkata Knight Riders

Shubman Gill, Nitish Rana, Tim Seifert (wicket-keeper), Rahul Tripathi, Rinku Singh, Dinesh Karthik (wicket-keeper), Eoin Morgan (captain), Andre Russell, Sunil Narine, Varun CV, Kuldeep Yadav, Pat Cummins, Lockie Ferguson, Kamlesh Nagarkoti, Shivam Mavi, Sandeep Warrier, Prasidh Krishna, Shakib Al Hasan, Sheldon Jackson, Vaibhav Arora, Karun Nair, Harbhajan Singh, Ben Cutting, Venkatesh Iyer, Pawan Negi.

Royal Challengers Bangalore

Virat Kohli (captain), Devdutt Padikkal, Finn Allen (wicket-keeper), AB de Villiers (wicket-keeper), Pavan Deshpande, Washington Sundar, Daniel Sams, Yuzvendra Chahal, Adam Zampa, Shahbaz Ahmed, Mohammed Siraj, Navdeep Saini, Kane Richardson, Harshal Patel, Glenn Maxwell, Sachin Baby, Rajat Patidar, Mohammed Azharuddeen, Kyle Jamieson, Daniel Christian, Suyash Prabhudessai, K.S. Bharat.

POINTS TABLE

Team	Played	Won	Lost	Tied	Net RR	Pts
1 RCB	2	2	0	0	+0.175	4
2 CSK	2	1	1	0	+0.616	2
3 MI	2	1	1	0	+0.225	2
4 DC	2	1	1	0	+0.195	2
5 RR	2	1	1	0	+0.052	2
6 KKR	2	1	1	0	+0.000	2
7 PBKS	2	1	1	0	-0.909	2
8 SRH	2	0	2	0	-0.400	0

SQUADS

Punjab Kings

KL Rahul (captain/wicket-keeper), Mayank Agarwal, Chris Gayle, Mandeep Singh, Prabsimran Singh, Nicholas Pooran (wicket-keeper), Sarfraz Khan, Deepak Hooda, Murugan Ashwin, Ravi Bishnoi, Harpreet Brar, Mohammed Shami, Arshdeep Singh, Ishan Porel, Darshan Nalkande, Chris Jordan, Dawid Malan, Jhye Richardson, Shahrukh Khan, Riley Meredith, Moises Henriques, Jalaj Saxena, Utkarsh Singh, Fabian Allen, Saurabh Kumar.

Delhi Capitals

Rishabh Pant (captain/wicket-keeper), Shikhar Dhawan, Prithvi Shaw, Ajinkya Rahane, Steve Smith, Sam Billings, Shimron Hetmyer, Ishant Sharma, Kagiso Rabada, Anrich Nortje, Umesh Yadav, Tom Curran, Avesh Khan, Lalit Yadav, Pravin Dubey, Rupal Patel, Lukman Hussain Meriwala, M Siddharth, Marcus Stoinis, Axar Patel, Ravichandran Ashwin, Chris Woakes, Vishnu Vinod (wicket-keeper).



Hamilton takes pole ahead of Red Bulls for Emilia-Romagna GP

IMOLA

WORLD champion Lewis Hamilton edged out the Red Bull duo to claim pole position for the Emilia-Romagna Grand Prix on Saturday.

It was Hamilton's 99th career pole and although there is a Red Bull directly behind the Mercedes driver, it will be Sergio Perez rather than Max Verstappen. Hamilton edged Perez by .039 seconds and was .087 faster than Verstappen, who is expected to be his main challenger this season.

"I didn't expect to be ahead of two Red Bulls, they've been so quick this weekend," Hamilton said. "The car is feeling much

better, I want to thank the team for their hard work. "I love the challenge, having two Red Bulls will definitely make strategy harder."

Hamilton's teammate Valtteri Bottas had a scrappy final lap and will start from eighth on the grid after finishing 487 slower. Lando Norris will start just ahead of Bottas. The McLaren driver was heading for the front row after a superb final lap but had his time deleted because of exceeding track limits.

Charles Leclerc qualified in an encouraging fourth for Ferrari but his teammate Carlos Sainz failed to make it into the final part of qualifying, known as Q3, and will start 11th on the grid. Pierre Gasly and Daniel Ricciardo will start fifth and sixth, respectively, while Esteban Ocon and Lance Stroll ended up the top 10.

Earlier in the day, Verstappen posted the fastest time in the final practice as the Red Bull driver was nearly half a second faster than the rest of the pack. He was .456 ahead of Norris and .557 clear of Hamilton.



Ravi retains Asian title, Bajrang settles for silver

ALMATY

INDIAN wrestler Ravi Kumar Dahiya retained his Asian Championship title with a solid performance but Bajrang Punia settled for a silver medal after withdrawing from the much-awaited final against Takuto Otoguro due to an elbow injury, here on Saturday.

Bajrang told PTI that he did not want to aggravate the condition of his right elbow. He said he started feeling the pain during the quarterfinal against Korean Yongseok Jeong.

"When I was pulling the Korean, the pain in my right elbow resurfaced. It's the same elbow that I had injured during the World Championship. The coaches advised that I must not take risk so close to the Olympics, so I withdrew," Bajrang said.

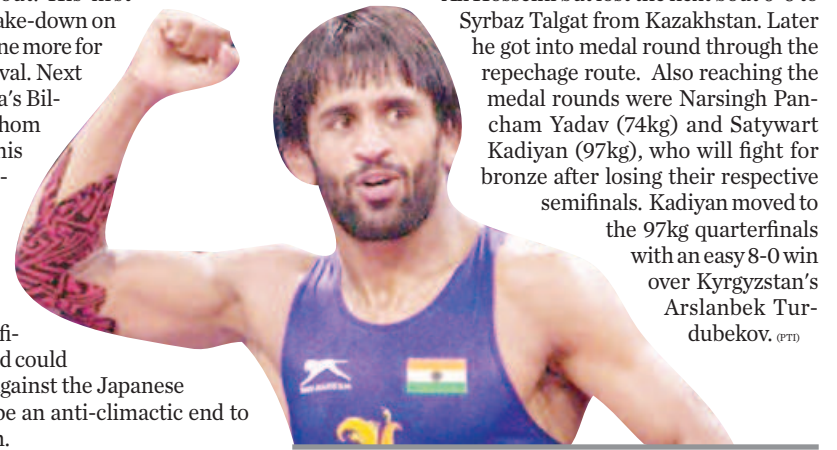
Bajrang did not look his usual self but did not face much competition en route the final. He had no difficulty in getting past Jeong, who hardly attacked in his opening 65kg bout. His first scoring point was a take-down on counter and earned one more for the passivity of his rival. Next for him was Mongolia's Bilguun Sarmandakh, whom he pinned to ensure his passage into the summit clash.

Bajrang had lost the 2018 World Championship title clash and last year's Asian Championship final to the Otoguro and could have tested himself against the Japanese but it turned out to be an anti-climactic end to the 65kg competition.

Ravi Dahiya, though, gave India the first freestyle gold medal of this edition with a commanding show. His supreme stamina and relentless attacking prowess was too good for his opponents in the 57kg. He returned to the mat after a year and in style. He had last competed at this event in New Delhi where he had won gold. He was slow off the blocks but became his usual dominant self after the first period against Uzbekistan's Nodirjon Safarov in his opening bout.

Once he got into his rhythm, his moves were too hot to handle for his rival, as he won 9-2. Ravi had a lot left in his tank even towards the end while Safarov had lost his steam, making it easy for the Indian to score points. Next, he faced Palestine's Ali M Aburumaila and won on technical superiority. His title clash against Iran's Alireza Nosratollah Sarlak was expected to be a tight one but Ravi only got better and better as the fast-paced final progressed.

There were attacks from both the wrestlers but Ravi was clearly the superior one on the mat with his quick moves as he won 9-4. Karan Karan bagged the 70kg bronze medal after winning 3-1 against Korea's Seungbong Lee. He had reached the quarters with a hard-fought 3-1 win over Iran's Amirhossein Ali Hosseini but lost the next bout 0-6 to Syrbaz Talgat from Kazakhstan. Later he got into medal round through the repechage route. Also reaching the medal rounds were Narsingh Pancham Yadav (74kg) and Satyawart Kadiyan (97kg), who will fight for bronze after losing their respective semifinals. Kadiyan moved to the 97kg quarterfinals with an easy 8-0 win over Kyrgyzstan's Arslanbek Turdubekov. (PTI)



Qatar wants everyone at 2022 FIFA World Cup vaccinated

CAIRO

QATAR is aiming to ensure that everyone attending next year's football World Cup in the country is vaccinated against the coronavirus.

Foreign minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani told a virtual India-hosted conference on Friday that they are talking to vaccine providers how to assure that everyone attending the tournament has received a jab, DPA reported.

"There are programmes under development to provide vaccination for all attendees of the World Cup and we hope to host it as a Covid-free event," he said.

"We want to make sure that with even the pandemic ongoing, how can we host a successful World Cup with a physical presence so that people can attend and enjoy the event."

"This is also a great opportunity for the world. It will be the first happy event to take place after this pandemic and isolation. Qatar is well prepared to demonstrate to the world that we can host such an event."

Qatar, with a population of 2.7 million, has so far had about 1,95,000 coronavirus cases. (IANS)

Rublev stuns Nadal in Monte Carlo; Evans backs up Djokovic win

BERLIN

RAFAEL Nadal was dumped out of the Monte Carlo Masters as Andrey Rublev completed a superb 6-2, 4-6, 6-2 victory in their quarter-final clash.

Nadal went into the meeting with a 73-5 record at the event but Russian Rublev was in inspired form and stunned his Spanish opponent, DPA reported.

The 11-time champion looked set to complete a trademark comeback after taking the second set in 74 minutes. But Rublev held firm in the decider to claim a memorable victory after two hours and 33 minutes.

"I cannot imagine being in the situation of Rafa, knowing that you are the best player on clay and you have that pressure every time," Rublev said.

"I think, for him it must be incredibly tough every time. I am in shock (with) the way he is playing under this pressure and that is why he is a legend."



Rublev will face Casper Ruud in the semi-final after he overcame defending champion Fabio Fognini 6-4, 6-3.

Dan Evans followed up his superb victory over Novak Djokovic on Thursday with a slender win over David Goffin to reach his first Masters 1000 semi-final.

World number 33 Evans, who had come into the tournament having lost his previous 10 matches on clay, overcame Goffin 5-7, 6-3, 6-4 in two hours and 42 minutes.

"I am proud of how I came back today, especially with what happened in the first set," he said after the match.

Evans will face Stefanos Tsitsipas, who progressed when opponent Alejandro Davidovich Fokina retired injured in their quarter-final. Spaniard Fokina did not return for the second set after receiving treatment during the first, which Tsitsipas won 7-5. (IANS)

Women's hockey core group to restart training at SAI

NEW DELHI: Indian women hockey's core group will return to the national camp in Bengaluru on Sunday to restart the preparations for the Tokyo Games after a 10-day break.

The 25-member Olympic core group will undergo mandatory quarantine before the commencement of training. In January, the team toured Argentina where it played seven matches against the home country's junior, B team and the senior side, ranked number 2 in the world. That was the team's first tour in 12 months.

In February, the team travelled to Dusseldorf, Germany where they played four matches against their hosts' senior side. "Getting these matches were absolutely important for us to analyse the level we are at and the work required to improve in specific areas ahead of the Olympics," chief coach Sjoerd Marijne said.

"In the upcoming camp too, we will be focusing on these areas and also keeping up with our fitness will be a priority." On April 9, the SAI had announced a three-week "summer vacation" at its various National Centres of Excellence all over the country owing to spike in Covid cases but said that the Olympic-bound athletes will continue to train at their ongoing camps.

The 25-member probable list: Goalkeepers: Savita, Rajani Etimarpu and Bichu Devi Kharibam. Defenders: Deep Grace Ekka, Reena Khokhar, Salima Tete, Manpreet Kaur, Gurjit Kaur and Nisha. Midfielders: Nikki Pradhan, Monika, Neha, Lilima Minz, Sushila Chanu Pukhrabam and Namita Toppo. Forwards: Rani, Lalremsiam, Vandana Katariya, Navjot Kaur, Navneet Kaur, Rajwinder Kaur, Jyoti, Sharmila Devi, Udita, Rashmita Minz. (PTI)