



THE HANS INDIA

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WINDOWS



India's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) C-50 is set to launch CMS-01 communication satellite on Thursday from the second launch pad at Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC), in Sriharikota on Wednesday

Covaxin triggers immune response

NEW DELHI: Covaxin - one of three coronavirus vaccine candidates being considered for emergency use authorisation in India - induced an immune response and registered no serious adverse events, interim findings of Phase I trials have revealed. The vaccine induced a neutralising antibody (an immune response) and was well-tolerated in all dose groups with no vaccine-related serious adverse events, pre-publication data showed. After the first vaccination, local and systemic adverse events were predominantly mild or moderate in severity and resolved rapidly, without any prescribed medication. The most common adverse event was pain at the injection site, which resolved spontaneously.

TMC's Adhikari quits Assembly

KOLKATA: In a major development, former Cabinet minister and heavy-weight TMC legislator Suvendu Adhikari resigned from the legislative Assembly on Wednesday. He was the legislator from Nandigram in East Midnapore district. Adhikari went to the Assembly and submitted a hand-written letter at the Secretariat. The Speaker, Biman Banerjee, was not present in his office.



FORM PANEL TO RESOLVE FARMERS' BLOCKADE: SC

Apex court says protests may spiral out of govt hand

NEW DELHI

THE Supreme Court on Wednesday observed that if urgent measures are not taken now, then the ongoing farmers' protest may spiral out of the government's hand to become a national issue. Against this backdrop, the court ordered eight farmer unions be made party to the PIL seeking removal of farmers from various Delhi borders, and a joint hearing of the Centre and the farmers' unions on Thursday in a bid to end the impasse.

A bench, headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde and comprising Justices A S Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian, proposed forming a committee, including the representatives of both the Centre, farmer unions and other relevant stakeholders, to arrive at some acceptable solution.

The Chief Justice told Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the Centre, that the government's negotiations may not



Bharatiya Kisan Union spokesperson Rakesh Tikait addresses farmers during their protest against the new farm laws, at Delhi-UP border near Ghazipur in New Delhi on Wednesday

work. "You should be willing to negotiate, and we should have a farmers' union before us," said the Chief Justice, seeking names of the farmer unions. Emphasising on forming a committee comprising farmers unions from the country, the Chief Justice said: "This will soon become a national issue. It seems government may not be able to work it out."

The top court in its order gave permission to implead the farmer unions --

Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU-Rakesh Tikait), BKU-Sidhupur (Jagjeet S. Dallerwal), BKU-Rajewal (Balbeer Singh Rajewal), BKU-Lakhowal (Harinder Singh Lakhowal), Jamhoori Kisan Sabha (Kulwant Singh Sandhu), BKU-Dakaunda (Buta Singh Burjigill), BKU-Doaba (Manjit Singh Rai) and Kul Hind Kisan Federation (Prem Singh Bhangu) - in the PILs seeking removal of farmers from Delhi borders. **Continued on Page 5**

Forming new panel no solution: farmer leaders

NEW DELHI

PROTESTING farmer unions said constituting a new panel to break the stalemate on the three new agriculture laws, as indicated by the Supreme Court, is not a solution as they want a complete withdrawal of the legislations. They also said the government should have formed a committee of farmers and others before the laws were enacted by Parliament. Their assertions came after the Supreme Court indicated earlier in the day that it may form a panel having representatives of the government and farmer unions to resolve the deadlock.

Greedy govt

Huge taxes keep petrol, diesel prices high

NEW DELHI

OIL companies may have provided relief to consumers by keeping the pump prices of petrol and diesel static for the past nine days even on rising

global oil prices, but it is the heavy load of taxes that has kept the two auto fuels price closer to all-time high levels now with the pandemic-affected revenue stream preventing the government from considering a duty cut.

Taxes and duties now account for 62.5 per cent of the retail price of petrol and 57.77 per cent of the retail price of diesel in the capital at current level of pump prices. The taxes component has fallen over the fort-

2003) and closer to what consumers in oil-rich countries in the Gulf pay.

The current state tax (VAT) rate on petrol and diesel has risen to Rs 19.32 and Rs 10.85 per litre, respectively, in

Delhi. Similarly, the Centre's decision in May to raise excise duties on petrol and diesel by Rs 10 and Rs 13 per litre, respectively, had taken up the component of this

tax on retail prices by Rs 32.98 on petrol and Rs 31.83 per litre on diesel. So, the total tax component (central and state in Delhi) is Rs 52.30 a litre on petrol and Rs 42.68 on diesel. Compare this with the base price of the two products today and the tax load becomes clearly visible. **Continued on Page 5**



JEE Mains to be held 4 times a year from now

NEW DELHI

UNION Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal has announced the dates of JEE Main 2021 on Wednesday. The Engineering entrance will be conducted from February 23 to 26. Also, in a first, JEE Mains will be held four times from the next academic year- February, March, April and May.

In the new paper pattern introduced, candidates have to attempt 75 questions out of 90 - or 25 out of questions 30 in each section of Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics. **Continued on P5**



₹2,400-CR MCD SCAM

Special session of Delhi Assembly today

PURNA SINGH

NEW DELHI: The Delhi government has called a one-day special session of the Assembly on Thursday to discuss the alleged misappropriation of Rs 2,400 crore by the north and south Delhi municipal corporations (MCDs) that are ruled by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Continued on Page 5

Delhi aggressively tackling Covid

NEW DELHI

DELHI is 'aggressively tackling' the Covid-19 situation and not only has the positivity rate dipped to below two per cent, it is also the lowest figure since May, Health Minister Satyendar Jain said on Wednesday. Interacting with reporters, he also said that the severity of the pandemic has

Positivity rate lowest since May: Jain



come down, but people still need to be vigilant and observe all safety

norms. "The positivity rate recorded yesterday (Tuesday) stood at 1.9 per cent. I think it is the lowest figure till date, though I will need to look into data to tell exactly. But, for sure, it is the lowest positivity rate since May. This indicates an improved COVID-19 situation in Delhi," he said.

Continued on Page 5

Centre likely to blacklist some telecom vendors

GOVT PREPARING A LIST OF TRUSTED SOURCES

NEW DELHI: Amid border tension with China, the Union government on Wednesday said it may blacklist certain telecom equipment vendors and prepare a list for 'India-trusted sources'.

The government move effectively means the telecom sector will have a list of companies from where firms can safely buy products and services.

The decision was taken by the Cabinet Committee on Security to "enhance se-



The decision to blacklist some vendors was taken by the Cabinet Committee on Security to 'enhance security of telecom sector' by designating trusted vendors

curity of telecom sector" by designating trusted vendors, said Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad. "The Cabinet Committee on Security has given approval for a National Security Directive on Telecommunication Sector. Under this, in order to maintain the integrity of supply chain security, the government will declare a list of trusted sources or products for the benefit of telecom service providers," Prasad said.

Continued on Page 5

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Womenia



Winter soups that will keep you healthy

Soups are one dish where the innate flavour of vegetables can be savoured

Winter is synonymous with soups. One of my fondest memories is sitting around my uncle's dinner table in Kurnoor, surrounded by family, regaled with laughter and a big pot of soup placed right in the middle for us to take numerous helpings. If I close my eyes I can still smell the spices and feel the warmth of my aunt's hearty soup. I won't be travelling there anytime soon but that won't stop me from relishing all the delicious soups this season has to offer.

The best part about soups is that they can be packed with any kind of vegetable. All vegetables can be made into a soup. Soups are one dish where the innate flavour of vegetables can be savoured. The plethora of vitamin and minerals they add to a meal make it a nutritiously dense. Most

soup can be blenderized but it is best to eat your soup, i.e. keep your soup chunky with pieces of veggies like we do in a minestrone soup so that you can enjoy the texture.

Soups are predominantly known as hearty veggie meals. However, soups can also be a great way to get in your protein. From our very own Mulligatawny to Turkish lentil soup, these have the right amount

Barley & pumpkin soup

- ½ cup pearl barley
- ½ cup pumpkin
- 6 cups water
- 1 chopped onion
- 1 tsp cumin
- ¼ tsp turmeric
- ¼ tsp red chilli
- Pinch of asafoetida
- Pinch of sea salt



Naini Setalvad

of protein. On a day the kids want something continental; try a Mexican bean soup and they will be ecstatic.

In today's busy times getting a meal prepared can be quite a task. One-pot meals are the solution to your woes. Soups are hassle-free meals that can be balanced in all food groups. Mulligatawny, barley-peas soup, minestrone soup have sufficient amount of grains, protein, good fat and vegetables.

It's not a surprise that soups are our go-to when we are under the weather. This comforting anti-ox-

Tempering

- 1tsp cow's ghee
- ½ tsp pepper corn
- ½ tsp clove
- Coriander and lemon juice for garnish

idant bowl is a great way to get in healing spices and herbs that make recovery faster. A simple tomato rasam with all the Indian spices, a lemon-coriander soup, a ginger-carrot soup, a cinnamon-spiced pumpkin soup or even a pho broth with clove, cinnamon and mint. All these are carriers of healing phytochemicals.

So this festive season, serve up a hearty, healing soup that will nourish your body and warm up your soul.

Method

In a large pot, bring barley, dal and pumpkin to boil in water. Add onion, spices and salt. Cover and simmer over a medium heat for 45 mins. Blenderize the soup. Add a tempering of pepper corns and cloves in cow's ghee and add it on top. Garnish with a sprinkle of coriander leaves and lemon juice.

Make your skin glow all season long



Here are some winter beauty tips that will keep you radiant! Since winter weather can tend to dry out our skin, these tips will help keep your skin glowing and radiant all season long. Help combat the drying effects of winter by following these tips!

Milk Bath

Bathe in milk to enjoy the skin nourishing benefits of lactic acid and natural fats. Just add skim milk to lukewarm water to soften your skin.

Deep Conditioner

Combat hair frizz by using a hair mask or deep conditioner at least once a week.

Cream Blush

Use cream blush instead of powder blush as the latter can make your face look cakey in the winter.

Alcohol & Caffeine

Limit your alcohol and caffeine intake to keep your body from dehydrating, which can show on your skin.

Body Lotion

Seal in moisture by applying body lotion as soon as you step out of the shower.

Mascara & Eyeliner

Wear waterproof mascara and eyeliner so your makeup won't run when your eyes start to water due to cold winds.

Eyeshadow

Wear eyeshadows in satin and shimmering colors as mattes can make dry skin more obvious.

Lipstick

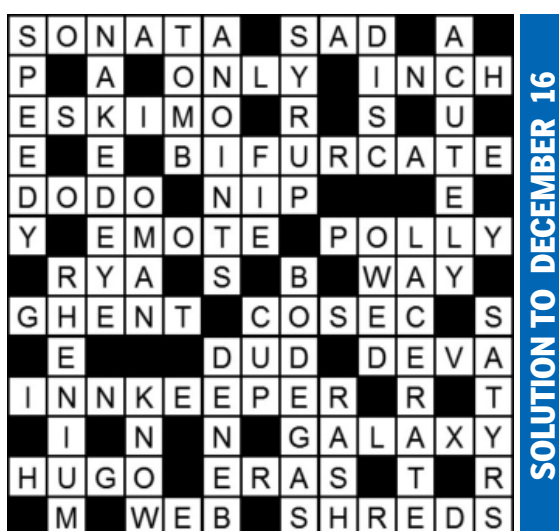
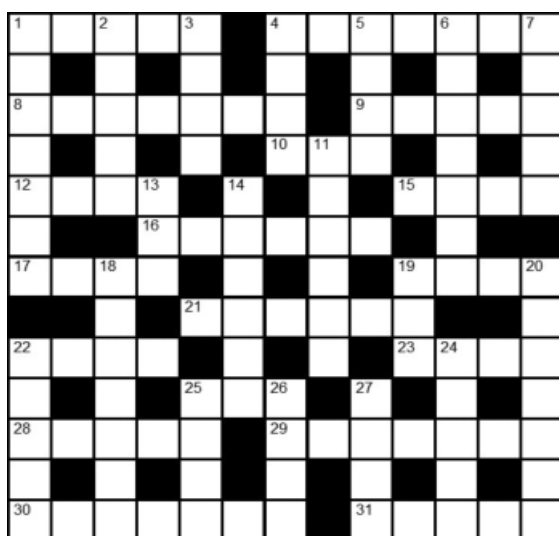
Wear a shade of red lipstick that is right for your skin tone to keep your complexion from looking completely washed out.

Dry Shampoo

Use dry shampoo in between your regular shampoo washes to help retain your hair's natural oil.

Cleansing Oil

Use an oil-based cleanser to remove makeup instead of your regular makeup remover or makeup wipes.



SOLUTION TO DECEMBER 16

CROSSWORD

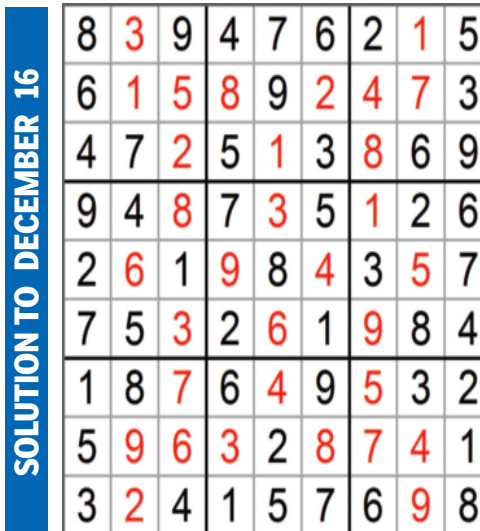
Across

- Former capital of Nigeria (5)
- A storage unit (7)
- Nil (7)
- Sylvester Stallone's role (5)
- Organ of sight (3)
- Tub for soaking (4)
- Went down (4)
- Serves, does or suffices (6)
- Part of a plane (4)
- Curtain (4)
- Uproar, hullabaloo (6)
- Letter opener (4)
- Diagnostic aid (1-3)
- A cutting tool (3)
- Female ruff (5)
- Pertaining to an order (7)
- Shipping document (7)
- Mote (5)

Down

- Medieval weapon (7)
- Intimate (3,2)
- Mishap (4)
- Barred enclosure (4)
- Drill a hole (4)
- Car of a balloon (7)
- Played with (5)
- Common colour (6)
- Witch (3)
- Cavity (6)
- Room for infants (7)
- Annoy (3)
- Truly or honourably (7)
- Threaded fastener (5)
- "Donor" anagram for piece of music? (5)
- One house of pair (4)
- Fleece (4)
- Glimmering (4)

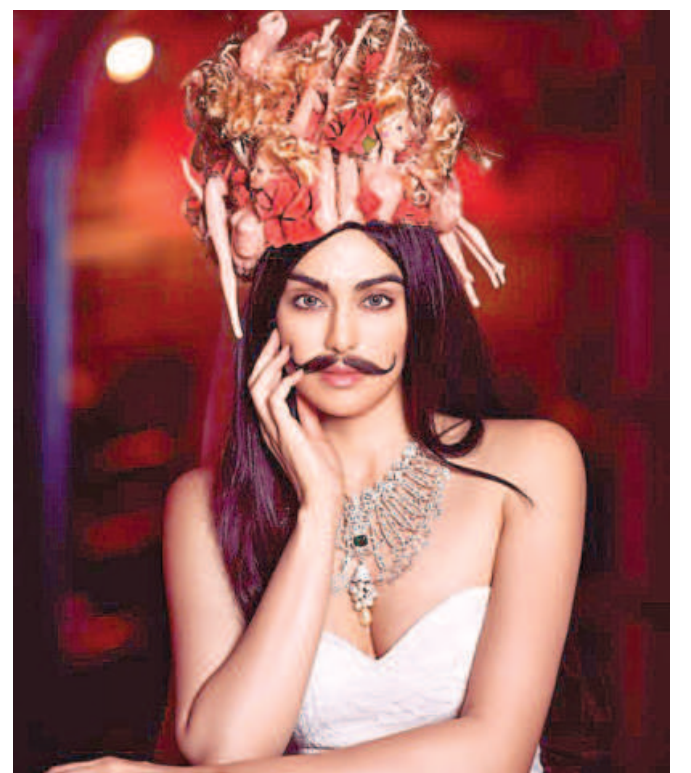
SUDOKU



SOLUTION TO DECEMBER 16

NEWS ROUNDUP

Adah Sharma to play the role of a man



Commando 2 and 3 actress Adah Sharma known for her choice of quirky roles and sense of humor will now be seen in a movie playing a man.

The actress shot for this film in a very hush hush way. The film originally titled Man to Man will now be called Pati, Patni Aur Panga. The genre being romantic comedy Adah this is a really bold move for her as no actress has played a man and transgender in a Bollywood film before. With her popularity down south they are dubbing the film into four south languages tamil, telugu, malayalam, kannada along with Bengali and Punjabi.

Originally to be a theatre release, now because of the current covid situation, the makers have chosen to go the OTT route like Laxmi Bomb and Coolie No. 1. The film will now release in December.

She is also happy with the re-

sponse she has been getting for her portrayal of a transgender in the recently-released web series, Pati Patni Aur Panga.

"I'm so glad so many people are watching 'Pati Patni Aur Panga'. It feels great when the audience appreciates your work. They can watch it in Telugu, Tamil, Punjabi and Bengali as well because it is dubbed in all these languages," she informed.

The web series directed by Abir Sengupta also features Naveen Kasturia, Hiten Tejwani, Gurpreet Saini, and Alka Amin among others.

"I love the action genre and I'm fortunate that directors are offering me really cool stuff! I'm getting to do action, romance, comedy, drama. What more can an actor ask for?" smiled Adah.

Adah is currently gearing up for the second season of the show, as well as the upcoming action film Commando 4.



ANJALI @YOURSANJALI

The things you do for love-honour! #PaavaKadhaigal, premieres 18 Dec, only on Netflix.

@NetflixIndia



How to take care of your silk



Skip the dry cleaners and care for your silks with these four simple tips at home, so they can stay silky for a lifetime.

Hand wash and be gentle

Wash your silks by hand in a basin or sink with cold water and gentle detergent so as not to agitate the natural fibres. Move the garment around the soapy water and the stains will release from the fabric.

Test for bleeding colours

Silk fades fast, so before you wash your silks, test a patch of the fabric. Blot a damp towel on it to see if the colour transfer,

if it does, take it to the dry cleaners. Bright colours and dark colours fade faster so those should be left to the experts.

Don't tumble dry!

Save the structure of your garment by placing it on a towel and dabbing it dry, then hang it over a bathtub, sink or bucket to air dry.

Hang it up!

Hang your silks up to maintain the integrity of your garment, preferably on a foam hanger so the silk doesn't slip. If you plan on storing your silks for a long period, make sure they are clean so moths are less drawn to the natural fibres.



PM Cares Fund: ‘Donations from China, Pakistan’

There is no control of either the Central or any State governments, either direct or indirect

NEW DELHI

THE PM Cares Fund has been defined by the government as a government trust for the purpose of corporate donations, but a clause in the trust documents calls it a private entity, which leaves it exempt from RTI scrutiny. This has raised questions over the Fund's entity-whether it is a private or a public one.

The deed of trust, which has been made public now and put up on the website of the Prime Ministers Office, spells out the powers, duties

and functions of the board of trustees, according to ThePrint.

Signed by PM Modi, who is the chairman of the board of trustees, the deed reads: "This Trust is neither intended to be or is in fact owned, controlled or substantially financed by any government or any instrumentality of the government. There is no control of either the central government or any state government/s, either direct or indirect, in the functioning of the Trust in any manner whatsoever."

It further says that the board of trustees, which includes the PM and

the ministers of defence, home and finance, was made "merely for administrative convenience" and for "smooth succession of the trusteeship". It is "neither intended to be nor in fact result into governmental control in the functioning of the Trust in any manner whatsoever".

The board of trustees are ex-officio members, i.e., once they vacate their office, the position will be automatically filled by the person who succeeds them.

In a series of tweets, Congress spokesperson Randeep Singh Surjewala said, "The intriguing case of



'foreign donations', including from China, Pakistan and Qatar to PM Cares Fund! Questions to Prime Minister -- Why did Indian Embassies publicise and receive donation to PM Cares Fund? Why was the fund advertised on banned Chinese apps?"

"How much money was received from Pakistan and who donated? Which are the two companies in Qatar donating to the Fund and how many crores were received?" How many thousand crores were received in Fund from 27 foreign countries and was there a quid pro quo

with NISSEI ASB between donation and restarting their factory?" he asked.

Questioning the government, the Congress General Secretary in another tweet said, "Why were the 27 Indian Embassies advertising the fund through 'Closed Channels, not in public domain', when fund is not a 'public authority' within RTI?"

"Why has the fund been exempted from the preview of FCRA by the government? Isn't it the only exception in India for a charitable trust? Why this special treatment?" he said.

"Why is the Fund then not a 'Public Authority'? Why is Fund not audited by CAG or GOI and report made public as substantial foreign donations were received?" he questioned.

The PM CARES Fund or Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund was set up following the Covid-19 pandemic in India in March this year to undertake and support relief or assistance of any kind relating to a public health emergency or any other kind of emergency, calamity or distress.

SIKH PRIEST SHOOTSELF

Many Army veterans to return their gallantry medals

NEW DELHI

A Sikh preacher supporting the farmers' agitation against the Centre's agriculture laws allegedly committed suicide near the Singhu border in Delhi on Wednesday, police said.

A handwritten note in Punjabi, purportedly left behind by the deceased, says he was unable to bear the "pain of farmers".

The note is being verified by police.

An official of the Sonapat police said they had received a call that Sant Ram Singh (65), who hailed from Karnal, allegedly shot himself.

The deceased was rushed to a hospital in Panipat where doctors declared him brought dead.

The official said the exact spot where the incident took place is being verified and police are in the process of recording statements of the deceased's family members.

Shiromani Akali Dal spokesperson and Delhi Sikh Gurudwara Management Committee president Manjinder Singh Sirsa expressed grief over the incident and urged farmers to exercise restraint.



Indian ex-servicemen join farmers' protest against the new farm laws, at Singhu Border on Wednesday

"A very sad news has been received that Sant Ram Singh, who dedicated his life to the service of humanity, committed suicide by shooting himself," he said on his Twitter handle. According to Sirsa, the victim wrote in his suicide note that he was unable to bear the "pain of the farmers".

"It is a sin to suffer atrocity and witness it, which I cannot see," Sirsa said the cleric wrote in his suicide note. Sirsa appealed to farmers to exercise restraint.

"It is a very grave time. I request you as the chief sewadar of the DSGMC to exercise restraint because anybody can do mischief in the farmers' agitation. It is a very sad incident for all of us but we need to be restrained," said Sirsa.

Thousands of farmers from Punjab, Haryana and other state have been protesting near the Delhi borders for the past three weeks, demanding that the Centre's farm laws be repealed. Meanwhile, many Army veterans

camping at the Singhu border have decided to return their gallantry medals in protest against the farm laws.

The All India Kisan Sabha said the government is trying to divide farmers' groups. "The unprecedented growing unity of the agrarian classes will be further cemented through the ongoing Kisan struggle across the country, and will strongly counter the cynical handwork by the Modi Government to divide the Kisan movement.

NANDED

5 yrs after return from Pak, Geeta searches for family in Maha

GEETA, the Indore-based hearing and speech impaired woman who returned to India from Pakistan in 2015 after staying there for several years, has come to Nanded in Maharashtra with the hope of finding her parents. Geeta was 7 or 8 years' old when she was found sitting alone in the Samjhauta Express at Lahore station by Pakistan Rangers around 20 years ago. She was adopted there by a person from Edhi Foundation. She was brought back to India on October 26, 2015 following efforts made by then external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj, who called her "Hindustan ki beti" (India's daughter). Swaraj had also met her and assured that the government was making every effort to trace her parents. Geeta, believed to be around 30 years old now, is currently living at the 'Anand Service Society', an NGO working for disabled persons, in Madhya Pradesh's Indore city. Several couples have come forward claiming to be her parents, but she has not recognised any of them and none could substantiate their claims.

LPG price up by ₹ 50, ATF rises by 6.3%

NEW DELHI

COOKING gas LPG price on Wednesday was increased by Rs 50 per cylinder, the second hike in rate this month following firming of international prices.

Also, aviation turbine fuel (ATF) price was raised by a steep 6.3 per cent. Non-subsidised LPG price was increased to Rs 694 per 14.2-kg cylinder from Rs 644 earlier, according to a price notification of state fuel marketing companies.

This is the second increase in rate this month. On December 1, price was hiked by a similar Rs 50 per cylinder. Prior to that, the price had remained unchanged at Rs 594 a cylinder since July.

A subsidised cooking gas cylinder was priced at Rs 497 in Delhi in June 2019. Since then, prices have cumulatively gone up by Rs 147. However, the increase in rates this month would mean that the government will have to resume paying subsidies to consumers. Rates of LPG are revised every fortnight.

Simultaneously, the price of jet fuel was hiked by Rs 2,941.5 per kilolitre, or 6.3 per cent, in Delhi to Rs 49,161.16 per kl. This is the second increase in ATF price this month. Rates had gone up by 7.6



per cent (Rs 3288.38 per kl) on December 1. Like LPG, ATF prices too are revised on the 1st and 16th of every month based on the average rate of benchmark international fuel and foreign exchange rate in the preceding fortnight. Alongside an increase in the price of 14.2-kg LPG cylinders, rates of the 5-kg bottles were increased by Rs 18 and those of the 19-kg cylinders by Rs 36.50. Households in India are allowed a maximum of 12 LPG cylinder purchases per year at subsidised rates. Cylinders have to be bought at full price at the time of purchase, and the subsidy is credited to the customer's account.

Kerala local body polls: Ruling LDF surges ahead

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

THE ruling CPI(M)-led LDF in Kerala on Wednesday appeared to make a sweep of the local body polls in the state, while the BJP seemed to have made some gains, leading in Pandalam, the centre of protests against women's entry into Sabarimala, among others.

The Left front was leading in 514 grama panchayats, five corporations and 11 district panchayats, prompting Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan to attribute the good show to the people of the state. Opposition Congress-led UDF was in the second spot, leading in over 400 local bodies.

The Left front is also ahead in 108 block panchayats, Vijayan told reporters here.

He also took to Twitter to thank the people for reposing faith in the ruling front.

"Thank you Kerala. Thank you for reposing faith in LDF. We are humbled by the trust and the confidence of the people of Kerala. This is a victory for secularism and inclusive development," he said. It was "people's victory," he said, adding LDF's performance is a resounding reply to those who tried to belittle the state's achievements.

School for poor kids at protest site

NEW DELHI

A group of farmers from Punjab's Anandpur Sahib has started an 'informal school' in a makeshift tent for local slum children at the Singhu border.

Pioneered by writer Bir Singh and advocate Dinesh Chaddha, the temporary school that started on Monday is part of the multiple 'sewa' practices being offered at the protest site, where thousands of farmers have been demonstrating against three new farm laws for over two weeks now. With several rounds of talks with the government ending in stalemate, the protesters have found new ways to help each other and those living around the protest site, be it community kitchens, medical services, libraries, or this temporary school.

"Everything here is 'sewa'. We saw so many children from neighbouring slums roaming around for food, and thought why not also help them keep engaged in a constructive way," Satnam Singh, a volunteer, said. According to him, educated individuals among the farmers, who have bachelors or Phd degrees, have been teaching the

children. About 60-70 children across age groups have been coming to them everyday to read, write, draw and listen to stories, he added. "The first day we had to encourage them to come and study here by giving them fruit juice and snacks, but over the last two days they have been coming on their own, and have brought their friends too," Satnam Singh said.

"The teachers ask them what class they are studying in and teach them according to the expected syllabi," he said, adding that they have arranged for a similar facility at the Tikri border protest site as well. As the local children speak Hindi, story books have been made available to them in the language. In the evenings, the tent is used to recreate a tradition -- "Sanjhi Sath" -- from back home - where the villagers gather to listen to their elders' advice. Here at eight in the evening, they discuss the orders of the day. "Not every farmer here gets an opportunity to speak on the stage, so this gives them a platform to share their concerns which we forward to the leaders of the protest," Satnam Singh said.



Pawan Vyas, 20, ties 450 m (1475 ft) long turban on his head in an attempt to create a world record, in Bikaner on Wednesday

Rahul walks out of Parl panel meet

NEW DELHI

FORMER Congress President Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday walked out of a meeting of the Parliamentary Committee on Defence, accusing the panel of wasting time by discussing uniforms instead of Chinese aggression and national security, sources said. According to sources, Rahul Gandhi tried to raise the issue of Chinese aggression and better equipping the soldiers on the borders with

China in Ladakh, but he was not allowed to speak by the committee's Chairman Jual Oram.

The sources claimed that the committee was discussing the uniforms of the three armed forces in the presence of Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat, when Rahul Gandhi tried to intervene saying that the time of the panel was being wasted by discussing uniforms instead of Chinese aggression on the borders and equipping the armed forces personnel in a better way.

The sources said that as he was not allowed to speak, the Congress leader walked out of the meeting.

Two other Congress members, Rajiv Satav and Revanth Reddy, also left the meeting along with him.

Another source said that the other members questioned the Congress leader's approach, saying it was not the Lok Sabha where he should be allowed to give a speech.

TN girl creates world record by making 46 dishes in 58 min

CHENNAI

A girl from Chennai entered the UNICO Book of World Records for cooking 46 dishes in less than an hour, according to ANI. Tamil Nadu's SN Lakshmi Sai Sri has entered the hallowed halls of UNICO, which celebrates unique achievements of Indians.

"I have learned cooking from my mother. I am very happy that I have achieved this milestone," she said.

According to the mother, N Kalaimagal, Lakshmi developed an interest in cooking during the lockdown.

"I cook different traditional cuisine of Tamil Nadu. During the lockdown, my daughter used to spend her time with me in the kitchen," she says.

Seeing the bolstered passion, her father suggested that she could give a go at creating a world record.

On research, Lakshmi's parents found that the record was previously held by a 10-year-old girl Saanvi from Kerala for cooking almost 30 dishes. In a delicious turn of events, Lakshmi beat that by making 46 dishes in 58 minutes on Tuesday.

SC to hear plea for ‘uniform grounds of divorce’ for all citizens

Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs and Jains have to seek divorce under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955. Muslims, Christians and Parsis have their own personal laws. A couple belonging to different religions has to seek divorce under the Special Marriage Act, 1956

NEW DELHI

THE Supreme Court on Wednesday agreed to hear a plea seeking "uniform grounds of divorce" for all citizens of the country keeping with the spirit of the Constitution and international conventions.

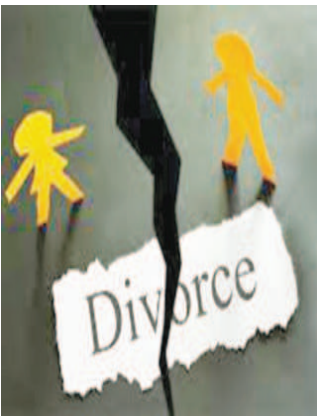
A bench of Chief Justice S A Bobde and Justices AS Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian orally observed that it may consider prayer for directing the Law Commission of India to examine the laws relating to divorce and suggest 'Uniform Grounds of Divorce' for all citizens in spirit of Articles 14, 15,

21, 44 of the Constitution within three months. The top court issued notice to the Centre on the plea and sought its response. At the outset, the bench told senior advocate Pinky Anand, appearing for petitioner Ashwini Upadhyay that whether she wants all personal laws should be abolished? Anand replied that no, she is not saying that.

The bench said that she is asking the court to direct something which amounts to go into personal laws and demolish them. It said that the Government is supposed to have a pulse of the people but does a court en-

croach on personal law like this. It asked Anand, "Can we remove the discriminatory practices without demolishing the differences in personal laws?"

The bench referred to the Triple Taluq case and said that Parliament has brought a legislation on it. Anand submitted that the practice of Triple Taluq was found to be discriminatory and was struck down by the apex court. The plea filed by Upadhyay sought directions to the Centre to take steps to remove anomalies in divorce laws and make them uniform for all citizens, without any prejudice



on the basis of religion, race, cast, sex or place of birth.

"The court may declare that the discriminatory grounds of divorce are violative of Articles 14, 15, 21 and frame guidelines for 'Uniform Grounds of Divorce' for all citizens. "Alternatively, this court may direct the Law Commission to examine the laws of divorce and suggest 'Uniform Grounds of Divorce' for all citizens in the spirit of Articles 14, 15, 21, 44 within three months, while considering international laws and international conventions," the plea said. "Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs and Jains have to seek

divorce under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955. Muslims, Christians and Parsis have their own personal laws. A couple belonging to different religions has to seek divorce under the Special Marriage Act, 1956," it said.. If either partner is a foreign national then that person has to seek divorce under the Foreign Marriage Act, 1969. Hence, the grounds of divorce are neither gender neutral nor religion neutral, the plea said.

The PIL said that the "injury" caused to the public due to this is large because divorce is among the most traumatic misfortunes for both

men and women, but even after 73 years of independence, divorce procedures are very complex in the country. "Hence, grounds of divorce are neither gender neutral nor religion neutral. For example, adultery is a ground of divorce for Hindus, Christians and Parsis, but not for Muslims. Incurable leprosy is a ground of divorce for Hindus and Christians, but not for Parsis and Muslims. "Impotency is a ground of divorce for Hindus-Muslims, but not for Christians-Parsis. Underage marriage is a ground of divorce for Hindus, but not for Christians, Parsis and Muslims," the plea said.

At 70, can Rajinikanth pull off an NTR?

TAMIL Nadu, where Assembly elections are scheduled to be held early 2021, had seen sharing of power between the two Dravidian parties DMK and AIADMK. But now it is all set to witness a multi-cornered fight with heavy dose of filmi glamour as Tamil superstar Rajinikanth has finally announced that he is launching his party on December 31 and will contest all 234 seats in the next Assembly elections. Rajinikanth, who had become very popular with his auto-wallah image, incidentally, got Auto as his party symbol. Many analysts are of the opinion that Rajinikanth has played the “will he, won’t he” game for too long and that at this age and given his health conditions, it may be difficult for him to create an impact. But what needs to be considered is that there has been a change in the political atmosphere of Tamil Nadu. Neither the DMK stalwart K

Karunanidhi who became the Chief Minister for five non-consecutive terms is alive nor is J Jayalithaa who ruled the State as Chief Minister six times. Ever since the death of Jayalalithaa, the State politics has seen lot of turmoil. The BJP which could never dream of getting a foothold in Tamil Nadu found an opportunity to fish in the troubled waters and had succeeded in making the AIADMK a friendly party. Another film star, Kamal Haasan has also announced that he would work with Rajinikanth in the next elections. Hence, the timing of Rajni to plunge into active politics has all the potential to shake up the poll scenario. Despite public denials by Rajinikanth, it appears that Rajni’s Makkal Sevai Katchi is in the good books of the BJP and could be called as a friendly party if not an ally. His ideology is close to the BJP, claim BJP leaders. His statements praising the policies of Prime

Minster Narendra Modi and comparing Modi and Shah as Krishna and Arjun in Mahabharata and the way he supported the Citizenship Amendment Act in February, throw some light on his political leanings at the national level. Tamil Nadu election had always seen caste playing a major role. The superstar who is known as a spiritualist, certainly will have a tough time to steer clear from the traditional politics based on caste, creed and religion. Rajni may not have anything to do with one particular caste or religion but then he cannot keep the party out of this phenomenon completely. His political advisors comment that Rajni will adopt political journey of inclusiveness without any kind of discrimination. It sounds music to ears, but it remains to be seen how effective this would be at the ground level when one has to fight to win the seats. He also will have to take on the important and es-

tablished leaders from the dominant castes like Gounders, Thevars, Vanniyars, SCs and Isai Vellalar community. While Chief Minister Palaniswami of AIADMK is from Gounder community, O Paneerselvam is from Vanniyars and M K Stalin of the DMK is from Isai Vellalar community. Rajinikanth who has massive fan following certainly will be a crowd puller. All his meetings will burst at seams with fans and his admirers, whistles and claps. If Kamal Haasan joins him, it will further add to the fan following and the meetings will give an impression that the duo is going to sweep the polls. But we have seen that fans do not necessarily convert into party cadre nor do they vote en block. Moreover, the new party does not yet have an organised cadre. Tamil Nadu is also known for showering gifts on voters like TV sets, mixer grinders and so on. Can the ageless Rajni overcome all these maladies with his filmi glamour and popularity. Hence, the big question is at 70, can Rajinikanth pull off an NTR?

PART- II

Sometimes, bad memory can be hilarious!



TALKING OF MANY THINGS

Dr Mohan Kanda

THE laws of Mendel state that acquired characteristics cannot be inherited. If that is so, I wonder how both my children also appear to have imbibed from me the habit of forgetfulness and being slightly lost in certain circumstances. My son, Arvind, was barely two years old when he once woke up in the middle of the night and asked several questions. He first asked, “Where is my mother?” I pointed to Usha sleeping next to him. He then asked, “Where are you?” Upon being satisfied about my being there he finally asked, “Where am I?”

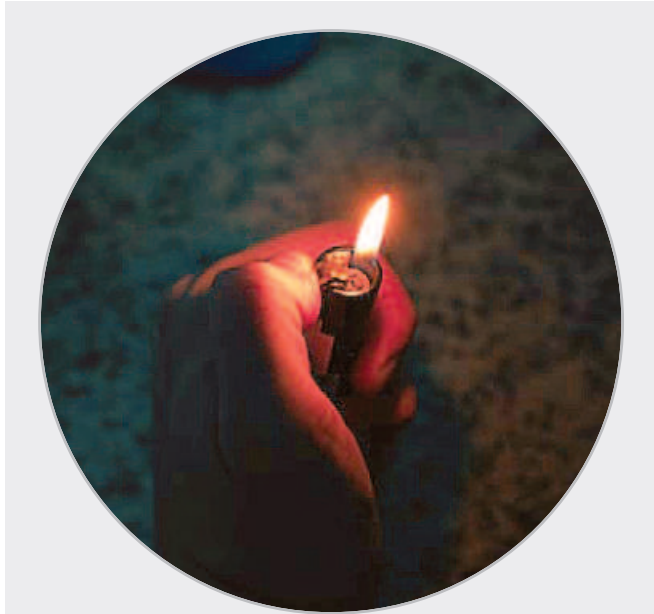
On another occasion, my daughter, Aparna, when she was the same age, woke up at night from sleep and wanted, not her mother, but ‘Usha Kanda!’. Usha has got so used to my forgetfulness that, whenever she wanted to send a thing to someone staying in the place to which I was travelling, she would put it in a briefcase, lock it up, and inform the other person to make sure that it was collected from me. I was reduced to the role of being a courier! While I can go on regaling the reader with countless number of such incidents, I regard one incident as the one represents the crowning glory of my virtue of absentmindedness. It was the year 1981. Vice President Hidayatullah, as whose Secretary I was posted at that time, was in Canada on an official visit. On his way back to India, he was to pass through Japan, meet the Crown Prince and hand over a gift to him. It was the longest trip, which took us to England, America, Canada, Japan and back to Delhi via Singapore.

There were gifts to be handed over at his place of which I was the custodian. And I managed to leave it behind at the hotel in Boston city from where we left for Tokyo via San Francisco! It was only thanks to the diligence and devotion of the hotel staff, that the gift was dispatched separately to reach Tokyo by the time we arrived there.

I have earlier made a mention, in this column, about how I transited from being an atheist to a believer, in my late teens. That took place primarily as a fallout of my failure in the practical examinations in chemistry in the B Sc Hons. course in Delhi University. After that I never looked back, as far as faith in a Supreme Being is concerned. However, after the conclusion of my tenure in NDMA, and returning to Hyderabad, I had to devise several methods to keep myself physically fit, mentally alert and emotionally stable, essentially to ward off ennui. It was at that time, when I was feeling lost in the bewildering and enormous realm of prayer, worship and meditation, that some elderly friends offered sound advice and counselled me about the practices and methods that best suited my requirements.

In the ‘activity tight compartments’ I referred to earlier, physical fitness has always occupied high priority. Worn out cliché though it may seem, ‘a healthy mind in a healthy body’ is a saying that has always appealed to me. For over 35 years now, I have maintained a record of over 90, on a scale of 100, in respect of the number of days of a week on which I work out to my satisfaction. Another activity that has regularly figured in my daily routine is the effort at preserving and sharpening my mental faculties. Solving puzzles, finding answers to riddles or playing indoor games such as chess, solitaire or bridge on the computer, are activities for which I make sure that slots are allotted in my daily regimen.

Looking back over the 75 years of my life, I have little regret about what I have done, or what I am doing now. Therefore, I have spent the last sev-



Much like the Boy Scout who has the ‘a good deed every day’ principle to guide him, I begin my day with a prayer asking that I be given the opportunity, and the power, to do some good for others during the day. Fortunately, something or other has always come up for over 15 years now. That attitude, and the opportunity endowed to me by destiny, have helped me keep my emotional equipment in good trim. When asked, “How is life?”, my father used to reply, “Better than the alternative!” Know that, of course, is a bit of an extreme illustration of the point I am trying to make. The point is that life should not merely comprise existence but be an enjoyable, productive and fulfilling experience. And that, again, is not to say that one should indulge in excesses, not only in things which are bad for one but also those which are good. Which is probably why, to quote my father again, “life depends on the liver!”

eral years almost exclusively on activities in which I can harness for the benefit of others the wisdom and experience I have gained. Apart from the odd act of charity or indenting upon my goodwill and influence to sort out day-today issues brought to my notice by others, I have invested a substantial amount of time in mentoring youngsters preparing for the Civil Services examinations. I can say, without any embarrassment, that I have been compensated for the time I offered, although in a modest way. That was to ensure that I

remained sincere and conscientious in my commitment to the task I agreed to perform.

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Life is an experience full of the occurrence of unexpected events. Their impact, however, can be condition given a steady and wise approach and the ability to anticipate things. Eleanor Roosevelt, while on this point, said that if life were predictable it would cease to be life. Albert Einstein also made an observation which is relevant in this context, when he said, “life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving...”

John F Kennedy famously said that there was no such thing as a free lunch. Similarly, in life, one must invest in terms of energy and effort in order to fulfil one’s objectives. I have, earlier in this column, used the following excerpt from a song composed by the Bard of the Telugu people Rajinikanth Rao: “Omkaara parivrittham viswam Sankalpa parimitham drisyam”.

In a similar vein, Oprah Winfrey said, “You get in life what you have the courage to ask for”. To return to the theme with which this discussion began, I have always believed that it is necessary to get lost in life, whether in the physical, intellectual, emotional or philosophical sense, because it is only then that one can discover one’s true bearings.

Incidentally, that is the message conveyed by the line “... Zindagi Hai, Bhul Kar Hi Raah Milti Hai”, in the song ‘Apni to Har Aah Ek Toofan Hai...’, from the unforgettable classic movie of yore, ‘Kala Bazar’.

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

Centre’s new farm laws are bold steps

MANAS CHAKRAVARTY

THE problem with Indian agriculture, put succinctly, is simply this: it is, for most farmers, an unviable business. A National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) report that mapped the income, expenditure and indebtedness of agricultural households in India in 2013 found that farmers with holdings of a hectare or less were able to get only half their total net income from farming and they had to supplement their income by wage labour, animal husbandry and other non-farm work to keep body and soul together. Even then, their total income from all sources, including net receipts from cultivation, was less than their consumption expenditure.

So how many farm households had land holdings of a hectare or less? The study said it was 69.4 percent. That means 69.4 percent of farming households — the vast majority — didn’t earn enough to cover their expenses in 2013. Another 17.1 percent households — those owning between 1 and 2 hectares — had an average monthly surplus of a paltry Rs 891 in 2013. A couple of bad monsoons, or even a major illness, would be enough to send even these farmers into the red. Thus, the vast majority of farming households not only lack the resources to invest in their land but have to borrow to make ends meet.

What then is the remedy? The received wisdom was that as industry develops in the cities, it will attract workers from rural areas. Since these people are underemployed in the first place, productivity will rise, farm sizes will become larger and farming will be integrated into the rest of the modern economy as agribusiness.

But the fact is that for many countries, including India, manufacturing has been unsuccessful in absorbing the surplus labour. Instead, labour fleeing unviable farms has found work in the informal sector and in construction, which, unfortunately, also suffer from low productivity. Given the capital-intensive nature of modern industry, it’s very unlikely that the manufacturing sector can absorb the vast masses scratching out a precarious living in marginal farms in India. Indeed, a working paper from the Asian Development Bank titled ‘Agriculture and Structural Transformation in Developing Asia: Review and Outlook’, projected that, while the share of output of agriculture would be less than 5 percent by 2040, the share of employment would still be 33.5 percent for India.

Policymakers will therefore have to chart a course that ensures a way out for small farmers within agriculture, while at the same time trying to create jobs for some of them outside the farms.

The Modi government’s Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) programme and increase in tariffs for some goods is aimed at creating jobs for the people displaced from farms. On the other hand, the farm reforms aim to create conditions for small farmers to survive, if not thrive, by linking farms to markets and agribusinesses, thereby trying to create a

Can’t the present system in agriculture — a mix of subsidies, minimum support prices and public procurement — do the job? Minimum support prices are only for a few crops and have resulted in huge surpluses of wheat and rice. Only a few regions in the country have benefited and it is the rich farmers in these regions that have gained the most. The system was designed at a time when the overriding objective was to ensure self-sufficiency for food in the country, especially in cereals. But it has outlived its utility, is inequitable, inefficient, an intolerable burden on fiscal resources and lacks dynamism. It is a dead-end. More importantly, it plainly hasn’t worked for the vast majority of farmers. In other words, there is no alternative to reform



dynamic, modern agricultural sector. The push to rural infrastructure and logistics is part of the same strategy.

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Will the new farm laws succeed in their aims? Well, we do have the example of successful agrarian transformations in much of East Asia. Consider the People’s Republic of China (PRC), a country we love to compare ourselves with and whose policies we try to emulate. The ADB report cited above says, ‘In the 1990s and 2000s, the PRC’s agriculture evolved from a grain-centered economy to one oriented towards high-valued cash crops, horticulture, livestock, and aquaculture products. Orchards now occupy over 5 percent of cultivated area, double the share in other countries with large agricultural sectors. Between 1990 and 2004, vegetable production was growing by the equivalent of California’s vegetable industry every 2 years. Agriculture is now also heavily export-oriented and specialized towards labour-intensive products.’ If China can do it, so can we.

A paper from the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), quoted here, said contract farming in China has helped millions of small farmers, offering them a modicum of security and preventing their becoming landless labourers. The metamorphosis of the peasantry into the flotsam and jetsam of modernisation in city slums need not be inevitable.

In the most optimistic scenario, smallholders may also become part of global agricultural value chains, although it’s not an easy task. The ADB paper points out, ‘In Laiyang country in Shandong province, up to half of output may be exported; owing to fragmentation of household parcels, village authorities consolidate farmers’ parcels for lease to processors (the fanzu daobao system), and production may follow a “growership” scheme in which the processor provides inputs and imposes delivery, quality and management standards, while farmers supply labour. Larger buyers tend to be foreign-owned or foreign-domestic joint ventures, and the main export destinations are the European Union, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and the United States. Harvest from small farms go to processors for sorting, cleaning, and packing (in the case of fresh produce), which are then distributed to supermarket outlets such as Wal-Mart and Carrefour.’

To be sure, it is entirely possible that in many instances, small farmers will be at the mercy of big buyers and there is little doubt that most of the benefits of the value chain will accrue to the big companies. The market plays contradictory roles—it can be a channel for small producers to participate in larger markets, or it could be a mechanism for large capital to exploit small producers. That is where the state has a role to play in managing these contradictions, perhaps by supporting smallholders to market their produce, or providing safety nets to mitigate the uncertainties of farming.

The farm reforms are a bold step aimed at creating a modern, viable agricultural sector. It is bound to be vociferously contested by the groups that benefited under the old regime. The government should stay the course. A few sops here and there may be politically expedient, but it should stand firm on the reforms.

(This article was originally published in Moneycontrol)

LETTERS

2020: The lessons we learnt

ONSET of the New Year 2021 amidst the onslaught of Covid-19 pandemic is around the corner. The outgoing year 2020 has left awful experiences in our lives especially due to the corona outbreak. Our perceptions are teemed with rueful memories of people just succumbing in large numbers as days passed by after Covid-19 haplessly hit the world.

An introspection of the lifestyle we have led in this year reveals bittersweet experiences and there are pros and cons of the effect caused by Covid-19 on our lifestyle. The pandemic has unkindly put humanity to trouble in many ways and also taught them a better and principled way of life in true letter and spirit. The havoc caused to humanity in 2020 on account of the calamity that struck a chord is reckoned in terms of life and economy.

The world economic matrix has been badly hit this year leading to recession. Even the advanced nations could not be spared by the severe impact of Covid-19, with highest number of positive cases that have resulted mainly on account of lackadaisical attitude of the citizens and governments that did not ensure to adopt guidelines (as recommended by the WHO) scrupulously providing access to facial masks and social isolation.

In some nations like the USA, due to subdued industrial and economic activity, citizens were driven to

poverty and joblessness. In India, the situation has turned still worse after lockdown when it ranked 2nd at the global level in the total number of cases registered.

There was virtual breakdown of industrial, trade and technology progress against the backdrop of corona impediment during lockdown times. Following hampered economic activity in the country during the disease-ridden times, the Indian government had to release two successive whopping economic packages that accounted for an unprecedented drain on exchequer. All sectors, both private and government, have sustained huge losses due to virtual cessation of work and other related activities.

The world passenger connectivity has been disrupted due to cancellation of domestic and international flights which remained off the service until the unlock phase had set in towards the end of the year. The corona effect has impacted the education sector by transforming the conventional classroom education into a virtual mode of teaching that proved to be unpalatable to the interests of a large section of students and their parents. The impact on education had mainly befallen on academic standards and examination system adopted in educational institutions, the latter undergoing either cancellation or postponement till the next year. The trends have also changed in the employment sector including IT field wherein the professionals have become totally attuned to “work from home” mode in evaluation of their work that is rather undaunted and profitable for certain major IT companies though irksome for the workforce to some extent.

The lockdown phase during the pandemic has rendered the film and sports celebrities inoperative who as a result dispensed away with their normal schedules and

kept their fingers crossed over rescheduling of their programmes only after resetting of pre-Covid-19 situation that is of late achieved after the unlock phase has come into play.

Pros and cons of Covid-19 are equally weighed with people becoming more or less health conscious by developing awareness about cleanliness and righteous civic code of conduct without compunction. A section of economically well-to-do people have set to derive pleasure out of their own resources and lived with pride and pleasure in doing self-help and hard work that kept them in good stead. The unruly and indolent people could learn self-discipline and hard work in crucial times of corona which has elevated their quality of life and inculcated social behaviour and ethos among them.

It is not out of context to mention that in this black year 2020, India had not only fought Covid-19 pandemic, but has also countered inimical aggression from China due to border disputes, thus leading to a double whammy for the nation.

As we enter into the New Year 2021, all our hopes are now pinned on the cusp of getting vaccines developed by various firms across the globe that is plagued by the ill-effects of Covid-19 pandemic from which we currently need a perennial relief. The New Year resolutions for 2021 should include giving befitting honour to the brave frontline warriors who fought for the cause of human service, pay tributes to millions of those victimised due to the scourge of corona and welcome human efforts that are underway in the production and distribution of vaccine which is the long standing hope of various nations in the interest of freeing humanity from the trouble and turmoil it is undergoing due to Covid-19.

Bh Indu Sekhar, Hyderabad

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POLAVARAM FUNDS

CM seeks release of ₹55,656 cr

- In his meeting with Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, the CM also discusses inter-state river water issue
- Informs him that around ₹1,779 cr is still pending with regard to reimbursement of Polavaram works apart from Dec 2018 bills

NEW DELHI

ANDHRA Pradesh Chief Minister Y S Jaganmohan Reddy on Wednesday called on Union Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat and demanded early release of funds to the tune of Rs 55,656 crore for the Polavaram project.

Besides the pending dues of the Polavaram project, the Chief Minister also discussed inter-state river water issues.

The Chief Minister, in a memorandum submitted to the Central minister, sought approval for release of Rs 55,656 crore funds as per the second revised cost es-



Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy meets Jal Shakti Minister Gajender Singh Sekhawath in New Delhi on Wednesday

time at the 2017-18 price index level, according to official sources.

He also informed in the meeting that about Rs 1,779 crore is still pending towards reimbursement of Polavaram works along with the December 2018 bills. "Any delay will further escalate

the cost and the national project," he added.

The number of families to be evacuated has risen considerably in 2017-18 as compared to 2005-06 from 44,574 to 1,06,006, by which the land acquisition relief and rehabilitation cost has increased, he added. On Tuesday,

December 15, the Chief Minister met Union home minister Amit Shah and requested his intervention in addressing issues pertaining to the Polavaram project. He had also sought early release of flood relief funds and requested that a central team assess the impact of cyclone Nivar in the state.

MPEDA launches call centre for aqua farmers in Vijayawada

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

IN a first-of-its-kind initiative, the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) on Wednesday launched a multilingual call centre for aqua farmers of Andhra Pradesh at Vijayawada. The call centre will address the technical issues of the aqua farmers and impart knowledge about efficient farming methods by domain experts round the clock.

Launching the call centre through video conference on Tuesday, MPEDA chairman K S Srinivas said it would help the aqua farmers in Andhra Pradesh to seek advice by experienced experts for addressing their concerns and following Best Management Practices (BMPs) to boost production and ensure quality of the produce.

"I request the aqua farmers to make use of the toll-free number 1800-425-4648 with IVRS (interactive voice response system) facility established at Vijayawada to clear their technical doubts from

GUIDING VOICE

- Farmers can call for guidance 24x7 on toll-free number 1800-425-4648
- This is the first-of-its kind facility in the country

► MPEDA chairman Srinivas says the call centre will help the aqua farmers in AP to get advice by experts regarding their concerns and to follow Best Management Practices

Out of 7,47,111 metric tonne shrimps produced in India last year, 68% came from Andhra Pradesh alone from its over 52,000 shrimp farms

the experts and not to fall in the trap of quacks. It will also help them in seeking information about the various support schemes ex-

tended by the field offices of MPEDA," he added.

Andhra Pradesh contributes more than 60 per cent of marine

products exports in the country. The call centre is primarily aimed to cater the aqua farmers of Andhra Pradesh and other parts of India. The call centre can also handle calls in English and Hindi.

India produced 7,47,111 metric tonne of shrimps last year, of which more than 68 per cent had come from Andhra Pradesh alone from its over 52,000 shrimp farms covering a water spread area of 75,000 hectare. In his welcome address, MPEDA director Dr Karthikeyan said, "The call centre will assist the aquaculture farmers of Andhra Pradesh in dealing with the issues of day-to-day farming activities and provide useful aquaculture-related information which can be utilised efficiently."

Appreciating MPEDA for its unique initiative, Kanna Babu, commissioner of fisheries, Andhra Pradesh, assured full support of the state government in this regard. Dr U Jogi Ananda Varma, member, MPEDA, exuded confidence that the services offered by the call centre would help the farmers to manage their crops in a better way and give a fillip to the Atmanirbhar Bharat scheme announced by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Deputy director, MPEDA, Vijayawada, K Sivarajan and other officials participated in the event.

NATIONAL ANIMAL: SHOULD COW REPLACE TIGER?

Cow is a sacred animal for Hindus for ages. India's neighbour Nepal declared cow as a national animal. This has also led to an intense debate in the country on whether the Indian government should also follow suit. *The Hans India* spoke to a cross section of people on the issue. A majority backed making cow the national animal. They said whether it is a house-warming ceremony or initiating a new venture, ushering in a cow is considered a good omen and a sign of lucky charm. However, a few said what benefit does a common man derive by enacting a legislation making cow the national animal. They pointed out there are more pressing problems like unemployment than this.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi is a leader committed to protect the religious interests of Hindus. Declaring cow National Animal would be the right decision. The only task ahead of the PM is to convince all political parties to support the move to bring a law. Arriving at consensus in the regard would be a challenging task. At this juncture, he can follow the example of abolishing Article 370 to unshackle Kashmir. I am confident that the Prime Minister would certainly win the task of ensuring National Animal status for cow.

K Ravindra Reddy, principal , Govt ITI, Chittoor.



In view of the importance of cow in our spiritual and real life, it is about time the government take a decision to make it the National Animal. The government should immediately ban cow slaughter before giving National Animal status to it.

Bommal Srinivasa Rao, advocate, Rajamahendravaram



Cow is a symbol of peace and prosperity and psychosocial impact of naming cow as National Animal will show our integrity and desire for peace and commitment to human values. In our mythology, cow is described as sacred animal. There is an immediate need to accord National Animal status to it.

Sunkara Nagendra Kishore, sportsman and community psychologist, Rajamahendravaram



Majority of Hindus worship cow from ancient days. The presence of cow is must in all auspicious and spiritual events and also in the final rites. Moreover, cow is multi-purpose animal, including medically. The importance of cow was described in our epics and sastras. Cow deserves National Animal status and also according the status will help in stopping cow slaughter.

T V Srimannarayana Charyulu, chief priest, Govinda Kshetram, Rajamahendravaram



I do support the idea of declaring cow as National Animal because cow is holy animal and cattle are also very important to the economy of the country. People can get multiple benefits with increasing cow population as it will be useful to the dairy industry, leather industry and provides livelihood to many people, particularly the rural people. Cow is very important to the Hindus for many centuries and it is worshipped across the country. I welcome if the government declares cow as National Animal.

Puppala Srinivas, advocate, Vijayawada.



There is a need to declare cow as National Animal and protect cow breeds because it is an inalienable part of our religious practices and culture. Every product of the cow, including its urine and dung are used for one or other ritual or for medicinal purposes. Cow ghee is used for performing yagas and homams. People of some faiths and political parties may oppose it, but the Centre should go ahead.

Autkuri Anjaneyulu, senior citizen, Guntur city



Right now the National Animal status for cow is not an important issue. The government has to sort out other major issues like unemployment, prices in the country. Declaring cow as National Animal is acceptable but at the same time the BJP government should maintain communal harmony among all religions.

K Srikar, B Tech student, Tirupati



Cow has a significant place in Hindu religion and I welcome the idea of declaring it as National Animal. It is age old tradition to worshipping cow. I think people across India will support the idea of giving National Animal status to it. Cow milk, urine and dung are also useful. Dung can be used in cultivation as manure.

K Narasimha Rao, employee, Vijayawada.



The governments should take steps to stop slaughtering of cows because it is a holy animal for Hindus. Several temples had set up gosalas to protect them. What is wrong if the Central government declares cow as National Animal?

K Srinivasa Rao, social worker, Guntur city

Naidu questions purpose of Jagan's Delhi visits

- Demands CM to explain to people what he has achieved by his 10 visits to national capital
- Reminds that Jagan spoke of bending necks but now prostrating in Delhi
- Calls upon 'victimised' downtrodden sections to support TDP in Tirupati bypoll to teach a lesson to YSRCP

AMARAVATI

TDP national president and former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday demanded Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy to explain to the people of Andhra Pradesh whether his Delhi visits were aimed at protecting himself from his cases or for protecting the state's interests.

Naidu asked what the Chief Minister had achieved for AP out of his visits to the national capital for over 10 times. The Chief Minister spoke loudly of bending the necks of the Centre at that time but now he was

prostrating in Delhi for his own selfish interests.

Addressing a video conference with party leaders of Rajahmundry parliamentary constituency, the TDP chief said that the Chief Minister failed to bring Central funds for the Visakhapatnam Railway Zone and could not take forward the Vizag-Chennai Industrial Corridor (VICIC) or the Bangalore Chennai Industrial Corridor (BCIC). The CM did not care about the Petroleum Complex and also did not try to recover the first year's revenue deficit from the Centre.

The TDP chief accused the YSRCP of using the vaccination as a pretext to postpone the local body elections. False tweets were being posted in the name of starting coronavirus vaccinations from December 25. Only the TDP victory in Tirupati bypoll would be a fitting reply to the YSRCP atrocities he said and urging all the victimised BC, SC, ST and Muslim Minorities to unite to defeat the lawless, atrocious regime.

Huge taxes keep petrol, diesel prices high

Continued from P1

The base price of petrol currently is a mere Rs 27.37 a litre and diesel is just Rs 28.32 a litre. The base price was much lower till a fortnight ago meaning that the two products are being heavily milked for revenue at the cost of consumers who are at the receiving end of the pandemic bearing higher prices for both food and fuel.

Together with central and state taxes, freight, and dealers' commission, petrol on Wednesday was priced at Rs 83.71 a litre in Delhi while diesel's current selling price stands at Rs 73.87 a litre.

"Auto fuels comprise 20-30 per cent of revenue of state governments while it forms a significant portion of excise revenue for states. As the fuel is still out of GST raising duties is easier for both the Centre and states that target the product to raise revenue whenever

there is an emergency. But high set price of fuel also adds inflationary pressure on the economy that would just not be right at this juncture when the country is fighting the coronavirus outbreak," said an oil sector analyst not willing to be named.

According to analysts Rs 5 per litre increase in retail price of petrol and diesel could add up to 0.5 per cent to retail inflation that stood at high level of 6.94 per cent in November.

After maintaining low levels, global oil prices have now risen expecting a demand pick up after the news of a successful coronavirus vaccine broke. While oil companies had kept retail prices from falling consistently in August, September and October even though global oil prices remained soft, they have regularly raised the retail prices since then to bring the pump prices closer to all-

time high levels seen in October 2018.

The retail price rise has been held back for the past nine days even though there is a case for it as crude has crossed \$50 a barrel. But, the government has still not shown any inclination to revise the taxes downward as it was decided earlier to manage extreme volatility. The taxes on the two petroleum products have risen on many more occasions in last few years than a cut in taxes.

Sources said that the government has now indicated that even with higher central duty, there would not be any increase in retail price of petrol and diesel. Oil companies have built enough buffer in past few days by not revising pump prices and jacking up their marketing margins. The high marketing margin with OMCs will prevent further increase in auto fuel prices.

Delhi aggressively tackling Covid

Continued from P1

Delhi recorded 1,617 fresh COVID-19 cases on Tuesday with over 85,000 tests conducted.

The death toll mounted to 10,115 with 41 new fatalities.

The positivity rate on December 3-7 had successively dipped to 4.96 per cent, 4.78 per cent, 4.2 per cent, 3.68 per cent and 3.15 per cent, respectively. However, on December 8, it had risen again to 4.23 per cent, falling again to 3.42 per cent on December 9 and 2.46 per cent on December 10. It had risen to 3.33 per cent again on December 11 and fell again to 2.64 per cent on December 12, and rose marginal again to 2.74 on December 13, and fell again to 2.15 per cent on December 14. These 1,617 fresh cases came out of 85,105 tests conducted the previous day, including 42,056 RT-PCR tests and 43,049 rapid antigen tests, according to the latest bulletin issued by the Delhi health department. "The positivity rate has stayed below 3 per cent since December 12, and below 5 per cent since December 3. So, it is definitely a downward trend," Jain said. Later, he also shared on Facebook, figures on current COVID-19 situation in Delhi, and said "Delhi is aggressively tackling corona".

Asked about the availability of ICU beds for COVID-19 patients, he said on an average about 50 per cent are vacant, but in some private hospitals, the occupancy of such beds is 80-90 per cent. The highest single-day spike till date -- 8,593 cases -- was reported on November 11.

Form panel to resolve farmers' blockade: SC

Continued from P1

During the hearing, the bench observed the situation warrants an urgent resolution measures through negotiations, as the agitating farmers at the Delhi borders not appearing to be in a mood to talk.

The Chief Justice told Mehta that the government negotiations may fail, therefore, it is necessary to have some farmer unions appear before the court to explain the matter. Mehta informed the top court that the government will not do anything against the interest of the farmers, and it is willing to address the ongoing impasse by having discussion on clauses in the laws. He, however, insisted there should be an open-minded discussion, and the farmers union should not insist on repealing the farm laws. The top court issued notice to the Centre on the PILs seeking removal of farmers, who have blocked various Delhi borders. The petitioner, during the hearing, cited the top court order in the Shaheen Bagh matter, where it had said that the "protesters cannot block public roads".

JEE Mains to be held 4 times a year from now

Continued from P1

There will be no negative marking in the 15 optional questions and best of four scores will be considered.

This year, JEE Main 2021 will be different in many ways. The agency has decided to conduct the exam in 13 languages - English, Hindi, Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Kannada, Marathi, Malayalam, Odia, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu. While exams in Hindi, English, and Urdu will be held across the country, other regional language papers will be held in the respective states.

In the light of rationalization of the syllabus by various Boards, the NTA has decided to provide for choice in the question papers and thus there will be two sections in each paper. The decision is aimed at giving students multiple opportunities to improve their scores in the examination if they fail to give their best in the first attempt without wasting a whole academic year. "In the first attempt, the students will get a first-hand experience of taking an examination and will know their mistakes which they can improve in the next attempt. Additionally, this will reduce the chances of dropping a year and droppers would not have to waste a full year," Pokhriyal said.

These changes, the minister said, has been introduced by NTA after reviewing suggestions made by the Education stakeholders. Pokhriyal, in his webinar on December 10, hinted at a change in the exam pattern. He said that the pattern will be kept in such a way that students across the boards, irrespective of their syllabus reduced or not, will be able to attempt the entrance exam.

Pokhriyal also said that his ministry will positively review the suggestion to hold JEE Mains 2021 in multiple shifts. In previous years, the exam was held twice a year -- in January and April.

CENTRE LIKELY TO BLACKLIST SOME TELECOM VENDORS

Continued from P1

"So, there's a trusted source and there's a not-trusted source," he added.

The government refused to elaborate on whether the move could lead to curbs on Chinese vendors. But, Prasad called it an important step for national security. "Existing telecom equipment with operators will not be impacted," he said.

Last month, the government banned several Chinese mobile apps for activities "prejudicial to sovereignty and integrity of India, defence of India, security of state and public order".

The apps were banned under Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology said on Wednesday. The move was based on "comprehensive reports received from Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre, Ministry of Home Affairs," said a government statement.

FOREX (buy rates in ₹)			
US Dollar	77.98	South	
Euro	94.22	African Rand	5.7
UAE Dirham	22.03	Hong Kong Dollar	10.91
Thai Baht	2.81	Japanese Yen	0.82
British Pound	103.3	New Zealand Dollar	54.92
Australian Dollar	58.5	Saudi Riyal	21.56
Canadian Dollar	60.68	Swedish Krona	10.14
Swiss Franc	86.55	Singapore Dollar	58.11

BIZ BRIEFS

SBI Life's new plan

SBI Life Insurance has launched SBI Life Smart Future Choice, a new insurance product. This allows consumers to select options like choosing the premium amount, term policy or premium payment term along with the capacity to review the features of the life insurance plan as per their changing needs and requirements. The plan provides a unique opportunity to choose benefit payouts in lump sum or flexibly. M Anand, president, Zone II, SBI Life Insurance, said, "SBI Life's 'Smart Future Choices' has been designed keeping this in mind, to cater to the unique needs of every consumer. The new plan aims to fulfil the unique aspirations of multitude of consumers."

Sharp unveils new package

Sharp Business Systems (India) Pvt Ltd. has launched integrated package of workplace solutions keeping in mind the requirements of working professionals operating remotely in the times of Covid-19. This package includes multi-functional printer, interactive touch panels, Dynabook laptops, software applications and commercial air purifier which can benefit all work-groups including startups but is designed for SMEs, BFSI, large institutions and multinational corporates to make working from home easier, safer and more efficient. The remote working package can also be availed either through sale or through a pay-per-use model. Shinji Minatogawa, Managing Director, Sharp Business Systems (India) Pvt. Ltd, said, "Sharp is committed to being a No 1 quality brand in India by providing reliable, durable and efficient office products to enable 'simply better business' and home products for a "simply better life" for our customers."

Honda Power completes 35 yrs

Honda India Power Products Limited (HIPP) has completed 35 glorious years of its operations in the country and has brought smiles to over five million customers in India and overseas. The company has been a trusted partner in line with its vision of "Empower People, To Do Better". HIPP launched its first product namely Portable Generator Model EM650 in India. Within a short span of three years, HIPP products are exported to nearly 50 markets overseas. Takahiro Ueda, company's CMD, said, "We are proud to have crossed the five million milestone in the same year of completing 35 years of committed service to our customers. The trust bestowed upon us by our valued customers inspires us to continuously innovate and provide products of highest quality at an appropriate price."

ICICI Securities' brokerage plan

ICICI Securities (I-Sec), a brokerage house with 5 million customers, launched ICICIdirect Neo, a zero brokerage plan. This plan is targeted at traders, offering unlimited trading with zero brokerage on all Futures trades and flat Rs 20 per order for Margin and Options trade. It offers a host of additional features including instant liquidity, access to ICICIdirect's award winning research with over 300 companies and access to one-click portfolios. Vijay Chandok, company's MD & CEO, said: "We remain agile to customer feedback and the launch of ICICIdirect Neo is in response to the feedback we received from our trading customers."

Fiat drives into Hyd with ₹1,100 crore digital hub

The hub will develop new tech for Fiat's global operations

NEW DELHI

AUTO major Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA) on Wednesday said it will invest \$150 million (around Rs 1,103 crore) to set up a global digital hub in Hyderabad to help the group develop new technologies to cater to its automotive operations across the globe.

The facility, which is FCA's largest digital hub outside of North America, would create nearly 1,000 jobs by the end of next year.

"While reviewing our strategy last year, we knew the next step for us to set up a global digital hub which would serve as transformation and innovation engine for Fiat Chrysler and drive global technology strategy and delivery experience through robust platform, technology and service centres of excellence," FCANorth America and Asia Pacific CIO Mamatha Chamathi said at a virtual event. In less than twelve months, the automaker has made this vision a reality, she added. "It is my privilege to announce that FCA is committing \$150 million in India towards the set-up and growth of the new global digital hub. This investment will help create nearly 1,000 new jobs by the end of 2021," Chamathi said.

The digital hub would help to digitalise every aspect of Fiat Chrysler's automotive operations globally and within India, drive the shift from legacy technologies to digital and modernise the company's existing applications and product portfolio, she added. The Hyderabad centre would operate as a fully integrated part of Fiat Chrysler's global team and attract best digital talent in India, Chamathi said. "It will focus on niche technology areas like connected vehicle services, date sciences, cloud services among others," she added.

In the digital era, data is the new currency and the company aims to build an innovation powerhouse that harnesses the intelligence enabled by data to build exciting new products and services to deliver at the speed of customers' expectations, Chamathi said. The availability of talent coupled with a culture of innovation and pro-business policies played a major role in FCA's decision to set up the facility in Hyderabad, she noted. FCA has a major presence in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, with headquarters in Mumbai, and employs over 3,000 people in the country. With the global digital hub, the automaker will be expanding its presence in Telangana. The company has a joint venture vehicle and powertrain manufacturing facility in Ranjanagaon in Maharashtra and its engineering and product development operations are located in Pune and Chennai.

Biocon Biologics signs MoU with CSSC

BENGALURU

BIOCON Biologics Ltd, in continuation of its Mission 10 cents affordable insulin program for low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Christian Social Services Commission (CSSC) on December 15. Tanzania will be the first country in Africa that will benefit from this collaboration between Biocon Biologics, and CSSC. CSSC, a faith-based organization active in Africa, works closely with the government as well as international and national partners to facilitate health and education services.

As a leading global insulin player, Biocon Biologics, a fully integrated 'pure play' biosimilars company and a subsidiary of Biocon Ltd, is helping unlock universal access to quality insulin in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) by making recombinant human insulin (rh-insulin) available for less than 10 US cents per day as a part of its 'Mission 10 cents' program.

Diabetes is a major cause of blindness, kidney failure, heart attacks, stroke and lower limb amputation. With an estimated 1 million diabetes patients, Tanzania is among the top 5 countries for the number of people with diabetes in Africa. An estimated 19.4 million adults aged 20-79 years were living with diabetes in the IDF Africa Region in 2019, representing a regional prevalence of 4 per cent.

FY21 GDP will contract at -7.4%: SBI report

It may take 7 quarters for GDP to reach pre-pandemic level

MUMBAI

INDIA'S GDP growth is expected to be at (-) 7.4 per cent in FY21 on better than projected recovery, said an SBI research report, upgrading its earlier forecast of (-) 10.9 per cent.

The report also believes that it would take seven quarters from the fourth quarter of FY21 for GDP to reach the pre-pandemic level in nominal terms.

"We now expect GDP decline for the full year (FY21) to be in single digits at 7.4 per cent (compared to our earlier prediction of (-) 10.9 per cent), aligned with RBI and markets' revised forecasts post Q2," SBI said in its research report - Ecowrap.

It said the revised GDP estimates are based on SBI 'Nowcasting Model' with 41 high frequency indicators associated with industry activity, service activity, and global economy. Based on this model, the forecasted GDP growth for third quarter would be around 0.1 per cent (with downward bias), it said.

Out of the 41 high frequency leading indicators, 58 per cent are showing acceleration in the third quarter. Apart from Q3 FY21, the Q4 growth will also be in positive territory (at 1.7 per cent). However, all projections are conditional on the absence of another wave of infections, the report said.

The research report forecast FY22 GDP growth to be at 11 per cent, primarily due to base effect. The report said it will take almost seven-quarters from Q4 FY21 to reach the pre-pandemic level in nominal terms and there will be a permanent output loss of around 9 per cent of GDP.

It further said even as growth outlook has improved, the decline in government expenditure has been quite significant to Rs 3.62 lakh crore in Q2 FY21 from Rs 4.86 lakh crore in Q1 FY21. "We believe that a large part of fiscal expenditure by the government has been indirect and are off balance sheet items.

This gives us hope that the government might be able to spend in Q4 to resurrect growth further," it said. The research report has revised its fiscal deficit estimates for FY21 at 8 per cent of GDP. (PTI)

P-notes investments swell to 27-mth high in Nov

NEW DELHI

INVESTMENTS through participatory notes (P-notes) in the Indian capital market surged to a 27-month high of Rs 83,114 crore at November-end driven by continued liquidity and improvement in second quarter corporate earnings. P-notes are issued by registered foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) to overseas investors who wish to be part of the Indian stock market without registering themselves directly. They, however, need to go through a due diligence process.

According to Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) data, the value of P-note investments in Indian markets - equity, debt and hybrid securities - increased to Rs 83,114 crore at November-end from Rs 78,686 crore at October-end.

This was the highest level of investment since August 2018, when fund inflow through such route stood at Rs 84,647 crore. The investment through this route had declined to Rs 69,821 crore at the end of September 2020. Prior to that, the investment level was at Rs 74,027 crore, Rs 63,228 crore, Rs 62,138 crore, Rs 60,027 crore and Rs 57,100 crore at the end of August, July, June, May and April, respectively.

The investment level had fallen to an over 15-year-low of Rs 48,006 crore at the end of March amid significant volatility in broader markets on concerns over the coronavirus-triggered crisis. Of the total Rs 83,114 crore invested through this route till November, Rs 72,910 crore was invested in equities, Rs 10,009 crore in debt and Rs 196 crore in hybrid securities.

Divam Sharma, co-founder of Green Portfolio said P-notes investments could be attributed to continued liquidity from low bond yields, accommodative stance of central banks globally and improvement in performance from companies in the second quarter. In addition, positive developments related to Covid-19 vaccines and better indications from data like IIP, PMI have created positive stance for overseas investors.

Stock markets extend record run for 4th straight session

HDFC twins, IT pack lead charge as macro indicators improve

MUMBAI

EQUITY benchmarks raced to new peaks for the fourth straight session on Wednesday as participants took note of continuously improving macroeconomic indicators and positive trends in global markets.

The BSE Sensex settled 403.29 points or 0.87 per cent higher at 46,666.46, while the NSE Nifty climbed 114.85 points or 0.85 per cent to 13,682.70 -- record closing for both the benchmarks. Both the indices also marked their all-time intra-day highs of 46,704.97 and 13,692.35, respectively. In the Sensex pack, HDFC, ONGC, Bharti Airtel, Asian Paints, Titan, TCS and Mahindra and Mahindra were the prominent gainers, advancing up to 3.11 per cent.

On the other hand, ICICI Bank, IndusInd Bank, NTPC, UltraTech Cement, Tech Mahindra and HCL Tech were among the major laggards, skidding up to 1.09 per cent. Asian bourses closed broadly higher amid hopes that COVID-19 vaccines and economic stimulus by governments around the world will revive economic growth.

SBI in a research report said India's GDP growth is expected at (-) 7.4 per cent in FY21 on better-than-projected recovery, upgrading its earlier forecast of (-) 10.9 per cent. Sectorally, BSE realty index soared 5.03 per cent, followed by consumer durables (2.39 per cent), telecom (1.75 per cent), metal (1.75 per cent) and capital goods (1.39 per cent). Broader BSE smallcap, midcap and largecap indices jumped as much as 0.88 per cent. On the forex market front, the Indian rupee settled 5 paise higher at 73.58 against the US dollar.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.47 per cent to USD 50.93 per barrel. Foreign institutional investors remained net buyers in the capital markets, purchasing shares worth Rs 2,484.09 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data. (PTI)

Scott Kirby to pilot Star Alliance

HYDERABAD

SCOTT Kirby, CEO of United Airlines, has been elected as the new Chairman of the Star Alliance Chief Executive Board (CEB). He succeeds Pedro Heilbron, CEO of Copa Holdings and of Copa Airlines, who held the post for the last four years.

Speaking on behalf of all Star Alliance CEOs, Kirby said: "I would like to thank Pedro for his dedication to the role of CEB Chairman during his four-year tenure. His leadership marked an important time in Alliance history as we accelerated digital innovation and continued to transform the customer experience." In his role as CEB Chairman, Kirby will conduct the two annual board meetings and act as the designated spokesperson for the board.

Reflecting on his tenure, Heilbron commented: "It was an honour for me to lead the board at a time of challenging market conditions for the entire airline industry."

Probe into violence at iPhone plant on Centre steps in; Wistron hopes to start factory in 15 days

BENGALURU

INVESTIGATIONS into the recent violence at the Wistron's iPhone manufacturing plant are on and a report was likely in a couple of days, Karnataka Labour Minister Shivaram Hebbar said on Wednesday even as he expressed hope about the factory restarting soon, with the Centre also involved in addressing the issues.

Asserting that the government was there to protect the interest of the labourers, the Minister, however, said such incidents may have an adverse impact on the investment and job creation prospects in the State. Wistron Corp, a Taiwanese contract manufacturer for Apple, has informed the Taiwan Stock Exchange that the December 12 violence at the iPhone manufacturing facility at Narsapura in Kolar district, did not cause any material damage to major manufacturing equipment and warehouses.

It put preliminary damage estimates in the range of New Taiwan Dollar 100 to 200 million, which is about Rs 52 crore. Earlier reports, quoting the complaint by company officials to the local police station, had put the estimate at about Rs 437 crore.

"There is no employees union as yet... there was immaturity on the part of the labourers. Also, the company should have paid attention towards the contractors. We will get to know in a couple of days the exact information on how much amount was paid (towards workers) and when," Hebbar said.

The Minister said meetings have taken place at the government level and also with the Union Cabinet Secretary from Delhi... the Centre is also involved. The company has said it will try to start the factory in about 15 days, he said.

Walmart to begin deliveries with driverless trucks in 2021

SAN FRANCISCO

TAKING its autonomous vehicle pilot with a startup called Gatik to the next level, retail giant Walmart is now planning to start deliveries with driverless truck in the US state Arkansas starting next year.

"This achievement marks a new milestone that signifies the first-ever driverless operation carried out on the supply chain middle-mile for both Gatik and Walmart," Tom Ward, Senior Vice President of Customer Product, Walmart US, said in a statement.

The move comes after Walmart last year began an autonomous vehicle pilot with Gatik to move customer orders on a two-mile route between a dark store — a store that stocks items for fulfillment but isn't open to the public — and a neighborhood market in Bentonville, Arkansas. The pilot has since been registered over 70,000 operational miles in an autonomous mode with a safety driver. "Now, we are taking the next step forward: Gatik's multi-temperature autonomous box trucks will operate this route driverless in the state of Arkansas," Ward said. "When we begin incorporating driverless Box Trucks into the Bentonville operation, the pilot will continue as it always has," he added.

Which should be the national animal - Tiger or cow?

The Hans India readers speak out their mind

It's a welcome decision. Declaring cow as national animal is a welcoming decision and banning cow slaughters is also a good thing. However, some political parties, especially BJP, and some other communal forces are trying to get political mileage out of this. P Ramesh, Transport operator



There should be no second thought in declaring cow as our national animal. I request all political parties to join hands with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in taking a quick step for passing the resolution in the Parliament to declare cow as the national animal.

T Sree Hari Rao, advocate, Lawyers' Colony, Chittoor

The sacred animal, cow, is a part of Hindu dharma and without the presence of cow, no auspicious programme is conducted. National animal status to divine animal is the need of the hour and at the same time, the government should ban cow slaughtering. A nationwide programme is also needed in this regard.

Pantham Kondala Rao, chairman, Pantham Satyanarayana Charitable Trust

Everyone will welcome if the government accords national animal status to the cow, because it occupies a prominent place in our epics and also in our spiritual texts. A movement is needed to protect cow and to get national status to it.

Prasadula Haranadh, chairman, Gowthami Co-operative Super Bazaar

Because cow has universal recognition as domestic animal, it deserves the national animal status. Irrespective of caste, creed, community and region, one should support the proposed move. All the Hindus should unitedly exert pressure on the Central government for according the national animal status to the sacred cow.

T Udaya Kumar, Secretary, District Libraries, Chittoor.



'Loyal' Cong leaders write to Sonia against Revanth

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

- Urge her not to make Revanth the next TPCC chief
- Says committed leaders might leave the party or stay away from its activities rather than work under Revanth



A letter to Congress president Sonia Gandhi requesting her not to appoint Revanth Reddy as the next Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee chief has created ripples in the State political circles. The letter was written by the "loyal and senior leaders of Telangana Congress party" with no names mentioned on it or no signatures seen on it. The loyal leaders cautioned her that there was a danger of committed and loyal leaders leaving the party or stay away from party activities

rather than work under Revanth Reddy. They also warned her of a split in the party if Revanth was made the Congress head in Telangana.

It was mentioned in the letter that Revanth had an association with RSS earlier and hence, he was not the right person to give the tough fight to BJP in the State.

He campaigned extensively in Dubbaka bypoll and in GHMC elections in his Malkajgiri parliamentary constituency where the party fared badly, the letter stressed. The letter also made a mention of strong criticism made

against Sonia Gandhi by Revanth when he was in Telugu Desam Party.

The leaders also warned that speculations were doing rounds that CBI inquiry might be ordered against Revanth on corruption charges. It was highlighted in the letter that Telangana TDP, BJP and even TRS was giving due importance to BC leaders and made them hold top posts like president or secretary-general of the party. Against this backdrop, the high-command was urged to appoint any loyal leader or any BC leader as the next TPCC chief.

Srisaillam Hydel Power Project works going on at brisk pace

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

TELANGANA Genco and Transco Chairman and Managing Director D Prabhakar Rao has informed that the works of Srisaillam Hydel Power Project, which was damaged during the recent fire accident, were going on a fast track.

As on date, two units were revived and 300 MW of power was generated. By December end, one more unit would be ready for power generation. By March 2021, two more units would come into operation.

The works on the fourth unit, which was damaged the most in the accident, would be completed by June. Generator and transformers for the fourth unit were getting installed. By June, all the units would be ready and 900 MW of power would be generated by the reversible pumping methods, Prabhakar Rao said, while inspecting works at the project site on Wednesday.

He explained that works were going at brisk pace with an aim to generate 900 MW of power in six units through reversible pumping method by rainy season.

'Implement COTPA strictly to eradicate public smoking'

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NAGARKURNOOL

GIVING orders to the enforcement officials to strictly implement Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act, 2003, (COTPA), District Collector L Sharman Chavan gave clear instructions to the officials of medical and health, municipality and police departments to implement the Act and ensure there is no smoking in open places.

Speaking at a review meeting on the implementation of COTPA in the district, the Col-

lector said the officials of all the departments should work in coordination to completely ban public smoking.

As per COTPA 2003, a fine of Rs 200 should be imposed on any individual, who found smoking any tobacco related substances in public places. Already district administration distributed chalan books to police and other en-

forcement departments. As per the Act, shop owners, who are selling cigarettes etc, must put a sign board highlighting the sale of beedi and cigarettes, but they should not give publicity to the brands they are selling. Any individual or shop owners if found giving publicity to tobacco products or its brand companies, are liable to be prosecuted under

Section-5 of the Act and can be penalised with a fine of Rs 1,000 and may even sentenced to jail for two years.

The Collector directed the enforcement officials to give wide publicity about the bad effects of smoking and about the COTPA to the public. The Collector said that every month they will review the implementation of the Act and instructed the concerned officials to be ready will all the data relating to number of raids conducted, number of persons penalized and number of cases booked against the violators.

40 houses damaged in explosion

HANS NEWS SERVICE
WARANGAL

IT was all chaos at the SC Colony located near Appalraopet road under Nekkonda mandal in Warangal Rural district on Wednesday following an explosion at a nearby construction site belonging to Challa Madhusudan Reddy. Although no one was injured in the incident, around 40 houses with tin roofs were damaged. This apart, appliances worth around Rs 8 lakh were also damaged when the explosion caused fluctuations in electricity supply in the colony. The police and the revenue officials are yet to ascertain the reason behind the explosion.

Agri laws will help farmers reap benefits: BJP

Dubbaka MLA Raghunandan Rao says with the new farm laws, farmers can decide the rate for their crop and sell at the market of their choice

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NALGONDA

BHARATIYA Janata Party leader and Dubbaka MLA Raghunandan Rao stated that new farm laws would help farmers reap profits and become self-sufficient.

Addressing the media at the party district office in Nalgonda on Wednesday, Raghunandan Rao ruled out the false allegations of opposition parties, and stated that farmers can decide the rate of their produce and can sell the produce at any market of their choice.

Stating that the BJP won Bi-



Dubbaka MLA Raghunandan Rao addressing the media at party district office in Nalgonda on Wednesday

har elections after bringing new farm laws into the effect, he described Central government as

farmer-friendly government and added that old farm laws were outdated.

The Dubbaka MLA added that State BJP would translate the farm laws into Telugu and would create awareness among the farmers on trustworthy new farm laws. He exuded confidence that lotus would bloom in Telangana in next Assembly elections with the blessings of the people of the State.

Party district president Kankanala Sridhar Reddy, party leaders Nukala Narsimha Reddy, Goli Madhu Sudhan Reddy, Oruganti Ramulu, Ramoju Shanmukha, Palleboina Shaym Sunder, party town president Morishetty Nageshwar Rao attended the meeting.

School teacher suspended for sexually assaulting students

HANS NEWS SERVICE
KOTHAGUDEM

THE Chintavarre village school teacher Dodda Sunil, who sexually assaulted tribal students, was suspended by District Education Officer E Somasekhar Sharma on Wednesday. The DEO said that the teacher was suspended based on the preliminary report submitted by the officers. It can be recalled that the teachers were directed to attend the school on alternate days for conducting online classes due to Covid-19 pandemic. On the pre-

text of non-availability of facilities in the agency village, Sunil had asked five girl students to come to school. He has been sexually harassing them for the past few days and threatened them of dire consequences if they reveal this to anyone.

A student falling sick severely raised doubts among locals and they found out that the teacher has sexually assaulted the girls. They beaten him up and complained to the DEO. Manuguru police took Sunil into custody on Wednesday and filed a case against him.

Cong high command frowns upon party leaders visiting Delhi

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI/HYDERABAD

WITH several Telangana Congress leaders flocking to New Delhi to meet the party high command regarding the selection of next Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee chief, it is learnt that the national party took a serious exception to it. It is learnt that the Congress high command has conveyed to the State leaders to not come to Delhi unless asked by it.

Sonia Gandhi office has not given any appointment citing health reasons. On the other hand, AICC Telangana in-charge Manickam Tagore is also preoccupied and is not available for discussions on this topic until December 22. Speculations are rife that Tagore is likely to take views of district leaders again on their choice for next TPCC chief.

Meanwhile, news reports from Delhi stated that Bhongir MP Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, who is being considered as one of the frontrunners for TPCC chief post, requested Rahul Gandhi to give him an opportunity to head the Telangana Congress. Komatireddy met Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday and discussed the topic with him.

Komatireddy Venkat Reddy reportedly requests Rahul Gandhi to appoint him as the next TPCC chief

8 PLEAS FILED AGAINST DHARANI

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

THE High Court division bench headed by Chief Justice Raghavendra Singh Chauhan and Justice Bolam Vijaysen Reddy heard eight public interest litigations opposing the move of the Telangana State government in digitalising the revenue records pertaining to agriculture and non-agricultural properties through Dharani portal.

Desai Prakash Reddy, Senior Counsel appearing for the petitioner Gopal Sharma, informed the court that the officials were again asking Aadhaar and caste details from the citizens while booking a slot prior to registration of their properties.

Further, the officials are asking the details of the family members of the purchaser as well as the seller, which is against the undertaking given by the Advocate General Banda Shiv-

- Petitioners allege that the officials are again seeking personal details while registration
- Government counsel informs that cabinet sub-committee is constituted to reconsider the issue
- Court directs Telangana Chief Secretary to file counter affidavit



LEGAL NOTES

ananda Prasad, who had assured the court that such details would not be asked and stressed that the court should obtain an undertaking from the State government in writing to avoid such situation.

Advocate General Banda

Shivananda Prasad informed the court that there was a cabinet sub-committee that has been constituted, which would be reconsidering the entire issue on Dharani portal and sought time to file counter affidavit.

Chief Justice Raghavendra Singh Chauhan, after hearing the contentions of petitioner counsel, directed the Chief Secretary, Telangana government to file an affidavit by Thursday (17-12-2020) assuring the court that Aadhaar and caste details would not be asked from the citizens while uploading the property details on Dharani portal.

Further, the Chief Justice observed that it was a clever ploy by the State in again asking Aadhaar and caste details from the citizens, despite the fact that the Advocate General BS Prasad had assured that such information would not be asked. "It's a very surreptitious way of behaviour on the part of the State," the CJ noted. He also opined that if the State government through the cabinet sub-committee was going to reconsider the issue of Dharani portal, then it was a good sign. The matter was adjourned to Thursday.

CITIZENSHIP ROW

Vemulawada MLA submits key documents to HC

Ramesh lost his Indian citizenship in 1993 when he voluntarily acquired German citizenship and in the same way, he has lost his German citizenship after he voluntarily acquired the Indian citizenship in 2009

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

VEMULAWADA MLA Ch Ramesh on Wednesday submitted key citizenship documents to the High Court about his nativity, and the court asked the Home Ministry to submit an affidavit.

As ordered by the High Court in its last hearing on citizenship issue of Ch Ramesh, his lawyers submitted important old and new documents, which were officially translated into English, pertaining to the consent of German authorities to acquire Indian citizenship, letter of mandatory information of acquiring Indian citizenship to the concerned authority as well as letter of acknowledgement and approval of the mandatory obligations from the concerned authority all from the year 2008 to 2020.

It can be recalled that Ramesh lost his Indian citizenship in 1993 when he voluntarily acquired German citizenship and in the same way, he has lost his German citizenship after he voluntarily acquired Indian citizenship in 2009. This is in confirmation with the existing laws in both the countries.

According to the TRS leader, the Home Ministry has failed to submit affidavit with any evidence documents regarding dual citizenship issue of Ramesh from German authorities as ordered by the High Court. The High Court was serious that old documents were submitted in the form of memos even though a detailed affidavit was asked for with full information from Germany. It has ordered the Home Ministry to submit the affidavit on January 20, for the next hearing.

TS govt prescribes conversion tax on farmlands

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

IN a move to earn more revenues to meet the growing financial needs, the Telangana government on Wednesday prescribed tax for conversion of agricultural lands to non-agricultural purposes. Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar has said in an order that 2 per cent of the basic value of the land would be collected as conversion tax under Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) limits and 3 per cent of the basic value of land will be collected as tax in other than GHMC limits. Officials said that in view of the increasing conversion of agricultural lands to non-agricultural purpose mainly realty sector, the government is expecting good revenues from the conversion tax. The conversion of farmlands for commercial purposes is high in the Greater Hyderabad and all major cities and big municipalities in the State.

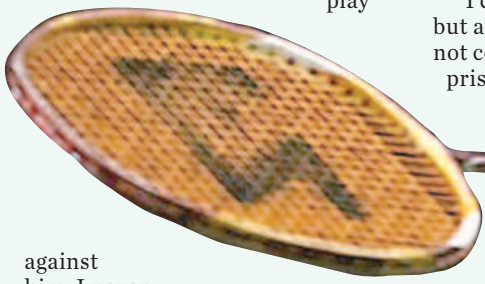
Used to sleep with Lin Dan’s poster in my childhood: Subhankar

JAIPUR

INDIAN badminton player Subhankar Dey has opened up about his victory over Lin Dan in the SaarLorLux Open Badminton Championship in 2018, saying it was a dream come true moment for him to defeat the two-time Olympic gold-medalist. The 27-year-old shuttler first rose to national prominence when he defeated Sai Praneeth in the quarterfinals of the senior badminton nationals held in Nagpur in 2017 and the win against Dan in 2018 ensured he grabbed national headlines. “When I was small, my sister



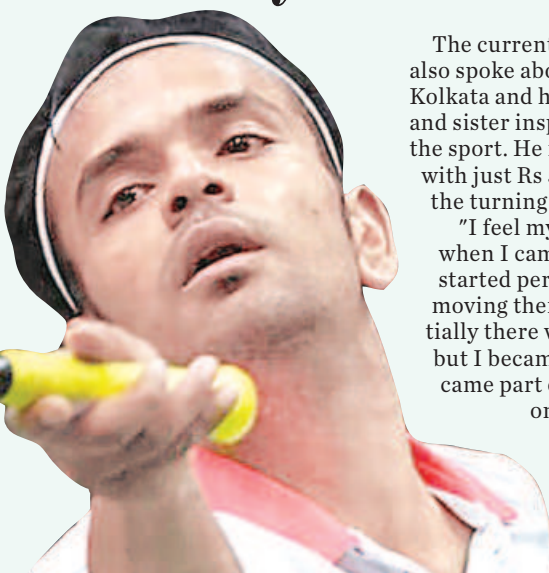
made a big poster for me of Lin Dan and I used to sleep next to it. And I used to think that one day I will play



against him. I never thought of defeating him that time since I was very small. It was always a dream for me. I

wanted to see Lin Dan, play like him and copy him when I was in Kolkata,” said Subhankar during an interaction on Sports Tiger’s show ‘Building Bridge’. “I celebrate a lot after every win but after defeating Lin Dan, I did not celebrate at all. It was quite surprising as everybody in India was like, you beat Lin Dan, so

some expression should be there. But I just went and shook hands and left. That was the respect I had for him,” he added.



The current world number 46 also spoke about his early days in Kolkata and how his elder brother and sister inspired him to take up the sport. He moved to Mumbai with just Rs 500 and terms that as the turning point of his career. “I feel my turning point was when I came to Mumbai. I started performing well after moving there on India level. Initially there weren’t any sponsors but I became India No.6 and became part of Asian Championship U-19, that time I got a scholarship from Hindustan petroleum of Rs 12k. That was the first scholarship I

got for me and it was a huge amount for me at that time,” he said. Subhankar, who also plays for the Awadhe Warriors in the Premier Badminton League, like most other sportsmen had to stay away from playing the game for a long time due to the nationwide lockdown amid the Covid-19 pandemic. “Initial two-three months I was motivated but then started getting bored. Luckily I have my own centre at Mumbai and I have a few students. So they started doing online sessions and we started doing physical sessions and that’s how I killed my time,” said the shuttler. On his future plans, Subhankar said he wants to go with the flow and break into the top 20 next year.

DAY-NIGHT TEST BEGINS TODAY

PINK-BALL EXPERIENCE GIVES AUSSIES AN EDGE

ADELAIDE

INDIA will step into an unknown territory when they play the four-match Test series-opener against Australia with the pink ball under lights at the Adelaide Oval from Thursday. While Australia are the most experienced side in day-night Tests, having played and won seven matches under lights, four of them at the Adelaide Oval; India played their first and only win late last year against Bangladesh at the Eden Gardens. That pink-ball Test came four years after Australia had played their first. However, India will be in-

spired by the fact that some of their best performances, especially in recent times, have come in Adelaide including a Test win in the first match during the last tour in 2018-19. Skipper Virat Kohli told reporters that the day-night Test match is completely opposite to the normal day game played with red ball as the pink ball does little in the first session and starts to move in the final one. India played a three-day warm-up game under lights with the pink ball at the Sydney Cricket Ground. However, the team did not include many of the Test cricketers like Kohli, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ravichandran Ashwin, Wriddhiman Saha and Umesh Yadav who all are part of the playing XI for the Adelaide Test. He said that the fact that you play pink ball games so few and far between makes it a hard proposition. While the Aussies have finalised their playing eleven, they are yet to disclose it. Indians, on the other hand, have already named their playing

eleven. There were questions over who would open with Mayank Agarwal in the first Test and India have picked Prithvi Shaw for that spot, despite the batsman failing to get runs in the two warm-up games. He aggregated just 62 across four innings of that warm-up averaging just 15.5. He had also failed to get runs in New Zealand early this year, making just one half-century. However, it seems that prior Test match experience has helped him get the nod ahead of Shubman Gill who is yet to play a Test. Both former India captain Sunil Gavaskar and former Australia skipper Allan Border had picked Gill ahead of Shaw. India’s Nos. 3, 4 and 5 are fairly settled with 2018-19 Border-Gavaskar Trophy edition’s man of the series Cheteshwar

Pujara, captain Kohli and Ajinkya Rahane manning the spots. Hanuma Vihari will bat at six.



Prithvi Shaw

Pink-ball Test opposite of red-ball match: Kohli

ADELAIDE

INDIA skipper Virat Kohli has said that the pink-ball Test, which will be the opening match of the four-game series against Australia beginning Thursday, is exactly the opposite of a normal Test match and is difficult to be pre-planned as it has many variables. Kohli on Wednesday added that they will have to react to situations as the game unfolds at the Adelaide Oval. “I think you can get a fair idea about how you want to go about things. I don’t think you can concretely plan anything in Test cricket. Test cricket is always about encountering situations and reacting to the situations to the best of your abilities -- understanding when to attack, to defend, when



to bat through...the pink-ball Test brings a lot more variables like the twilight period, a tricky period to bat in, then bowling in the first session (is tough) and then at night you have more on offer for the bowlers,” said Kohli, who led India to a 2-1 Test series win last year. The right-handed batsman, who has six centuries in 12 Tests in Australia, hinted that KL Rahul, who has opened in the past, can play at any position and also confirmed that Rohit Sharma will open once he re-joins the team in the later part of the series.

Shaw to open, Saha in as keeper

ADELAIDE

TEAM India have picked Prithvi Shaw to open the innings with Mayank Agarwal and Wriddhiman Saha as wicketkeeper-batsman for the first Test against Australia, a pink-ball fixture that begins on Thursday at the Adelaide Oval. Umesh Yadav will be third pacer besides Mohammed Shami and Jasprit Bumrah. The Indian team is going in with a batting heavy side for the first Test of the four-match series, with four bowlers including a spinner in Ravichandran Ashwin besides three pace bowlers. They have picked six batsmen. “Mayank (Agarwal) performed the last time we came here and he batted brilliantly without any baggage. That is what you expect from the young guys, just go out there -- they have no baggage from the past -- and express themselves and put the team in strong position and play that brand of fearless cricket along with being calculated and reading situations. It is exciting to have young guys as I said who can play more freely,” Kohli said.



Tim Paine

THE TEAMS

India XI: Virat Kohli (captain), Mayank Agarwal, Prithvi Shaw, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane (vice-captain), Hanuma Vihari, Wriddhiman Saha, Ravichandran Ashwin, Umesh Yadav, Mohammed Shami, Jasprit Bumrah. Australia squad: Tim Paine (c), Joe Burns, Pat Cummins, Cameron Green, Marcus Harris, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Moises Henriques, Marnus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon, Michael Neser, James Pattinson, Will Pucovski, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, Mitchell Swepson, Matthew Wade, David Warner

‘No change in bowling plans against Smith’

ADELAIDE

INDIA captain Virat Kohli has said that Steve Smith suffering from stiffness in his back during training session does not mean that the visitors will change their plans against the prolific Australia batsman in the first Test beginning Thursday at the Adelaide Oval. The Australian media

have been expecting Indians to use the short ball against Smith after the Aussie batsman failed against the variety against New Zealand last season. “I don’t think the back has got anything to do with us changing our plans to him or any other batter. Our plans are pretty much sorted and ready for all the batsmen we have to come up against. We have to make sure that we execute those plans consistently and

as efficiently as possible to be able to trouble them and get those breakthroughs and dismiss them at the right times during the Test match,” said Kohli on the eve of the first Test on Wednesday. “We are not focussed on if their players are going to start or not. We are only focused on what we can do as a team, go on to the field to be able to execute them. So yeah, we are only focused only on what we can do as a side,” he added.

Taking one Test at a time, says Paine

ADELAIDE

AUSTRALIA skipper Tim Paine has said that he is in talks with head coach Justin Langer and national selector Trevor Hohns over his future as captain, although his immediate focus remains at the four-match series against India beginning Thursday with a pink-ball fixture at the Adelaide Oval. The 36-year-old was appointed as Australia’s captain after Steve Smith was banned from playing Test cricket for a year and leading Australia for two years following his role in sandpapergate controversy in 2018. Former Australia skipper Allan Border has backed the return of Smith for captaincy, saying that a series loss to India will force the Aussies to think of removing Paine. Border had also said there are not many options beyond Smith for Australia after Paine. “Yeah, we will wait and see. I’m taking one Test at a time,” Paine said. The Australia Test skipper, who has played 31 Tests and 19 of those as captain, said the return of Smith and David Warner (in 2019) to international cricket has been of great help to him.

‘We have plans for Kohli’

ADELAIDE

VIRAT Kohli, who will be available only for the first Test of the four-match Test series, does not worry Australia skipper Tim Paine who says his team has a few plans up its sleeve to counter the India captain. Paine also said that the Australian team won’t hold back, and will be ready to retort, if things get ugly on the field. “Everyone has got great plans against the best players...that is why they are best players because they can adapt. They can change what you are doing and Virat is certainly one of the best if not the best in the world. There are going to times when they do get away against you - there is just one Test hopefully he doesn’t - but we have plans against him that have worked against him and hopefully they work against him. But if not then we have a couple of different plans,” said Paine

Sourav relieved of ₹1.5 cr service tax liability

NEW DELHI

IN a major relief for former Indian cricket team captain and current BCCI president Sourav Ganguly, the Customs, Excise & Service Tax Appellate Tribunal (CESTAT) has set aside a service tax liability amounting to around Rs 1.51 crore for promotional activities as a brand ambassador for various corporate clients along with other services. The case also pertains to rendering other services like TV anchoring, cricket playing fee, fee for article writing. Kolkata-bench of CESTAT gave a clean chit to Ganguly and observed that in case if the brand name or house mark is promoted by a celebrity, without reference to any specific product or services, the service



would not be classified under business auxiliary services and hence not taxable under service tax law. “There is, therefore, no manner of doubt that the activity carried out by the appellant would be classifiable under the new taxable service contemplated under section 65(105)(zzzzq) of the Finance Act,” said the CESTAT order. “As the appeal filed by the appellant is being allowed and the demand confirmed by the Commissioner is being set aside, there is no reason why the appellant should not be granted interest on the amount of (Rs 1,51,66,500 and 50,00,000) deposited with the Government from the date of deposit of the amount upto the date of transfer of the said amount to the Registrar General of the High Court,” it said.

A phone call to parents changed golfer Jeev Milkha Singh’s life

NEW DELHI

ACE Indian golfer Jeev Milkha Singh has revealed one of the biggest decisions of his sporting career that involved a phone call to his parents in the early 1990s. Jeev was introduced to the game of golf at the age of nine by his father and later earned a golf scholarship in America after representing the Indian national team. Playing for the golf team at Abilene Christian University in the US, he, however, felt the call of the professional game but needed clearance from family back in Chandigarh. “Had to make a big call; picked up the phone and spoke to my parents,” Jeev, who turned 49 on Tuesday, was quoted as saying by asiantour.com. “My dad said: ‘You know

what, please go ahead, but don’t come back to me after five or 10 years and tell me you want to do something else’. They obviously gave me the right guidance,” he said. The move was a wise one by Jeev as his father, Milkha Singh, was arguably India’s greatest

sprinter and his mother, Nirmal Kaur, was a former captain of the Indian women’s volleyball team. “Actually we wanted to make him a doctor,” said Milkha. “He said: ‘No, I want to play golf’. (I said) if you want to play golf then you have to work day and night. I want to see you number



one in the world!” he added. Jeev turned professional in 1993 and never looked back. “My inspiration growing up was my father. Lots of people in India said: ‘you come from the Milkha family, you have a lot of pressure’,” said Jeev. While the young Jeev didn’t quite reach that target, he more than justified his decision to turn professional by winning the Asian Tour Order of Merit title twice, clinching five titles on the Asian Tour, and four on both the European Tour and Japan Golf Tour Organisation. “Everybody asked me: ‘hey, do you guys play golf in India?’ I said: ‘yes we do’, and they said: ‘oh, we didn’t know that’. And I said, you know what, let’s show them that there are good golfers out of India,” added Jeev.

“But if I played in Italy I needed an Italian visa, or Spain a Spanish visa. And in France I needed one there. Some weeks I had to miss because I couldn’t get a visa in time. But nothing comes easy, you have to take it in your stride.” He suffered a loss of form midway through his career but bounced back by winning the Volvo China Open in 2006. “I had a fantastic start but then a dip for five or six years. In those five, six years I learned a lot,” said Jeev. “I was going through a bad patch. I had not won a tournament from 2000 to 2006, so six years of drought. Golf is a game very close to human life because you go through the ups and downs. One week you are the best and the next you don’t even make the cut. “Took the plunge in 1993 and loved it ever since!”