



A volunteer holds a placard that reads 'Clean Air Action Day' during an awareness campaign to mark the 'International Development Week' in Kolkata on Wednesday

India, China begin disengagement at Pangong Tso lake

NEW DELHI: Chinese and Indian troops began disengagement from the contentious 'Finger' area of the Pangong Tso Lake on Wednesday according to the consensus reached between the two sides during the ninth round of military commander-level talks, sources said. Confirming the development, Senior Colonel Wu Qian, spokesperson for the Chinese Ministry of National Defence, said frontline troops of the two sides started "synchronised and organised disengagement at the southern and northern banks of the Pangong Tso Lake". ► **Details: P6**

Further dismantling of INS Viraat stayed



NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Thursday stayed further dismantling of the decommissioned aircraft carrier INS Viraat. The order comes on a plea filed by a firm that had proposed to turn the vessel into a museum. Envitech Marine Consultants Pvt Ltd had approached the apex court after the Ministry of Defence (MoD) had turned down its proposal to convert the decommissioned aircraft carrier into a museum. INS Viraat was beached on September 28 at Alang at a formal ceremony, after numerous attempts to convert the carrier into a museum failed. Commissioned in the British Navy in 1959 as HMS Hermes, INS Viraat was inducted into the Indian Navy in 1986-87. ► **Details: P6**



PM DEFENDS FARM LAWS

Modi says agri reforms will create new options

CONGRESS, TMC STAGE WALKOUT

NEW DELHI

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi strongly defended farm laws on Wednesday and accused the Congress of misleading the farmers and called it a "divided party" which cannot think about the well-being of farmers.

Replying to the motion of thanks on President's address, the Prime Minister said that purchase on MSP increased after the laws were formed. He said the Opposition must talk about the "content" and "intent" of the farm laws.

In his reply, Modi tried to pacify the farmers agitating against the three farm laws introduced in the previous Parliament session. Modi said his government and Parliament have great respect for farmers and made it clear that those who want to continue with the old agriculture marketing system can continue doing so.

Arguing that new reforms are essential to development, Modi said that status quo mentality will destroy the country. The PM even invoked Jat farmer leader from western Uttar Pradesh Chaudhary Charan Singh twice to make his case for the need for agriculture reforms in India. Citing the examples of reformers Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Jyotiba Phule, the PM said the Congress never stopped them from pushing for reforms. "I am surprised by statements like why were these laws made when no one asked for them. The people never asked for Ayushman Bharat, Jan Dhan or Swachh Bharat but



Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks in the Lok Sabha during the ongoing Budget Session of Parliament, in New Delhi on Wednesday

Farmers plan rail roko on Feb 18

NEW DELHI: Intensifying their agitation against the three new agricultural laws, protesting farmer unions on Wednesday announced a four-hour nationwide 'rail roko' on February 18. In a statement, the Samyukta Kisan Morcha, which is spearheading the protest, also announced that toll collection will not be allowed in Rajasthan from February 12. "There will be a 'rail roko' across the country from 12

pm to 4 pm on February 18," the SKM said in the statement. Earlier this month, they had observed a three-hour road blockade to press their demand of repealing the three laws. Thousands of farmers have been protesting against the three laws which were enacted in September last year. The protesters have been alleging the laws will weaken the MSP mechanism and end the mandi system.

we decided to take the initiative. The government should work only when something is demanded, that time has gone," the Prime Minister said. Modi recalled that Charan Singh had said that reforms were necessary for farm sector to

ensure that our farmers have options to sell and grow their crops. "Chaudhary Charan Singh wrote a book on India's economy advocating that India should be considered a single market for agricultural products," the PM said.

'Kisan andolan' is sacred, but when 'andolanjivis' hijack it and show pictures of those jailed for terrorism, what purpose does it serve

PM's 'planned strategy' charge angers Cong, TMC

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi's response to the Motion of Thanks on the President's address was overtaken by angry protests from the Opposition as he mentioned farm laws. After a huge altercation, the Congress and the Trinamool Congress walked out as the Prime Minister said the slogan-shouting "was a planned strategy to drown out reason and hide the truth". The protests started as the Prime Minister, after speaking of Covid 19, switched to farm laws, saying, "This government and the Parliament respects farmers and will always continue to respect them". The Opposition, which has shredded him over the last two days for comments like "andolanjeevi" and "parjeevi (parasites)", made during his last address, broke out in protests.



Twitter yields

Blocks access to 500 accounts

NEW DELHI: Twitter Inc has permanently suspended more than 500 accounts and blocked access to hundreds of others within India, the company said on Wednesday, acceding to the Union government's order to restrain the spread of misinformation and inflammatory content related to the farmers' protest.

The social media giant had earlier been in a stand-off with the government, disagreeing with some blocking orders from regulators and citing "open and free exchange of information," but backed down after receiving a non-compliance notice.

No decision yet on free vaccination for people above 50

NEW DELHI

WITH just weeks remaining for the start of Covid vaccination for people above 50 years of age, the Union government has still not decided whether this priority group will receive the doses free of cost on the lines of healthcare and frontline workers currently being immunised under the nationwide programme. Dr VK Paul, member (health) NITI Aayog and Chairperson, National Task Force For Covid-19, on Wednesday said that no decision regarding free vaccination to people above 50 years of age who fall in the third priority group of vaccination has been made by the Centre so far.



Low turnout forces govt to mull private rollout of Covid vaccine

NEW DELHI: Two weeks after the vaccination programme started, about 37 per cent of the targeted 10 million healthcare professionals had received the first shot. With a low turnout for vaccination so far, the government is planning to open up vaccination to the private market by March or April, according to sources.

GLACIER DISASTER

Rescue ops continue to locate 35 workers trapped inside tunnel

DEHRADUN

DEFYING odds, a joint rescue team of security personnel on Wednesday continued its struggle to penetrate deeper through tonnes of silt inside the Tapovan tunnel to reach out to 25-35 people trapped inside it following the glacier disaster in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand.

The rescue operation at the NTPC hydel project site, which bore the brunt of the disaster, has been going on uninterrupted since Sunday after the sudden flood in the Alaknanda river system in Chamoli that was



ITBP and other agencies cut the loose ends of pipes and wires inside the Tapovan Tunnel as rescue operation continues, in Chamoli district

possibly triggered by an avalanche or glacier burst, with no breakthrough in sight yet. Measures like drilling to

take oxygen to those trapped inside the tunnel are being contemplated, project consultant A K Shrivastava said at the site in Tapovan.



Central Vista project: IGNCA, National Museum to be shifted

NEW DELHI

As part of the Central Vista project, prestigious institutions like the National Museum and the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, located in central Delhi, will be shifted to other locations.

The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) will be set up in a new building to be built on the Jamnagar House plot while the National

Museum will be shifted to the North and South Blocks.

The National Museum that showcases artefacts associated with the history and cultural heritage of the last 5,000 years in India is located on Janpath in New Delhi.

It operates under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture. Similarly, the Ministry of Culture also oversees the IGNCA since 1985.

3 held for ₹523-cr property frauds

GURUGRAM

THREE residents of Punjab, including a woman, were arrested by Gurugram police on charge of involvement in fraudulent sale of immovable properties totalling Rs 523 crore in the district.

Officials said that the gang used to forge documents related to plots of land owned by NRIs in Ansal Townships and sell them to unsuspecting buyers.

Those arrested are Kavita Rani alias Riya Sehgal, 33, Rahul, 29, and Ranveer Kumar, 49. The gang kingpin is Sanjay Kathuriya, a proclaimed offender. Other accused were identified as Sandeep alias 'Mota', Ajay Sehgal alias Alok Kumar and Rakesh Kumar alias Ram.

Sanjay has settled in Dubai along with his family, police said.

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Nursery admissions from February 18

NEW DELHI

THE process for nursery admissions in over 1700 schools in Delhi will begin from February 18, the Directorate of Education (DoE) announced on Wednesday, bringing respite for anxious parents who have been waiting for the notification for over two months.

As per the notified schedule, the application process will begin from February 18 and the last date to apply is March 4.

The first list of selected children will be displayed on March 20, followed by second list on March 25 and subsequent list for admission, if any, on March 27.



The entire admission process will conclude on March 31.

The DoE has also directed that since schools are closed in view of the COVID-19 pandemic and physical class room learning is

not going on for entry level classes at present, no fee except prescribed registration fee, admission fee, caution fee (if school already charges) and tuition fee, shall be charged at the time of admission by the schools

and thereafter only tuition fee shall be charged from the students till further orders.

"Congratulations to all parents and children. We have to bring the excitement back in schools after defeating coronavirus. Our schools are waiting for their students," Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal tweeted, referring to the notification of nursery admission schedule. Usually, nursery admissions in around 1,700 schools in the national capital begin in the last week of November.

The DoE releases guidelines and schools are asked to furnish required information, following which the application process is rolled out in December.

Womenia

TWEET PATROL


RENUKA SHAHANE
@RENUKASH

So so proud of this heart-wrenching film made by @KarishmaDevDubefor making it to the Oscar's shortlist. Congratulations & a huge shout out to @guneetm @tahira_k @ektarkapoor @IndWomenRising for championing this powerful short



Diabetics: Fear not your fruits

I have noticed that we women get the severe sugar craving. These are heightened for those with diabetes. Do you have diabetes? Did you stop eating your fruits fearing they will take up sugar levels? Let me bust this myth for you and share the truth on how the fiber in the fruit lowers the sugar and the host of nutrients are great for you I say, consume as a whole fruit and not a juice. Beat those cravings with these winter fruits -

Guava

This fibre dense fruit is a yummy favourite of the winter season especially when had with a sprinkle of red chilli powder and rock salt. One serving of a big guava (approx. 60 gms) gives you 23 per cent of your RDA of dietary fibre. This fibre supports slow blood sugar release during digestion. So, be it white or pink, I say go gaga over guava!

Amla

The richest source of natural vitamin C mother nature has given us is the Indian

gooseberry or amla. One fruit has up to 600 mg of vitamin C your most potent antioxidant may reduce any oxidative stress or inflammation faced by the pancreas that secrete insulin – the key hormone of diabetes. Toss it as a pickle with turmeric and salt and have daily.

Oranges

Orange is full of dietary fibre rating low on the glycemic index scale! This means that the high fibre results in a laggard digestion and hence a slower increase in blood sugar.

Papaya

Say Ya to the papaya! diabetic women. It's a good balance of dietary fibre and vitamin C. It eases digestion and lowers glucose improving insulin levels and an added benefit of beta-carotene (vitamin A)

Strawberries

Thanks to the low carbohydrate density of strawberries, a diabetic can easily en-

joy about a cup a day satisfying sweet craving. Being rich in disease fighting antioxidants, sweet and delicious strawberries are ideal for a diabetic diet make the most of them this season.

Golden gooseberries

These tiny golden berries have several nutrient properties that aid in blood sugar control. High in fiber helping bind to special enzymes in your small intestine that prevent sugar from moving from your gut to your blood stream. Go ahead with these golden gooseberries.

While there is no "good" or "bad" fruit, you need to be aware about how and how often you are consuming these fruits. Juicing, for instance, can be detrimental towards blood sugar levels. It is best to consume the fruit in its whole, natural form. Any one of the above fruits eaten during the day is alright as long as you are following portion control and not mixing with your main meals.



Naini Setalvad

The richest source of natural vitamin C mother nature has given us is the Indian gooseberry or amla. One fruit has up to 600 mg of vitamin C; your most potent antioxidant may reduce any oxidative stress or inflammation faced by the pancreas that secrete insulin – the key hormone of diabetes



Embrace healthier lifestyle in times of pandemic

In the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, as people around the world, and India in particular, adjust to the new concept of normal, Almond Board of California, hosted a session around 'the importance of ensuring family health and nutrition amidst a pandemic'. The discussion focused on the current health situation in the country and highlighted preventive measures families can include within their daily diets and lifestyles. The session was moderated by actor & show host, Sharmila Kasala and featured celebrity fitness expert & trainer Kiran Dembla as well as Sheela Krishnaswamy, nutrition and wellness consultant.

As several people continue to work from home and children attend virtual classes, a sudden shift has been noticed in the family routine which has further resulted in chaotic and inconsistent schedules. This includes a mix of erratic meals, higher screen time, lack of physical activity, anxiety, stress, and an overreliance on snacking due to easy access and boredom. Addressing these issues through the session, Kiran and Sheela, focused on three areas of health - proper nutrition and dietary habits, the need to incorporate regular exercise, and the importance of self-care during these challenging times.

Through the session, the guests also highlighted the importance of mindful snacking and urged families across the city to inculcate healthy snacking routines within their diets. Both



Kiran Dembla



guests also shared anecdotes and examples from their personal lives, as well as suggestions for dietary and lifestyle adjustments that families can make to better support their health, immunity and boost overall well-being.

Talking about the need to focus on improving immunity by consuming nutrients that support it, Kiran Dembla said, "The past

year has been a unique one which has made many of us realize the true value of life. As a mother and wife, I feel it's my responsibility to undertake adequate preventive measures that can help in maintaining my family's safety and good health. For this, I rely on almonds as they are known to contain the immunity supporting nutrient zinc, which plays an important role in growth, development, and the maintenance of immune function. I make sure to keep almonds in the house at all times and ensure that each family member eats at least a handful every day. This is something I have been doing for several years

now, and urge other families to do so as well."

Awareness of good food choices and snacking habits is key to leading a healthy lifestyle, especially now when the world around us is changing rapidly. Make sure to focus on consuming balanced and nutrient-rich diets including a handful of almonds, as they contain several nutrients like vitamin E, magnesium, protein, riboflavin, zinc, etc. which, in the long run, will aid in overall health and well-being. But besides this, it's also pertinent to stay fit by incorporating some form of physical exercise into the routine, and also maintaining a

positive attitude while adjusting to these unprecedented times.

During the session, Sheela Krishnaswamy, said, "The ongoing pandemic has highlighted more than ever the need for right nutrition amongst Indian families. Many Indians suffer from ailments such as high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease (CVD), diabetes and obesity, and in many cases, these existing co-morbidities have led to fatalities in Covid19 patients. Whether you are suffering from one of the aforementioned ailments, or are at risk, be sure to include nuts like almonds in your family and your daily diet as they are nutrient-rich and add to the body's overall health. Besides this, almonds also contain copper, folate, iron, and vitamin E, nutrients that are known to contribute to supporting immune function. So be sure to include a handful of almonds to the diet every day!"

As most of us spend a large part of our time during these times, it is important to reevaluate the family's nutrition and lifestyle choices and make the necessary revisions that can add value to every member's health. By making small dietary and lifestyle changes like incorporating nutritious foods including a handful of almonds everyday and exercising regularly, families across India can make a healthy difference to their lives and strengthen their immunity while taking relevant precautions to keep themselves safe from the ongoing outbreak.

Growing trend of baby, maternity shoots

PUJA GUPTA

Family portraiture was once a formal affair with no space for spontaneity. Many social taboos surrounded the idea of photographing newborn babies and pregnant women. A fashion inspired maternity shoot was almost unheard of back in the day, but now everyone from A-list celebrities like Kareena Kapoor Khan and Anushka Sharma to models like Lisa Hayden want to capture and share that special moment.

Celebrated photography entrepreneur Amrita Samant who runs the venture, 'Mommy Shots by Amrita', operating out of India and Singapore, says things have changed for the better now.

Routinely helping maternity shoots, photographing newborns and toddlers, she says, "The taboo still exists in certain pockets but yes, there is less discomfort around women wanting to celebrate a pregnancy. Young mothers-to-be want to enjoy their pregnancy and they want to capture that bliss forever. Many young couples also want to capture the milestone moments of their babies because they grow up so fast! I feel privileged to be a part of such intimate experiences and feel happy that more and more families are so comfortable expressing themselves before the camera. The monotony of forced expressions is also now a thing of the past."

For young parents, such photo shoots have become a norm with social media normalising the sharing of personal moments. Also, celebrities stepping out of their comfort zone and sharing the different facets of their life, has encouraged and motivated others to celebrate their own lives in a similar way. Many mothers-to-be feel confident about posing before the camera.

Samant says: "Photography is largely about emotional bonding. The warmth I capture and communicate through my images tells a unique story every time. Even if I take pictures of different families in the same place or pose, the emotions captured are different, because each time, the family dynamics are different. I also bond instinctively with children and it was a natural choice to combine my love for babies with my pas-



Amrita Samant

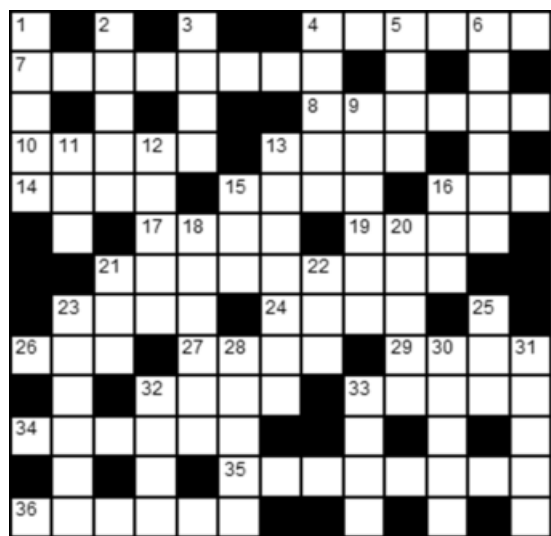
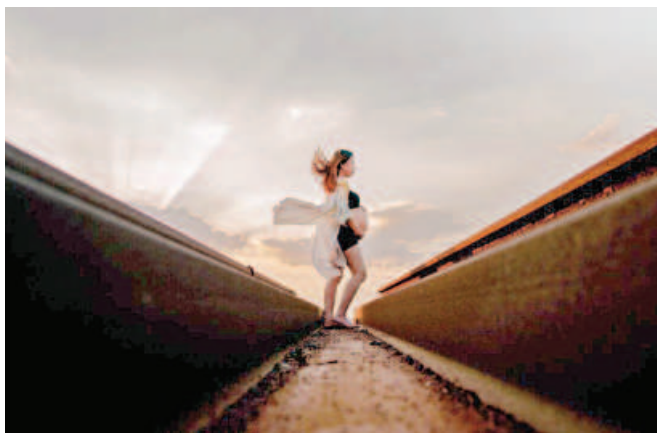
sion for photography."

Samant's work went on to pioneer baby portraiture in India and she shares: "Newborn and creative baby photography has always been very popular in the West, and I wanted to carve a niche back home by capturing moments that families could treasure forever."

Before she ideated her venture, this double Masters degree holder in Human Resources (HR), was climbing the corporate ladder for over seven years. The decision to start Mommy Shots in retrospect was inevitable because she comes from a family of entrepreneurs with a strong affinity for the arts.

Today Samant travels all over India for shoots and her work has also taken her to over 10 countries. Even the pandemic did not impact her work. She says: "An emphasis on safety practices is mandatory in this industry and we have been following stringent safety measure even before the emergence of COVID-19. Now, in the new normal, we adhere to safety protocols even more strictly."

With seven years of experience in the field, what remains constant is the magic of instant connection she forms with a baby every single time. She concludes, "Moments I capture become precious because they are forever and will be cherished and looked back upon by families even after 20 years. Their culture, their lifestyle won't be just a memory from the past to be forgotten by the next generation. Their legacy will be carried forward with the help of these images. That is why every happy mother, every joyful baby, each memorable family shoot motivates me to continue preserving memories for posterity."



SOLUTION TO FEBRUARY 10

CROSSWORD

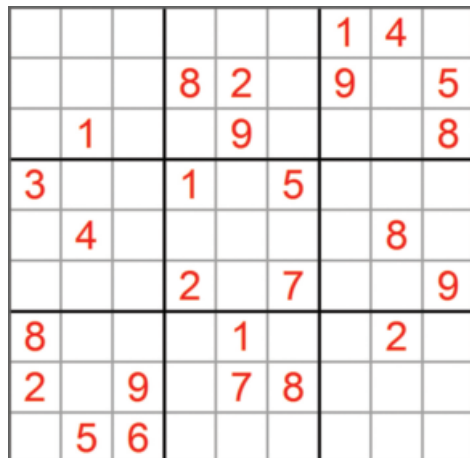
Across

- 4 Papeete and thereabouts (6)
- 7 Seaport on W Kyushu (8)
- 8 Oak seeds (6)
- 10 Escapes from danger (5)
- 13 German count (4)
- 14 Enemies (4)
- 15 Scheme (4)
- 16 Charged atom (3)
- 17 Tofu base (4)
- 19 Useless (4)
- 21 Indian goddess of wisdom (9)
- 23 A Central American people (4)
- 24 Essential point (4)
- 26 A doll or a kite (3)
- 27 Block up (4)
- 29 Misfortunes (4)
- 32 Change from a frozen state to a liquid or soft state (4)
- 33 Ladle (5)
- 34 Capital of Croatia (6)
- 35 Strong black coffee (8)
- 36 Bony (6)

Down

- 1 Smell (5)
- 2 Concur or correspond (5)
- 3 Inquires (4)
- 4 Crown (5)
- 5 Animal foot (4)
- 6 Sinew (6)
- 9 Sails collectively (6)
- 11 Auction item (3)
- 12 Attempt (5)
- 13 Scottish city (7)
- 15 Monetary unit of Myanmar (3)
- 16 Latin trio (3)
- 18 Mountain spinach (6)
- 20 Loft (5)
- 21 Speak (3)
- 22 Head covering (3)
- 23 Ethics (6)
- 25 Specialized U.N. agency (3)
- 28 Identity tag (5)
- 30 Slack (5)
- 31 Eating utensil (5)
- 32 Authentic (4)
- 33 Progenitor (4)

SUDOKU



SOLUTION TO FEBRUARY 10

REPUBLIC DAY VIOLENCE

Dead farmer's kin move HC for court monitored SIT investigation



NEW DELHI

THE family of a 25-year-old man, who died after his tractor overturned at Central Delhi's ITO during the protesting farmers' tractor parade on the Republic Day, moved the Delhi High Court on Wednesday seeking a court-monitored SIT probe into the incident.

The petition, which is likely to be listed for hearing on Thursday, is filed by deceased Navreet Singh's grandfather who has sought enforcement of his right

to fair investigation and justice as well as the right to know the truth about his grandson's death. According to the police, the man had died as his tractor overturned at ITO where many farmers participating in the parade had reached from the Ghazipur border after taking a detour from the pre-agreed route for the march.

The police had claimed that the man was driving the tractor and he came under the vehicle as it overturned. However, the petition said that as per eye-witness accounts reported in the media,

Navreet was driving his tractor past the Andhra Education Society in New Delhi, and he was allegedly shot by policemen, due to which he lost control of his tractor which thereafter collided with some barricades and overturned.

The plea, filed through advocates Vrinda Grover, Soutik Banerjee, Mannat Tipnis and Devika Tulsiani, sought for a court appointed and court monitored Special Investigation Team (SIT) comprising police officers with a demonstrably impeccable record of professional integrity, honesty

and efficiency, to carry out time bound investigation into the death of the petitioner Hardeep Singh's grandson Navreet Singh.

It also sought a direction that the SIT shall file periodic status reports before the court to ensure a time bound court monitored investigation. "The petitioner's grandson was lying in a critically injured condition under the overturned tractor, however, despite the presence of a large number of police men including senior police officials in the vicinity, no attempts were made by Delhi Police

to provide immediate critical medical intervention to save the life of the petitioner's grandson.

"Instead, the Delhi Police resorted to tear gas shelling to prevent other protestors from reaching the site where the tractor lay with the petitioner's grandson's body underneath. No efforts were made by the Delhi Police to cord off the site of the incident and to collect time sensitive material evidence from the site, which was allowed to be erased and destroyed," the petition claimed.

Yogi govt's anti-conversion ordinance to become law

LUCKNOW

THE ordinance on 'forced' or 'fraudulent' religious conversions, which was promulgated by the Uttar Pradesh government in November last year, will be formally passed by the state Assembly in the upcoming Budget Session.

Though the opposition is preparing to vehemently oppose the passage of the Bill, the numbers in the state Assembly weigh heavily in favour of the ruling party which will not have any problem in getting the Bill through.

In an Assembly of 403 members, the BJP has 312 MLAs which is more than enough to



see the Bill become the law.

The Budget Session begins on February 18 and will continue till March 10.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has been advocating the law to check such reli-

gious conversions for marriage and states like Haryana and Madhya Pradesh have also brought in similar laws to counter alleged attempts to convert the Hindu women to Islam in the guise of marriage,

which the right wing forces refer to as 'love jihad'.

The Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020 provides for a jail term of up to 10 years for any violation.

All the offences under the ordinance shall be cognisable, non-bailable and triable by the court of sessions.

If any person reconverts to their immediate previous religion, the same shall not be deemed to be a conversion under the ordinance.

Any aggrieved person, parents, brother, sister, or any relative may lodge an FIR over such a conversion.

SC rejects plea on dead body disposal

NEW DELHI

THE Supreme Court on Wednesday dismissed a plea which had sought a direction to the Centre to formulate a national mortal remains management and disposal protocol for pandemic and non-pandemic times to be implemented across the country. The plea was filed by a Delhi-based man who had said that body of his mother was mistaken for some other COVID-19 victim and was handed over to another person due to the negligence of a hospital.

The petitioner said that he was denied the sacred right of doing the last rites of his mother who was not a COVID-19 positive patient, due to the callous action of the hospital. The plea came up for hearing before a bench comprising Justices Ashok Bhushan and R S Reddy. "You can intervene in the suo motu matter. You can file proper intervention application. These issues are being taken up in the suo motu PIL. Why should we hear a fresh petition," the bench told advocate Manoj V George, who was appearing for the petitioner.

The top court had last year taken suo motu cognisance



of reports of improper handling of COVID-19 patients and undignified disposal of victims' bodies in the country. The suo motu case is titled as Proper Treatment of COVID-19 Patients and Dignified Handling of Dead Bodies in Hospitals etc'.

George said this is not an adversarial petition. "My (petitioner) mother's body was swapped and I was denied the right of dignified burial to her. This can happen to anyone," he told the bench, which dismissed the plea.

Akbar defamation case: Judgement on February 17

NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Wednesday adjourned to February 17 the pronouncement of judgement in the criminal defamation case filed by former Union Minister and veteran journalist M.J. Akbar against journalist Priya Ramani for accusing him of sexual misconduct.

"Since the arguments by the counsels were lengthy, more time will take to pronounce the judgement," Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Ravindra Kumar Pandey said and adjourned the matter.

On February 1, the Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate had reserved the judgement in the case after hearing rebuttal arguments of counsel of the complainant -- Advocate Geeta Luthra for M.J. Akbar and Rebecca John for Priya Ramani.

In the wake of #MeToo movement in 2018, Ramani had made allegation of sexual harassment against Akbar. Pursuant to this, he filed the criminal defamation case against her and resigned as the Union Minister. Trial began in 2019 and went on for almost two years.

In 2017, Ramani wrote an article for the Vogue where she described her ordeal of being sexually harassed by a former boss during her job interview for his publication. One year later, she revealed that the person alluded to as harasser in article was M.J. Akbar.

Akbar told the court that Ramani's allegations were fictitious and cost him his stellar reputation. Priya Ramani, on the other hand, contested these claims, pleaded truth as her defence and said that she made allegations in good faith, public interest, and for public good.

19-year-old man held for harassing over 50 girls

New Delhi

A 19-year-old man was arrested from Faridabad for allegedly harassing more than 50 girls and women by stalking them on social media platforms through a fake identity and morphing their pictures, police said on Wednesday.

The accused, Rahim Khan, studied up to Class 8 and was engaged in operating various morphing mobile applications, they said. The police said the accused harassed more than 50 girls and women after stalking them over various social media platforms. He used to send them messages with sexual connotations on these platforms using a fake identity of a woman.

The accused even targeted minors by morphing their pictures. Khan was arrested after a complaint was received at the RP Puram police station on Tuesday from one of the victims, who alleged that an unknown person was sending her



morphed pictures to her from the Instagram handle 'ch.rahim.khan786' and further demanding nude pictures, according to the police.

Based on technical inquiry and details obtained from Instagram, a Cyber Cell team of southwest district traced the location of the accused. Khan was nabbed from his house in Haryana's Faridabad, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southwest) Ingit Pratap Singh said. During interrogation, Khan confessed to his involvement in the crime and told the police that he had victimised over 50 girls and women across the country for personal satisfaction, the officer said. The police have recovered incriminating evidence including chat details, video clips and photographs of various women from Khan's mobile phone. Further investigation is underway, the police said, adding that efforts are being made to contact the other victims.

HC declines to stay DA fixed by AAP govt

NEW DELHI

THE Delhi High Court on Wednesday declined to pass any interim order putting on hold the operation of an AAP government order with regard to dearness allowances (DA) to be paid to unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled workers in the national capital. However, a bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh which refused to stay, for now, the December 7, 2020 order of the Delhi government's labour department fixing the dearness allowances, observed that it was tough to survive in the national capital on a minimum wage of Rs 15,000. The court issued notice to the Delhi government and its labour department and sought its stand on the application moved by the Apex Chamber of Commerce and Industry of NCT Delhi for stay of the December 7, 2020 order. The application was filed in the main petition filed by the petitioner-organisation challenging an October 2019 notification issued by the Delhi government revising the minimum wages for all classes of workmen or employees. The Delhi government, represented by its additional standing counsel Sanjoy Ghose and advocate Rishab Je, meanwhile has defended its October 2019 notification saying the rates were fixed based on the average prices of food items, clothing, housing, light and fuel, children's education, medical treatments and other factors.

British MP concerned over arrest of rights activist Nodeep

CHANDIGARH

BRITISH Labour Party MP Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi on Wednesday expressed concern over the arrest of labour rights activist Nodeep Kaur over the farmers' agitation, saying the abuse of peaceful protest activists, especially women, is an affront to democracy and civilised society.

"Alarmed to learn of sexual assault and torture allegations in police custody of Punjabi trade unionist Nodeep Kaur, who after four weeks hasn't even been granted bail," Dhesi tweeted.

He added, "Abuse of peaceful farmers protest activists, especially women, is an affront to democracy and civilised society."

Earlier, Punjab-origin politician Dhesi had



sent a letter, signed by over 100 MPs and Lords, to UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson on the ongoing farmers' protests, asking him to raise this matter with his Indian counter-

part Narendra Modi when they next liaise.

On Monday, the Punjab State Commission for Scheduled Castes asked the Additional Chief Secretary (Home) to ensure relief for Nodeep Kaur.

The Commission also sought a report by February 23. It said it has taken suo motu notice of the issue since the woman is a resident of the state.

Nodeep Kaur, 23, was arrested on January 12 during the farmers' protest at Kundli in Haryana.

Nodeep's case came to the fore as US Vice President Kamala Harris' niece Meena Harris claimed in a tweet that she was "tortured and sexually assaulted" in police custody.

However, the police said she was facing serious criminal cases.

Congress may gain in western UP through farmers' stir

LUCKNOW

IN the middle of the ongoing farmers' agitation for the repeal of the three new Union farm laws, the Congress has been working at a fast pace to strengthen its political base. The party feels that in the western districts of Uttar Pradesh by coming out in favour of the farmer protests, it is preparing the political ground for the upcoming panchayat (civic) polls and Assembly elections.

In order to support the farm-

ers in their protest, the Congress's own 'anti-farm laws' movement is going to kick-off from Wednesday. The party's National General Secretary and Uttar Pradesh party in-charge, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, will embark on a four-day programme in the state. She will address rallies in Saharanpur on Wednesday, Meerut on February 13, Bijnor on February 16 and a 'kisan Panchayat' in Mathura on February 18. Farmer leaders may also join Priyanka in these events.



Priyanka Vadra, who went to Rampur to visit the family of a farmer who died during the protest, is likely to gain an edge by holding a 'Kisan Panchayat' in Uttar Pradesh. She will attend four 'Kisan Panchayats' in the state, thus spearheading the Congress' campaign from western UP.

According to former Congress MLA Imran Masood, Priyanka will reach the panchayat at 2 p.m. on Wednesday. Seating arrangements for nearly 15,000 people

have been made at the venue in Saharanpur.

In western UP, the Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) is also all set to gain political mileage from the farmers' agitation, say analysts. After Mathura and Baraut, crowds thronging the panchayats in Shamli are making other political parties restless. The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and the Samajwadi Party (SP) are silent, but the Congress is desperate to gain some political mileage. Wherever there is no presence of

the RLD, the Congress wants to influence the farmers towards it.

At the same time, a strategy has also been chalked out to stop the RLD from trying to dent the Congress's traditional strongholds.

Ahead of the UP Assembly elections next year, the Congress is working to gain a major vote bank through the anti-farm laws movement by campaigning at the grassroot level in the western UP districts where the party's base is strong.

Sharmila's T dreams: Storm in the teacup?

At a time when some political lull is being witnessed in Telangana, some colour and curiosity have been added by the daughter of former Chief Minister of undivided Andhra Pradesh Y S Rajasekhara Reddy. After three months of 'brain storming sessions' within the family including her brother Jagan Mohan Reddy, Rajasekhara Reddy's daughter Sharmila has finally decided to enter active politics and float her own party in Telangana.

A ground was prepared for it with a news leak that there were serious differences between Sharmila and her brother - Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy. The soft landing made by Sharmila from Lotus Pond (translated into Telugu by some Opposition leaders as Kalvakunta)

gave a clear indication that she was all set to launch her own party. Her business card is that she is the daughter of Rajanna and would bring Rajanna Rajyam once again in Telangana.

Since the YSRCP does not exist here and the few leaders and cadre who were there before the bifurcation of the united Andhra Pradesh now joined the ruling TRS or the BJP, Sharmila wants to target two communities, the Reddys on one hand and the SC Christians on the other. Sharmila wants to take new people into the party and her husband brother Anil who is an evangelist is likely to help her in bringing the SC Christians into the party fold.

It is also being said as part of the makeover, Sharmila will now call herself as Sharmila Reddy. Though on one

hand it is being said that her brother and his YSRCP will not have any direct role in the party and that she would be responsible for the outcome of the new party, the fact remains that the name of the party is going to be YSRTP and just as YSRCP had given slogans, "Ravali Jagan, Kavali Jagan, (Jagan should come, we need Jagan), the slogans for Sharmila are also the same. "Ravali Sharmila, Kavali Sharmila."

Though anyone has the right to launch a political party and aspire to become the Chief Minister, political circles knowing fully well that she cannot be a formidable force by next elections have started talking about her. The reason is all of them feel that what was said to be Jagan's arrow has changed its direction towards Telan-

gana basically to split the anti-incumbency votes of the TRS.

Another major hurdle for the proposed YSRTP could be the fact that Y S Rajasekhara Reddy was against bifurcation of the State. He had made this clear on the floor of the State Assembly on many occasions. So, what does 'Rajanna Rajyam' really mean? This being the situation, the big question is how successful his daughter will be in making her party emerge as a formidable force with her visiting card YSRTP?

The new outfit, however, will give a chance to the TRS to rekindle the Telangana sentiment to try and remain in power for yet another term. It appears that YSRTP will prove that family politics would continue in the south and hence Sharmila's moves will continue to hit the headlines for some time in the media.



In poll-bound Assam, MEA goes for Japanese push

AARTI TIKOO SINGH

At a time when Modi 2.0 has ticked all checkboxes in providing vaccine aid to India's neighbours, the Centre has ratcheted up a mega plan for a strategic partnership with Japan in poll-bound Assam.

Ahead of the state Assembly elections, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar will be taking a Japanese delegation headed by their Ambassador to India, Kenji Hiramatsu, to the northeastern state on February 14, a move seen as fillip to NDA's Look East policy.

Official sources in MEA confirmed to IANS that Jaishankar and a Japanese delegation will physically review some of the Japanese-aided projects that are under construction in Assam. The Sarbananda Sonowal government in Assam has already acquired 2,000 bighas of land in Nagarbera for an upcoming Japanese Industrial Township.

"India is setting up the 13th Japanese industrial township in Assam. The purpose is aimed at helping more domestic manufacturing with help of Japan in this border state. It will bring huge employment and tech knowhow. We have had such partnerships with Japan, Israel and the US time to time," a senior MEA official said.

The project is being looked after by the Japan External Trade Organisation. It is like to have a host of plug and play companies in co-ordination with government.

The Japanese Embassy did not comment on about the visit considering the memorandum of understanding confidentiality.

Sources said the delegation may also include representatives of the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) - Japan government's agency which provides aid for economic and social growth in developing countries and promotes international cooperation.

Jaishankar, sources said, may also sign a new Memorandum Of Understanding (MoU) with Japan for skills training and recruitment of youth in Assam, which is likely to go to assembly elections in April.

Five years ago, the BJP wrested power from the Congress, which had ruled the state for 15 years since 2001. The election battle in Assam this time, has turned quite fierce ever since the Congress-led UPA formed a grand alliance with Maulana Badruddin Ajmal's All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF).

The BJP-led alliance headed by Sarbananda Sonowal is facing stiff opposition from the AIUDF which had won 13 seats and the Congress which got 26 out of the 126 assembly seats in the 2016 state polls. The political rhetoric in Assam focuses on religious and ethnic identities because of illegal migrants from Bangladesh and its sensitive demographics.

As per the 2011 census, 61.5 per cent people in Assam were Hindus and 34.22 per cent Muslims. Out of 32 districts, 11 are Muslim majority in Assam. The Hindu demographics is further divided along ethnicities - Bodo, Bengalis and others. With massive influx of migrants from Bangladesh, the population of Assam's indigenous communities, has been on a downward curve.

Apart from the debate on demographics, Assam's concerns have remained high rate of unemployment due to poor infrastructure and inadequate connectivity. Incidentally, Japan's bilateral relationship with India, which strengthened under former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has benefitted Assam in the last few years.

A spokesperson of Japanese Embassy in New Delhi told IANS that Japan has assisted several infrastructure development plans which include the Dhubri-Phulbari bridge, Guwahati Sewerage project, Guwahati water supply project and construction of vocational training center for poor women in Kamrup. Japan was the fourth largest investor for India in 2019. Currently, about 1,454 Japanese companies have branches in India. "At recent summit meetings, India and Japan reconfirmed the commitment to synergising India's demographic dividend and Japan's capital and technology to realise the true potential of the Japan-India economic partnership for a prosperous future," as per an official statement of the Japanese government.

Abe's successor, Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga who got a landslide victory in party leadership election on September 14, is pursuing the same vision for Japan-India strategic partnership. Sources said Jaishankar, who was a career diplomat before he joined politics, shares a very good rapport with the Japanese government, due to which he was able to bring in a lot of investment for Assam.

PART-I

Of learning, unlearning and relearning

TALKING OF MANY THINGS



Dr Mohan Kanda

THE need for improving the infrastructure of educational institutions in the country and the content of curricula and syllabi have been touched upon briefly in an earlier piece in this column. Let us, today, take a look at the state in which the temples of higher learning, namely the universities are.

The word university is derived from the Latin 'universitas magistrorum et scholarium' meaning 'a community of teachers and scholars'. It was first used to describe the institution established in Bologna Italy in 1088. As a matter of fact, as long ago as 2200 years, the first university, at Athens, was holding classes, organising lectures, maintaining a library, and laying the foundation upon which the modern edifice of higher education now rests in a highly developed state.

And, difficult to believe though it may sound, a formal education system was first established, nearly two millennia ago in China. "A university stands for humanism, for tolerance, for the adventure of ideas and for the search of truth" said Jawaharlal Nehru.

Athens and Rome were home to the earliest known formal systems of education the history of mankind has seen. While the Greek system achieved prominence in the fifth century BCE its counterpart in Rome took

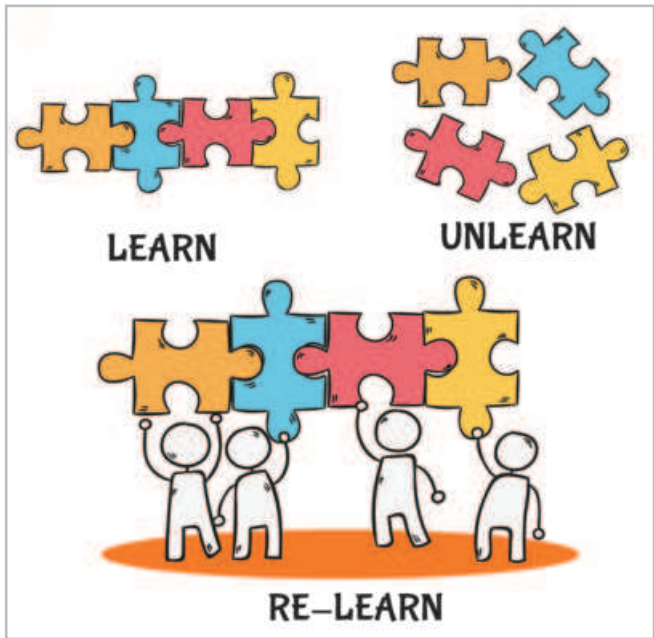
shape in the 3rd century BCE.

It was later in the 5th century CE that Nalanda University was established (in today's Bihar state in India), and became an undisputed international centre of higher learning. In a very gratifying development a proposal to re-establish that university was endorsed by 16 countries in 2007 and, finally, a modern version of the ancient university opened its doors to the first batch of students in 2014 following an enactment of Parliament. The University of al-Qarawayyin established in 859 CE at Fez in Morocco is also a great ancient institution that has now developed into a modern and contemporary university.

It is said that Mark Twain once famously remarked that "I have never let my schooling interfere with my education!" In a similar vein, a great political philosopher, in his autobiography, titled one chapter as 'going to school' and the next one 'beginning of education!' Then, we have Alvin Toffler, author of the sensational book 'Future Shock', say "The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn".

And, living as we do in an era where digital technology has replaced traditional forms of access to information and knowledge, one finds that the entire definition of the word 'education' has undergone a dramatic transformation. One can be highly educated and still be all at sea in the world of today.

On the other hand, an illiterate farmer can with the click of a mouse obtain all the assistance he needs to carry on his occupation profitably. Societies, modern as well as ancient, have always been supported by human resource shaped by education systems. The skills, knowledge and the wisdom needed to secure order in a Society, have been provided by educational in-



stitutions such as gurukuls in earlier times, and schools and colleges in modern days. The Indian higher education system ranks among the best such systems in the world.

In the 'Panchatantra' stories, the King invites Vishnu Sarma - an elderly scholar of great repute - to his Court and requests him to impart knowledge and wisdom to his four imbecile sons. And, in Indian mythology, the 'Rakshasa' (demon), king Hiranyakasipu hands over his five-year-old son Prahlada to Chandamarka, son of Sukracharya - The sage who was the guru - preceptor of the Demon race, to make him (Prahlada), a scholar. Education was accorded such importance in the initial days that, Bhartruhari in his 'subhashitas' brands an illiterate a 'strange animal'.

The alumni of reputed educational institutions have shaped modern India, building dams and factories. They also included famous doctors, sociologists, political thinkers, anthropologists, lawyers and scientists. The Corona vaccines, for example, have been made in Indian labs, al-

though the formulae may have originated in Oxford or Washington, and are now being used in many countries. In short if there were no universities, the very existence of Society as we know it, would cease to exist.

Sadly, however, universities all over the country are suffering from criminal neglect. As noted in earlier pieces in this column, the central and state governments are, unfortunately, trying to exit from both education and health/medicare areas where their presence is still very much needed. The curricula and syllabi need to be 'trans' rather than 'multi' disciplinary. And universities, should really be places where admixture of disciplines produces robust hybrids and not comprise departments that live in silos. The interaction of different fields of learning and investigation should therefore be more in the nature of chemistry rather than physics.

Viewed against that background the tendency to establish universities for narrow and limited areas such as, for instance, medicine or aeronautics does not augur well for the future of

the university system as it was originally conceived. On the other hand, however, the establishment of universities exclusively to cater to the needs of neglected sections such as women is a welcome step.

There are distinguished centres of excellence in the shape of renowned universities in many parts of the world, the most prominent among them being the Oxbridge twins in the UK, the Ivy League group of universities in the USA and Sorbonne in France, to mention just a few.

Not to be left without mention, in this context, are many illustrious examples in our own country, such as the University of Bombay, the University of Calcutta, Santiniketan, Annamalai University at Chennai, the Jawaharlal Nehru University and the Delhi University in the national capital and many other Universities with glorious histories and enviable international reputations, such as the Allahabad University and the Osmania University, again, to mention just a few.

In more recent times, institutions such as the IITs and IIMs have also carved out a niche for themselves in the international space of higher education. Then there is the Centurion University of Technology and Management, Bhubaneswar, recently and its sister institution in Visakhapatnam which have demonstrated the value of a refreshingly unique approach to designing the curriculum and syllabi of courses.

As a result of constant interaction with potential employers and continuous tweaking of the course content in consultation with them, the university has achieved the almost unheard-of objective of every single student, not only securing employment, but knowing precisely where he/she will go!

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

LETTERS

A statesmanlike gesture

SALUTE to Prime Minister for first-ever salute at floor of the House (Rajya Sabha) by a Prime Minister to retiring leader of opposition when Narendra Modi in his highly emotional farewell speech to Ghulam Nabi Azad recalled telephonic conversation with him when both these leaders were Chief Ministers of Gujarat and Jammu-Kashmir respectively, and Ghulam Nabi Azad at that time shared his emotions and anger with Narendra Modi on the shocking incident. Ghulam Nabi Azad also gave a fitting reply to his own party-colleagues when he mentioned that he was much happier to be a Hindustani Muslim rather than being a Pakistani citizen. It is noteworthy that Congress maintained an undue silence on comments of former Vice President and others who openly expressed that Muslims in India did not feel comfortable. Such respect for opposition leader was seen only in era of PV Narsimha Rao as Prime Minister when he trusted the then opposition leader Atal Bihari Vajpayee for leading Indian delegation at a crucial special session of the United Nations Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) in Geneva where a Pakistan-sponsored resolution was there to censure India on its record of human rights in Jammu and Kashmir. However political repercussions of emotional exchange between Narendra Modi and Gulam Nabi Azad as seen by some political analysts are noteworthy in tune with comment of Ramdas Athawale that ruling alliance was ready to bring Azad back in Rajya Sabha.

Subhash Chandra Agrawal, Delhi

II

PRIME Minister Sri Narendra Modi honoured co-parliamentarian and leader of opposition Ghulam Nabi Azad in the upper house. He is great parliamentarian and also good administrator. PM praised his qualities and also his dedicated work.



He has talked and highlighted public issues in the house. He has raised current topics in zero hour in the house. He is a good and disciplinary parliamentarian in India. He served as a Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir and central minister.

K Ranga Rao, Danvaigudem, Khammam

III

THE last Rajya Sabha day of Ghulam Nabi Azad, the leader of Opposition, has been an immensely eventful one, even making the PM Modi teary-eyed over his exit. By expressing that he is proud of being a Hindustani Muslim, Azad has made not only the whole Muslim community in the country but also each and every Indian proud in every sense. It's a pleasant shock that he has never been to Pakistan. Azad is indeed a great example of true love towards, and of strong patriotism for our country. His decades-old representation is history. A true gem of a leader, indeed.

E Sethuramalingam, Kollam

IV

THE tearful farewell gesture of PM Modi and Leader of Opposition Gulam Nabi Azad in Rajya Sabha is indeed a good gesture and in the

process the politician Modi has indeed managed to get the tear jerker scene the attention from the media across India. While opposition leaders appreciated bonhomie between Modi and Azad, they also wanted to know from the PM, why there are no tears for farmers who have died while participating in agitation at the Delhi border. However, for ordinary people like us nowadays whether they go to the petrol bunk or market, they come back in tears with empty purses. Neither ruling or opposition party leaders shed any tears for them. It's tear jerker for them every day.

N Nagarajan, Hyderabad

V

THE Leader of opposition in Rajya Sabha Gulam Nabi Azad was given a touching farewell. He is a soft-spoken and handsome leader who criticized the government on various occasions but without rancor or grudge. The PM Modi had shown his softer side when he became quite emotional speaking about Azad. If the praise is from his heart, it is indeed praiseworthy of PM. Otherwise, he is to be acclaimed for his stellar performance. No doubt, Azad was wowed, but he appears to be being wooed

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too. Is Modi going to give a lift to Azad to give a snub to congress? Of late, the relations between Azad and his party are strained. Otherwise, he would have been accommodated for another term. He is a suave and sophisticated politician who maintained good equation with all political col-

leagues. He stole the thunder when he said he is a Hindustani Muslim. It is a unique achievement that he received more praise from opposition than from his own, notwithstanding the political motives.

Vinay Bhushan B, Hyderabad

Sharmila and TS politics

RECENTLY Sharmila of YSRCP party has announced her intention of setting up of a party in Telangana to restore "Rajanna Rajyam (YSR's rule). This has raised many eye brows in Telangana when assembly elections are few years away. What is more surprising is the timing of new political party when there is actually no political vacuum in the state.

It is a known fact that KCR's image has taken a dent vis-a-vis TRS party's debacle in Dubbaka and GHMC elections and that Telangana sentiment no longer works for KCR. Anti-incumbency factor is also bound to work against TRS in the coming elections. It is also quite evident that BJP has emerged as a viable alternative for TRS party. There is no chance of revival of Congress party in near future and TDP has already been decimated in Telangana.

So it may be the master strategy of KCR to split anti-KCR's votes / opposition votes through Sharmila and at the same time gain the sympathy of Andhra settlers in Telangana and cut BJP's growth to its size in state politics, Sharmila has been thrust into state politics, by using his good rapport with Jagan. There are some speculations Sharmila may even take 'Padayatra' to gain vote bank after setting up new party.

V Nagendra Kumar, Hyderabad

Benami party?

LATE Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy had strongly opposed bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh, while Telangana state was formed mainly on anti-Andhra sentiment and one wonders how YSR's daughter Sharmila will succeed by launching a new party in the State. It is clear that new party is being floated to help other parties rather than it coming to power in the state. Therefore, Sharmila's proposed party can be termed as a benami political party.

Kshirasagara Balaji Rao, Hyderabad

Tough assignment

SHARMILA who is active in politics took the responsibility of her brother's party when he was unavailable for the public now wants to launch a political party in Telangana. So, time has to tell whether she would be treated as outsider or not. Before that her entry into Telangana politics may rise tension between two states in respect of river water sharing. Her proposed political dispensation would like to depend on legacy of her late father and settlers in Hyderabad and Nizamabad. However her new political entry has stirred a political hornet's nest in TS with its political parties accusing each other as she seems to be brought into politics for political purposes. But she should not forget the AP interests with the launching of political party as she took walkathon in both the States in absence of her brother.

Pratapa Reddy Yaramala, Tiruvuru

WILL ‘OUTSIDER’ SHARMILA IMPACT STATE POLITICS?

Many in State still believe YSR was the hurdle in formation of separate State

Political analysts say she may not find many takers for ‘Rajanna Rajyam,’ as the TRS claims to be spending a whopping Rs 40,000 crore every year on welfare schemes, many of which were launched by YSR, who was CM of undivided AP between 2004 and 2009

HYDERABAD

THE plans by Y S Sharmila to enter Telangana politics came as a surprise, leaving all major players in the State guessing on what impact it may have on their prospects in 2023 Assembly elections. Sister of AP CM Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy, she is the first leader from AP after TDP president N Chandrababu Naidu to dabble in Telangana politics since its formation in 2014. She is planning to float a party.

Her intention has puzzled all, as both the YSRCP, led by her brother, and TDP have become almost inactive in Telangana. As the YSRCP has distanced itself from her move, political observers say it will be a herculean task for her to float and sustain a party.

Sharmila believes that there is scope for a new player in Telangana politics. She plans to hold meetings to know ground realities and understand the sit-



uation before announcing her next course of action.

Political analysts say she may not find many takers for ‘Rajanna Rajyam,’ as the TRS

claims to be spending a whopping Rs 40,000 crore every year on welfare schemes, many of which were launched by YSR, who was CM of undivided AP

between 2004 and 2009.

Several leaders cutting across party lines have already reacted to the development to say that there is no role for an “outsider” in Telangana. Analyst P Raghava Reddy pointed out many in Telangana still believe that YSR was the hurdle in the formation of a separate State. The agitation for Telangana picked momentum after YSR’s death in a helicopter crash in 2009.

What is more baffling is that Sharmila initiated steps to foray in Telangana politics despite her brother advising her against it. The YSRCP leadership gave up the idea of reviving the party in Telangana in view of ground realities, including the dispute between two Telugu States over irrigation projects. It is not clear what stand she will take on the contentious projects.

The timing of her move also sparked intense speculations in political circles. Opposition BJP and Congress took no time to blame CM KCR while the ruling party maintained that there is no alternative to it.

“There’s a clear possibility that both KCR and Jagan have sponsored this new party with pre-emptive political designs,” said BJP spokesman Krishna Saagar Rao. Political analyst Raghava Reddy too feels that Sharmila’s party could be an attempt to attract powerful Reddy community towards her and in the process, split the pro-Congress vote.

Bandi accuses KCR of reneging on promises

- Seeks to know why the CM did not raise the issue of encroachment of tribal lands by TRS legislators during the Halia meet
- Says the fluorosis issue in Nalgonda was solved in 2004 in which KCR has no role
- Accuses the CM of not releasing funds for the construction of Nagarjunasagar SLBC tunnel



HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

STATE BJP president Bandi Sanjay on Wednesday alleged that Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao had lied in the Halia public meeting.

Reacting to the comments made by the Chief Minister that he would not seek votes if he does not complete the lift

irrigation projects in the district, Bandi Sanjay said KCR skipped his promise many times. He questioned as to why the Chief Minister did not talk about the encroachment of tribal lands by the TRS MLAs? Why the government jailed 40 persons who came to question the MLA for encroaching their lands? he questioned.

“KCR had promised to con-

struct Nagarjunasagar SLBC tunnel six years ago by sitting on a chair. The Chief Minister seems to have not found a chair in the last six years,” mocked Sanjay.

The BJP leader said that the company which was taking up the works of SLBC has promised to complete the works within one year if the government releases funds, but the Chief Minister was not releasing the funds.

He also countered the claim of KCR that the TRS government ended the fluorosis problem in Nalgonda. Sanjay said that the people of Nalgonda were getting safe drinking water from 2004 and there was no role of TRS in that.

The BJP leader said that the situation in the State was such that there should be a bypoll in the State to have new schemes. He also found fault with the Chief Minister referring to protesters as dogs.

KCR dubs protestors as dogs

He asks the protesting women to leave the meeting venue

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NALGONDA

CHIEF Minister K Chandrashekar Rao lost his cool during a public meeting in Halia and referred to the people protesting in the meeting as dogs.

A group of women were protesting showing papers in their hands while the Chief Minister was speaking. The Chief Minister first asked the police personnel to collect the papers from the group and asked the protestors to stay calm or leave the venue.

“If you want to be in the meeting, stay calm here, otherwise go out of the meeting. No one will be disturbed by your mad cries.

You will only get thrashed unnecessarily. There will be many dogs like you... go out,” said enraged Chief Minister.



VSP’s financial crisis is result of concerted conspiracy: Vijayasai



YSRCP Rajya Sabha MP V Vijayasai Reddy addressing a public meeting organised against the privatisation of steel plant in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VISAKHAPATNAM

RAJYA Sabha MP V Vijayasai Reddy alleged that the reason for Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP) falling into a financial crisis is a result of a ‘concerted conspiracy’ hatched by successive Union governments.

Speaking at a public meeting with all party leaders here on Wednesday, the MP said according to the records, the VSP was a debt-free company as of 2002 but the successive governments did not take corrective measures to save the company from incurring losses.

Vijayasai Reddy further pointed out that the government did not allocate its own captive mines fearing that the move would help the company make profits.

The MP assured that the VSP

- Says the agitation will continue until the Centre withdrew its plans to privatise RINL
- Asserts that the VSP will turn into a huge profit-generating company within a year if the Union govt sanctions captive iron ore mines to the plant

will turn into a huge profit-generating company within a year if the Union government allots iron ore mines. Similarly, company loans should also be converted into equity, he suggested. The MP clarified that the fight will continue until the Centre’s proposal to privatise Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Ltd (RINL) is taken back and added that he would fight together with all political parties and trade

unions. Further, Vijayasai Reddy said he will be visiting New Delhi along with trade union leaders and bring the seriousness of the issue to the notice of the concerned Minister and also try for an appointment with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Tourism Minister M Srinivasa Rao said a fitting lesson will be taught to the Centre if the sentiments of the people were not valued.

VSP employees and political party leaders raised slogans against the Union government. The meeting was held under the aegis of INTUC, MLAs T Nagireddy, G Amarnath and A Adeep Raj, along with CPI and CPM leaders, including Ch Narasinga Rao, JV Satyanaraya Murthy, INTUC national secretary Mantri Rajasekhara, and other union leaders J Ayodhya Ram, J Mutyala Naidu and D Adinarayana.

AP CM stresses on teamwork for progress

- Asks secretaries of various depts to focus on the work to be done
- Points out that the YSRCP govt brought about several revolutionary changes including Disha Act for women security and protection, and village, ward secretariats system
- Judicial Preview of tenders in contracts has been introduced to curb corruption
- Hails services being rendered by village volunteers and instructs officials to felicitate them during the ensuing Ugadi festival

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

CHIEF Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy held a meeting with Secretaries of various Departments and thanked them for the support and team work in governance for the past 20 months.

During the meeting held at Secretariat here on Wednesday, the Chief Minister said many revolutionary changes were brought in the State with the support of all the officials and added that the changes include Disha Act initiatives for protection of women, village/ ward secretariats and



Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy holding meeting with secretaries of different departments at the Secretariat at Velagapudi on Wednesday

volunteers system among others.

The Central government also appreciated the steps taken by the State to reduce power costs and the policies implemented in power purchases which have received the attention of not only Union government but also the neighbouring States. He said Judicial Preview of tenders in contracts to curb corruption, reverse tendering policy, English as medium of instruction, setting up of RBKs and YSR village clinics and concept of village and ward secretariats has shown the commitment and transparency in governance.

The State government has credited nearly Rs 90,000 crore into the accounts of beneficiaries through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT). He said the initiatives of Nadu-Nedu scheme has brought revolutionary changes in health and education sectors and house site pattas were distributed to 30.92 lakh households and prob-

ably never in the history of the country such a programme was undertaken.

He said Andhra Pradesh might be the only State which effectively utilised Prime Minister’s Housing Scheme (PMAY). All the achievements mirror the performance of the State and It stands as a symbol of efficiency and dedication of the officials.

The Chief Minister directed the officials not to relax and focus on the work to be done and see if it can be improved.

He also stressed on coordination among different departments and taking measures to rectify any mistakes. He appreciated the Chief Secretary for convening the meeting with secretaries and said these type of meetings should be held at regular intervals for effective coordination among departments and to also bridge communication gaps. It also helps to issue orders

to Finance Secretary regarding problems related to funds for other departments.

He asked all the secretaries to give their suggestions and share their ideas for effective governance. The government has worked towards fulfilling all the promises of election manifesto and completed almost 95 percent of the promises made.

He said the State had a debt of Rs 60,000 crore when YSRCP came to power and the confidence in bureaucratic circles was very low. Large scale corruption had taken place in the State through Janmabhoomi Committees of the previous regime. The Centre-State relations and interstate relations were poor. He said that’s the time when YSRCP took over the administration in the State and thanked officials for their support.

The Chief Minister said volunteers should be felicitated on the occasion of Ugadi in every constituency recognising their services by giving them awards like Seva Ratna and Seva Mitra. He said a felicitation programme should be conducted in one constituency every day in each district starting from Ugadi.

District Collector, SP, Joint Collector, Ministers and MLAs should attend this felicitation programmes to motivate and encourage volunteers.

Chief Secretary Adityanath Das, DGP Goutam Sawang and secretaries of various departments were present at the meeting.

TDP-backed candidates posted impressive wins: Naidu

HANS NEWS SERVICE
MANGALAGIRI

TDP national president and former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday asserted that their party supported candidates posted impressive victories in the first phase panchayat elections by courageously fighting against the attacks, abductions, threats and atrocities committed by the ruling YSRCP with the connivance of the official and police machinery.

Addressing a press conference at the party headquarters here, Naidu said that the people gave their mandate against the misrule and misdeeds of the Jagan Mohan Reddy regime in the past 20 months. The verdict in the panchayat polls marked the ‘beginning of the end’ of the YSRCP rule in Andhra Pradesh.

The TDP chief said that their party would go to the court against

the election offences in Minister Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy’s Punganur Assembly con-

stituency and also Macherla constituency. Unfortunately, Peddireddy was allowed to continue as Minister even after he threatened to put IAS, IPS and all India officers in blacklist. There was no action even though the YSRCP resorted to 2 murders, 23 attempt to murders, 42 kidnappings, 92 threats and 33 election offences.

Referring to YS Sharmila’s proposed new political party, Naidu said Sharmila was the victim of yet another treachery of Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy. This time, the Chief Minister has not hesitated to cheat his own sister on which he owed an answer to the public. ‘Jagananna Vadilina

Banam’ (arrow released by Jagan ie Sharmila) was now going in a reverse mode.

Jagan Reddy demanded a CBI inquiry into the murder of his own uncle Vivekananda Reddy but after coming to power, he said there was no need for the CBI probe. It was only after Viveka’s daughter went to the court that the murder case was being investigated by the CBI. Viveka’s daughter had a right to know who the culprits were in the murder. Naidu demanded that the Chief Minister give an explanation to parents and students who were suffering silently after his regime cancelled the fee reimbursement and scholarships. A girl committed suicide after the government stopped fee reimbursement, he pointed out.



Uttam slams Centre for not fulfilling promises made to TS

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

TELANGANA Pradesh Congress Committee president and Nalgonda MP N Uttam Kumar Reddy has strongly condemned the BJP-led Central government for failing to fulfil the assurances given to Telangana as per Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014.

Opposing the Motion of Thanks on President Ram Nath Kovind’s address in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday, Uttam said that the people of Telangana were highly disappointed with the President’s address. “What was assured for Telangana and its people in the Andhra Pradesh State Reorganisation Act, 2014 was not fulfilled. We expected that there would be some mention of those promises in the President’s address. The unfulfilled promises include Railway Coach Factory at Kazipet, a steel plant at Bayyaram and many other issues,” he said.



Criticising the three new farm laws, Uttam said that the controversial legislations have already started making a negative impact on the lives of farmers. He said Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao, after meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi, made an announcement that the State government would be closing down all the IKP and PACs centres which procure agriculture produce from farmers at Minimum Support Price (MSP).

The CM has cited the new farm laws as the reason for closing down the procurement centres

from Rabi season onwards. He sought to know as to what transpired between the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister in the meeting. Uttam described the crop insurance scheme, the PM Fasal Bima Yojna, as a total flop. He said not a single farmer from Telangana was covered under this scheme. He said nearly 25 lakh acres of standing crops were damaged due to heavy rains in Telangana. However, not a single farmer got any compensation or crop insurance to cover the damage. He also alleged that 10 insurance companies were exploiting the farmers in the name of PM Fasal Bima Yojna. He said the total premium of approximately Rs. 1.35 lakh crore was paid to insurance companies. However, they settled claims of about Rs. 90,000 crore. This means that the insurance companies pocketed net profit of nearly Rs. 45,000 Crore from the public exchequer.

SC stays Delhi HC verdict on free gadgets, internet to poor students

HC had directed that cost of gadgets and internet package are not a part of tuition fee and have to be provided free of cost to the students by the schools, subject to the right of private unaided schools to claim reimbursement from the State

PURNA SINGH
NEW DELHI

THE Supreme Court Wednesday stayed the Delhi High Court verdict which directed private unaided as well as government schools like 'Kendriya Vidyalayas' to provide gadgets and internet packages to students from economically weaker section (EWS) or disadvantaged group for online classes during the COVID-19 lockdown.

A bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde agreed to hear the plea filed by the Delhi government challenging the high court judgement of September 18 last year.

"Issue notice. In the meantime, there shall be stay of operation of the impugned order of the high court," the

bench, also comprising Justices A S Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian, said in its order.

A division bench of the high court had directed that cost of gadgets and internet package are not a part of tuition fee and have to be provided free of cost to these students by the schools, subject to the right of private unaided schools to claim reimbursement from the state in accordance with provision of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009.

While staying the verdict, the apex court also issued notices to NGO 'Justice for All', on whose petition the high court had delivered the judgement, and others on Delhi government's plea. Senior advocate Vikas Singh, appearing for Delhi government, told the bench that additional burden has been put on the State by the high



court verdict. "We are already spending a lot on the education front," Singh told the bench. The bench, while observing that the apex court had earlier delivered a verdict on a similar issue in a case arising out of Himachal Pradesh, asked Singh to place that judgement before it.

The high court had delivered the judgement on a plea filed by the NGO seeking directions to the Centre and the Delhi government to provide free laptops, tablets or mobile phones to poor students so that they can access classes online during the COVID-19 lockdown.

The high court had said that to separate such students from others in the same class due to non-availability of a gadget or a device would generate "a feeling of inferiority" that may "affect their hearts and minds

unlikely ever to be undone". It had said if a school decides to voluntarily provide synchronous face-to-face real time online education as a method of teaching, "they will have to ensure that the students belonging to economically weaker section (EWS) or disadvantaged group (DG) category also have access and are able to avail the same". The court had said that, "Segregation in education is a denial of equal protection of the laws under Article 14 of the Constitution and in particular the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009."

The high court had said that section 12(1)(c) of RTE Act requires private unaided schools to provide free and compulsory elementary education to 25 per cent EWS/DG students and that means "education sans financial barrier".

Disengagement with Indian Army has begun, says China

**No statement from Ministry of External Affairs
'9-month stand-off between 2 Asian giants ends'**

NEW DELHI

CHINA and India on Wednesday began their simultaneous withdrawal of troops along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh, according to an official statement issued by the Chinese government.

If the Chinese official statement is to be believed, the nine month-long stand-off between the two Asian giants has come to an end.

The Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi has not issued any statement yet.

The spokesperson of China's Ministry of National Defense, Wu Qian said: "According to the consensus reached by the 9th round of the military commander-level talks between China and India, the frontline units of the Chinese and Indian armed forces in Pangong Hunan and North Coast began to simultaneously and systematically organize disengagement on February 10." Since May last year, Indian and Chinese troops were engaged in skirmishes along the LAC near Pangong lake in Ladakh and the Tibet Autonomous region. In one of the violent clashes, 20 Indian soldiers and over 40 Chinese troops were killed in the Galwan valley on June 15-16. Amid the face-off, India sent massive de-



ployments to Ladakh. Though both sides disengaged in the Galwan valley of Ladakh in July but the stand-off continued at critical points at Pangong and PPI7A. In August, Indian troops regained multiple strategic heights in Chushul sector along the LAC.

Meanwhile, China, which has been blocking India's efforts to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council, on Wednesday reiterated its stand on New Delhi's bid, and called for evolving a "package solution" that is acceptable to all to reform the top organ of the global body. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin's comments in response to a question came a day after India and China discussed a wide range of issues relating to top UN body. China is a permanent member of the UNSC while India began its two-year tenure as a non-permanent member on January 1. In August, India is scheduled to serve as the president of the UNSC. Asked about the outcome of the meeting and whether there was any discussion on India's candidature for permanent membership of the UNSC, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang told a media virtual meeting, the two sides held consultations on Security Council issues.

Australian beef blamed for Covid, not Wuhan wet market

LONDON

IT'S been well over a year since the Coronavirus broke out and was first reported in China's Wuhan Province. Since then, many countries, including the United States, have accused China of not coming clean on the origins of the virus, which has claimed 2.34 million lives.

Now, a team of 14 scientists, belonging to the World Health Organisation (WHO), investigating several accusations, including that the virus might have leaked from a lab in Wuhan, have concluded their probe.

According to a report in Daily Mail, the WHO investigators have backed the ruling Communist Party's claims that "cold-chain products" such as Australian beef, may have caused the initial outbreak.

Peter Embarek, the leader of the WHO team, also said that studies should be carried out to find if the virus was imported into the country, adding it was "extremely unlikely" that the virus leaked from a lab. They even went on to declare that no further study should be undertaken into the theory.

In October, China had claimed that SARS-CoV2 broke out in the various parts of the world in 2019

but it was the only one to have reported and acted first. The country also rubbished the widely-held view that the deadly contagion originated in Wuhan before turning out to be a pandemic.

The findings of the WHO report come as a shot in the arm for the Chinese who have repeatedly de-



nied that letting up on their part cost so many human lives across the world.

But the report will arm the critics of WHO, who always feared the trip would become a part of "Chinese whitewashing."

Reacting sharply to the WHO report, Australia's Health Minister Greg Hunt said it was "not surprising that there are no surprises" there.

"The overwhelming likelihood is that you have an animal-based source and that the virus is likely to arise somewhere in the vicinity of the first human cases," Hunt said.

Australian Senator Matt Canavan, too, was critical of the investigation and said: "Through this whole process, China's acted like it had something to hide and it has frustrated the inquiry, dragged it out."

"We needed this inquiry to start pretty much straight away if there was any hope of finding conclusions and it hasn't," Canavan was quoted as saying by news.com.au.

U'khand tragedy: 10 lost race against deadly floods

RAJNISH SINGH
CHAMOLI

IT was like a 'cat and mouse' race between life and death for a group of around 10 labourers, who were stuck at the Tapovan barrage that got washed following the deadly flash floods triggered by a snow avalanche which

wreaked havoc in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district on Sunday morning. The labourers tried their best to flee from one spot to another in order to save their lives, but a strong flow of muddy water swept them away. These labourers are among the list of 174 persons who are still missing, while 32 bodies have been recovered so far following the tragedy.

The fury of the flood at the Tapovan barrage was captured in mobile phones by the locals, who witnessed the wrath of nature from some nearby hills.

Going by the video, it seems that the labourers got information about the flood very late, when they didn't have much option left to move out of the barrage. To save their lives, the victims climbed atop the barrage to escape the flow of water, perhaps losing 10 crucial minutes in the process which could have made a difference between life and death.

By the time the group of labourers reached the top of the barrage, they had less than 10 seconds in their hands to save themselves. The video clearly shows that they ran from one corner to another to save themselves from the flow of muddy water coming towards them. The labourers then again fled to the previous location on the roof of the barrage after witnessing another current of

water flowing towards them.

But it turned out to be the last race for the trapped labourers, as another strong flow of water swept them away. The video clearly shows them falling in the muddy waters from the roof of the barrage. No one knows if they are alive, as their bodies have not been recovered yet.

The 520 MW downstream NTPC hydro power project at Tapovan on river Dhauliganga was washed away in the flood that was triggered after a landslide, leading to a snow avalanche covering approximately 14 square km area that caused a flash flood in the Rishiganga river in Chamoli district.

The spokesperson of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) told IANS that the force is now planning to dig the place where the labourers fall after being swept away by the flood water

from the roof of the barrage.

"It seems almost impossible that the labourers might be alive, but our force will always try to save lives. We will dig the place and try to find the bodies," the spokesman told IANS when asked about ITBP's next plan. The tragedy occurred at 10 a.m. on Sunday when the avalanche hit the upper catchment of Rishiganga river, a tributary of Alaknanda river in Chamoli, leading to a sudden rise in the water levels of Rishiganga river.

Due to flash floods on account of rising of water levels in Rishiganga, a functional small hydro project of 13.2 MW was washed away. The flash floods also affected the under construction 520 MW NTPC hydro power project at Tapovan on river Dhauliganga.



A general view of the damaged Dhauliganga hydro power project in Chamoli district

10 hurt, 20 houses burnt along Assam, Mizo border

SILCHAR/AIZAWL

IN fresh trouble along the Assam-Mizoram borders, at least 10 people were injured and around 20 houses were burnt down by 'unknown miscreants', forcing the authorities to deploy huge contingent of security forces in the area, officials said on Wednesday.

The violent incidents took place in Kachurthal in Assam's Hailakandi district adjoining Bairabi in Mizoram's Kolasib district on Tuesday.

The Deputy Commissioner of Hailakandi district, Megh Nidhi Dahal, said that to control the situation and to prevent fresh incidents, prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the CrPc have been promulgated on Wednesday along the bordering areas, in addition to the deployment of a large contingent of security forces in the area.

"We are investigating all aspects of the incident. We are providing relief and other assistance to the affected families. Senior district and police officials are camping in the area since Tuesday," Dahal told IANS over phone from Hailakandi.

Police officers said that of the 10 people hurt in the incident, the injuries of four persons are serious and they have been shifted to the Silchar Medical College and Hospital.



Man involved in killing of cop gunned down

KASGANJ

THE brother of a liquor mafia kingpin whose associates had allegedly killed a police constable and injured a sub-inspector was gunned down in an encounter here early on Wednesday, an official said. "Elkar and others were surrounded by a police team on the banks of Kali river and in the exchange of fire, he was injured.

He was taken to a CHC in Sidhpur where he died," Superintendent of Police, Kasganj, Manoj Sonkar said. Elkar, a resident of Nagla Dhimar village in the Sidhpura area here, was earlier booked under the Excise Act and was involved in spurious liquor trade with brother Moti Dhimar and others, police said.

Sonkar said Elkar's accomplices managed to escape during the encounter and police are on the lookout to trace them. A constable was beaten to death and a sub-inspector seriously injured when a police team went to Nagla Dheemar village to serve a warrant to liquor mafia kingpin Dhimar Tuesday evening. Dhimar and his associates caught them and severely thrashed them, resulting in the death of constable Devendra, District Magistrate Chandraprakash Singh had said.

Sub-inspector Ashok Kumar, who was injured in the attack, is undergoing treatment at a hospital, he added. Following the incident, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had directed officials to take stern action against the culprits under the National Security Act. He announced an ex-gratia of Rs 50 lakh to the kin of the deceased constable and a job to a family member. He has asked for proper treatment of the injured policeman, a government spokesperson said.

Cong will repeal farm laws when back in power, says Priyanka

SAHARANPUR

CONGRESS General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Wednesday promised that his party will repeal the three "black" central farm laws and ensure MSPs for different crops as soon as it returned to power at the Centre.

"When the Congress comes to power again, we will immediately repeal these farm laws. We will also ensure MSPs for all farmers," she said while addressing a 'Kisan Panchayat' in Chilkhana in Saharanpur district.

Priyanka also urged the farmer not to step back from their ongoing agitation across many states in support of their demands and assured that the Congress would stand with them in "their fight against the black laws".

"There should be no politics with farmers. Those who do not respect the sentiments of farmers cannot be called patriots," the Congress leader said.

The Congress leader also flayed Prime Minister Narendra Modi while reminding the audience that the BJP had promised to clear sugar cane dues totalling Rs 15,000 crore within 15 days of coming to power at the Centre.

"Instead, the Prime Minister bought two planes worth Rs 16,000 crore for himself and conveniently forgot about the farmers' money," she quipped.

SC orders status quo on dismantling of decommissioned aircraft carrier

Nearly impossible to reassemble Viraat now: Company chief

AHMEDABAD

THE Supreme Court on Wednesday ordered status quo on the dismantling of decommissioned aircraft carrier 'Viraat', but a Gujarat-based ship-breaker who has purchased it said it is now too late for any restoration effort.

Over 40 per cent of the dismantling work has been completed so far, said Mukesh Patel, Chairman of Shree Ram Group based at Alang in Bhavnagar district which bought

the ship at an auction in July last year for Rs 38.54 crore. The firm began the dismantling at its ship-breaking yard at Alang in December 2020 and now it is impossible to reassemble the parts that have been cut, he said. "Over 40 per cent of dismantling work is complete. We have already pulled the ship towards the shore and also dismantled some portions of the hull, making it impossible for the ship to remain afloat now," said Patel, after learning about the SC order from

the media.

"I have not received any notice yet from the court. But it is already too late for the ship to be used for any other purpose. Our legal team would submit a reply if a notice is served to us," he said.

The Supreme Court on Wednesday ordered status quo on the dismantling of 'Viraat' which was in service with the Indian Navy for nearly three decades.

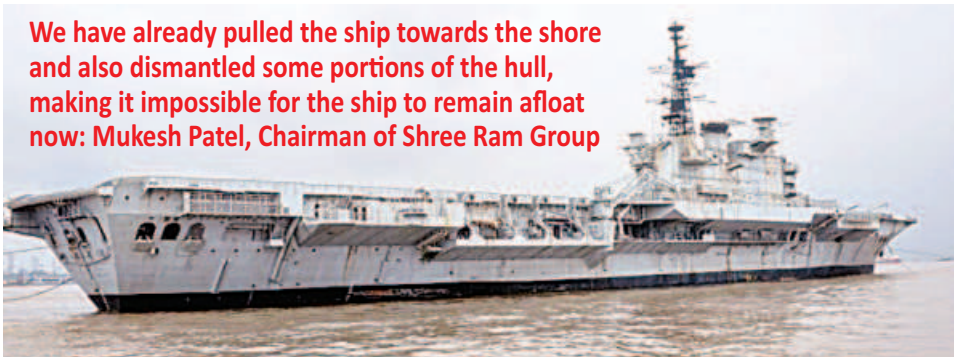
A bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde issued notice to the Cen-

tre and others seeking response on a plea filed by a firm which seeks preservation of the ship as a museum.

The centaur-class aircraft carrier, INS Viraat, was in service with the Indian Navy for 29 years before being decommissioned in March 2017.

The Centre had in July 2019 informed Parliament that the decision to scrap Viraat was taken after due consultation with the Indian Navy.

We have already pulled the ship towards the shore and also dismantled some portions of the hull, making it impossible for the ship to remain afloat now: Mukesh Patel, Chairman of Shree Ram Group



TODAY'S QUOTE

Intl passenger traffic fell by 90%

“International passenger traffic fell by 90.56 per cent to 18.55 lakh in March-December period of 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic as compared to the corresponding period of 2019. Moreover, domestic passenger traffic fell to 3.77 crore in March-December period of 2020 from 11.99 crore in the corresponding period of 2019.”


— Hardeep Singh Puri, Civil Aviation Minister



PROFIT

Bol Q3 net jumps 412% to ₹541 cr

State-owned Bank of India (BoI) on Wednesday reported a 412 per cent jump in standalone profit after tax at Rs 541 crore in the third quarter ended December on improvement in asset quality and lower provisions. The bank had posted a profit after tax of Rs 106 crore in the same quarter of the previous fiscal.

FOREX (buy rates in ₹)			
US Dollar	77.21	South	
Euro	92.72	African Rand5.71	
UAE Dirham	21.81	Hong Kong Dollar10.8	
Thai Baht	2.8	Japanese Yen0.8	
British Pound	104.86	New Zealand Dollar55.22	
Australian Dollar	59.16	Saudi Riyal21.35	
Canadian Dollar	60.24	Swedish Krona10.08	
Swiss Franc	85.01	Singapore Dollar57.67	

DELHI THURSDAY 11 FEBRUARY 2021

BIZ BRIEFS

Vedanta unveils new alloy

Vedanta Limited launches the aluminium cylinder head alloy, a critical raw material for manufacturing cylinder heads and other automotive components. The product leverages material design to help automakers increase efficiency of internal combustion engines for improved performance on emission control, in line with BS-VI and CAFÉ norms. Ajay Kapur, CEO-Aluminium & Power, and Managing Director, Commercial, Vedanta Limited, said: “For India to become a \$5 trillion economy by 2025 and an economic powerhouse, the entire manufacturing sector has a crucial role to play. As India's leading producer of a vast array of globally acclaimed metals and value-added products, Vedanta aims to partner with various industry sectors, especially automotive and auto ancillary industry, across their entire value chain, from large players to MSMEs, for the nation's growth.”

SIDBI's meet on Stand Up India

Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI), along with Confederation of Women Entrepreneurs of India (COWE), has launched the ‘Swavalamban Sashakt - Mega Campaign’, a 20 webinar series to create awareness outreach & business opportunity programme’ to give a fillip to Stand Up India (SUI) scheme, a flagship programme launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This webinar series is a participative interaction by all stakeholders. It is an opportunity for the invited businesses to showcase their business models and for the aspiring women entrepreneurs to identify a business of their choice. V Satya Venkata Rao, Deputy Managing Director of SIDBI, said: “Swavalamban Sashakt envisages to ignite the spark for business leadership in women entrepreneurs and encourage them to start their entrepreneurial journey in order to become Swavalambi. The thrust of SIDBI has always been to strengthen the MSME ecosystem.”

Kaveri Seeds net at ₹9.11 cr

Kaveri Seeds Company Limited posted 10.42 per cent upswing in net profit at Rs 9.11 crore for the quarter ended December 2020. The company attributed the rise in its net profit to a sharp 45 per cent fall in the cost of raw materials used. As a result, the PAT margins also improved from 6.76 per cent in December 2019 quarter to 7.68 per cent in last quarter. For nine months ended December 2020, the company's net profit stood at Rs 327.86 crore, up 30.38 per cent year-on-year. Operational EBITDA margin in 9MFY21 at 26.69 per cent, up by 422 basis points compared to last year. GV Bhaskar Rao, Chairman & MD, Kaveri Seeds, said: “We are encouraged by our performance and in particular the success of our new launches.”

SBI home loans cross ₹5L cr

State Bank of India (SBI) on Wednesday said it has crossed the Rs 5 lakh crore-mark in its home loan business. The real estate and housing business (REHBU) unit of the bank has grown five times in the last 10 years with an asset under management (AUM) of Rs 89,000 crore in 2011 to Rs 5 lakh crore in 2021. “This extraordinary feat is a testament to customers' continuous trust in the bank. We feel that combining technology with personalised service is the key in the current scenario,” says Dinesh Khara, bank's Chairman. The bank is also working on various digital initiatives to improve the efficiencies in home loan delivery, he added.

‘More than full GDP recovery in FY22’

STRUCTURAL REFORMS, POLICY PUSH, BUDGET MEASURES WILL STRENGTHEN ECONOMIC FUNDAMENTALS: DEA

NEW DELHI

AS the economy emerges out of the pandemic-induced slowdown, a report by the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), Union Ministry of Finance, has said that the outlook for growth and inflation of the country in the upcoming financial year (2021-22) indicates a ‘more than full recovery’ of the economy.

The ‘Monthly Economic Review’ for January 2021 said the structural reforms and the policy push under the Atmanirbhar Bharat Mission along with the slew of measures announced in the Union Budget 2021-22 towards achieving broad-based inclusive growth will strengthen the fundamentals of the economy and bring it back on to a strong and sustainable growth path in the year ahead. “Growth and inflation outlook in 2021-22 portends more than full recovery,” it said.

The report added that a sustained and strengthening economic recovery continues to be witnessed in January, 2021 across

FinMin REPORT CARD

- Sustained recovery continued in Jan
- PMI remained in expansionary zone
- FDI, FPI flows fueling GDP rebound



GST collections in Jan 2021 have been the highest monthly collections so far in the history of this tax regime

key high frequency indicators such as power consumption, inter and intra state mobility, manufacturing capacity utilisation, business expectations and consumer confidence.

GST collections in January, 2021 have been the highest monthly collections so far in the history of this tax regime, it said, adding that

manufacturing and services PMI remain in expansionary zone while augmented credit growth, surging FDI and FPI flows and private placement of corporate bonds are providing critical financial cushion to the real recovery.

The DEA report highlighted that the Economic Survey, 2020-21 has drawn attention to the V-shaped

economic recovery as a testimony to the resilience and intrinsic strength of the Indian economy. It noted that the survey roots for growth through counter cyclical fiscal policy emphasizing that growth alone is the answer to sustaining the public debt burden of the country.

The Budget, 2021-22 presented two days later implemented the counter cyclical fiscal policy by raising the target of fiscal deficit to 6.8 per cent of GDP, more than double the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act (FRBM) target.

“With the expanded borrowing programme mostly meant for funding the enhanced capital outlay, the Budget has set in place the multiplier impact on growth to support the prescribed fiscal glide path tapering to 4.5 per cent of GDP in 2026,” it said.

It said that with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) keeping India's growth projections elevated at 6.8 per cent in FY23, India is back as the fastest growing major economy in the world.

Market slips for 2nd day on subdued sentiments

MUMBAI

EQUITY indices closed with mild losses for the second straight session on Wednesday, weighed by selling in banking counters, as domestic sentiment remained subdued despite a bullish trend overseas.

After swinging 666.64 points intraday, the 30-share BSE Sensex settled 19.69 points or 0.04 per cent lower at 51,309.39. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty slipped 2.80 points or 0.02 per cent to close at 15,106.50. Index heavyweight HDFC Bank was the biggest laggard in the Sensex pack, shedding 1.77 per cent, followed by Bharti Airtel, Axis Bank, ONGC, Nestle India, L&T, Infosys and SBI.

On the other hand, Bajaj Finserv, M&M, Bajaj Finance, TCS and Reliance Industries were among the gainers, surging up to 2.96 per cent. According to traders, investors used the higher levels as an opportunity to book profits through the day, keeping the benchmarks



volatile. “The market witnessed a slip in its momentum during a volatile day as losses in banking stocks weighed on the sentiment. Auto, realty and consumer stocks remained firm along with mid and smallcap indices outperforming.”

“US markets remained positive, supported by upbeat quarterly earnings while the trend was followed by most of the global peers,” said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services. BSE telecom, bankex, capital goods, power and FMCG indices lost as much as 1.46 per cent, while realty, consumer durables, auto and energy ended with gains. In the broader markets, the BSE midcap and smallcap indices outperformed the benchmark, rising up to 0.71 per cent. Global equities remained firm, propped up by vaccine rollouts and US stimulus hopes, as investors looked ahead to a speech by US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell. Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Tokyo and Seoul ended with gains. Stock exchanges in Europe were also trading on a positive note in early deals. Meanwhile, the global oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 0.23 per cent higher at \$61.36 per barrel. The rupee firmed up by 3 paise to settle at 72.84 against the US dollar in range-bound trade.

E-commerce in India clocks 36 % volume growth in Q4

Personal care, beauty and wellness as well as FMCG and healthcare were the biggest beneficiaries and saw volumes grow by 95 per cent and 46 per cent year-on-year, respectively, according to a report by Unicommerce and Kearney



NEW DELHI

E-COMMERCE in India grew by 36 per cent and 30 per cent year-over-year (YOY) in terms of order volume and gross merchandise value (GMV), respectively, in the fourth quarter of 2020, said a report on Wednesday. However, the average order value declined by 5 per cent in Q4 2020 as compared to same period last year, said the report by Unicommerce, an e-commerce-focused supply-chain software-as-a-service (SaaS) technology platform, and global management consulting firm Kearney.

The report showed that personal care, beauty and wellness as well as FMCG and Healthcare were the biggest beneficiaries and saw volumes grow by 95 percent and 46

percent YoY, respectively. Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities accounted for a 90 per cent YoY incremental volume and value growth.

Interestingly, brand websites reported 94 per cent volume growth in Q4 2020 as compared to same period last year. “The e-commerce industry has emerged as the backbone of the retail industry and small and big players have realised the immense potential that e-commerce holds,” Kapil Makhija, CEO, Unicommerce, said in a statement.

“The e-commerce volume growth continued to accelerate in the last quarter of the pandemic hit year.” The report showed that FMCG and pharma as a category reported growth of 92 per cent on the brand website and 62 per cent growth on the marketplaces.

Govt plans to sell 20% stake in National Fertilizers

MUMBAI

THE Centre plans to sell 20 per cent stake in National Fertilizers Ltd (NFL) through ‘offer for sale’. The Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) has invited tenders from law firms with experience and expertise in public offerings and OFS in capital markets to act as legal advisers and assist the government in the process. It has also sought tenders from merchant bankers for the sale process.

“The GoI intends to disinvest 20 per cent paid up equity capital of NFL out of its shareholding of 74.71 per cent, through ‘Offer for Sale’ (OFS) method of shares by promoters through the stock exchanges’ as per Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) Rule and Regulations,” said a notification by the department.

Further, the Centre is also considering allotting shares to eligible and willing employees of NFL at a discount on the issue or discovered price -- lowest cut off price -- up to a maximum of certain percentage of the OFS size subsequent to completion of the transaction under OFS. The percentage and extent shall be decided in due course.

SBI Ecwrap revises FY21 growth forecast to -7%

KUMUD DAS
MUMBAI

SBI's research wing, Ecwrap has revised its FY21 GDP forecast estimate for the current fiscal to -7 per cent from -7.4 per cent earlier.

Based on ‘SBI Nowcasting Model’, the forecasted GDP growth for Q3 would be around 0.3 per cent (with upward bias), said the report by Ecwrap which is headed by SBI's group chief economic advisor Soumya Kanti Ghosh.

Additionally, out of the 41 high frequency leading indicators, 51 per cent are showing acceleration. “We now expect GDP decline for the full year to be around 7.0 per cent (compared to its earlier prediction of -7.4 per cent),” the report said. Apart from Q3 FY21, the Q4 growth will also be in positive territory (about 2.5 per cent). However, all projections are conditional on the absence of any rise in infections.

The report goes on to say, “We retain our GDP forecast for FY22 GDP at 11 per cent, but with the caveat that 11 per cent will be the floor below which it cannot fall.” The corporate results so far

also reinstate the fact that Q3 growth would be much better than the Q2 growth. The corporate GVA of 1129 companies has expanded by 14.7 per cent in Q3 as compared to 8.6 per cent growth in Q2 (of 3758 companies ex telecom).

Meanwhile, the proposed ARC AMC structure in the budget could facilitate recovery and resolution of stressed assets in a much better way and this could create a market for stressed assets. Given that the governance of the AMC and its independence is central to the success, there could be multiple suggestions to make it successful. This includes keeping majority ownership in the private sector, putting together a strong and independent board, hiring a professional team from the market and linking AMC compensation to returns delivered to investors.

Meanwhile, the report pointed out that fiscal deficit is likely to be higher for FY21 than 9.5 per cent projected in the Budget. “We already estimated that excluding off balance sheet liabilities, fiscal deficit of the Centre is likely to be at 8.7 per cent of GDP”, the report said.

SICMA condemns strike call by BAI

NEW DELHI

South India Cement Manufacturers Association (SICMA) has condemned the strike called by Builders Association of India (BAI) on February 12. BAI has called the strike and will stop work for a day on February 12, citing input cost increases, including that of cement. “South India Cement Manufacturers Association strongly condemns the same for two reasons - spreading misinformation among common public and their intent to take advantage of economic recovery and to further increase prices of real estate, which is already at unaffordable levels,” SICMA said in a statement.

It has already written to the Prime Minister and Finance Minister to look into profiteering being done by the builders. “We believe that instead of supporting initiatives by both state and central governments to bring the economy back on the growth trajectory, BAI is trying to take advantage of the situation by citing unfounded reasons to increase the realty prices, instead of reducing it drastically and help common consumers who are looking for a roof over their head,” it said. Across markets, builders access cement at a rate of Rs 6,000 per metric tonnes or below.

Srikakulam has potential for MSMEs: Collector

CHOWADARI LAKSHMAN RAO
SRIKAKULAM

SRIKAKULAM district has sufficient natural resources but these resources are not properly used. As a result, the district is still lagging behind as far as industrial development is concerned.

Srikakulam district has abundant natural resources and sufficient work force but youth need to come forward to start MSME units by availing government schemes, District Collector, J Nivas told Bizz Buzz. In Srikakulam, more number of food processing units can be established if entrepreneurs come forward, he added.

The district is home to a long coastal belt of 193 kilometres and two major rivers - Vamsadhara and Nagavali. These rivers cater to the water needs of the district. Besides, there are two medium rivers, MahendraTanaya and Bahuda, which also quench the thirst of the district. At present, Srikakulam district



stands at 12th place in the State as far as industrial growth is concerned.

The total number of industrial units including all categories such as mega, large, medium and minor industries in Srikakulam district is 5,893. The investment for all these units is to the tune of Rs 6741.45 crore and as many as 63,675 people work in these industrial units.

Large and mega industrial dedi-



The district has abundant natural resources and sufficient workforce

cated to jute processing are three in number. Previously, these units used to be 20 in number but due to reduced demand for jute, several units had to be closed.

There are pharmaceutical manufacturing units besides a pesticide making unit. Cooperative sugar factory at Amudalavalasa was closed down and only one sugar factory is running in private sector at Sankili village in Regidi mandal. As far as machine product manufacturing is

concerned, there are piston and piston ring making units. The district has other units such as 10 craft paper making industries, three beach sand minerals processing units.

Currently there are as many as 324 rice mills. Besides rice mills, about 300 granite mining, cutting and polishing units are there.

The stone crushing units total to 700, while cashew processing units are 450 in number, fishnet making units are 100 in number and paper

plates and cups making units are 100. Besides, poultry feed making units are 50 in number, electrical poles manufacturing units are ten, cement brick making are 50 in number in the district. There are many food processing units while drinking water units are 300 in number.

The district can boast of other small industries such as 200 metal work units, about 100 coir production units and 300 saw mills.

GDP set to grow 10.4% in FY22, says Ind-Ra

NEW DELHI

INDIA'S gross domestic product (GDP) growth will bounce back to 10.4 per cent year-on-year (YoY) in FY22, primarily driven by the base effect, said India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra). Accordingly, the ratings agency's estimates showed that after recording negative growth during 9MFY21, GDP growth will finally turn positive at 0.3 per cent YoY in 4QFY21. “Although the recovery in FY22 on a YoY basis will be V-shaped, the size of the GDP will barely surpass the level attained in FY20 and will be 10.6 per cent lower than the trend value.”

“The impact of Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown on the economy, although subsiding, will continue to delay the normalisation of economic activities in the contact-intensive sectors till the mass vaccination or herd immunity becomes a reality.” In the FY22 Union Budget, the Centre set aside its fiscal conservatism and decided to provide the much-needed support to the demand side of the economy.

Fit Axar back in nets, Nadeem set to be dropped

SECOND TEST PITCH MIGHT OFFER MORE TURN

KUSHAN SARKAR
NEW DELHI

INDIA could go for one change to their playing XI in the second Test against England starting Saturday with Jharkhand left-arm spinner Shabbaz Nadeem making way for fit-again all-rounder Axar Patel after his poor show in the series-opener in Chennai. While Nadeem's replacement will be decided by Friday, one can expect Patel to replace him after his debut was put on hold by an injury. India were outplayed in the first Test that ended on Tuesday.

"Axar had a minor knee niggle and has already started batting at the nets. He is expected to start bowling during the next couple of days," a senior BCCI source told PTI on Wednesday. "He was always the first choice to play the opening Test but it will depend on skipper Virat Kohli, head coach Ravi Shastri

and bowling coach Bharath Arun," he added.

Indian captain Virat Kohli didn't hide his disappointment when it came to Nadeem's performance during the post-match presentation where he said that he and Washington Sundar couldn't keep up the pressure that was created by Jasprit Bumrah, Ishant Sharma and Ravichandran Ashwin. Nadeem had four wickets in all but gave away 233 runs in 59 overs across two innings with an economy rate of close to 4 runs per over.

And if that wasn't enough, as a slow bowler, a total of nine no balls at the Test match level can be considered criminal. Nadeem himself admitted that he has had some issues with the timing of his jump at the crease and he needs to sort that out in the nets. Washington bowled 26 overs for 98 runs in the first innings and got a solitary over in the second innings. However, Washington,

who was impressive with the bat in the first innings, is likely to retain his place in the playing XI.

Ashwin hurt, but is okay

A welcome news for India will be that Ashwin is doing fine after he sustained a painful blow from a Jofra Archer short ball during the Indian second innings and needed immediate attention from the physio Nitin Patel. India's best bowling performer in Chennai wasn't required to go for any precautionary scans which will certainly be a relief for Kohli as he expects a friendlier pitch during the next Test starting from Saturday.

New Chepauk strip may offer some turn from Day 1

After one of the flattest decks on offer during the first Test in Chennai, task will be cut out for Tamil Nadu Cricket Association's rookie curator V Ramesh Kumar and BCCI head of

pitches and grounds committee head Taposh Chatterjee, to provide a track which doesn't make toss so crucial. While currently, there is grass cover on one of the adjacent strips, which could be used for the second match, it is a given that there will be fair share of turn. It will be interesting to see whether Ramesh and Chatterjee stop watering the track during the next three days. If a dry pitch is baked adequately in sunshine, there could always be a case of pitch breaking early.

There is always this school of thought in Indian cricket circles as to why questions are raised about tracks that offer turn from the first day whereas in places like Christchurch in New Zealand, the 22-yard strip couldn't be identified from the outfield. Ditto for Basin Reserve in Wellington where the ball was jaggling around from the first hour. (PTI)



'Root will probably break all batting records of England'

LONDON

FORMER England captain Nasser Hussain feels incumbent Joe Root is "arguably" the country's best ever player of spin and can break all the Test batting records accumulated by the nation's batsmen.

Root struck 218 in England's first in-

formance" and will go down as one of the great England Test wins.

"People were writing England off, saying this series could be 4-0 to India. No one really gave this side much of a chance. India had won in Australia, Virat Kohli was back and India is a very difficult place to go and win in Test match cricket. "So, this win for England has to be right up there, especially a way from home. They put in the per-

James Anderson inspired England off, saying this series could be 4-0 to India. No one really gave this side much of a chance. India had won in Australia, Virat Kohli was back and India is a very difficult place to go and win in Test match cricket. "So, this win for England has to be right up there, especially a way from home. They put in the per-

nings on a spin-friendly pitch to lead his side to a 227-run win over India in the first Test in Chennai on Tuesday. "Root sure is one of England's greats. He will probably end up breaking all records, he will probably go past Sir Alastair Cook's 161 Test matches and probably tally of runs as well," Hussain wrote in his column for 'Sky Sports'. "He is in great nick, only 30 years old, and if you did a list of all-time England batting greats - the ones I have seen anyway - you'd have to have Root with Cook, Graham Gooch and Kevin Pietersen. "I would say he is arguably England's best-ever player of spin, the way he sweeps spin away is outstanding to watch."

The 52-year-old Hussain said the massive win against India in their own den was a "perfect per-

fect performance. From ball one to the final delivery, it was outstanding."

Hussain felt that England have improved a lot on the road having won six away matches on the trot. "If you asked Joe Root or Chris Silverwood right now whether they are the best side in the world they would say no. But they have been the best side they can be. Six away from home in a row, if you go back to South Africa last winter. "They are starting to answer the right questions about how to improve away from home," said Hussain who played 96 Tests between 1990 and 2004.

of the England and Wales Cricket Board. "Anderson is 38 so Stuart Broad could come in for him as it is going to be a very similar pitch to the first Test and England might want to keep Anderson fresh for the third Test. "That is a day-night game in Ahmedabad (third Test) and Anderson under lights could be a real handful. Broad is a pretty good replacement, I have to say!"

The former captain also defended Root for his decision not to enforce the follow on after taking a massive first innings lead against India. "... there is always a 45-minute gap between what pundits, spectators, people off the field think the captain should be doing and what actually happens. "If you are not going to enforce the follow on, then you want to rest your bowlers. Root wanted to make sure they were fresh to go again." (PTI)



HYD TENNIS PLAYER EXCELS

HANS NEWS SERVICE

HYDERABAD: Y Sai Dedeepya of Hyderabad entered the AITA singles Quarterfinals in the 1 lac women's tennis tournament at Chennai. In the pre-quarters singles, Dedeepya beat Sharanya Shetty of Maharashtra with the score of 6-3, 6-1 and in the quarters Dedeepya will play with Shrivally Rashmika of same State. In the quarters doubles partnering with Pooja Ingale of Maharashtra Dedeepya lost to Sai Samhita- Tentu pair of Tamil Nadu with the score of 2-6, 4-6.

Bopanna-McLachlan pair goes down fighting at Australian Open

MELBOURNE

INDIA endured a second successive disappointing result at the Australian Open with Rohan Bopanna and Ben McLachlan bowing out after a close opening-round defeat to Ji Sung Nam and Min-Kyu Song in the men's doubles event, here on Wednesday.

Bopanna and his Japanese partner lost 4-6 6-7(0) to the Korean wild card pair in one hour and 17 minutes. Not having enough court time due to hard quarantine seemed to have an effect on Bopanna's sharpness. McLachlan, on his part, struggled to negotiate volleys and that hurt them. Bopanna had spent 14 days in his room and came out only on January 30, jumping into the tune-up event, only to lose his opening round with Frederik Nielsen.

The Indian did not get enough competition time to be ready for the season's first major. Bopanna lost his serve in the opening set and that initial break stayed with the Korean players, who executed their plan with precision to take the first set. It was expected to be an easy match for the Indo-Japanese pair but the good chemistry of the lower-ranked Koreans, who played to their strength, made it tough for them.

Manolo Marquez signs two-year extension

Spanish coach extends stay at ISL club till 2022-23

PANAJI

HYDERABAD FC Head Coach Manuel 'Manolo' Marquez has signed a two-year extension, the club announced on Wednesday. The 52-year-old Spaniard who joined Hyderabad in August 2020, has signed a deal which will keep him at the Indian Super League side till the end of the 2022-23 season.

"I am very happy to extend my contract with Hyderabad FC because I think that it is a very good project. The atmosphere here is great. The continuity at the club, with players as well as the staff is really good. When things are working well, you should not change much, so I am very pleased to sign the new contract," said Manolo Marquez after completing formalities.

"Sometimes the second year is more difficult than the first. This season, we are a surprise to the league but next season, I am sure will not be the same. There will be more pressure, but if we work hard, and strive to im-



prove like we did in this season, we can surely have a good season, next year as well," he added.

Hyderabad FC co-owner Varun Tripuraneni said, "We are extremely delighted that Manolo has signed a two-year extension with us. He took over a massive challenge at HFC and he has not only brought us and the fans delight with results on the pitch, but he has also brought in an attractive style of play."

"Manolo has done a tremendous job in showcasing the potential that this talented young squad has. He has managed to bring out the best in a lot of young players by instilling confidence, and it's important that we keep up with the good work."

Pride at stake for Odisha as they look to end Kerala's playoff hopes

HANS NEWS SERVICE
GOA



WITH their hopes of qualifying for the Hero Indian Super League play-offs all but over, all that Odisha can fight for now is pride. The bottom-placed side has been on a six-match winless run now, having won only one game all season, which came against Kerala Blasters. And they will be keen to repeat that feat when they face the same opponents at the Fatorda Stadium, here on Thursday.

While Odisha will be battling for pride, Kerala placed 10th, will try and reach as close as they can to a top-four spot. Odisha coach Gerald Peyton is aware that Kerala will be fighting for all that they have but he will take confidence from their record against the southern outfit. In their three meetings so far, Kerala have never beaten Odisha.

"I think they've got some good players," he said. "Tactically, we know how they play and will match them in every area. They play a 4-4-2 and we are going to play the same way. We are going to make it difficult for them and I think we can do the double over them."

Like their opponents on Thursday, Kerala have also been struggling. They are winless in four games and have conceded the most goals this season (27). Odisha lie a close second on that table, having conceded 25 goals.

The defensive issues faced by both teams are visible from the fact that Odisha has faced the maximum number of shots on target while Kerala have faced the second-most.

HANDBALL TOURNAMENT

Hyderabad District Handball Association is conducting its first tournament post-Covid in the memory of late Ibrahim Khan from February 26-28 at LB Stadium. Late Ibrahim Khan was The founder and General Secretary of erstwhile State of AP and Secretary General of Handball Federation of India. Entries are to be submitted on or before February 24.



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