



WINDOWS



Centre withdraws heritage bylaws for Jagannath Temple

BHUBANESWAR: Following widespread protests, Union Minister of Culture and Tourism Prahlad Singh Patel on Monday announced the withdrawal of the draft notification on heritage bylaws issued by National Monuments Authority (NMA) for Jagannath Temple in Odisha. The decision came after delegations of Biju Janata Dal and Bharatiya Janata Party MPs from the state met Patel separately demanding withdrawal of the controversial bylaws.

India has crossed LAC more times than China: VK Singh

NEW DELHI: India has crossed the Line of Actual Control more number of times than China, but the government does not publicly announce it, Union minister VK Singh said on Sunday. "Let me assure you, if China has transgressed 10 times, we must have done it at least 50 times," the former Army Chief told reporters in Madurai. Singh said India's border with China had never been demarcated, and that the two countries have differing perceptions about the de facto border. "China had transgressed many times over the years with its own perception of the LAC," the minister added. "Similarly, none of you come to know how many times we have transgressed as per our perception. Chinese media does not cover it."

Centre asks Twitter to block 1200 'Khalistani' accounts

NEW DELHI: The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has sent a fresh list of nearly 1200 accounts to Twitter, asking it to either suspend or block them in India. These accounts — the new notice sent on February 4 — said, "were flagged by security agencies as accounts of Khalistan sympathisers or backed by Pakistan". "Many of these accounts were also automated bots that were used for sharing and amplifying misinformation and provocative contents on farmers protests.



Sharmila to float YSR Telangana Party



HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

ANOTHER political party known as YSR Telangana Party to be headed by the daughter of the former undivided Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister is likely to take shape soon.

Sharmila is said to have asked her legal consultants to complete the formalities of floating a new party by registering the name with the Election Commission of India. Why has Sharmila de-

cided to float a new political party is the big question that is being discussed in the political circles. While some say that she had decided to launch a new political outfit following differences with her brother Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy. It is said that she felt totally ignored by her brother though she played a key role in all election campaigns in support of her brother and even undertook padayatra in the Telangana region. It is said that Sharmila

wants to bring all the diehard fans of Y S Rajasekar Reddy who are in politics in some party or the other under one umbrella. She has a long-term goal in politics. She would like to start her journey as a political leader from Telangana and once the organisational structure was in place, she would contest in Andhra Pradesh and some other states so that her proposed party can become a national party, analysts aver.

End agitation, hold talks: PM

Asks farmers to give a chance to agri reforms

NEW DELHI

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi has appealed to the protesting farmers to end their agitation and initiate talks to resolve the issue while assuring that the MSP will continue. He also asked the farmers to give a chance to the agri reforms and said he was always open to change.

The Prime Minister, while replying to the discussion on the Motion of Thanks to the President's address, said the MSP will continue and so will the monthly ration scheme to 80 crore people.

Appealing to the agitating farmers to end their protest, he said talks should be held to resolve the issue.

Modi said, "The agri-reforms should be given a chance and MSP was very much there and will continue in the future, and I in the House also say that the ration scheme to 80 crore people will continue."



Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks in the Rajya Sabha during ongoing Budget Session of Parliament, in New Delhi, Monday

Country has new community 'Andolan Jivi', says PM

NEW DELHI

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said a new community has come up in this country- 'Andolan Jivi' (one who thrives on protests)-- who can be spotted in every protest and are parasites on the nation. "We are well aware of some terms like 'Shram Jivi' and 'Buddhi Jivi'.

But, I am seeing that from some time a new entity has come up in this country- 'Andolan Jivi'. This community can be spotted wherever there is a protest, be it agitation by lawyers, students, or labourers, sometimes at the forefront and sometimes from behind. They cannot live without protests.

SET A DATE

Farmers respond to PM's invite for talks

NEW DELHI

FARMER unions agitating against the three farm laws on Monday asked the Union government to fix a date for the next round of talks, soon after Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged them to end their stir and invited

them to resume the dialogue.

They, however, objected to the Prime Minister's remarks in the Rajya Sabha that a new 'breed' of agitators called 'andolan jivi' has emerged in the country, and said that agitation has an important role in a democracy.



BKU leader Rakesh Tikait (C) with Acharya Pramod Krishnan (R) and other saints during the ongoing farmers' protest against the new farm laws, at Ghazipur Border in New Delhi, Monday

MASSIVE RESCUE OP TO SAVE 39 TRAPPED INSIDE UTTARAKHAND TUNNEL

Toll mounts to 26; still 171 missing

NEW DELHI



A massive operation led by a joint team of the ITBP, Indian Army, SDRF and NDRF is underway to rescue 39 people, which include power plant workers, trapped inside a tunnel after the glacier burst in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district.

The team had earlier managed to enter the 12-foot high and 15-foot wide tunnel at Tapovan and reach about 100 metres before they were forced to retreat as sludge and water blocked their way.

Uttarakhand Director General of Police Ashok Kumar said that efforts were focussed on rescuing

the labourers trapped in the tunnel. Two villages are cut off and essentials are being supplied to them. The work was complicated by the fact that the tunnel is slightly curved, making difficult to clear the slush, debris and silt blocking it.

The death toll has gone up to 26 and 171 missing.

'An insult to farmers'

AURANGABAD: Senior Congress leader and Maharashtra minister Ashok Chavan on Monday termed as 'insult' to farmers the use of word 'Andolan-Jivi' by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "The farmer is one of the key elements which is keeping the humanity alive. Using the word 'Andolan Jivi' sarcastically for farmers' agitation is an insult to farmers, Chavan tweeted.

Bill in RS to replace ordinance facilitating regularisation of unauthorised colonies

PURNA SINGH

NEW DELHI

The government introduced a bill in the Rajya Sabha on Monday, which seeks to replace the National Capital Territory of Delhi Laws (Special Provisions) Second (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020.

Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs Hardeep Singh Puri introduced the National Capital

Territory of Delhi Laws (Special Provisions) Second (Amendment) Bill, 2021 in the Upper House of Parliament. The ordinance was promulgated by President Ram Nath Kovind on December 30, 2020.

It amended the National Capital Territory of Delhi Laws (Special Provisions) Second Act, 2011. The 2011 Act was valid till December 31, 2020.

"A premium Co-Living Space"

PROPERTY MULTIPLIER
WITHOUT ADDITIONAL INVESTMENT

KT Residency approved by Approved No. PO2400001598

SAFE

Earn extra sft*

AFFORDABLE

9% to 11% Returns

NO MAINTENANCE

Assured rental income for 20years

+91 95337 76694

www.ktresidency.com | sales@kapilproperties.com

Womenia

Will act till my last breath; Saanve Megghana

Saanve Megghana was last seen in the Tollywood movie 'Bilalpur Police Station' in 2019. Megghana in an exclusive interview with The Hans India, shares her journey as an actor in the Telugu cinemas

TEJAL SINHA

Saanve Megghana who was last seen in the Telugu movie 'Bilalpur Police Station' believes that she is fortunate enough that her career chooses her and not the other way. Megghana began her career in acting at a young age of 18.

Her career began when Jayasudha, a veteran actor rang up her mother. Recalling about the same, Megghana adds, "There was a shoot happening at my college St. Francis, Begumpet and for mandatory attendance I had to assist the team being part of Social service. Somebody from the team bumped into me and asked me if I could act, to which I said No, I can dance. I gave them my mom's number to get away. Cut to two months, my mom gets a call from Jayasudha Ma'am, asking if I would be interested to act in a sitcom produced by her. I auditioned the next day which happens to be the first time I ever acted. It was magical. Subsequently, my number was circulated and people began to approach me for roles in films. It was surreal for a girl like me who has no film background. I knew this was the beginning and ever since then, with immense faith, I know I belong to this world of cinema."

For her, doing small roles in a couple of Telugu films before doing her lead roles was a great experience and learning. It was more like an acting school for her.

She adds, "I was naive and I knew absolutely nothing. But by then, I was in love with how I felt being on sets. Irrespective of the screen space or the role, I wanted to put myself out there, I've done a film Bilalpur Police Station with minuscule screen space at the age of 18 and I've also played a couple of small roles in Syeraa and MEB. During the process, I've developed a lot of patience while working in these films."

Like the other debutants it wasn't easy breezy task for her as well as a debutant. She also shares that she has been to countless number of auditions and it has been almost 4 years now, that she has been embarked to this journey with having no film background.

"I didn't have the right guidance to take any step further. I almost felt like I'm fighting a losing battle but I dug my heels in, I gathered patience, courage and worked on myself. It was nothing but belief, a belief that the best is coming for you. Nothing can beat that. I will act till my last breath. But If I'm really put in such situation, I think I'll work off camera, but definitely Cinema. I'm trying to live in the moment of being a well-known personality in the Telugu industry and It feels like a dream but it's actually coming true. I'm very confident about my abilities which make me feel I deserve it. I'm thrilled for my upcoming releases and work harder than I ever have," says the 'Bilalpur' actress.

She further adds saying that she thinks being here for 4 years now was not an easy task.

She says, "Year in year out, we go through so much and these 4 years now taught me that nothing ever comes easy and If it does, it goes away easy. I've been more than patient

with myself. I think as human, the least we could do is TRY. In this process, I could discover a lot about myself. When I look back, I see how every little moment was so valuable to me and that's what makes me value every little thing that happens to me in my life now."

At present, Megghana is all set for the release of her next film Pitta Kathalu in which she plays the role of 'Ramula'. Pitta Kathalu is an Anthology, in colloquial Telugu it means, Short stories about women, that consists of 4 films directed by 4 phenomenal directors telling us stories about powerful women. It's going to be the first ever Telugu Netflix Originals. The part that she played is named "Ramula" and has been directed by the amazing Tharun Bhascker. The movie is set to be released on the 19th of February.

She will next be seen in her upcoming project, where she will be opposite Anand Devarakonda and the movie directed by debutant Damodara who's got innate sense of storytelling, it's going to be a very exciting story, under King of the hill and Tanga productions.

Megghana also reveals that she has always been a Bollywood freak and would love to grab an opportunity in the Bollywood industry.

The love for dance and acting

Megghana has also been a fantabulous dance since the start and for her dance is her first love. She says that there is not even a day of hers that passes without dancing. Though, Megghana has not been a trained dancer, learning different styles in dance is definitely in her 'to-do list'.

"Dance and Acting are both beautifully hitched. I act while I dance and I can also dance while I can act. With all the humility, I think I'm a brilliant dancer. I can groove to any song you play. At times, I dance just before going for my shot. That brings joy to me. I think we should do anything and everything that brings joy to us," ends the actress.



TWEET PATROL



THERICHACHADHA @RICHACHADHA

Tweeting from the unaffected part of Uttarakhand seems surreal...So much death, devastation not too far away...Human beings are a part of nature, if we mess with nature, we're messing with ourselves actually.Hope we citizens ensure that development is always sustainable



Nutritionist Lovneet Batra sticks to basics in pandemic times

VISHNU MAKHIJANI

At a time when a multitude of manufacturers are pushing their largely synthetic products as boosting immunity during the pandemic, nutritionist Lovneet is steadfastly sticking to the natural way of doing things, saying traditional wisdom provides the best answer to staying fit.

"I've been a clinical nutritionist for over a decade; during my practice I've helped several people struggling with different goals, be it weight management, body image issues, sports or healing from a disease condition. Although different people may have different goals their hope is to re-invent the wheel when it comes to their diet," Lovneet Batra told in an interview of her book, "50 Desi Superdrinks" (Rupa).

"They usually expect a super-food from far away land to be the life-changing element in their fitness journey. Just like I've busted those superficial, non-sustainable ideas of fitness for my clients through my diets, this book is a humble attempt to rebrand our traditional wisdom through the support of science into our go-to super-food," she added.

Q: What are the health and immunity benefits from such drinks?

Immunity is the most trending buzzword of year 2020; it is an army that is required to work in a strict balance in our body. Although we can't build a strong immunity overnight but maintaining optimum nutrition, restful sleep and active lifestyle remain key ingredients. Indian kitchens are loaded with ingredients that can support our health and immunity.

Our gut health is strongly linked to our immunity through trillions of microbes present in our GI (gastrointestinal) tract. 'Kanji', a natural vegan probiotic made by fermenting beetroot and carrot can help in nourishing the good bacteria that strongly support our immune system.

Then, 'masala chai', which is loaded with a strong antioxidant theaflavin and is combined with flu-fighting ingredients such as tulsi, ginger, black pepper and cardamom keeps infections at bay.

Mulethi and fennel kahra is used as a natural immunity booster in Ayurveda. It helps in soothing sore throat and chronic cold-cough. This drink helps to decongest and reduce phlegm production, Batra elaborated.

Q: Are there separate summer and winter drinks?

Yes, each and every drink has a season, time and purpose. Some drinks like 'besan sheera' or 'kahwa' are meant for cooler temperatures whereas some like 'jal jeera' or 'aam panna' are summer saviors. Drinks like 'thandai' are a must have during festivities whereas others are a timeless pleasure such as 'masala chai' or 'shikanji'.

Considerable research went into the book.

It took over a year of late night researching through scientific journals, learning more about the details of regional Indian traditional recipes and making sense of it all through my day-to-day patient interactions, testimonies and professional experience as a nutritionist.

Q: What then, are the five takeaways from this book?

- 1) Healthy living starts with simple and sustainable solutions not with some exotic, hard to find and over-priced ingredients.
 - 2) We need to look beyond calories to measure goodness in our foods.
 - 3) Food is the source of our strength, don't make it a weakness, and use it wisely.
 - 4) Celebrate and nurture traditions.
 - 5) The power of drinking well is underestimated; it adds up quickly and boosts vitality seamlessly.
- Batra certainly believes in leading by example.
- "Going beyond fads and myths, I believe in making nutrition simple and straight. I often encourage my clients to develop a healthy relationship with food. As a nutritionist, I believe good food and good health are best buddies; I begin my day with a paaneer parantha for breakfast because it keeps me happy, full and energized for the rest of the day. For me, nutrition is delicious and doable," she said.

Q: What is her next project?

I'm currently working on developing nutrition education platform for patients struggling with disease management.



"I've been a clinical nutritionist for over a decade; during my practice I've helped several people struggling with different goals, be it weight management, body image issues, sports or healing from a disease condition. Although different people may have different goals their hope is to re-invent the wheel when it comes to their diet" - Lovneet Batra

NEWS ROUNDUP



Lakshmi Manchu to cycle 100km to support differently-abled for sports

Actress Lakshmi Manchu will cycle 100 kilometres on February 28 to raise funds for differently-abled people and their ambition to pursue different forms of sports.

Lakshmi said: "I have been wanting to ride a 100 kilometres as a dream, as something that I wanted to do." The actress shares that her determination to be a part of the cause came after she went to Maldives on a holiday.

"After going to Maldives I understood how

we have taken for granted about everything in our lives. It was so refreshing to be on an island with people around you with no masks. It dawned on me that how we have taken even breathing for granted and now we have to breath our own breath through these masks," Lakshmi said.

She continued: "My heart again went out to these people, who have a limb or something missing from their lives because of

they weren't born like this, they had an accident or they were in the front lines saving our country and they willingly gave up a part of their body for the betterment of us or an accident took it away."

She went on to say: "That gave me the motivation to really commit to 100 kms because the pandemic has really hurt organisations who are raising funds and I thought what better way to create awareness."

CROSSWORD

Across

- 1 Slender bars (4)
- 4 Change for better (6)
- 8 Downhearted (3)
- 10 Fencer's sword (4)
- 13 Hung around (8)
- 14 With feet apart (7)
- 15 Boosted or hoisted (6)
- 17 Relating to voters (9)
- 21 Floor covering (3)
- 22 Taro dish (3)
- 23 Consume (3)
- 26 Island now known as Lakshadweep (9)
- 27 Delighted (6)
- 28 Vacates (7)
- 32 Leap by a ballet dancer (8)
- 34 To glut (4)
- 35 Obese (3)
- 36 Mooch (6)
- 37 Wading bird (4)

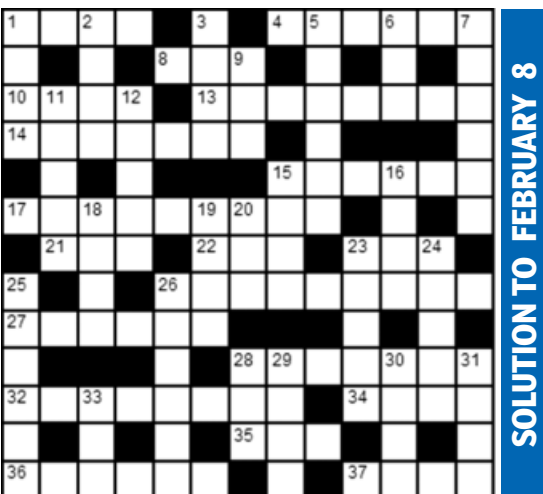
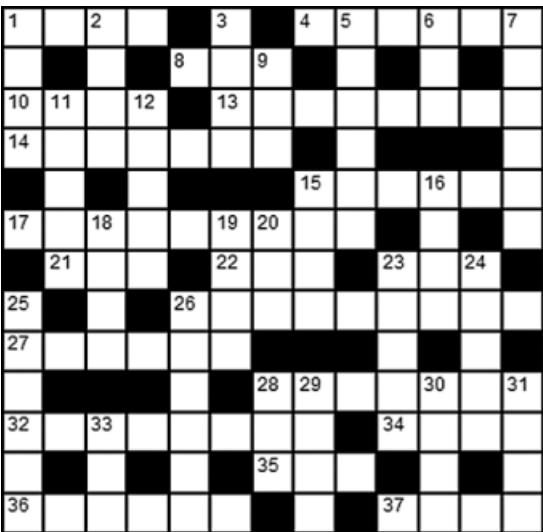
Down

- 1 Earthbound bird (4)
- 2 Food regimen (4)
- 3 Chilled (4)
- 5 Involve (6)
- 6 Boat propeller (3)
- 7 Got by (4,2)
- 9 Misery (3)
- 11 Davidic poem (5)
- 12 Upright (5)
- 15 Not of the clergy (4)
- 16 Bangkok resident (4)
- 18 Effortless (4)
- 19 Gemstone (4)
- 20 Mythical bird of prey (3)
- 23 Changes or emends (5)
- 24 Idiot box in the house ? (2,3)
- 25 Puts out by force (6)
- 26 Enticing (6)
- 28 Sprite (3)
- 29 Intend (4)
- 30 Two-syllable foot (4)
- 31 Becomes firm (4)
- 33 Jeering cry (3)

SUDOKU

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 6 | 5 | 2 | | 4 | 9 | 1 | |
| | 8 | | | | | | 4 | |
| | | 9 | 1 | | 7 | 8 | | |
| 7 | | | | 5 | | | | 3 |
| | 1 | | | | | | 9 | |
| 5 | | | | 2 | | | | 4 |
| | | 3 | 6 | | 9 | 2 | | |
| | 2 | | | | | | 3 | |
| | 7 | 4 | 3 | | 2 | 6 | 8 | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | 9 | 1 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 8 | 3 |
| 3 | 7 | 5 | 4 | 8 | 9 | 1 | 2 | 6 |
| 8 | 6 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 7 | 9 |
| 6 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 1 |
| 5 | 2 | 7 | 9 | 1 | 8 | 3 | 6 | 4 |
| 1 | 8 | 9 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 2 | 5 | 7 |
| 4 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 9 | 1 | 7 | 3 | 8 |
| 9 | 1 | 8 | 5 | 7 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 2 |
| 7 | 3 | 6 | 8 | 2 | 4 | 9 | 1 | 5 |



SOLUTION TO FEBRUARY 8

SOLUTION TO FEBRUARY 8



UP govt's 'Mera Ghar, Mera Vidyalaya' scheme a winner

VARANASI

THE 'Mera Ghar Mera Vidyalaya' (mohalla class) scheme introduced in Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh is now becoming a role model for the whole country.

This scheme by the Uttar Pradesh Basic Education Department was started from the Sewapuri block in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's constituency and is proving to be so popular that parents are giving it preference over convent schools.

The scheme was launched in 2020 during the Covid-19

pandemic when all schools and educational institutions were shut.

The state government came up with an initiative of 'Mera Ghar Mera Vidyalaya' as an attempt to facilitate learning through ancient 'Gurukul' residential style of teaching.

Varanasi Basic Shiksha Adhikari, Rakesh Kumar Singh, said, "The scheme was started with an aim to provide a school-like environment at home through digital means. Since the launching the scheme, teachers and staffers of the schools have been delivering books and study ma-

terial to the children. It is being received well by the students and parents alike."

Under the scheme, the students take classes every alternate day from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. An hour between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. is set aside for sports whereas 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. in the evening is dedicated to moral stories. The parents have been directed not to give any household chores to the children during the assigned timings.

This initiative of the state government reflects the ancient residential learning system amid natural surround-

ings. Initially, the teachers and students had to face certain difficulties because of poor internet services and even the parents were wary of sending their children for the 'Mohalla Pathshaala'. However, later they agreed and now this initiative is being highly appreciated by all.

'Mohalla Pathshaala' is designed to reduce the distance of children from schools and books is also giving many benefits to the students of private schools. In order to avoid heavy fees, children from private schools are now switching to government schools.

HC dismisses plea claiming Ayodhya mosque land rights

LUCKNOW

THE Allahabad High Court on Monday dismissed a petition filed against the allotment of land in Ayodhya's Dhannipur village for the construction of a mosque, following the Supreme Court verdict in the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute.

Two Delhi-based sisters had moved the Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court on February 3, claiming ownership of the five-acre land allotted to the Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Waqf Board for the mosque. Appearing for the state, Additional Advocate General Ramesh Kumar Singh had opposed the plea, saying the plot numbers allotted for the mosque are different from those the petition is filed about.

On Monday, justices D K Upadhyay and Manish Kumar dismissed the plea after the petitioners' lawyer, H G S Parihar, sought to withdraw it. The bench



also expressed concerns with Parihar for filing the petition in a cursory manner without ascertaining the facts. Rani Kapoor, alias Rani Baluja, and Rama Rani Punjabi had said in the writ petition that their father Gyan Chandra Punjabi had come to India during partition in 1947 from Punjab and settled in Faizabad (now Ayodhya) district. They claimed that their father was al-

lotted 28-acre land in Dhannipur village by the Nazul Department for five years which he continued to possess beyond that period.

Later, his name was included in the revenue records, the petitioners had said. However, his name was struck down from the records against which their father filed an appeal before the Additional Commissioner, Ayodhya, which was allowed, they

claimed. The petitioners further claimed that the consolidation officer again removed their father's name from the records during consolidation proceedings. Against the order of the consolidation officer, an appeal was preferred before the Settlement Officer of Consolidation, Sadar, Ayodhya, but without considering the said petition, the authorities allotted five-acre of their 28-acre land to the Waqf Board for the constructing of mosque, they said.

The petitioners demanded that the authorities be restrained from transferring the land to the Sunni Waqf Board till the pendency of dispute before the settlement officer. The state government has allotted five-acre land to the Sunni Waqf Board in Dhannipur village for construction of a mosque in compliance with Supreme Court direction in the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri mosque title suit.

Punjab govt supporting gangster Mukhtar, SC told

SUMIT SAXENA
NEW DELHI

THE Uttar Pradesh government on Monday unleashed a barrage of charges against the Punjab government for providing shelter to gangster-turned-politician Mukhtar Ansari, who is accused in several heinous cases in UP.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told the Supreme Court that Ansari is getting five-star treatment in a Punjab jail, and questioned why state government is supporting a gangster?

Mehta, representing the Uttar Pradesh government, did not mince words in criticising the Punjab government before a bench comprising Justices Ashok Bhushan and R. Subhash Reddy. "He (Ansari) is happy in Punjab jail and he is enjoying," Mehta said.

The Solicitor General added that Ansari is being vociferously defended by the Punjab government. He said the Punjab government claims that he (Ansari) is suffering from depression, but in reality he is enjoying



his time in jail.

"The Punjab government is supporting a gangster. There are very serious cases pending against Ansari and the trials of the same are pending in Uttar Pradesh," Mehta contended before the top court.

The Uttar Pradesh government has moved the top court seeking Ansari's transfer from Punjab to UP. However, the Ropar jail authorities have refused to hand him over citing medical grounds.

Mehta added that summons were issued against Ansari, but

then he got an FIR registered against himself in Punjab and did not even file for bail, rather he is enjoying his time in Punjab. The Uttar Pradesh government has termed the FIR as a complete sham and a design to help Ansari escape the law in UP.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, representing Ansari, said that his client can appear through video conferencing in cases in Uttar Pradesh. Mehta rebutted that Ansari cannot choose a forum and he cannot sit in five-star accommodation and then appear for trial in Uttar Pradesh.

Javadekar blames Punjab stubble burning for pollution in Delhi

NEW DELHI

REPLYING to a supplementary question on the situation of air quality in Delhi, Union Minister of Environment Prakash Javadekar said that the main reason behind deteriorating air quality in the national capital in the month of September to November is the stubble burning in Haryana and Punjab.

He said that stubble burning in Punjab has increased by 75 per cent this year while it has increased by 25 per cent in Haryana.

Union government has spent huge amount on providing 40,000 machines to the states but they are used seldom. The wind during September to November is eastward due to which the pollution increased in Delhi, the minister added.

The government said that the problem of Delhi is that it has alluvial soil which results in the dust while the city's like Bangaluru have rocky soil.

The AQI on Monday in Loni, Ghaziabad and Delhi was reported to be 456 and 393 respectively, which falls under hazardous category.

Aditi questions Sonia's absence from Rae Bareilly

RAE BAREILLY

REBEL Congress MLA from Rae Bareilly, Aditi Singh, has added to the embarrassment of the party by questioning the prolonged absence of interim Congress President Sonia Gandhi from her parliamentary constituency. Sonia Gandhi has consistently won the Rae Bareilly seat after shifting from Amethi in 2004.

"Sonia Gandhi came to Rae Bareilly only twice after winning the election in the last five-year term. She has come to Rae Bareilly only once before the 2019 elections to file her nomination," Singh told reporters.

Rae Bareilly, the lone seat held by the Congress in Uttar Pradesh, has emerged as a ma-



jor trouble spot for the party. While the two Congress legislators in Rae Bareilly - Aditi Singh and Rakesh Singh - have already revolted against party, other leaders are also coming out openly against the 'new culture' in the Congress in which veterans are being 'completely sidelined' and 'turncoats' are being given importance.

Three held for theft of auto parts worth Rs 35 lakh in Gurugram

GURUGRAM

THREE persons have been arrested on charges of theft of auto parts worth Rs 35 lakh from the premises of a private company in Gurugram, police said on Monday.

Those arrested for the thefts are Shift Manager Rakesh Kumar of Rewari, Machine Operator Shahid of Gurugram and stolen property receiver Zahid of New Delhi.



Police said Area Manager Dinesh Puri of Safe Express NH-48 Pvt Ltd said in his police complaint that during inspection of stocks on January 16, as many as

1,872 auto part items were found missing. He claimed that Shahid and Rakesh had stolen the items on January 6, following which they stopped reporting for duty. A case was registered at the Bilaspur police station.

Acting on a tip-off, Farrukhnagar Crime Branch unit led by Inspector Inderveer arrested Rakesh and Shahid from the Bilaspur-Taurau Road on February 2 and took

them on 5-day remand. Police also seized Rs 9 lakh from their possession. "During interrogation, the accused confessed to their involvement in the crime and disclosed that Shahid sold stolen items for Rs 11 lakh to Arif alias Chajju of Palwal district. Police arrested prime accused Zahid on February 5 and seized stolen property worth Rs 6 lakh from him," said ACP (Crime) Preet Pal Sangwan.

Scientists ponder reasons for floods in Uttarakhand

SHAKOOR RATHER
NEW DELHI

GLOBAL warming or maybe a Western disturbance bringing fresh snow that melted could have triggered the inundation in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district, experts said on Monday as they scrambled to understand the reasons for the avalanche and floods that wreaked havoc in the upper reaches of the Himalayas.

Recalling the horrors of the 2013 deluge in the hill state in which thousands were killed, a part of the Nanda Devi glacier "broke off" at Joshimath on Sunday, leading to a massive flood in the Alaknanda river system. Till late afternoon Monday, 18 bodies had been recovered and 202 were missing. The Snow and Avalanche Study Establishment (SASE) of

the Defence Research and Development Organisation is investigating the exact reason for the flooding but there are no clear answers yet for a glacier to have melted in the winter. It is not clear whether the flood is a typical Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) or some temporary damming due to a landslide and avalanche that might have blocked the main-stream to form a temporary lake which burst, said Ranjit Rath, director general of the Geological Survey of India (GSI).

A GLOF is a type of outburst flood that occurs when the dam containing a glacial lake fails. "Once the water level recedes a team of experts will assess the damage as well as the triggering factor responsible for the outburst," Rath told reporters here. As the nightmare envisaged by



numerous environmentalists warning against untrammelled development in the mountains came true on Sunday, glaciologist Farooq Azam said a glacial burst is very rare. "We have been trying

to understand the event since yesterday. Right now what we can tell is a glacier slipped from around 500-600 metres, which started a landslide with an icefall that triggered this disaster,"

Azam, assistant professor, Glaciology & Hydrology, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Indore, told PTI.

"For sure there was no glacial lake outburst flood, for sure there is no cloud burst because there is no lake available in the region at this particular time. Even if there are lakes, they are frozen and they don't have any activity. The disaster happened because of an icefall and landslide," he added. Satellite and Google Earth images, Azam added, do not show a glacial lake near the region, but there's a possibility there may be a water pocket in the region. "Water pockets are lakes inside the glaciers, which may have erupted leading to this event," Azam told PTI. The scientist, however, said further analysis, weather reports and data are needed to confirm if this indeed was the case.

"There is no doubt that global warming has resulted in the warming of the region. Climate change driven erratic weather patterns like increased snowfall and rainfall, warmer winters have led to the melting point of a lot of snow," he added.

Climate scientist Roxy Mathew Koll agreed and also said more data is needed. He said the recent climate change assessment report for India shows significant melting and decline in glacier mass over the Himalayan region in the recent decades due to warmer temperatures. Koll also said it was not clear if an accumulation of glacier melt led to this burst, and noted that Western disturbances during last week did bring in a lot of snow over the region, followed by clear sky and warm temperatures.

THE HANS CLASSIFIEDS

CHANGE OF NAME

I, NEERAJ JUNEJA, R/o. B-7, Hari Nagar, New Delhi-110064, hereby state that DEITY JUNEJA is my Daughter and her Date of Birth is 02-11-2006. I have changed my Daughter's name from DEITY JUNEJA to ENIKA JUNEJA. In future, DEITY JUNEJA will be known as ENIKA JUNEJA. Hence, both names are One and Same.

(TH_Karun Sharma)

VIRTUALSOFT SYSTEMS LTD.
Regd. Off: S-101, Panchsheel Park, New Delhi-110 017.

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given pursuant to Regulation 29 of SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulation, 2015 that the meeting of the Board of Directors of the Company will be held on Saturday, 13th February, 2021 at 4:00 P.M. at 59, First Floor, Okhla Industrial Estate Phase-III, New Delhi-110020, to inter-alia, consider and take on record the Un-Audited Financial Results for the Quarter ended 31st December-2020.

By order of the Board
For Virtual Soft System Ltd.

Sd/-
Date: 08.02.2021 Mukta Anuja
Place: New Delhi Company Secretary

Nature gives a warning yet again

THE glacier tragedy in Uttarakhand has just proved the growing impact of the climate crisis. A survey done in 2019 found that the Himalayan glaciers are melting at an “alarming speed”. Since long, local activists and writers have also blamed the intensive building along Uttarakhand’s rivers and mountains of dams and hydropower infrastructure, which they argue is destabilising the ecologically fragile Himalayan region and resulting in more extreme weather events.

The Himalayas are a very young mountain range and are still in a formative stage. In recent years, scientists have monitored a notable increase in the rate of glacier retreat across the region as a result of climate change. There are 550 dams and hydroelectric projects in the state of Uttarakhand alone, with 152 big dam projects, and in the area affected by the February 7 flash flood, there are 58 projects along the rivers and their tributaries.

A new road is also being built into the mountains to ease access for tourists to Uttarakhand’s famed Kedar-

nath temple, which has involved blasting into the rocks and the reported dumping of mud and rubble into the waters. In this Himalayan area, there are 10,000 big and small glaciers so we should be very careful about building any development projects in this ecologically fragile region, especially as climate change makes it even more fragile. The government wants to exploit hydropower for income and gives approval to all these big dam projects on every river, who we then see flouting environmental laws.

We can’t say these projects are entirely to blame for this latest disaster, but they are definitely one of the contributing factors. The Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology, had a different theory to the authorities on what caused the flooding. It was “more likely” that in recent weeks there had been a debris blockage in the river upstream, causing a lake to form and water to gradually build up. An avalanche had then “caused this lake to breach and the water to surge down the valley at speed”, the Institute said. Climate change is exacerbating India’s water crisis in several different ways, including an erratic monsoon cycle.

Water resources are becoming progressively scarce, and therefore, less dependable for generating electricity through large hydro projects. Countries such as Brazil, which has traditionally relied extensively on large hydro as a source of power, are now increasingly looking at alternatives due to unreliable precipitation. In India too, rivers such as the Ganga and the Cauvery are facing an unprecedented reduction in flow and volume. Many Himalayan rivers are projected to face a drastic reduction in flow due to climate change by the middle of this century.

Worse, it has been projected that the large-scale damming of the Himalayas will cause the submerging of hundreds of square kilometres of forest, resulting in the loss of hundreds of species of fish, plants and vertebrates. In India, large hydro projects have already been associated with some of the country’s worst floods, deforestation, and submerging of forest lands. It has been recommended by many experts that unsafe and unproductive dams in India should be decommissioned. We should rethink. Many countries, such as the United States, Brazil, China and Peru, are now actively taking steps to decommission existing dams.



UP gov’t ‘Mera Ghar, Mera Vidyalaya’ scheme is a winner

THE ‘Mera Ghar Mera Vidyalaya’ (mohalla class) scheme introduced in Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh is now becoming a role model for the whole country.

This scheme by the Uttar Pradesh Basic Education Department was started from the Sewapuri block in Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s constituency and is proving to be so popular that parents are giving it preference over convent schools.

The scheme was launched in 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic when all schools and educational institutions were shut.

The state government came up with an initiative of ‘Mera Ghar Mera Vidyalaya’ as an attempt to facilitate learning through ancient ‘Gurukul’ residential style of teaching.

Varanasi Basic Shiksha Adhikari, Rakesh Kumar Singh, said, “The scheme was started with an aim to provide a school-like environment at home through digital means. Since the launching the scheme, teachers and staffers of the schools have been delivering books and study material to the children. It is being received well by the students and parents alike.” Under the scheme, the students take classes every alternate day from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. An hour between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. is set aside for sports whereas 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. in the evening is dedicated to moral stories. The parents have been directed not to give any household chores to the children during the assigned timings. This initiative of the state government reflects the ancient residential learning system amid natural surroundings. Initially, the teachers and students had to face certain difficulties because of poor internet services and even the parents were wary of sending their children for the ‘Mohalla Pathshala’. However, later they agreed and now this initiative is being highly appreciated by all. ‘Mohalla Pathshala’ is designed to reduce the distance of children from schools and books is also giving many benefits to the students of private schools. In order to avoid heavy fees, children from private schools are now switching to government schools. (GANS)

VSP: A victim of neglect over decades



Madabhushi Sridhar Acharyulu

THE Centre’s plan to sell away the Navratna public enterprise - Vizag Steel Plant (VSP) will be a big blunder. The time has come for the two Telugu state people to unite and fight for protection of the icon of Telugu self-respect - VSP - for which there were agitations in all the districts of combined Andhra Pradesh in 1970s under the name “Visakhha Ukku Andhrula Hakku” for which 32 agitators laid down their lives.

In 1965, an Anglo-American consortium certified that Visakhapatnam was a suitable place for a steel plant. But PM Indira Gandhi rejected it in 1966 leading to a strong agitation. Veteran freedom fighter Tenneti Viswanatham led the movement and T Amritharao took to indefinite hunger strike. On November 1, 1966 police opened fire killing nine persons. In 1970, Indira Gandhi declared the establishment of the VSP and she came to the city to lay its foundation in 1971.

When the Centre sells this unit, how does it value the 32 lives and the donation of 6,000 acres of land by local Kurupam Jamindars in 1970 and 16,000 acres of land allocated by AP Government at throw away price? The Government, the donors and the people were expecting that it would help all round development of the state and generate employment for many.

The plant had increased steel production from 3.4 million tonne to 7.3 million tonne with its own funds and with bank loans reflecting its financial strength. While the Centre’s initial investment was around 4,900 crore, the RINL has paid back Rs 43,000 crore to both the Centre and Andhra Pradesh for various taxes and dividends so far. Which means the Centre did not suffer any loss but remained in profits, though it did not give single paise in the last 25 years.

It has no moral right to blame that VSP should be sold out because of its losses. Two main reasons for the losses are that the VSP had to bear the burden of interest for bank loans it took for increasing the production and had to purchase thousands of tonnes of iron ore every day for higher cost as the Centre did not allocate mines to its own unit.

The Union Cabinet had cleared the privatisation of Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Ltd (RINL), as per the tweet on February 3 by the Secretary of DIPAM (Department of Investment & Public Asset Management) Tuhin Kanta Pandey. DIPAM means lamp, but this tweet if DIPAM will put off lakhs of ‘dipams’ in lakhs of families in Visakhha.

Tuhin Kanta Pandey said that the RINL strategic sale proceeds would be part of the disinvestment target for next fiscal year starting from April 1. “Cabinet Com-

mittee on Economic Affairs has, on 27th Jan 2021, given in principle approval for 100 per cent strategic disinvestment of Government of India shareholding in Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited RINL along with management control by way of privatisation”. Strategic disinvestment is a ‘strategic name’ for selling off the PSU to crony capitalists.

Visakhapatnam, the steel city (Ukku Nagaram, the name assumed because of steel plant) has woken up to this decision of the Centre without consulting anybody, its people, employees of VSP and the trade unions came together and voiced together for withdrawal of the decision to disinvest the Government’s share in VSP.

The Kurupam Zamindars have donated 6,000 acres of land in 1970 for Vizag Steel Plant. Then a new company called Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (RINL) was formed on 18 February 1982. Thus the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant was separated from SAIL and RINL was made the corporate entity of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant in April 1982.

On 20 May 2009, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh launched the expansion project of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant from a capacity of 3.6 MT to 6.3 MT at a cost of Rs. 8,692 crores. But the investment was revised to 14,489 crores with classification - Expenditure for the financial year 2009-10 was Rs 1840 crores, Rs 5883 crores since inception of the project and total commitment, including enabling works, steel procurement, consultancy, spares, etc. was Rs 11,591 crores as of 25 March 2010.

The VSP is the first shore-based integrated steel plant in the entire country. It has 16,000 permanent employees and around 20,000 contract workers and provides indirect livelihood to 65,000 people. Five lakh people, a quarter of population of Visakhha depend on this factory, for which the then Prime Minister laid foundation stone in 1977. It began production in 1992.

The steel plant has a capacity of 7.3 million tonnes per annum with two subsidiaries - The Orissa Minerals Development Company Ltd (OMDC) and The Bisra Stone Lime Company Ltd (BSLC) - and runs RINMOIL Ferro Alloys Pvt Ltd, an equal joint venture with Manganese Ore (India) Limited Company (MOIL) and RINL Powergrid TLT Pvt Ltd, also an equal joint venture with Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd. In 2020, under the directions of the Union Steel Ministry, RINL signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with South Korean Steel Corporation POSCO company to set up a joint venture on the plant’s land in Visakhapatnam.

The Central government should take the responsibility for starving the VSP by not allocating mines as captive mines for uninterrupted supply of iron ore. In spite of Union’s continuous demand for allocation of captive mines over a few years,



Visakhapatnam, the steel city (Ukku Nagaram, the name assumed because of steel plant) has woken up to this decision of the Centre without consulting anybody, its people, employees of VSP and the trade unions came together and voiced together for withdrawal of the decision to disinvest the Government’s share in VSP

been depending on the supplies from Bailadila mines being run by the National Mineral Development Corporation and importing coking coal from Austria. The other steel plants have their own captive mines, they are able to get the iron ore at a cost of ₹1500 per tonne, whereas the RINL was spending ₹7,000 per tonne. VSP requires 20,000 tonnes every day, for which they are compelled to purchase at higher price and that is resulting in huge losses to the company.

Instead of facilitating the supply of raw material i.e., allotting captive mines, the Government has referred it in 2003-04 to the Board for Industrial Finance and Reconstruction (BIFR) for winding up the company due to losses. Then there was a massive agitation by the workers, employees and the people, and the promise of the workers to work hard and turn the plant into profits within two years. The VSP was saved as it could make some profits.

The steel plant has a highly valuable asset in the form of huge tracts of land of 22,000 acres. At the present market value, each acre costs around ₹5 crore. So, the land value itself is more than ₹one lakh crore. The Centre is likely to sell this prime property to private parties for a song.

The workers gave some more details which reveal the real reasons for the status of VSP. “It must be recalled that the Central Government has invested Rs 4,900 crore into the plant since its inception but the state government had made an investment of about Rs 42,000 crore”. The Government is marching ahead with its ‘disinvestment’ plan to make Rs 1.75 lakh crore in this financial year.

AP CM requested the Centre not to sell the VSP, while pointing out that RINL achieved its highest ever capacity utilisation of 6.3 MTPA against the capacity of 7.3 MTPA in December 2020, posting a monthly profit of close to Rs 200 crore.

(The writer is Professor of Law, Bennett University and former Central Information Commissioner)

there was no response from the Centre and state failed to build pressure to secure allocation of mines, which could have drastically reduced the losses. While allocating the mines to private companies and not giving any mine to its own unit has surprised many.

One allegation of the Centre is that the VSP is suffering losses and it cannot afford losses anymore. RINL has incurred net losses worth Rs 1,321 crore in 2017-18 and a net profit of Rs 96 crore in 2018-19. “It is only in recent years that the plant was incurring losses, mainly owing to the crisis in the steel industry. Another main reason is due to the non-allotment of captive mines in spite of numerous requests. The plant can expand and revive on its own with minimal government support,” said the union leaders.

Though having an installed capacity of 21 million tonnes per year, the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant has presently been operating with a production capacity of only 7.3 million tonnes. The basic reason for this underperformance of the plant is lack of raw material. Unlike Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL), Tata Steel, Jindal Steel and other such plants, the VSP does not have its captive iron ore mine. It has

LETTERS

Arrogance versus democracy

THE statement of CM KCR that he is going to be the CM for 10 years need not be accorded any value. It can be brushed off as ranting of a politician who wants to cling to power for ever. Of late there had been growing noise in the party to make his son KTR as CM. could this have happened without the blessings of the father and the son? May be, they want the seed to be planted in the minds of party men and people on political heritage and it is done successfully.

However, our Constitution provides a tenure of 5 years only for any government and then their fate is decided by electorate. Such statements by CM undermine democracy. Of course, KCR is not an exception to this general political phobia. BJP leaders keep saying about being in power for next 25 years.

The YSRCP leaders speak as if they will remain in power eternally. Chandrababu Naidu always had far longer visions of 2025, 2050 and so on, but only failed to visualise his own displacement by an upsurge against him. This kind of over confidence breeds complacency, arrogance, inefficiency and finally the fall. Better if these politicians concentrate on the job on hand rather than building castles in distant future.

Vinay Bhushan B, Hyderabad

RSS and unsung heroes

I read in the newspapers that the Governor of TS, in her interview, said that she was inclined to RSS just

because when she called for four units of blood to save a patient as a Doctor, ten RSS volunteers turned up. Of course, those were the days of difficulty in procuring blood and slack or rather deplorable collection standards which got international standards, thanks to HIV/AIDS. Let me say that when I was in a situation as hers to save a critical patient in a dependable Mission hospital in a rural setting, I raised three units of blood, one from the referring local doctor, one from patient’s mother and lastly but not the least from me. Ideology must be universally acclaimed while RSS lacks such universal standards, not to demean any such help to humanity but what about unsung heroes whose blood saves lives and remain anonymous since their cause is universal.

Dr T Ramadas, Visakhapatnam

Today VSP, tomorrow Singareni?

EVER since Narendra Modi has become the Prime Minister he has become the definition of the disturbance to the public of this country. Before the farmers demand for withdrawal of Farm Laws was attended to, he targeted Visakhha Steel. Why is Modi and his team so anti-people?

All the decisions are proving to be hasty and causing so much discomfort to the common people. Starting with sudden announcement of demonetisation till the equally sudden announcement of lock down of the country.

The country has witnessed the inexplicable agony of the migrant labourers due to sudden lockdown. Already the country is anxious about striking farmers in this hard climate for so long and instead solving the issue of farmers, the cruelty of the central government once again proved with the idea of privatisation of Vizag Steel.

It is time all the southern states must be united to

fight against the privatisation of Vizag Steel factory. If we Telugu states keep quiet, the next in queue could be Singareni. Let us fight unanimously and prove that India is a democratic and socialist country.

Thummapudi Bharathi, Tirupati

Indo-Americans shine in USA

AS part of broader plan to combat ethnocentrism reigning America, the new president, Joe Biden, identified self as an antagonist of “racism, xenophobia and intolerance” against the country’s Asian American and Pacific Islander community and has appointed around 20 Indo-Americans, among others in key posts.

Joe Biden has appointed at least 13 women, to key positions in his administration, a new record in itself for this small ethnic community that constitutes one per cent of the country’s population. It is also for the first time ever that so many Indian-Americans have been roped into a presidential administration ever before the inauguration. Biden is still quite far away from filling all the positions in his administration. It’s highly rejoicing to note that trusting Indian talents, the President has appointed nuclear scientist Bhavya Lal to a highly sensitive post as NASA acting chief of staff which has a leadership role.

The dedication that the Indian-American community has shown to public service over the years has been recognised in a big way by Biden rewarding them creditably. Indians, thereby, have earned an acclaimed place in American history.

Seetharam Basaani, Hanamkonda

thehansreader@gmail.com

TS govt plans to strengthen local bodies

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

CHIEF Minister K Chandrashekar Rao on Monday declared that local bodies would be strengthened and they will play an active role in the rural development. He said the Zilla Parishads and Mandal Parishads would be given funds like the Gram Panchayats and they would be assigned with the fixed responsibilities.

The CM also made it clear that Zilla and Mandal Parishads would be allocated funds in the State's budget of 2021-2022 while holding a review meeting with officials on measures to be taken to strengthen the local bodies.

KCR said that special funds from the Finance Commission would be released to Zilla and Mandal Parishads. If these funds are linked with the MN-REGA more funds can be accrued. "We have incorporated conditions in the new Act for the Gram Panchayats to spend their funds totally. But in some places, for more than Rs 2 lakh worth works, the old rule of taking permission from the mandal officers is being implemented. This is against the new Act. The Gram Panchayats have every right to spend funds for the needs of their villages. No one should interfere in this. On this matter, the official should clarify once again," the CM, said.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Tiffin boxes back to school

SABYA SINGH
HYDERABAD

EVEN though the mid-day meal scheme (MDM) is back in force following the reopening of schools beginning this month, parents are preferring to provide home food to their wards owing to COVID pandemic. The parents of students of government schools have been sending their wards with lunch boxes, fearing that the managements are not adequately geared up to ensure strict adherence to the Covid protocols. "Since many people come into contact during cooking and distribution of food, there remains a question of hygiene hence we prefer home cooked food," said M Karnakar, father of a class 9 student in Secunderabad.

At one of the schools, students of Class X said that they were bringing their own lunches as their parents were apprehensive about the coronavirus. They thought it was not safe to eat outside food. "Earlier I used to have the food provided by the school, but now I am bringing tiffin box. My mother has also instructed me to avoid sharing with my friends," said a class X student, on condition of anonymity.

New tech courses fall prey to old ways of teaching habits

VRC PHANIHARAN
HYDERABAD

QUESTIONS raised over the much-talked-about the introduction of courses in the emerging technologies at B Tech and undergraduate level in various colleges in Telangana.

Recognising the importance of new courses like Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, and Data Analytics, Cyber security and the like the State government had permitted an intake of about 18,000 seats in the emerging technologies from the current academic year. Besides, similar courses are introduced in the science streams of in the degree colleges. However, now questions are raised over the same. Reason being, while the technologies are new the way they are allowed to

- Students of AI-ML in B Tech and UG courses have no inter-disciplinary papers
- Fingers pointed at experts and academicians prepared syllabus for the new courses
- Studying papers related to public policy, law necessary for students of AI, ML and Big Data



teach at the colleges falling back in the old ways.

Jawaharlu Nehru Technological University, Hyderabad (JNTU-H) senior faculty member said, "Experts from the academic and industry from the fields of Artificial Intelligence,

Machine Learning and Big Data etc have prepared the syllabus for the new courses."

The main focus was to make it more relevant for the students to gain employment or to go for higher studies in those streams. However, the current syllabus

FOR EASY RECALL OR LUCK

Online auction kicks off for fancy numbers

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD



Hitherto, one had to visit RTA offices and quote a price for a particular number

THE Telangana Transport department has extended the online booking (e-bidding process) of the fancy registration numbers to few more RTA offices including Medchal, Ibrahimpatnam, Kondapur, Rangareddy in an effort to eradicate the role of middlemen.

The transport department had started the e-bidding process of the fancy registration numbers such all nines (9999) on a pilot project basis in some RTA offices in the city in January 2020. The pilot project was started in offices like Khairatabad, Secunderabad, Mehdiapatnam, Malakpet and Bandlaguda. The services are now started in the RTA offices like Uppal, Medchal, Kondapur, Rangareddy and Ibrahimpatnam.

According to officials, the fancy registration numbers are the most sought after by the vehicle

owners, especially the high-end vehicle owners. Until now the vehicle owners had to visit the RTA offices and quote a price for a particular number. The vehicle owners should quote a price apart from the prescribed fee and deposit a demand draft of that price in a sealed cover and deposit it in a box at the RTA office. The vehicle owner who bids the higher price would be given the number, said a senior RTO.

Actor to promote sports for differently-abled

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

ACTRESS Lakshmi Manchu will cycle 100 kilometres on February 28 to raise funds for differently-abled people and their ambition to pursue different forms of sports. Lakshmi said: "I have been wanting to ride a 100 kilometres as a dream, as something that I wanted to do." The actress shares that her determination to be a part of the cause came after she went to Maldives on a holiday.

"After going to Maldives I understood how we have taken for granted about everything in our lives. It was so refreshing to be on an island with people around you with no masks. It dawned on me that how we have taken even breathing for granted and now we have to breath our own breath through these masks," Lakshmi said.

She continued: "My heart again went out to these people, who have a limb or something missing from their lives because of they weren't born like this, they had an accident or they were in the front lines sav-



ing our country and they willingly gave up a part of their body for the betterment of us or an accident took it away." She went on to say: "That gave me the motivation to really commit to 100 kms because the pandemic has really hurt organisations who are raising funds and I thought what better way to create awareness."

"That really motivated me and that's what motivates me to wake up every morning so it's not like my feet are hurting today, my legs are hurting today and I don't want to ride, there is a bigger purpose and I have started my training now. It's been five days. Today I did 40 kms, I'm hoping that before the big event I'm able to at least push 70 easily. So on day of the ride I can do 100 kms with ease," she added.

CM aide protecting land mafia: Uttam

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

TELANGANA Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) president & Nalgonda MP N Uttam Kumar Reddy alleged that people in Huzurnagar were suspecting that a principal aide of Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao and TRS MP Santosh Kumar were helping the land mafia.

"People are wondering with such a huge uproar against grabbing government and tribal lands, why is that the district and State administration maintaining complete silence on the issue. TRS councilors and other party men themselves are alleging that government and tribal lands worth hundreds of crores were forcibly being grabbed by unscrupulous elements in Huzurnagar," he said.

Addressing a press conference at Gandhi Bhavan on Monday, Uttam Kumar said that Gurrumbodu thanda of Pedaveedu in Mattampally mandal was located on the banks of Krishna river. "Mattampally was a highly backward area. There were no roads and many people did not even have land documents. As the MLA, who repre-

QUESTIONS THE SILENCE OF DISTRICT AND STATE ADMINISTRATION EVEN AS THERE IS HUGE UPROAR AGAINST GRABBING OF GOVT AND TRIBAL LANDS



sented the Huzurnagar constituency for four terms, I laid roads and brought immense development in the area and there were no encroachments. However, he said some brokers, connected with a close aide of CM KCR, purchased documents from the tribals. When I was the MLA, no one purchased the land documents," he said. Uttam Kumar said that after TRS won the Huzurnagar Assembly by-elections in 2019, local TRS leaders, in connivance with

police and other officials, encroached upon thousands of acres of land worth several hundred crores.

The TPCC chief strongly condemned Telangana BJP president Bandi Sanjay for his remarks against him. He said Bandi Sanjay lacks basic decency as he became the State president of a party after coming from a corporator level. He said he had served the country as an Airforce Pilot and fought against the enemies on the bor-

ders. Therefore, Bandi Sanjay should be cautious in making remarks against him. Further, he said if Bandi Sanjay was genuine in criticising CM KCR, then he should make his party's government at the Centre to order a probe against the Chief Minister's corruption. He alleged that both BJP and TRS were two sides of the same coin and they were having a secret pact with the sole intention of damaging the Congress party in Telangana State.

SEC expresses satisfaction with cooperation of govt staff

AMARAVATI

STATE Election Commissioner (SEC) N Ramesh Kumar met representatives of major associations representing government employees and expressed his complete satisfaction regarding the support and dedication on the part of employees as well as police personnel regarding poll duties. In a meeting at the premises of SEC on Monday, the commissioner assured that the commission fully shares the concerns of employees and took immedi-

ate measures to instill confidence among them at a critical juncture of holding of elections.

APJAC Amaravati chairman Bopparaju Venkateswarlu, secretary Y V Rao, AP Revenue Services Association general secretary Ch Krishnamurthy met the State Election Commissioner seeking basic amenities for those employees who were going to discharge poll duties, including face masks and PPE kits and see that the government does not victimise those who discharge poll duties.

FUNDS FOR POLAVARAM

Progress after panel decision: Centre

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

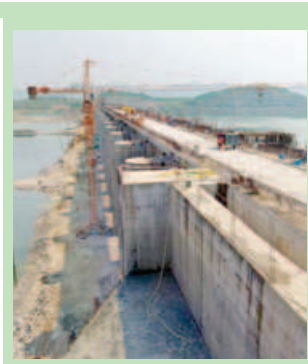
UNION Jal Shakti minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat here on Monday in his reply to YSRCP MP V Vijayasai Reddy on Polavaram costs, said that a committee was appointed for the revised cost estimates and once its decision was conveyed, the Cabinet would take it forward.

The Centre had been reimbursing the expenditure on irrigation component of the project with effect from April 1, 2014, upon receipt of verified bills and recommendations from the Polavaram Project Authority (PPA) and Central Water Commission (CWC), with the approval of the ministry of finance (MoF).

Funds were being provided through Extra Budgetary Resources (EBR) from NABARD from Long Term Irrigation Fund (L TIF), after seeking specific approval.

Further, NABARD raises the funds from the market once requirement of requisite amounts is conveyed to them by this ministry. NABARD normally requires about two to three weeks to

- Jal Shakti Minister says once the committee on revised cost takes a decision, the Cabinet will move ahead
- Asks the State govt first to expedite the rehabilitation and resettlement-related issues as there will not be any difficulty for flow of funds



- He responds to a question by YSRCP member Vijayasai Reddy who raised the discrepancy in recommendations of Technical Advisory Committee and Revised Cost Committee

arrange funds from market (depending upon market conditions) and transfer to National Water Development Agency (NWDA). The funds are then transferred to the state, the minister added.

Vijayasai Reddy sought clarification regarding the total amount pointing to the fact that the minister had previously said in the Lok Sabha that the Revised Cost Committee recommended the revised estimates at Rs 47,725 crore and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) has given investment clearance for Rs 55,656.87

crore as per 2017-18 price level. The state government so far had spent over 2,500 crore own money for the national project, he added seeking to know when would the money be reimbursed.

The Union minister further added that under the AP Reorganisation Act when the Polavaram Irrigation Project (PIP) was declared a national project, it was decided that the state government would undertake it. The ministry of finance moved the Cabinet note of the Act under which it was written that

the project would be completed under the 2013-14 price level.

The RCC (Revised Cost Committee) had worked out the estimate as of 2017 and the matter after this was yet to be discussed.

This would then be finalised and would be sent to the Cabinet and then what the Cabinet finally decides would be taken up.

As far as flow of funds is concerned, there were no difficulties involved in it, the minister assured. "I would like to tell the House that there are no difficulties involved in it. While it was decided that Polavaram would be a national project it was decided then only that it would be paid in a reimbursement mode. From LTIF and NABARD, this money is raised and given to the state government based on the bills and documents they submit which are then verified and funds are released. I think the difficulties are not involved in the flow of funds. I think the state government needs to focus and expedite the process of R&R (rehabilitation and resettlement) related issues. This project can then be completed at the pace desired by the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh".

Speed up Krishna river bund road, officials told

- CM reviews works under Amaravati Metropolitan Region Development Authority and in Visakhapatnam
- Says speedy completion of 4-lane road is important for the development of Amaravati region
- Examines proposals on a project in 13.59 acre land on coastline in Vizag which was given on lease to Lulu group by the previous govt

AMARAVATI



Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy reviewing projects under Amaravati Metropolitan Development Authority and in Vizag in Tadepalli on Monday

tended to increase the revenue to the government and can become prestigious projects to the city. National Buildings Construction Corporation Ltd (NBCC) and APIIC have explained the details of the proposals to the Chief Minister. NBCC estimated that construction of commercial plazas and residential complexes will bring in at least Rs 1,450 crore net income to the government.

With regard to the projects under AMRDA, the officials explained the proposals for expansion of Krishna river bund road into four lane road with a budget estimate of Rs 150 crore. The Chief Minister said this road is crucial for the development of Amaravati region and directed the officials to complete the con-

struction of the road soon. He asked them develop all the roads connected to this road. He also directed them to expedite the works related to connecting seed access road to the main road and complete HappyNest project proposed in Amaravati capital region very soon and complete all pending works of buildings in the region.

Municipal and urban development minister Botcha Satyanarayana, principal advisor to Chief Minister Nilam Sawhney, CCLA special chief secretary Neerab Kumar Prasad, municipal and urban development principal Secretary Y Sri Lakshmi, revenue principal secretary Usharani, AMRDA commissioner P Lakshmi Narasimham, and other officials were present.

Maha Govt to probe pressure on celebs to tweet on farmers’ issue

Has this MVA Govt lost all its senses? MVA should feel ashamed while using the word probe for Bharat Ratnas! Actually, now it seems necessary to probe the mental state and stability of the ones who made such demand and ordered probe: Former CM Fadnavis

MUMBAI

CONGRESS leader Sachin Sawant on Monday informed that Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh has given orders to the Intelligence Department to probe the row over tweets by celebrities on the farmers' issue.

He also hit out at the BJP alleging that national heroes were being intimidated by the ruling party.

"The government sprung into action after Rihanna tweeted on the farmers' issue. This was followed by a series of tweets from celebrities. If a person, be it a celebrity, opines on their own, it's fine. But there is scope for suspicion that the BJP is behind this. Similar words like 'amicable' have been used in these tweets," Sawant told ANI.

"Why BJP is keeping mum on why tweets of Akshay Kumar and Saina Nehwal are matching with each other? Why Suniel Shetty tags his tweet to a BJP of-fice bearer? Why BJP is scared of probe?" Sawant tweeted.

Celebrities like Sachin Tendulkar, Akshay Kumar, Sunil Shetty and Lata Mangeshkar among several others had tweeted calling for unity in the country after international pop star Rihanna, teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg and others extended their support to farmers protesting at the borders of India's capital against the three agriculture laws.

"National heroes should be provided security if BJP is intimidating them. I spoke to Home Minister Anil Deshmukh and he said it is a serious matter. He has given orders to the Intelligence department to probe



into this," the Congress leader said.

He further emphasised that celebrities can and should be allowed to speak up for the country if they want to and added that there should be an investigation to see if the BJP has a role to play in the tweets."They can speak for the country if they want of their own free will. We want an investigation to see if there is any pressure from the BJP. Was there any arm twisting? These things have happened before," he said. NCP chief Sharad Pawar asked the former Indian skipper to "exercise caution while speaking about other fields".

In a stinging attack, senior BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis termed the move as "disgusting and highly deplorable" and said the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) should feel ashamed while using the word

"probe" for Bharat Ratna awardees. He also said that it seems necessary to probe the "mental state" of those who demanded the investigation and those who ordered it. "Has this MVA Govt lost all its senses? MVA should feel ashamed while using the word 'probe' for BharatRatnas! Actually, now it seems necessary to probe the mental state & stability of the ones who made such demand & of people who ordered probe against our BharatRatnas!" Fadnavis tweeted. In an apparent swipe at the Shiv Sena which heads the MVA government, Fadnavis, a former chief minister, asked, "Where is your Marathi Pride now? Where is your Maharashtra Dharma? We will never find such 'ratnas' (gems) in entire Nation who order probe against BharatRatnas who always stand strong in one voice for our Nation!"

Rakesh Tikait reacts to PM Modi

‘Can’t do biz over hunger’

Modi Govt should withdraw Farm Laws, says BJD Union’s legal cell writes to UN on illegal detention

NEW DELHI

FARMER Leader Rakesh Tikait said business over hunger will not be allowed in the country and once again demanded a law on minimum support price (MSP) for crops along with the repeal of new contentious agri-marketing laws. The Bharatiya Kisan Union spokesperson's comments came soon after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address in the Rajya Sabha during which he assured, "MSP was there. MSP is there. MSP will remain in the future".

"Desh mein bhook pe vyaapaar nahi hoga. Bhook kitni lagegi anaaj ki keemat utni hogi. Desh mein bhook se vyaapaar karne walon ko baahar nikaala jaaega (There will not be business over hunger in the country. If hunger goes up, price of crops will be decided accordingly. Those wanting business over hunger will be driven out of the country)," he told reporters. "The way rates of a flight ticket fluctuate three to four times a day, the price of crops will not be decided the same way," Tikait said.

Odisha's ruling Biju Janata Dal demanded that the Centre withdraw the contentious farm laws that have set off a storm among the farmers in the country. Referring to the ongoing protest by lakhs of farmers at the borders of Delhi for over two months, BJD's Pinaki Mishra said, "This crisis has arisen due to unilateral bulldozing on behalf of the Modi government". The farm unions' legal cell which is representing farmers facing legal challenges emerging out of the Republic Day violence, has written to the United Nations Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) on "illegal detention" and suspension of internet at protest sites on the borders of the national capital.



Protest ad features at Super Bowl

This year's Super Bowl, a football championship game that is also one of the most-watched events on American television, featured a 30-second commercial on the ongoing farmers' agitation in India, terming it the "largest protest in history".

The advertisement was funded by the Sikh community of Fresno, a city in central California, according to a grateful tweet from the Kisan Ekta Morcha handle, which is the official voice of the protesters. The 30-second spot in this year's Super Bowl cost \$5.5 million, and last year's viewership of the championship was around 100 million.

The commercial begins with a quote from Martin Luther King: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere".

Images from the farmers' tractor parade and their border camps are overlaid with text alleging human rights violations against protesters. Punjabi music plays as "No Farmers, No Food, No Future" flashes on the screen.

It includes a message from Fresno mayor Jerry Dyer. "We want you to know, our brothers and sisters in India, that we stand with you," he says. Fresno has a large Sikh population, as high as 40,000, according to some local reports.

100 Kashmiris who visited Pak on visa in last 3 years missing

NEW DELHI

THE security establishment has found that in the last three years around 100 youth from Kashmir who travelled to Pakistan on a visa are missing. "They have either never returned or have returned but are missing," said an IPS officer adding that they can be part of 'sleeper cells' of terror organisations.

The officer further said as more proactive outreach programmes have been taken up and more surveillance mechanisms placed, the incidents of youth going missing are "decreasing proportionately".

He says it is a well-known fact that any youth visiting Pakistan would be approached by Inter-Services Intelligence members. "Either these youth are being brainwashed and thereafter being trained or are allured to carry out anti-India propaganda. It is a big challenge before us to bring such youth back in the fold," explains the officer, who is part of the counter-insurgency team in the Valley.

The officer further points out that the youth, who were trained, try to enter India through Line of Control and the youth who had been a bit reluctant and visited for short durations turn out to be members of 'sleeper cell'. "Many youth who have returned from Pakistan on valid visa have candidly conveyed that they were approached by ISI men and were asked to join terror organisations," said the officer.

Dental surgery course Top court sets aside Centre’s decision not to lower cut-off marks

NEW DELHI

IN a setback to the Centre, the Supreme Court on Monday set aside its order not to lower the minimum marks for admission to the Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) course for 2020-2021 saying "it suffers from the vices of illegality and irrationality".

The top court directed the Centre that the vacant seats in first year BDS for the academic year 2020-2021 be filled from the candidates who have participated in the NEET (UG) courses for the current year, after lowering the minimum mark by 10 percentile. It noted that there are about 7,000 seats available for admission to the first-year BDS course during the current academic year for which the examinations were held on September 13, 2020. A bench of Justices L N Rao and Krishna Murari held that the candidates belonging to the general category who have secured 40 percentile shall be eligible to be considered for admission in the first year BDS course for 2020-2021. "We set aside the decision of the first Respondent dated December 30, 2020 to not reduce the minimum marks for admission to BDS course as it suffers from the vices of illegality and irrationality," it said. The bench said the students belonging to the SC/ST/OBC categories shall be declared qualified if they have secured 30 percentile.

"In so far as General candidates with bench mark disabilities specified under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, they would be eligible if they have secured 35 percentile," it said, adding that the admissions shall be made strictly in accordance with merit and the admission process shall be completed by February 18, 2021. It said that any other student who has qualified in NEET(UG)-2020 examination even without lowering the minimum marks and is willing to participate in the admission process shall also be considered for admission to BDS course.



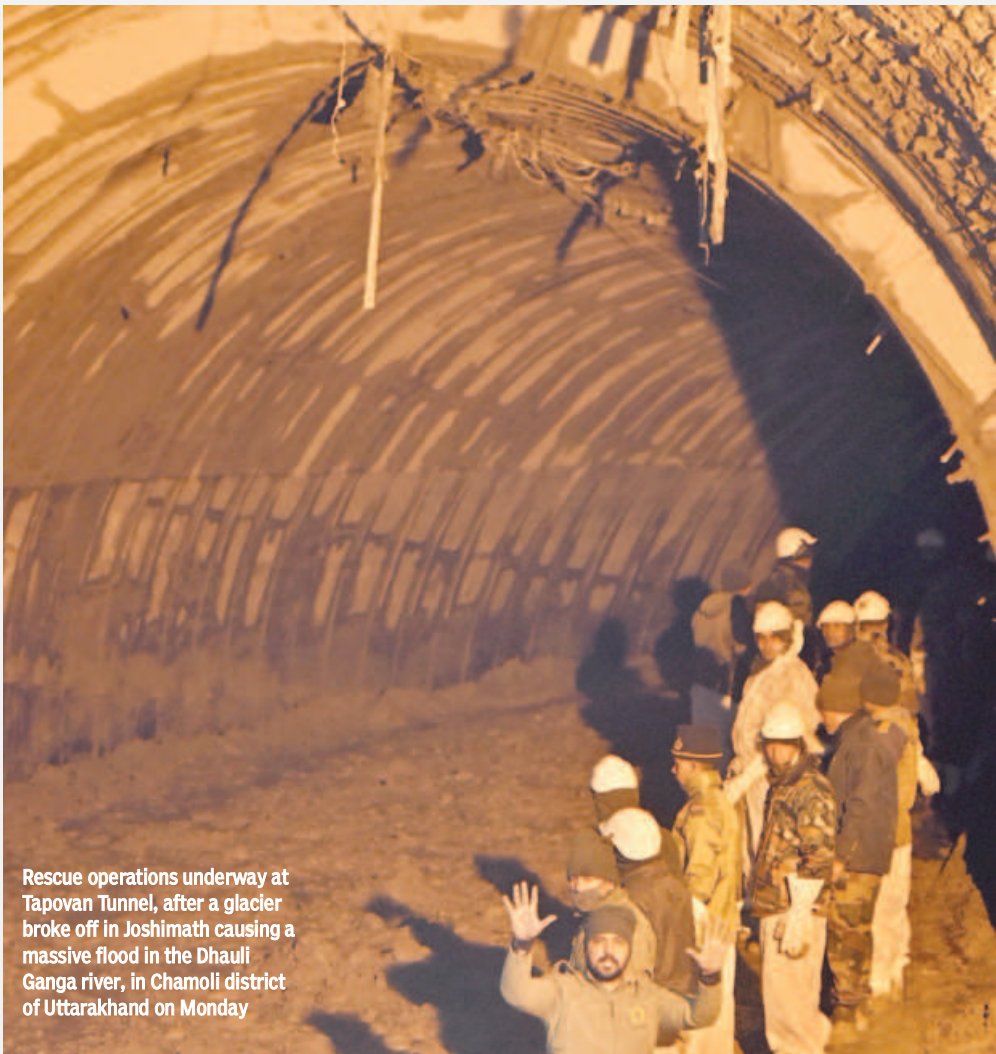
Sasikala returns to TN after 4 yrs; AIADMK jittery

KRISHNAGIRI

EXPELLED AIADMK leader V K Sasikala on Monday returned to Tamil Nadu to a grand reception, days after completing her four-year jail term in Bengaluru in a corruption case, amid indications of a confrontation with the ruling party which she once controlled. Sasikala, a close aide of late Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa, crossed into Tamil Nadu at Athipalli in Krishnagiri district bordering Karnataka, around 10 am as her supporters broke into celebrations, dancing to drum beats and showering flower petals on her convoy.

Her nephew T T V Dhinakaran, who accompanied her, said she would visit the residence of AIADMK founder and late Chief Minister M G Ramachandran in Chennai later. He claimed several functionaries of the ruling AIADMK turned up to welcome Sasikala and that she was travelling in the vehicle of one of the ruling party functionaries after her car developed some issue. The AIADMK reiterated that Sasikala and those with her had nothing to do with the party and that it was illegal on their part to use the party flag as she travelled in a car sporting it, for the second time in the last two weeks.

UTTARAKHAND GLACIER BURST



Rescue operations underway at Tapovan Tunnel, after a glacier broke off in Joshimath causing a massive flood in the Dhauli Ganga river, in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand on Monday

A phone call saved 12 lives

JOSHIMATH

THEY had lost hope of survival when one of them found his mobile phone network working, helping them contact the authorities who rescued them from an underground tunnel at Tapovan in Uttarakhand's Chamoli where flash floods wreaked havoc following a glacier burst.

"We heard people screaming at us to come out of the tunnel but before we could react, a sudden gush of water and heavy silt swamped upon us," rescued Tapovan power project worker Lal Bahadur said. He, along with 11 of his other colleagues, was rescued by the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) from an underground tunnel in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district on Monday evening.

According to officials, they remained stuck there for about seven hours, from around 10 am to 5 pm, till the last man was evacuated by rescuers.

The ITBP provided their recorded video accounts to the media. They are now being treated at an ITBP hospital in Joshimath, about 25 km from the incident spot. This is also the base of the ITBP's Battalion No. 1, tasked with guarding the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China that runs along the state.

At least 11 bodies have been recovered while 202 are still missing since the disaster struck in the upper reaches of Chamoli district, according to the ITBP. "We were 300 metres deep in the tunnel when the water gushed in. We got



A family member of a worker stuck inside the Tapovan Tunnel, waiting for information in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand

trapped. The ITBP rescued us," Nepal resident Basant said.

Another unidentified worker who hails from Dhak village in Chamoli and worked at the Tapovan project said as the water gushed in, the only thing they could do was to lunge onto the crown of the tunnel. "We lost hope...but then we saw some light and felt some air to breathe...suddenly one of us found he had network on his mobile and then he called up our general manager informing him about our situation," the man said from the hospital bed. Officials said the project GM subsequently informed the local authorities who requisitioned ITBP rescuers to save them.

The ITBP teams, armed with ropes, pulleys and carabiners, rappelled down a steep slope and brought out these men from the narrow snout of the tunnel on Sunday evening. Vinod Singh Pawar, a resident of Joshimath, said they climbed up half-way inside the tunnel through the rods but got stuck as a gush of water came in. "We are thankful to the ITBP rescuers for saving us," he said in the video. The border force began air-dropping food packets on Monday in at least nine villages that have been cut off due to the floods.

"Beyond the Raini bridge (which was swept away by the floods), there are nine villages and choppers are dropping food packets after picking them up from our base in Joshimath," ITBP spokesperson Vivek Kumar Pandey said.

Social media platforms: Only eight Army personnel violated ban

AARTI TIKOO SINGH
NEW DELHI

THE ban imposed by the Indian Army on the usage of 89 smartphone applications, including social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram, since June last year, has been highly successful. Of the 1.3 million strong Indian Army, only eight personnel were found to have violated the ban.

Official sources told IANS that at least 730 Army officers have been authorised to enforce the ban which came into effect last year, on July 15. The apps included 59 Chinese apps banned by the government for general public. But strikingly, the Army also banned the usage of common apps like WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Ella, Snapchat, PubG, Messenger, TrueCaller, anti-virus 360 Security, Tinder, Tumbler, Reditt, Hungama,

Songs.pk, Cam Scanner, Ok Cupid, Daily Hunt, and others. Most of the applications are American and Chinese. Following the violence face-off between India and China along the Line of Actual Control in Eastern Ladakh last year, the Army imposed the ban to prevent cyber attacks, illegal accumulation of digital data and leakage of sensitive information. In last few years, several cases of Army personnel were discovered where they were honey-trapped on Facebook resulting in leakage of sensitive information related to the Indian military and the government.

"Till five years ago, everything was open to our personnel. Anyone could access anything," an official said. Though the Army had been issuing several directives on the use of Facebook for personal life and WhatsApp for official work, but only in June last year, it made stringent rules for the violations.



The ban has been enforced by seeking undertakings from each soldier and officer across the country, that they have deleted their accounts and they have not installed any of the applications on their phones.

Official sources told IANS that around 730 authorised officers are to review if the Army personnel are abiding by the rule every now and then and issue certificates of compliance. Only eight cases were found to be in violation of the rules, sources said adding that the punishment for violations includes conventional penalties in the Army for indiscipline.

In some cases, the personnel have been asked to carry sand sacks on their backs and run on the ground for a whole week, sources said. In serious cases, sources said, the punishment can be severe, including suspension or termination of services. "But Indian Army is a highly disciplined institution and the ban has been

quite effective so far," an officer said.

Within the military institutions, academies and offices, the Army, is however allowed to access platforms like Facebook on their internet browsers on their desktops to monitor content. But no personnel is allowed to have an account or the application, sources said.

Army sources said everyone in the military now connects with their families and friends in the old way: "We all speak on phone instead of private messengers and social media." The families of the Army personnel and officers are, however, not bound by the directive. "They are common citizens who are entitled to the same rights as others," an official said.

There are some in-house applications like Sandesh and Vishesh which Army personnel have been using for messaging purposes as an alternative to WhatsApp, sources said.

TODAY'S QUOTE

Under ECLG 91L guarantees issued

“ UNDER the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee (ECLG) Scheme, around 91 lakh guarantees have been issued till January 25. During FY21 (April-December), a total of 31,923 units were setup under the ongoing Prime Minister Employment Generation programme (PMEGP) and 5,21,746 guarantees were issued under another ongoing scheme - Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for MSEs

– Nitin Gadkari, Union Minister



PROFIT

Torrent pharma Q3 profit up by 18%

DRUG firm Torrent Pharmaceuticals on Monday reported an 18.32 per cent rise in its consolidated net profit to Rs 297 crore for the quarter ended in December. The company posted a net profit of Rs 251 crore for the corresponding period of the previous fiscal, Torrent Pharma said.

| FOREX (buy rates in ₹) | | | |
|------------------------|--------|--------------------|-------|
| US Dollar | 77.27 | South | |
| Euro | 92.07 | African Rand | 5.62 |
| UAE Dirham | 21.83 | Hong Kong Dollar | 10.81 |
| Thai Baht | 2.79 | Japanese Yen | 0.79 |
| British Pound | 103.91 | New Zealand Dollar | 55.05 |
| Australian Dollar | 58.66 | Saudi Riyal | 21.37 |
| Canadian Dollar | 59.91 | Swedish Krona | 9.98 |
| Swiss Franc | 84.16 | Singapore Dollar | 57.31 |

DELHI TUESDAY 9 FEBRUARY 2021

BIZ BRIEFS

Yamaha unveils new FZ series

YAMAHA launched new range of FZ Series across India. The new FZ series comes with a 149 cc, fuel-injected, BS VI engine which is lighter, and will flaunt attractive body style in one new color for FZS FI Matte Red. The product also comes with side stand engine cutoff switch while the FZS FI model additionally get bluetooth-enabled Yamaha Motorcycle Connect X. Motofumi Shitara, Chairman, Yamaha Motor India Group of companies said: “We had launched the Yamaha motorcycle connect X application in dark knight & vintage models as an accessory. This feature was accepted well by our customers & moving forward with today's launch of FZSFI. We are upgrading our popular FZ series with features like side stand engine cutoff switch & Inbuilt Bluetooth Connectivity for FZS-FI”

SIDBI's skill initiative

SMALL Industries Development Bank of India (Sidbi) has joined hands with National Skill Development Corporation to launch JuniorSkills, a skill championship with an objective to create a wider awareness about the importance of skill development amongst the youth of India at an early age. JuniorSkills is an opportunity for students from standard VI to XII to explore and exhibit their passion for a particular skill and receive the appropriate technical and vocational education training to harness their passion. V Satya Venkata Rao, Deputy Managing Director of SIDBI, said: “With JuniorSkills, we hope to create a better tomorrow for the future generations who will play a key role in the growth of our nation.”

IDFC offers new fund

IDFC Mutual Fund announced the launch of IDFC Floating Rate Fund, with the New Fund Offer opening on February 10, 2021 and closing February 16, 2021. The fund will endeavour to generate relatively stable returns through a portfolio comprising substantially of floating rate debt, fixed rate debt instruments swapped for floating rate returns and money market instruments. Vishal Kapoor, CEO, IDFC Asset Management Company Limited, said: “In addition to the growth-oriented announcements made in the recent Union Budget, factors such as stress on banking balance sheets seem to be stabilizing. Government revenues are also likely to see a cyclical upswing. Additionally, monetary policy is genuinely accommodative. In our view, these cyclical factors could combine to provide potential tailwinds for the fund's investment strategy.”

Cotton output at 360 L bales

COTTON Association of India on Monday retained its January estimate for the 2020-21 season output at 360 lakh bales due to more carry overstock. The total cotton production for the 2019-20 season stood at 360 lakh bales. The cotton season runs from October to September. The total cotton supply during October 2020 to January 2021 is estimated at 386.25 lakh bales, one bale is 170 kgs, which comprises the arrivals of 255.25 lakh bales, import of cotton estimated at 6 lakh bales up to January 31, and opening stock at the beginning of the cotton season on October 1, 2020 estimated at 125 lakh bales. CAI has estimated cotton consumption from October 2020 to January 2021 at 110 lakh bales.

FUNDING MODI GOVT

RBI will buy ₹3 lakh cr govt bonds in FY22

The intention is to cap the benchmark bond yield under 6%, while narrowing its spread with the repo rate to around 150 basis points

ANIRBAN NAG & SUBHADIP SIRCAR

THE Reserve Bank of India will seek to buy more than Rs 3 lakh crore (\$41 billion) of sovereign bonds in the next fiscal year to support the government's borrowing plans, according to a person with knowledge of the matter. That will exceed the Rs 3 lakh crore the RBI is expected to spend for the current year ending March, the person said, asking not to be identified as the deliberations are private. The intention is to cap the benchmark bond yield under 6 per cent, while narrowing its spread with the repo rate to around 150 basis points, the person said.

This is the first time there's a clear signal on how much the RBI would spend on bond purchases, as recent market selloffs test its patience. The schism between traders and the central bank had widened on Friday when Governor Shaktikanta Das's assurances on providing liquidity fell short of expectations and led to the partial cancellation of a debt auction.

Spread between the 10-yr yield and policy rate remains high

“This possibility of OMOs, if followed up to the fullest, will certainly provide relief to the market from over supply,” said Naveen Singh, head of fixed-income trading at ICICI Securities Primary Dealership Ltd. in Mumbai. “On the flip side, it



will reduce the opportunity to trade.”

The RBI on Monday announced plans to buy 200 billion rupees of bonds through open-market operations on Feb. 10. Bonds extended gains. The benchmark 10-year yield dropped three basis points to 6.04 per cent. The most-traded 5.77 per cent 2030 bond yield fell four basis points to 6.09 per cent. The RBI didn't immediately reply to queries.

Traders on Friday had hoped that the RBI will announce a calendar for its bond purchases after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration had announced plans for near-record borrowings. Instead, Das offered measures that included letting retail

investors buy sovereign debt while allowing banks the right to hold more bonds without marking to market for a year longer. The bank rule leeway will ensure four trillion rupees worth of bond demand, the person said.

This is the first time there's a clear signal on how much the RBI would spend on bond purchases, as recent market selloffs test its patience

Missed signals

An explicit buying calendar could jeopardise the RBI's foreign-exchange strategy, the person said in explaining the deliberations. The central bank will conduct open-market bond purchases to replenish the system with durable liquidity when the cash reserve ratio is unwound, the person said. The cen-

tral bank is confident it can push through the government's borrowing plans because the target to shrink the budget deficit to 6.8 per cent of GDP in the next fiscal year from the estimated 9.5 per cent this year is contractionary, the person said. That means monetary policy can stay easy, the person said. The RBI also wants to flatten the yield curve to better reflect inflation expectations, the person said. It will continue with Operation Twists - where the RBI sells short-term debt while buying longer bonds - to achieve this.

Tug of war

So far, the RBI has bought a net 2.5 trillion rupees of debt in the current fiscal year, while the spread between the 10-year bond yield and the repo rate is at more than 200 basis points. Yields on the benchmark 10-year bond surged 17 basis points last week, its biggest jump since April. The RBI, as the government's debt manager, now finds itself with the delicate task of rolling back pandemic-era emergency measures and seeing through the government's borrowing without roiling the jittery market. “We believe the tug of war between the RBI's motivation to support the bond market via OMOs, and fundamentals that call for gradual liquidity normalization, is set to intensify,” Nomura Holdings Inc. analysts including Sonal Varma wrote in a note. (Bloomberg)

Sensex soars above 51k as bulls dominate mkts

Sensex zooms 617 pts while Nifty goes past 15,100 mark

MUMBAI

THE Sensex closed above 51,000 points for the first time while the Nifty smashed past the 15,100-mark on Monday as the post-Budget rally continued for the sixth session amid strong corporate results and robust foreign fund inflows.

A persistently bullish trend in global markets further bolstered risk appetite, traders said. After touching a lifetime high of 51,523.38 during the day, the 30-share BSE Sensex ended 617.14 points or 1.22 per cent higher at its record closing peak of 51,348.77. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty surged 191.55 points or 1.28 per cent to its lifetime closing high of 15,115.80. It touched an intra-day record of 15,159.90. Investor wealth climbed by nearly Rs 2.50 lakh crore, with the market capitalisation of all BSE-listed companies reaching Rs 202.82 lakh crore. Mahindra and Mahindra (M&M) was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, soaring 7.23 per cent, followed by Bajaj Finserv, Bharti Airtel, PowerGrid, Infosys and ICICI Bank.

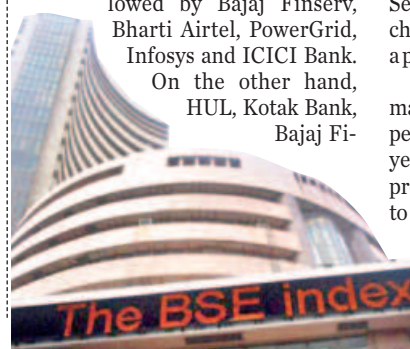
On the other hand, HUL, Kotak Bank, Bajaj Fi-

nance, ITC, Bajaj Auto and Sun Pharma closed in the red, dropping up to 1.43 per cent.

“Strong global cues supported the domestic rally. PSU Banks, which was on a bull run paused today with some correction noticeable in FMCGs. The overall market is maintaining its buoyancy with rally in all sectors especially auto, IT and metals. Improved domestic outlook is encouraging sustained FPI inflows,” said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services. Sector-wise, BSE auto, metals, industrials, telecom, utilities and tech indices rallied as much as 3.07 per cent, while FMCG index closed with losses. In the broader markets, the BSE midcap and smallcap indices spurted up to 1.53 per cent. Global shares marched to record highs on hopes that US President Joe Biden's \$1.9 trillion Covid-19 relief package will be passed by lawmakers soon.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Shanghai, Hong Kong and Tokyo ended with significant gains, while Seoul was in the red. Stock exchanges in Europe were trading on a positive note in mid-session deals.

Meanwhile, the global oil benchmark Brent crude crossed the \$60 per barrel mark after more than a year on improving demand prospects. The rupee fell by 4 paise to close at 72.97 against the US dollar, weighed by a strong dollar sentiment and high demand for the greenback from importers.



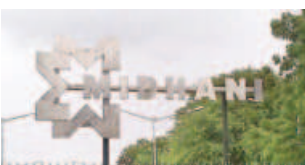
BEML, MIDHANI set for disinvestment

Defence ministry aiming at divesting parts of the state-run defence sector companies

NEW DELHI

DEFENCE public sector undertakings BEML, GRSE Ltd and Mishra Dhatu Nigam are set for disinvestment, the government said in Rajya Sabha on Monday.

The defence ministry is aiming at divesting parts of the state-run defence sector companies to enhance their efficiency in sync with the government's broader objective of boosting indigenous production of military hardware and weapon systems. “Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs) set for disinvestment are BEML Ltd, Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers Limited (GRSE) and Mishra Dhatu Nigam Limited (MIDHANI),” Minister of State for Defence Shripad Naik said in a written reply in Rajya Sabha.



He said the policy of disinvestment of minority stake without transfer of management control is being followed for priority sector including DPSUs to unlock value and promote public ownership. “Policy of disinvestment of minority stake without transfer of management control is being followed for priority sector including defence PSUs to unlock value, promote public ownership, to meet the minimum public shareholding norms of SEBI (Securities and Exchange Board of India) and for ensuring higher degree of accountability,” Naik said.

HCL employees get ₹700 cr bonus

NEW DELHI

HCL Technologies (HCL) on Monday announced that it would issue a one-time special bonus worth over Rs 700 crore to employees around the world in recognition of its recent milestone of crossing the \$10 billion mark in revenue for 2020.

“Achieving this historic milestone in technology, business and engineering services and software, just 20 years since HCL Technologies' IPO, is a testament to the passionate efforts and consistent achievements of its employees, many long term, deep relationships with leading companies across all industries and a leading network of partners and stakeholders,” said a company statement.

It added that in celebration and gratitude, all employees with one year of service or greater will receive a bonus, the equivalent of ten days' salary.

BANK OF MAHARASHTRA'S MSME EXPO



The Hyderabad Zone of Bank of Maharashtra organised MSME & Retail Expo to reach out to MSME and retail customers in AP and Telangana. Jayesh Ranjan (2nd from right), Principal Secretary, Industries Department, Telangana, inaugurated the expo. Sanjay Rudra, General Manager, MSME Vertical & Large Corporate, Bank of Maharashtra, was also present.

FUTURE-RELiance DEAL

Delhi HC stays 'status quo' order

NEW DELHI

THE Delhi High Court on Monday stayed its single judge direction to Future Retail Ltd (FRL) and various statutory authorities to maintain status quo with regard to the Rs 24,713 crore deal with Reliance Retail. A bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh passed the interim direction on FRL's ap-

peal challenging the February 2 order of the single judge. The bench also declined Amazon's request to keep its order in abeyance for a week so that it can explore appropriate remedies. The court while staying the February 2 order said that statutory authorities, like National Company Law Tribunal, CCI and SEBI, cannot be restrained from proceeding in accordance with law with re-

gard to the deal. The court also issued notice to Amazon and sought its stand on FRL's appeal by February 26 when it will commence day-to-day hearing of the matter.

The February 2 order had come on Amazon's suit seeking enforcement of the Emergency Arbitrator (EA) order restraining FRL from going ahead with its Rs 24,713 crore deal with Reliance Retail.

MSME clusters planned to boost industry in Nellore

PV PRASAD

HAVING got ourselves abreast of the industrial scenario in the Nellore district in the earlier write-up in the Part-I of the industrial profile in these columns, let us now look at the plans and progress.

The government of Andhra Pradesh has taken a policy decision to extend infrastructural support to the MSMEs in the State by developing MSME clusters/parks in all 175 Assembly constituencies. As part of the programme, three parks are coming up at Dagadharthi in Kavali, Boduvaripalem in Kovur, and at Amancharla in Nellore Rural mandal in around 150 acres. APIIC has developed 11 Industrial Parks in the district in around 3,000 acres. Around 3,500 acres of land is still available with the APIIC for future development. Readymade garments cluster, goldsmith cluster, and wood processing clusters among others that the State government is keen on devel-

oping. New industries are coming up as part of Chennai Bangalore Industrial corridor and Visakhapatnam Chennai Industrial corridors.

However, MSMEs are facing severe problems with the policies and predicament of the government in the sector. Let's understand what ails the industry in the district. The major problem is with the land allocation. Now, the land is being allocated to the entrepreneurs on a lease basis and hence they are not getting loans from the banks. Whereas earlier, the APIIC has been allotting lands on a sale basis.

Land cost includes basic infrastructure such as land, water, and power. Now the majority of industrial parks have only land without other facilities. Either the entrepreneurs have to arrange for these basic amenities on their own by shedding lots of money or have to wait patiently till the Government develops them. The industrialists are not so hopeful of the latter option.



NELLORE PART II

The cost of land being allocated by the APIIC is higher when compared to the private landowners.

There has been a concession of up to 50 pc for entrepreneurs belonging to SC/ST/BC/women categories and now only women are getting the benefit. District level offices are waiting for directions from the Government.

Majority of lands being allocated by the APIIC has been encroached by the local population.

Even though entrepreneurs are getting lands they are failing to evict the encroachers, which is the primary reason for falling interest in setting up of industries. Conversion is also a major challenge for the entrepreneurs that had actually to be done by the APIIC at the time of allocation. Mega projects such as Chennai-Bangalore Industrial Corridor, Vizag-Chennai Industrial Corridors are also facing the issues of land due to en-



croachments by the local people supported by the politicians. MIDHANI project is also facing the same problem with the land encroachments. Operational guidelines as part of the industrial policy have not been released so far, even though the financial year is almost coming to an end, which is hampering the growth of the sector.

There is only Sri Damodaram Sanjeevayya Thermal Power Station at Nelaturu in Muthukur Mandal under

public sector category. The workforce is around 250 permanent employees (150 engineering staff, 60 O&M staff and 40 deputed staff from other units) and 1,150 casual labourers.

The district has several agro and food and processing units such as milk chilling, milk processing, shrimp and prawn feed, shrimp and prawn processing, rice milling, edible vegetable oil are some of the industries. The government wants to improve these units by providing the possible help. The district can boast of the basic metals and metal products such as iron and steel, manufacturing of automobile parts and chemical and pharmaceuticals industries.

The mineral-based industries include silica processing, ceramic tiles, granite polishing, pulverising of quartz & feldspar, vermiculite processing, new and renewable energy: solar, biomass power.

Textile and Apparel include spinning and weaving, readymade garments, household furnishing.

INDIA 39/1 IN RECORD 420-RUN CHASE

Off-spinner Ashwin takes six wickets for 61 runs as England were bowled out for 178 in their 2nd innings an hour before close

CHENNAI

INDIA were left with the herculean task of chasing a world record 420 after England refused to declare in an unfocussed second essay, cut short by Ravichandran Ashwin's brilliance on a sharply turning fourth day strip in the opening Test here on Monday.

At stumps, India were 39 for one, requiring another 381 runs to set a new record and take a 1-0 lead in the four-match series. The previous best is 418, chased by West Indies against Australia in 2003.

Relishing bowling on a responsive pitch, the seasoned Ashwin returned excellent figures of 6/61 to snap England's second innings at 178 after the home team conceded a massive first-innings lead of 241 runs.

With opener Rohit Sharma (12) back in the hut, Shubman Gill (15) and Cheteshwar Pujara (12) will begin the proceedings for India on the fifth and final day at the MA Chidambaram pitch, which has started to play tricks.

India would have been in a bigger hole had it not been for a seventh-wicket partnership of 80 runs between newcomer Washington Sundar (85) and Ashwin, who also contributed a 31 with the bat before picking his career's 28th five-wicket haul. But despite the duo's best efforts, the hosts still fell way short of the follow-on target after

being bowled out for 337. India resumed the day at 257 for six.

Hoping to give their bowlers some respite from the sweltering heat, England decided against enforcing the follow-on and batted again. But the start wasn't the one they wanted as Ashwin bowled his off-spinners to deadly effect with the new ball, the bounce aiding him in his endeavour.

Ashwin removed Rory Burns with the very first ball of the second innings when he induced an edge for Ajinkya Rahane to take an easy catch in the first slip. Having ambled to 16 off 37 balls, Dominic Sibley was shown the door by Ashwin, with the bounce again helping the off-spinner.

Veteran pacer Ishant Sharma was rewarded for bowling with a lot of heathr throughout the match when he had Daniel Lawrence trapped in front of the wicket with the one that snaked in. That was wicket number 300 for Ishant, making him the sixth Indian and third pacer from the country to reach the landmark.

Ben Stokes could not replicate the form of his first innings as he played away from his body to give Rishabh Pant a catch off Ashwin.

As wickets kept falling at one end, skipper Joe Root (40 off 32 balls) looked like he was batting on a pitch different from the one where the ball was turning from one end to the other, scoring

| SCOREBOARD DAY-4 | |
|--|--|
| England 1st Innings 578 all out | |
| India 1st Innings (Overnight 257/6) | |
| Rohit Sharma c Buttler b Archer-----6 | |
| Shubman Gill c Anderson b Archer --29 | |
| CPujara c Rory Burns b Dom Bess ----73 | |
| VKohli c Ollie Pope b Dom Bess ----11 | |
| ARahane c Root b Dom Bess -----1 | |
| R Pant c Jack Leach b Dom Bess -----91 | |
| Washington Sundar not out-----85 | |
| R Ashwin c Buttler b Leach -----31 | |
| Shahbaz Nadeem c Stokes b Leach ----0 | |
| Ishant Sharma c Pope b Anderson ----4 | |
| J Bumrah c Stokes b Anderson-----0 | |
| Extras: (B-4, LB-1, NB-1) -----6 | |
| Total: (all out in 95.5 Overs) -----337 | |
| Fall of Wickets: 1-19, 2-44, 3-71, 4-73, 5-192, 6-225, 7-305, 8-312, 9-323. | |
| Bowling: James Anderson 16.5-5-46-2, Jofra Archer 21-3-75-2, Ben Stokes 6-1-16-0, Jack Leach 24-5-105-2, Dominic Bess 26-5-76-4, Joe Root 2-0-14-0. | |
| England 2nd Innings | |
| Rory Burns c Rahane b Ashwin -----0 | |
| Dominic Sibley c Pujara b Ashwin ----16 | |
| Daniel Lawrence lbw b Ishant -----18 | |

runs without much ado.

With all the confidence in the world, first-innings double centurion Root swept and reverse swept the India spinners, including Ashwin, as runs came at a fast clip when he was in his element in the second session.

He not just negated but also attacked the spinners with aplomb but what Root could not tackle was a delivery that kept low on landing before thudding against the English run-machine's pads.

the first three days, a staggering 15 fell by the wayside on Monday and the Chepauk pitch played a major part. While Ashwin did an admirable job, India captain Virat Kohli may have missed a trick or two by not trying out Washington's off-breaks when left-arm spinner Shahbaz Nadeem was leaking runs, including overstepping on a few occasions and adding to his first innings no balls.

When India came out to bat again, left-arm spinner Jack Leach bowled Rohit with a peach of delivery that landed on the leg-stump before hitting the off-stump, the turn leaving the home team with plenty to worry about going into the final day's play.

Ishant Sharma 3rd Indian pacer to pick 300 Test wickets

CHENNAI

ISHANT Sharma on Monday became only the third Indian fast bowler to scalp 300 wickets in Test cricket. He achieved the feat on Day Four of the first Test here

at the MA Chidambaram Stadium when he got the wicket of England's Daniel Lawrence in their second innings. Lawrence scored 18 runs off the 47 deliveries he faced before he got out lbw against Ishant.

Kapil Dev and Zaheer Khan are the other Indian fast bowlers to reach 300-wicket milestone in the longest format of the game.

Ravichandran Ashwin, Anil Kumble and Harbhajan Singh are the other Indian bowlers to scalp 300 or more wickets in Test cricket.

Ishant, however, is the slowest Indian bowler to scalp 300 wickets. He reached the milestone in 98 Test matches, whereas Ashwin -- having scalped 300 wickets in 54 Tests -- is the fastest. Ashwin is followed by Kumble (66), Harbhajan (72), Kapil Dev (83) and Zaheer (89).

Kumble remains the highest wicket-taker for India in Test cricket with 619 wickets ahead of Kapil Dev (434) and Harbhajan (417).

Ishant had made his Test debut in 2007 against Bangladesh in Dhaka. He has also played 80 ODIs and 14 T20Is so far in which he has scalped 115 and eight wickets respectively. (ANS)



FIRST STRIKE

R Ashwin on Monday became the first Indian spinner in the country's 88 years of Test cricket to take a wicket off the first ball of an innings (not necessarily the first one) when he dismissed England's Rory Burns at the MA Chidambaram Stadium, Chennai. It was the first such instance after 113 years.

| Year | Bowler | Country | Batsman dismissed | Opposition | Venue |
|------|----------------|--------------|-------------------|------------|-----------------------------|
| 1888 | Bobby Peel | England | Alec Bannerman | Australia | Old Trafford, Manchester |
| 1907 | Bert EE Vogler | South Africa | Tom Hayward | England | The Oval, London |
| 2021 | R Ashwin | India | Rory Burns | England | MA Chidambaram Std, Chennai |

India's Ravichandran Ashwin and captain Virat Kohli celebrate the dismissal of England's Rory Burns during the 4th day of the first Test match at MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on Monday

| Top Five Highest Run Chase in Test | | | | |
|------------------------------------|-------|--------|-------------|--|
| Team | Runs | Target | Against | |
| 1 West Indies | 7/418 | 418 | Australia | |
| 2 South Africa | 4/414 | 414 | Australia | |
| 3 Australia | 3/404 | 404 | England | |
| 4 India | 4/406 | 403 | West Indies | |
| 5 West Indies | 7/395 | 395 | Bangladesh | |

City strengthen IPL lead with win as rivals all falter

LONDON: Manchester City have taken a huge step towards the Premier League title with their recent 4-1 win away to Liverpool -- a win that owed a large amount to their impressive finishing and two bad errors from Liverpool keeper, Alisson Becker, who gifted their second and third goals with dreadful passes from the back.

The result leaves Liverpool 10 points behind Manchester City, who have a game in hand over them and over Manchester United and Leicester, five and seven points behind respectively, reports Xinhua news agency.

Two goals from Ilkay Gundogan (also missed a penalty) and one each from Raheem Sterling and Phil Foden on Sunday gave Pep Guardiola's men a record-equaling 14th consecutive win in all competitions. Although Mohamed Salah's second-half penalty cancelled out Gundogan's 49th-minute opener, two awful passes out from Alisson helped to gift Gundogan and Sterling their goals before Foden underlined his quality with a stunning finish to net City's fourth.

Manchester United dropped two vital points after conceding a 95th-minute equalizer at home to Everton on Saturday night.

United took a 2-0 first-half lead thanks to Edinson Cavani but two goals in three minutes at the start of the second half from Abdoulaye Doucoure and James Rodriguez drew Everton level.

Scott McTominay's header with 20 minutes left to play looked to have won the game for United but Dominic Calvert-Lewin's 95th-minute equaliser with the last kick of the game saw it end 3-3.

Wolves and Leicester City produced an entertaining goal despite the final score of 0-0. (ANS)

Bengaluru FC in bid to maintain momentum as Bagan chase summit

MARGAO (GOA)

RIDING high on a four-match unbeaten streak, Bengaluru FC will look to maintain momentum when they face ATK Mohun Bagan in an Indian Super League encounter here on Tuesday.

Bengaluru seem to have finally have found a semblance of rhythm, remaining unbeaten in the last four games while also keeping clean sheets in their previous two outings.

"Right now we are focusing on ATK Mohun Bagan and we know how to play. We will give our best. Players are positive and everyone is giving their best. Last two matches, we have not conceded goals. Let's hope we play in a positive way," said interim coach Naushad Moosa.

The two clean sheets were primarily due to the brilliance of keeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu. He made six crucial saves against Chennaiyin FC to salvage a point and keep his 29th clean sheet in the ISL. However, against ATK

RESULT

Mumbai City FC draw with FC Goa 3-3

Mohun Bagan, Moosa stressed the need for his side to be compact and not leave everything to the keeper.

"The way Bagan is playing, they have been scoring even after conceding and that is one thing we have to be careful. We have to be more compact. It won't be an easy match," he said.

"First (thing) is not to concede goals as we know we can score anytime. With Sunil (Chhetri), Cleiton Silva, anything can happen," Moosa added.

Bengaluru have a poor record against ATKMB coach Antonio Habas but Moosa stressed that his side would not be under pressure. (PTI)

TODAY'S MATCH

Bengaluru FC vs ATK Mohun Bagan at Fatorda Stadium 7.30pm

| ISL STANDINGS | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|----|----|---|---|----|----|-----|-----|--|--|--|
| CLUB | M | W | D | L | GF | GA | GD | PTS | | | |
| Mumbai City FC | 16 | 10 | 4 | 2 | 25 | 11 | 14 | 34 | | | |
| ATK Mohun Bagan | 15 | 9 | 3 | 3 | 20 | 10 | 10 | 30 | | | |
| FC Goa | 16 | 5 | 8 | 3 | 24 | 19 | 5 | 23 | | | |
| Hyderabad FC | 16 | 5 | 8 | 3 | 20 | 20 | 0 | 23 | | | |
| NorthEast United FC | 16 | 5 | 8 | 3 | 21 | 16 | 5 | 23 | | | |
| Bengaluru FC | 16 | 4 | 7 | 5 | 19 | 19 | 0 | 19 | | | |
| Jamshedpur FC | 16 | 4 | 6 | 6 | 15 | 19 | -4 | 18 | | | |
| Chennaiyin FC | 16 | 3 | 8 | 5 | 11 | 16 | -5 | 17 | | | |
| SC East Bengal | 16 | 3 | 7 | 6 | 14 | 21 | -7 | 16 | | | |
| Kerala Blasters FC | 16 | 3 | 6 | 7 | 20 | 27 | -7 | 15 | | | |
| Odisha FC | 15 | 1 | 5 | 9 | 14 | 25 | -11 | 8 | | | |

Suspension of 22 shooters likely to be revoked

NEW DELHI: The suspension of 22 shooters, including Olympic quota winner Yashaswini Singh Deswal, from the national championships for disciplinary reasons will come up for review after the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) president, Raninder Singh said that he would persuade general body of the NRAI, scheduled to meet on March 5, to stay the decision of suspension.

Yashaswini, the Olympic quota winner in women's 10m air pistol, was among the list of banned shooters. She is competing in the national selection trails starting on Tuesday here at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Ranges.

In the meeting of the NRAI's governing body held last Friday, a decision was taken to ban shooters who had participated in unauthorised online shooting competitions during pandemic.

Serena, Venus, Osaka cruise into Australian Open second round

MELBOURNE

SERENA Williams, in search for a record-tying 24th Grand Slam title, started her Australian Open campaign in an emphatic manner as she zipped past Laura Siegemund of Germany, 6-1, 6-1, on to notch her opening-round win on Monday.

With the win, the seven-time Australian Open champion improved her flawless record in first-round matches at Grand Slam events to an astounding 76-1.

Serena is contesting a milestone 20th Australian Open, and her 56-minute win over Siegemund was her 100th career match at the event.

"This was a good start. Definitely vintage 'Rena,' the 39-year-old said after the match. "It's definitely good. I think I'm pretty good at pacing myself in a Grand Slam.

Monday.

With the win, the seven-time Australian Open champion improved her flawless record in first-round matches at Grand Slam events to an astounding 76-1.

Serena is contesting a milestone 20th Australian Open, and her 56-minute win over Siegemund was her 100th career match at the event.

"This was a good start. Definitely vintage 'Rena,' the 39-year-old said after the match. "It's definitely good. I think I'm pretty good at pacing myself in a Grand Slam.

I love and to be able to come out and compete and play at a Grand Slam, after the last 12 months, it makes me appreciate the moment even more," she added.

The American will next face Serbia's Nina Stojanovic on Wednesday.

Earlier in the day, Serena's elder sister Venus also registered a straight-set win in her opening round contest, defeating Kirsten Flipkens of Belgium 7-5, 6-2, at the Margaret Court Arena.

Meanwhile, three-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka defeated Russian Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova 6-1, 6-2 in her opening round contest which lasted 68 minutes at the Rod Laver Arena.

She will next lock horns with former world number four Caroline Garcia from France, who overcame Slovenia's Polona Hercog, 7-6(6), 6-3. (ANS)



Pak sweep Test series against SA

RAWALPINDI

RIGHT-arm pacer Hasan Ali's 10-wicket haul helped Pakistan beat South Africa by 95 runs on Monday in the second and final Test here at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium. With this, the Babar Azam-led side won the two-Test series 2-0. On the fifth and final day, Ali followed his first-innings 5/54 with 5/60 to finish the match with figures of 10/114 as Pakistan bundled out the Proteas for 274. Pakistan had set them a target of 370 to win.

Fellow quick Shaheen Shah Afridi picked four for 51 while



leg-spinner Yasir Shah got one for 1/56. South Africa had lost the first Test by seven wickets in Karachi. **Brief scores:** Pakistan

272 and 298 beat South Africa 204 and 274 (Aiden Markram 108, Temba Bavuma 61; Hasan Ali 5/60) by 95 runs.

BCCI to use drones for cricket tourneys

MUMBAI: The Centre has given conditional permission to the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) to deploy drones for live aerial cinematography of the upcoming cricket season, including the Indian Premier League, officials said here on Monday. The Ministry of Civil Aviation has granted permission to use drones to the BCCI and drone operator Quidich till the year-end after it received a request for granting permission to use Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems for live aerial filming.