



A woman shows a diamond-studded mask at the gems and jewellery exhibition 'Sparkle 2021' in Surat on Saturday

If highlighting farmers' protest is sedition, it's better to be in jail: Disha Ravi

NEW DELHI: Stating that there is no evidence to link Disha Ravi with Sikhs For Justice, a banned organisation, the climate activist's counsel Siddharth Agarwal on Saturday told a Delhi court that "if highlighting farmers' protest globally is sedition, I am better in jail." During a hearing on a bail plea by Ravi at the Patiala House Court, the Delhi Police had argued that the 22-year-old needs to be thoroughly investigated as "she was aware of the criminality of her actions". The police told the court that the investigation will reveal the "sinister design to defame India". It has reserved the order on Disha's bail plea for February 23.

Man chosen for Padma Shri lies bed-ridden

AYODHYA: An 83-year-old Faizabad resident, who is said to have arranged last rites over 25,000 unclaimed bodies in last 25 years and was chosen for a Padma Shri last year, is suffering from serious ailments but is unable to afford treatment due to poverty. Mohammad Shareef, also known as "messiah of lawarais lashen", was found bed-ridden when this PTI correspondent visited his home in Mohalla Khirki Ali Beg on Thursday. ►P3

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NASA rover sends colour photos of Mars

WASHINGTON

NASA's Perseverance rover has sent some stunning photos of the Red Planet, including a high-resolution colour selfie taken during its landing. The selfie is part of a video taken by several cameras as NASA's Perseverance rover touched down on Mars on February 18.

"While NASA's Mars Curiosity rover sent back a stop-motion movie of its descent, Perseverance's cameras are intended to capture video of its touch-



down and this new still image was taken from that footage, which is still being relayed to Earth and processed," the US space agency said in a statement on Friday.

A camera aboard the de-

scent stage captured the shot. Unlike with past rovers, the majority of Perseverance's cameras capture images in colour.

After landing, two of the Hazard Cameras (Hazcams) captured

views from the front and rear of the rover, showing one of its wheels in the Martian dirt.

A key objective for Perseverance's mission on Mars is astrobiology, including the search for signs of ancient microbial life.

The rover will characterize the planet's geology and past climate, pave the way for human exploration of the Red Planet, and be the first mission to collect and cache Martian rock and regolith (broken rock and dust).Continued on Page 4

BACK PVT SECTOR TO MAKE INDIA SELF-RELIANT: MODI

■ Underscores need to achieve Ease of Doing Business, Ease of Living
■ Centre, States must work together for progress: Modi at Niti meet

NEW DELHI

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi has called for a solid policy framework as the country is trying to shake off the economic downturn induced by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Addressing the sixth meeting of the government's think tank Niti Aayog, the Prime Minister said the private sector must be allowed to grow and the States and the Centre should both support them.

"We, as governments, have to provide private sector opportunities to take part in the mission of Aatmanirbhar Bharat," Modi said at the meeting, which was attended by Chief Ministers and Lieutenant Governors of various States and Union Territories.



Talent is Indian but product is not

Speaking at the Niti Aayog meeting, PM Modi emphasised that there is a need to further strengthen start-ups. "We recently liberalised geospatial data. If we could have done this 10 years back, it is likely that Google would have been made in India, not outside. The talent is Indian, but the product is not," he noted.

Modi made a strong case for repealing archaic laws and making it easier to do business in India, stating that the Centre and States need to work closely to boost economic growth. He said farmers need better infrastructure and modern technol-

ogical planning strategies, which would help farmers.

The whole country succeeded when the State and Central governments worked together during the coronavirus pandemic, he said, adding that "the basis of the country's progress is cooperative federalism and today's meeting is to brainstorm to make it more meaningful and move towards competitive cooperative federalism."

Modi said there is a need to bring competitive cooperative federalism not only among States but also among districts. He asked the States to form committees to reduce regulations which are no longer relevant in the wake of technology growth.

Continued on Page 4



'India can leave China behind in manufacturing'

Kejriwal suggests largescale creation of manufacturing hubs

NEW DELHI: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday emphasised about working on a war footing to make the country a manufacturing hub in the world and claimed India can leave behind China in the sector, Delhi government sources said.

Speaking virtually in the sixth Governing Council meeting of Niti Aayog chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Chief Minister also outlined that attention was not paid to the manufacturing sector in the country over the last 70 years.

Kejriwal suggested largescale creation of manufacturing hubs across the country with facilities and tax benefits for production of cost-effective goods.

He also supported favouring small and medium industries in the country.

Get out of poll mode: Patnaik

NEW DELHI: Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said it's high time that the country should get out of the election mode. Speaking at the NITI Aayog meet, Patnaik said: "Every crime is being politicised, every action of an elected government is being seen from a political angle. This kind of atmosphere is one of the biggest threats to the pace of development and peace in the country. Its high time the country gets out of this election mode and allows elected governments to function. However, the hallmark of a mature democracy is that once elected, governments are meant to work for people, beyond the party line."

Punjab CM raises farm laws

CHANDIGARH: Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to ensure urgent resolution to the ongoing farmers' "unrest" and an early release of the State's pending GST compensation. In his pre-recorded address, the Congress leader also proposed that States are consulted before deciding the priority list for Covid vaccination. Singh, who could not attend the meeting as he was unwell, also expressed concerns over the threat to Punjab's agriculture sector as a result of the "disruptions caused by the three new farm laws", according to a State government release.

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CAUSE OF CONCERN

COVID SURGE IN 5 STATES

Must stick to safety measures: Govt

Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh are experiencing an upsurge in daily cases of Covid-19 during the past three days

NEW DELHI

FIVE states -- Kerala, Maharashtra, Punjab, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh -- are experiencing an upsurge in daily cases, the Union government said on Saturday. The upswing comes after a low that started in November-December and amid a race to push forward the vaccination process. The Centre has said that more than 1.07 crore vaccine doses have been administered so far to health workers and frontline workers for Covid-19.

"In the past week, Maharashtra has exhibited a spike in the number of daily new cases, accounting for highest number of daily new cases in the country today. In last 24 hours, 6,112 daily new case has been reported in the state," the Centre said.

"Similar to Maharashtra, Punjab has also shown a sudden spike in the number of daily new cases reported in

last 7 days with 383 daily new cases in last 24 hours," read the statement from the government.

The authorities in Maharashtra have attributed the rise to a laxity in implementing the safety measures, especially since the local trains started running.

On Thursday, strict measures were announced in Mumbai as well as two districts -- Amravati and Yavatmal. Mumbai Municipal Commissioner Iqbal Singh Chahal said citizens flouting rules for home isolation, weddings and public gatherings will be prosecuted.

Besides, 300 marshals will be appointed to take action against passengers travelling without mask in suburban railways, the city's civic body said. The aim will be to catch 25,000 offenders every day.

Since, Feb 13, Madhya Pradesh is also witnessing a rise in number of daily new cases. Continued on Page 4



The Air India flight carrying 63 passengers hits lamp post at Gannavaram airport in Vijayawada on Saturday

Al Doha plane hits pole; 64 passengers, crew safe

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

A MAJOR mishap was averted when an Air India Express flight, carrying 64 passengers, lost control and met with an accident at Gannavaram International airport on Saturday around 4.50 pm. "All 64 passengers on board the flight and the crew are safe," airport director G Madhusudan Rao told the media.

The accident took place "while the flight proceeded from the run-

way to Bay No 5, the captain followed the leading margin (yellow) line instead of the central yellow line. As a result, the flight's right wing hit the high mast lights pole and the pole fell down. The flight's right wing got damaged slightly.

The passengers said that they did not feel any impact of the accident, but they felt a little jerk. The Air India Express flight arrived from Doha. Of the 64 passengers, 19 were scheduled to de-board at the Vijayawada International Airport.



China's Galwan video shows Indian soldier's bravery

NEW DELHI: China, in a video released on social media as part of psy-war, showcased the bravery of an Indian Army officer during the Galwan Valley clashes in Eastern Ladakh. The officer of Bihar Regiment, who hails from the Senapati district of Manipur and was commissioned in 2018, was seen leading his men from the front in Galwan Valley during the confrontation against the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA). He is a Captain in the Indian Army. The name of the Captain has been withheld on request from the Indian Army.

Continued on Page 4

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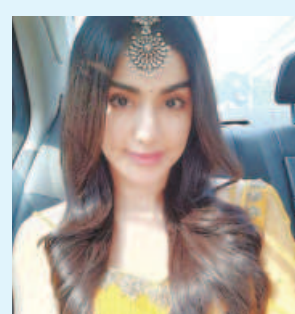
Womenia

TWEET PATROL



ADAH SHARMA
@ADAH_SHARMA

What should we name this one ?
Before he gets well and flies away..
Going to share the recovery on my
Instagram 📷 📷



'Girl Tribe' is a 'win-win community' for women looking for a safe and uplifting space to connect with other women, away from the trolling and negativity of conventional social media. It brings together a diverse range of women of all ages, backgrounds, and experiences to converse, share views, and offer expertise on any topic

GIRL TRIBE — TROLL FREE SPACE FOR WOMAN

ASKARI JAFFER

WHAT started as Malini Agarwal's Facebook experiment to spread positivity, empathy, and kindness amongst 100 girlfriends in 2018, has now catapulted into an extraordinary community that is over 55k plus women strong. 2020 saw this group's population bursting at its seams, with new members that are eager to engage, learn, have fun and support each other while affecting a real, positive impact on women's lives everywhere.

Malini Agarwal said, "I invited a few of my girlfriends with the golden rule that they treat each other in the group like we do in real life, when we're face to face: with empathy, kindness and respect. I wanted to be able to have open, honest digital conversations on any topic without the onslaught of creepy DMs, trolling or random spam comments that you get everywhere else and that immediately shuts down any chance of a meaningful interaction. The experiment was an immediate success, and since then the community has grown to nearly 60,000 women who are looking for a better internet experience. From there it was clear what we needed to do, and our very own 'Girl Tribe' by MissMalini App was custom designed based on all our learnings and recently launched on Android and iOS."

Malini Agarwal in an interview with The Hans India shares about 'Girl Tribe'

Why did you name it as 'Girl Tribe'?

I felt that very often women communities fall into very serious, practical or sombre categories, and I wanted to reflect the fun young-at-heart vibe of the

group. Our community is not just about seeking help or support (which is definitely there) but also just connecting with other women and having fun. Every woman is a girl at heart and society tends to write us off after the age of 40 for some reason. I also wanted to capture the feeling of a strong sisterhood and community and the word "Tribe" encapsulates that beautifully.

What inspired you towards 'Girl Tribe'?

I have always spent my life online and seen with increasing dismay the toxicity and negativity women face on a daily basis. As much as I love social media, I feel we are using it poorly. Social media gave me my career, and with it a certain amount of influence. Part of me felt responsible for giving back and using that influence for good.

I also don't believe that women's issues should be restricted to sexual harassment or menstruation. Everything is a "women's issue", be it travel, food, luxury, relationships, careers, mental health etc and it's not always about needing to empower women. Sometimes women just need a space to connect without all the noise and junk on social media. The 'Girl Tribe' is that space.

How can one share their special stories?

Simply download the 'Girl Tribe App' or visit the Facebook Group called 'Girl Tribe' by MissMalini, for partnerships and associations you can write to gauri@missmalini.com.

On which platforms can we find 'Girl Tribe'?

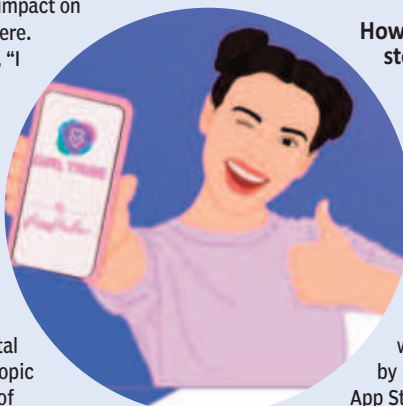
For the full 'Girl Tribe' experience we have our very own app, 'Girl Tribe' by MissMalini in the Android and Apple App Stores. We also have a Facebook Community, and an Instagram handle @malinisgirltribe that features a subset of all the exciting things happening in the app.

How do you inspire women on 'Girl Tribe'?

In fact, it is the women in the Tribe that inspire me. They connect in such a beautiful way and bring so much joy and inspiration to one another which is truly amazing. We simply facilitate those conversations and give women the opportunity to showcase their talents, businesses and encourage open-minded discussions.

Does 'Girl Tribe' also provide any employment opportunities as well?

We connect and showcase women entrepreneurs to help build their businesses and connect them with their perfect audiences. We have also hired many of our team members from within the Tribe itself. In some cases, we have seen Tribers hiring from within the community, or helping place members through their networks. We've also seen members becoming customers of other members, and in that way we're proud to support women entrepreneurs and livelihoods.



Women farmers working towards health

Apollo Hospitals supports over five thousand women farmers, by procuring millets and making it a part of the diet at hospitals!

As a pioneer in sustainability and preventive healthcare, the Apollo Hospitals, Hyderabad, initiated the use of millets in collaboration with over 5000 women farmers working with Deccan Development Society. The Healthcare group has already procured 4000 kgs of millets and will procure another 1000 kgs every month to support women farmers of Sangareddy District in Telangana.

The usage of millets will become an eminent feature in the Apollo Hospitals Hyderabad's dining areas and menus. As doctors begin to enjoy the health benefits of millets, food habits can slowly create a shift towards healthier eating patterns for society as a whole.

Vice Chairman CSR for Apollo Hospitals Group, Upasana Konidela states that, "Our aim is to enrich the lifestyle of the women farmers with good health, wealth and strength through education and skills training. It's time for us to care for our water table, eat and procure local to live a healthier life."

Rice and wheat have been holding a major place in our households and economy. While they are satiating, a significant percentage of people continue to face and increase in lifestyle diseases with their over consumption.

Crops such as rice consume 4000 litres of water to grow about a kg of produce. These crops strain our ground water reserves, causing an adverse effect on the environment. In terms of water consumption, millets utilize only 25-30% of water required to grow rice. This

It's time for us to care for our water table, eat & procure local to live a healthier life"
—Upasana Konidela

makes us turn our attention to look for healthier and environmental-friendly options that can stall climate change as well as create a positive effect on our gut health.

Millets are superior to rice owing to their rich protein content, fibre, iron and calcium. They provide good nutritional security and also prevent nutrition deficiency. Consuming millets automatically controls portion size and also reduce the overall diabetic instance of the population.

Ipsitaa dedicates new song 'Solo Laila' to women 'who dare to fly high'

Singer Ipsitaa, who made her singing debut with Yo Yo Honey Singh track, First kiss, released her song Solo Laila on Saturday. She says the number is an ode to independent and fearless women.

"Girls are taught at a young age to settle down and tether their wings, to find their security and happiness in their partners. It's high time we reject and change that narrative. Women are self-sufficient and we alone are responsible for our happiness. Solo Laila is a track dedicated to all the women who dare to fly high," says Ipsitaa.

Tanishk Bagchi has composed the song on lyrics by Vayu. The music video has been directed by Viraf Sarkari and Sabreena Sarkari.



My career has never been dependent on my co-actors: Priyanka Chopra Jonas

SUKANT DEEPAK

"There is no rulebook for me and I don't believe in planning too much. I have never allowed my work to define me completely. All my life, I have chosen diverse roles across genres, continents and platforms, and my career has never been dependent on my co-actors," said actor Priyanka Chopra Jonas, talking about her recently released memoir 'Unfinished', during the ongoing Jaipur Literature Festival (JLF).

The book details the 38-year-old actor's childhood in India and abroad, and her rise to fame. Speaking with columnist and writer Shobha De, she said that she was now at a place where she had come together and in-charge of everything in her life. That is a long way from a young high school girl who got into fashion and later the Indian film industry.

Priyanka, who was recently seen in the film 'White Tiger', which she also co-produced on a digital platform, feels that the coming of age of streaming platforms has been a major breakthrough.

She says "It is no longer the same 10 people who are doing everything. We are witnessing newer talent every day. Thanks to these platforms, so many actors, directors and writers are going where no one has been. Just see how the world has come to witness the brilliance of Adarsh Gourav in 'White Tiger'."

While nepotism was the media's favourite word a few months back, the actor feels that she has sel-

dom seen anyone inheriting work.

She adds, "There is nothing wrong in wanting to take care of family and friends. However, I have always believed that there should not be a wall, and we need to ensure that the table is bigger more opportunities must be created."

Although a private person who seldom talks about her personal life, the actor who has written extensively about her husband and father in the book said, "Nick Jonas is an extremely secure and conscientious man who provides me with a sense of balance. I can completely trust him to share my burdens."

Talking about her late father, she shared that he always stood by her. "He was always on my side to encourage and always made it a point to be there for me."

On her foray in Hollywood, the actor feels it has been a lesson in humility. She says, "It was my choice to go to a new industry and try my luck there. There are times when no one comes in a party, and you introduce yourself. One may enter a magazine office and tell them who you are. Frankly, I do not have a problem with that because I never walk into a room entitled."

Adding that women of her generation have been instrumental in creating a change in the Hindi film industry, Jonas says that now we are witnessing several married women playing the lead, becoming producers and managing content. She really hopes the next generation of girls do not inherit the same failures of the system which we did.

Talking about racism and discrimination on ethnicity in Hollywood, she said that though it was not blatant but it is just not in their consciousness to imagine a brown or black person playing the lead in a movie or television drama.

"However, it has been incredible that many of South Asian descent have been able to push the envelope and I am honoured to be among them. I wanted to break those doors," said the actor who played the lead in the US TV series 'Quantico'.



No compromise on issues affecting common man, says new LoP

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

OPPOSING the government just for the sake of doing so was not his style of functioning, new leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge said, but made it clear there would be no compromise on issues affecting the common man.

"We are not opposing the government just for the sake of opposition.

We oppose the government's wrong policies affecting the common man," he told PTI to a query on how he would function as Leader of the Opposition.

Kharge, who became LoP this week following the retirement of Ghulam Nabi Azad, flagged the ongoing farmers stir demanding repeal of the three farm laws enacted by Parliament last year, "flouting all procedures" and demanded that they be withdrawn.

He suggested that the government come up with fresh proposals after withdrawing these controversial laws and refer them to a parliamentary standing committee for scrutiny. The senior Congress leader visited Kerala on Friday to address a public meeting organised in Kollam as the Congress- led UDF's 'Aiswarya Kerala Yatra', led by senior party leader Ramesh Chennithala arrived in Kollam.

The yatra is being organised to reach out to people ahead of the assembly polls likely to be held



in April-May. Kharge, a hardcore Gandhi family loyalist, said his party leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi had asked him to "highlight the issues of the poor people" on the floor of the House.

"We raise the issues (in Parliament) not to become famous. We take up the issues affecting the poor. Somebody should talk", the senior Congress leader said.

The 78-year-old veteran leader, with over 50 years' experience in politics, urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP to listen to the voices of agitating farmers and address their grievances. "The farmers have been agitating against the new

farm laws for past few months and demanding that they be withdrawn as it abolishes the MSP and the Mandi system. We are all supporting their demand. The government has failed to satisfy the farmers, the major stakeholders, while bringing in these laws and should withdraw them," he said.

Kharge came down on the Centre on the issue, alleging that the government was using all its machinery to divide the farmers by terming them as 'Khalistanis' and 'Pakistanis.'

The LoP alleged that the incitents at the Red Fort on January 26 was a planned conspiracy by the government was one such

move to cause divisions among the farmers and was done to 'hide its failures.' He also flayed the government over the increasing fuel prices, saying they were doing "a great injustice" to the people.

"Petrol prices are at an all-time high, while international crude oil prices have touched a record low. By hiking prices day by day, the central government is doing a great injustice to the people of this country", he said.

Kharge also urged Kerala's ruling CPI(M)-led LDF government to reduce state taxes on petrol and diesel to ease the burden on the people. (PTI)

PM to launch several projects in Assam, Bengal on Monday

NEW DELHI

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi will visit the poll-bound states of Assam and West Bengal on Monday to launch and lay the foundation stones of several projects.

The PMO said he will dedicate to the nation important projects of the oil and gas sector in an event organised at Silapathar in Assam, and also inaugurate and lay the foundation stones of engineering colleges during the event. Later in the day, he will inaugurate several railway projects at Hooghly in West Bengal.

In Assam, the PMO said, Modi will inaugurate the IN-DMAX unit at Indian Oil's Bongaigaon refinery, Oil India Limited's secondary tank farm at Dibrugarh and a gas compressor station at Hebeda village in Tinsukia. He will also inaugurate the Dhemaji Engineering College and lay the foundation stone for Sualkuchi Engineering College. These projects will usher in an era of energy security and prosperity, and open bright avenues of opportunity for local youth, the PMO said, asserting that they are in line with Modi's vision of "Purvodaya" to drive eastern India's socio-economic growth.

The INDMAX unit at Bongaigaon leverages the technology developed indigenously to produce a higher LPG and high-octane gasoline yield from heavy feedstocks. The unit will increase the refinery's crude processing capacity from 2.35 MMTPA (million metric tonnes per annum) to 2.7 MMTPA. Its commissioning will also significantly enhance LPG production from 50 TMT (thousand metric tonnes) to 257 TMT and mo-



'Bengal wants its own daughter': TMC launches poll slogan

KOLKATA

THE Trinamool Congress on Saturday launched its slogan for the upcoming assembly elections -- 'Bangla Nijer Meyekei Chaye', adding to the shrill insider vs outsider debate while portraying Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee as the daughter of Bengal. The slogan, which translates to 'Bengal wants its own daughter', with Banerjee's photo was put up on hoardings across Kolkata as the state's ruling party officially launched it from its headquarters off EM Bypass. "The people of the state want their own daughter who has been by their side for the last several years as their chief minister. We don't want outsiders to call the shots in Bengal," TMC secretary-general Partha Chatterjee said. The Trinamool Congress is engaged in a bitter political fight with the BJP, pitching the opposition party's leaders as outsiders who are on "election tourism" to the state.

tor spirit (Petrol) production from 210 TMT to 533 TMT.

In Bengal, the prime minister will inaugurate the extension of the metro railway from Noapara to Dakshineswar, and flag off the first service on this stretch. The PMO said this 4.1-km extension has been constructed at a cost of Rs 464 crore and is fully funded by the central government. This extension will ease up access to the two world famous Kali temples at Kalighat and Dakshineswar for lakhs of tourists and devotees, it noted.

Modi will also inaugurate a third line between

Kalaikunda and Jhargram over a stretch of 30 km of the 132-km-long Kharagpur-Adityapur third line project of south eastern railway, which was sanctioned with an estimated cost of Rs 1,312 crore. The four stations between Kalaikunda and Jhargram have been redeveloped by constructing four new station buildings, six new foot over bridges and eleven new platforms, along with renovation of the existing infrastructure, the PMO said. This will help ensure seamless movement of passenger and freight trains on Howrah-Mumbai trunk route, it added.

DNA helps cops trace man's family 16 months after his death

PALGHAR

SIXTEEN months after an unidentified man was found dead on railway tracks in Maharashtra's Palghar, police have traced his family on the basis of DNA samples, an official said on Saturday. The decomposed body of the man, 32, was found on railway tracks between Palghar and Boisar railway stations in October 2019, he said. The deceased could not be identified. But the bones of the dead man were preserved at a laboratory in Mumbai for DNA testing, senior inspector Yogesh Atmaram Devare of Palghar railway police station said.

"The police continued their probe. We went to nearby villages and enquired with the local residents if any of their family members had gone missing. During the investigation, a 58-year-old labourer from Kolgaon told us that his son had gone missing," he said. The labourer's blood sample was sent to the lab for testing and the DNA analysis confirmed that the deceased was his son, the official said. "Five days ago, the lab informed us that the DNA samples of the deceased and the labourer have matched. Accordingly, his family members were informed about it...We did our bit and succeeded in tracing the victim's family," Devare added. (PTI)

MAN CHOSEN FOR PADMA SHRI LIES BED-RIDDEN

AYODHYA

AN 83-year-old Faizabad resident, who is said to have arranged last rites over 25,000 unclaimed bodies in last 25 years and was chosen for a Padma Shri last year, is suffering from serious ailments but is unable to afford treatment due to poverty.

Mohammad Shareef, also known as "messiah of lawarais lashaen", was found bed-ridden when this PTI correspondent visited his home in Mohalla Khirkhi Ali Beg on Thursday.

With Shareef Chacha, as he is fondly called in his neighbourhood, lying virtually unconscious on his bed, his senior members said they were still hoping for some pension to him against his award so that they could afford his treatment.

Mohammad Shareef's son



Shageer said they had got a letter from the Union Home Ministry last year informing his father that he was chosen for the Padma Shri award.

The letter dated January 31, 2020 from Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla further said the date for conferring the award upon him would be shortly communicated, said Shageer. He said his father was

chosen for being conferred the award on the recommendation of BJP MP Lallu Singh from Faizabad. On being asked about the status of the award, Singh too expressed surprise and asked, "Has he still not received the award?"

"Ok, I will look into it," he promised. Shageer said he worked as a private driver and earned Rs 7,000 a month, while his father's treatment alone costs over Rs 4,000 a month.

"We are having very difficult times. We are unable to meet even household expenses. Due to the lack of money, we are not able to afford even proper treatment for my father," he said. "Till recently, we depended upon a local doctor for his treatment. But due to the lack of money, we are not able to afford even that," he rued. (PTI)

Arvind Kejriwal to organise lunch for farmers today

HANS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

THE agitation of the farmers against the new agricultural laws of the central government is going on for a long time. It has been 87 days since the farmers' agitation on the borders of Delhi, but no solution has yet been found between the farmers and the central government. Meanwhile, Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party convenor Arvind Kejriwal has made a big announcement.

CM Kejriwal said that he will give lunch to farmer leaders tomorrow i.e. Sunday. During this, he will discuss the three agricultural laws with the farmer leaders. Arvind Kejriwal is openly supporting the peasant movement. According to the information, CM Kejriwal will hold a meeting in Delhi Legislative Assembly with big leaders of farmers' organizations.

India's first digital varsity comes up in Kerala

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

KERALA took a major step forward in its progress towards a knowledge society with the inauguration of the country's first Digital University, based in Technocity at Mangalapuram near here on Saturday. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan presided over the function, where Governor Arif Mohammed Khan, who is also the Chancellor of the Kerala University of Digital Sciences, Innovation and Technology (KUDSIT), unveiled the varsity plaque. Both the Governor and the Chief Minister addressed the function through video conferencing. In his inaugural address, Khan said the launch of the Digital University is part of the state's resolve to embrace new technologies and desire to use them for bringing positive changes in the life of people and become a global hub for higher learning and technology.

Praising the state government for recent initiatives in higher education including the launch of Sree Narayana Guru Open University, the Governor said "In any aspect of life, knowledge brings courage, understanding, acceptance, unity and also liberates us from the clutches of ignorance." "The society expects the Digital University to provide intellectual support to lap up the new world of opportunities arising through artificial intelligence (AI), Blockchain, Data Analytics and other digital transformation courses," he said.

In his address, the CM said the launch of the first Digital University in the country would open tremendous opportunities for youngsters. "There should not be a digital divide in the society. The government is involved in the efforts of attaining digital excellence in various fields. We need to foster technically-talented people in accordance with the changes in the new world," the CM said.

Declare Godavari-Cauvery river link plan a national project: TN

CHENNAI

TAMIL Nadu Chief Minister K Palaniswami on Saturday urged the Centre to declare the Godavari-Cauvery river link initiative as a national project and said if it was done, it would benefit people in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Speaking during the virtual meeting of the NITI Aayog being chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Palaniswami noted that Tamil Nadu stood first in the country in coverage under micro irrigation in 2019-20 and 2020-

21, he underlined rejuvenation of river Cauvery. He requested Modi for the declaration "so as to benefit lakhs of people in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu."

"River Cauvery and its tributaries have to be rejuvenated on lines of 'Namami Gange'. Government of India is requested to accord sanction and extend financial assistance to Tamil Nadu, at the earliest," he said.

On health, the CM said the Siddha system of medicine is a proud contribution of Tamil ancestors to the world.

A day after J&K violence, Mehbooba calls for dialogue with Pakistan

SRINAGAR

A DAY after three policemen were killed in militant incidents in Jammu and Kashmir, PDP president Mehbooba Mufti Saturday asked the Centre to start a dialogue with Pakistan and also engage the local public to ensure there is no violence in the union territory.

The PDP president visited Lorigpora Aishmuqam area of in Kashmir's Anantnag district to express her sympathies with the bereaved family of J-K Police Constable Suhail Ahmad who was



killed in the militant attack in the Baghat area of the city on Friday. Besides Ahmad, another police personnel lost his life in the Baghat attack. Separately, a policeman died during an encounter with ultras in Budgam district during the day. Three militants

were also killed in a gunfight with security forces at Badgam in Shopian district of south Kashmir on Friday.

Speaking to reporters after her visit, Mehbooba asked the Centre to hold talks with Pakistan and the people of Jammu and Kashmir, saying the government must think as to till when the people of J-K, its policemen and youth will continue to sacrifice their lives.

"This (the Kashmir issue) is a huge issue and this issue should be resolved so that the bloodshed in J-K stops and the people here live in peace," she said.

Small cars in UP 112 fleet to reduce emergency response time

KISHOR DWIVEDI LUCKNOW

SOON smaller cars will be replacing some of the bigger SUVs used by Uttar Pradesh police's 112 service, in a move aimed at further improving emergency response time, a top official said. The step will affect police's emergency response at sites located in markets, congested areas, narrow lanes and all such places where the PRVs (police response vehicles) lose precious time in traffic snarls because of their size, the official said.

The UP Police's 112 service (formerly the 100 service) cur-



rently has around 4,500 vehicles of which nearly 3,000 are four-wheeler SUVs and the remaining two-wheeler motorcycles. Additional Director General of Police (112 service)

Asim Arun said currently 15,000 to 16,000 events across the state are attended daily by the emergency responders, while the number of distress calls is even more.

"Many a time the calls come from incident spots located in busy markets, congested areas, narrow lanes and all such places where SUVs lose precious time in traffic snarls because of their size. Sometimes the police vehicles themselves lead to traffic disruption while responding to emergencies," Arun told PTI. "We will soon be adding into our fleet cars which are smaller in size than our SUVs so that they can easily navigate such areas and the response time can be improved further," he said, adding specifics like car type and number of vehicles are yet to be worked out. Arun said cur-

rently the UP police's average response time in urban areas stands 7 to 8 minutes, while in rural areas it is 15 to 20 minutes. On the difference in response time in urban and rural areas, he said there are more events from urban areas where deployment of PRVs is also higher, while the relatively longer response time in rural areas is because distress calls are not frequent and locations of villages is also isolated.

"We have a world-class response time," Arun said and added that during the pandemic and lockdown, the UP police's emergency responders tended to an average 35,000 distress

calls daily. "During the lockdown, the 112 utilised the state capacity following directions from the chief minister. Our PRVs were providing dry ration, cooked meals, milk for newborns and infants and what not.

On many occasions, PRV personnel spent money from their own pockets to help distressed callers while the world was yet to come to grips with the situation," he added. On further utilization of 112 in diverse roles like lodging of FIR, he said it was more of a "policy question" that could be answered by the government.

"But as far as capacity is concerned, we are technically equipped for it," Arun said. (PTI)

Vijayasai vows to continue Ukku stir

- Conducts 25-km padayatra demanding Centre to withdraw proposed sale of stake in Visakhapatnam Steel Plant
- Hundreds of people, Ministers, public representatives, advocates join the trek
- Criticises TDP chief of not doing anything, even writing to the PM to save the steel plant

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VISAKHAPATNAM

AMID rousing reception, Rajya Sabha member V Vijayasai Reddy's 25-km-long 'padayatra' commenced near Gandhi statue opposite municipal corporation office here on Saturday morning. Aimed at exerting pressure on the Centre to withdraw the strategic sale of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP), 'Visakha Ukku Parirakshana Porata yatra' began in the city with the support of hundreds of volunteers, including women, advocates and students.

Holding placards and shout-



YSRCP Rajya Sabha member V Vijayasai Reddy, Nagari MLA R K Roja, Tourism Minister M Srinivasa Rao among others at the padayatra held against the proposed privatisation of Visakha Steel Plant in Visakhapatnam on Saturday

ing slogans, ministers Muttam-setti Srinivasa Rao, K Kannababu and Seediri Appalaraju, Deputy Chief Ministers Dharmana Krishna Das and Rajya Sabha MP Pilli Subash Chandra Bose joined the trek that concluded in the evening, followed by a public meeting at the steel plant main gate.

Wrapping a kanduva (towel) around his head, MP Vijayasai

Reddy embarked on the trek after paying floral tributes to Gandhi statue. Calling TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu a 'traitor', the MP said, "Instead of making any effort to stop VSP from privatisation, Naidu is indulging in mudslinging. What efforts has he and his family members made so far to dissuade the Union government to withdraw its decision on the plant? Has he sought

an appointment to meet the Prime Minister or at least wrote to him?" the MP said and added that the issues of the plant will be brought to the notice of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Speaking at the public meeting after the padayatra, the MP said, "Lack of captive mines and interest paid for the loans pushed the plant into losses. The situation will change if loans are

converted into equity and captive mines are established," the MP added.

Vijayasai Reddy made it clear that the fight against privatisation of VSP will continue both inside and outside the Parliament. He called for combined efforts to save VSP from strategic sale.

From the GVMC office, the trek that drew large number of participants, passed through Thatichetlapalem, Marripalem, NAD, Old Gajuwaka, BHPV area and Kurmannapalem, covering five constituencies.

Nagari MLA RK Roja who took part in the yatra, said except shedding 'crocodile tears' the TDP has not done anything constructive to mount pressure on the Centre to withdraw VSP's strategic sale.

Speaking on the occasion, tourism minister Srinivasa Rao said Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy is keen on saving the steel plant from privatisation.

Visakhapatnam MP M V V Satyanarayana, MLAs Gudivada Amarnath, Golla Baburao and K Dharmasree, who embarked on the padayatra, said that until the Centre withdraws its decision to privatise the steel plant, their collective fight will continue.

TDP flays Vijayasai's double game on VSP

- Former Minister Bandaru Satyanarayana Murthy says that YSRCP MP is playing dangerous games with the future of Vizag's people
- Asks why the ruling party MPs have not raised their voice against privatisation in Parliament

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI



Bandaru Satyanarayana Murthy

FORMER minister and TDP senior leader Bandaru Satyanarayana Murthy on Saturday accused the YSRCP MP V Vijayasai Reddy of playing dangerous games with the future of the Visakhapatnam people by adopting double standards on the Visakha Steel Plant issue.

Satyanarayana Murthy termed it as 'regrettable' that Vijayasai Reddy started a fake padayatra after having played a sinister role in the secret deal to sell the steel plant to the Korean company POSCO. The VSP was like the soul of the port city and a matter of self-respect for the Andhra people but the YSRCP regime has not hesitated to mortgage it to POSCO.

In a statement here, the TDP leader recalled how the Jagan Reddy Government has already reached an understanding with Posco. Vijay Sai Reddy should swear in front of the public that he did not know about this shady deal. It was Vijay Sai Reddy who has held consultations with the representatives of the Posco company for several times. They have held meetings both in Delhi and at the Chief Minister's Tade-

palli residence in Amaravati and also at Lotus Pond residence in Hyderabad too.

Satyanarayana Murthy demanded the YSRCP MPs to explain why they had not expressed their protest against the VSP privatisation in the Parliament. YS Avinash Reddy was a member of the Parliamentary Standing Committee but he did not question the Centre on the VSP issue even once. The AP chief secretary and Industries principal secretary themselves attended the disinvestment meeting in Delhi, he said.

The TDP leader said that it was only after the people had realised and revolted against the double games of the YSRCP leaders that Vijayasai Reddy had begun his padayatra now. The people would not sit silent if the ruling party leaders would like to mortgage the steel plant for the sake of saving themselves from their cases. The Vizag residents have now become fully prepared to chase the YCP leaders out of North Andhra.

Satyanarayana Murthy asserted that the TDP would continue to expose the misdeeds of the ruling party and its attempts to grab the public properties in the port city.



Congress former MP G V Harsha Kumar addressing the media at his residence in Rajamahendravaram on Saturday

VSP PRIVATISATION

Congress will not keep mum, warns Harsha

HANS NEWS SERVICE
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM

CONGRESS former MP G V Harsha Kumar warned the state government that the party cannot be a mere spectator if the BJP government at the Centre fails to withdraw its decision to privatise steel plant in Visakhapatnam.

Speaking to reporters at his residence here on Saturday, Harsha Kumar said Congress would take up an agitation with the people, students and workers unions to retain steel plant in government sector. Moreover, plans are afoot to bring AICC leader Rahul Gandhi to Visakhapatnam, he added.

The Congress leader blamed

- Says a mass movement will be built against the Centre's move
- Hints at Rahul Gandhi visiting Visakhapatnam to express support to the movement
- States Jagan should be ashamed to suggest sale of 6,000 acre land of steel plant

the BJP government for deliberately pushing the steel plant into losses by not allotting captive mines it. He said Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy know very well about the privatisation of steel plant and added that he should be ashamed to suggest sale of

6,000 acre land of the steel plant out of 13,000 acre given by the evacuees of the plant.

Harsha Kumar said Jagan Mohan Reddy had a hidden agenda in making suggestion to sell the land, which costs Rs 2.50 lakh crore, he alleged and demanded the Chief Minister release the letter he had reportedly sent to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

He recalled that 32 people sacrificed their lives in agitation for steel plant which was the right of Telugu people. The former MP accused BJP of trying to hamper the development of the state using cheap gimmicks and the Chief Minister was mum in this regard because of his pending cases.

VIZAG TRAGEDY

NHRC okays State's actions post gas leak



AMARAVATI/NEW DELHI

THE National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has accepted the Andhra Pradesh government's action of giving Rs 1 crore each to the families of the 12 people who died due to styrene gas leak in Visakhapatnam in May 2020.

The state government informed the commission that 485 people, who were hospitalised for 2-3 days were paid Rs 1 lakh each, and criminal proceedings were initiated against 12 accused.

The commission took *suo motu* cognisance of media reports about the death of eight persons and 5,000 others falling sick due to styrene gas leak on May 7, 2020 from LG Polymers company in the port city. The noxious fumes affected people in a radius of 3 km, leaving some people dead on the road and causing rashes and breathing difficulty in several others. Along with humans, 25 animals also succumbed to the fumes. Other than compensation for mortality, the government also paid Rs 10 lakh each to people who were put on ventilators, Rs 25,000 each to people who underwent primary treatment and oth-

The State govt told the commission that 485 people, who were hospitalised for 2-3 days were paid Rs 1 lakh each, and criminal proceedings were initiated against 12 accused

ers. The commission observed that the loss of lives and thousands falling sick is indeed a serious violation of human rights with the right to life being grossly violated.

"At a time when human lives across the country are at stake due to the spread of Covid-19 virus and everyone is forced to stay indoors, the gruesome tragedy has come as a bolt from the blue for the people," said a commission official.

Following the incident, the commission issued notices to the Andhra chief secretary, demanding a detailed report on the tragedy and the rescue efforts and medical treatment provided to the victims.

It also asked the director general of police to inform within four weeks about the police action and investigation.

Assembly budget meet likely in March-end

AMARAVATI

THE state Assembly budget session is likely to be held in third week of March after completion of municipal elections. The budget session may continue for two week. The Cabinet which is going to meet on February 23 is expected to discuss on the budget session. The Visakhapatnam steel plant issue is certain to figure in Assembly session as Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy during his recent tour in Visakhapatnam stated that if necessary the state Assembly would pass a resolution against the privatisation of the steel plant.

Stage set for final phase of panchayat polls today

AMARAVATI

STAGE is set for conducting fourth and final phase of panchayat elections on Sunday, February 21. The polling will be held for 2,744 gram panchayats and 22,422 wards. The voting will take place from 6.30 am to 3.30 pm in 161 mandals of 13 districts. Of the 3,299 gram panchayats scheduled for polls, elections were declared unanimous in 553 panchayats and polling will take place in 2,744 panchayats where 7,475 candidates are

Election will take place for 2,744 gram panchayats and 22,422 wards

in the fray. With regard to wards, of the total 33,435 wards, 10,921 members were declared unanimously elected to 10,921 wards and polling will be held for 22,422 wards for which 49,083 candidates are contesting. The elections authorities made arrangements to send the polling material to the respective polling stations.

NASA rover sends colour photos of Mars

Continued from P1

Subsequent NASA missions, in cooperation with ESA (the European Space Agency), would send spacecraft to Mars to collect these cached samples from the surface and return them to Earth for in-depth analysis.

In the days to come, engineers will pore over the rover's system data, updating its software and beginning to test its various instruments.

In the following weeks, Perseverance will test its robotic arm and take its first, short drive. It will be at least one or two months until Perseverance will find a flat location to drop off Ingenuity, the mini-helicopter attached to the rover's belly, and even longer before it finally hits the road, beginning its science mission and searching for its first sample of Martian rock and sediment.

Covid surge in 5 States

Continued from P1

In last 24 hours, 297 daily new cases have been registered in the state, the Centre said. Over the last seven days, Chhattisgarh has also seen a rise in daily active new cases. In last 24 hours, 259 daily new cases have been reported, the government said in a statement. "Adherence of Covid appropriate behaviour is strongly reiterated for breaking the chain of transmission of the virus and containment of spread of the disease," the statement read.

Back pvt sector to make India self-reliant: Modi

Continued from P1

Underscoring the need to achieve Ease of Doing Business so the country can "grab global opportunities", Modi also spoke of achieving "Ease of Living" for the people. "For India's citizens, we must try and better Ease of Living. It will help us achieve the aspirations of Indians and make their lives better," he said.

Over the last few years, there have been opening of bank accounts, increase in vaccination and health facilities, free electricity connection, free gas connection which have "empowered the poor", bringing phenomenal changes in their lives, he said.

"The positive response received for this year's Budget has expressed the mood of the nation. The country has made up its mind that it wants to progress rapidly and doesn't want to lose time. The youth is playing a major role in setting the mood of the nation," the PM said.

The agenda of the meeting included agriculture, infrastructure, manufacturing, human resource development, service delivery at grassroots level and health and nutrition.

China's Galwan video shows Indian soldier's bravery

Continued from P1

He received a Mention in Despatches during Republic Day this year. He was seen walking unarmed towards the Chinese PLA to stop transgression into Indian territories. India has lost 20 soldiers in the clash.

China released this video on Friday as part of its psy-war to depict India's aggression during clashes in Galwan Valley. The video went viral on all the platforms of social media.

The video was released after China for the first time accepted it lost four soldiers during the clash.

India, China hold 10th round of military talks

NEW DELHI: India and China on Saturday held another round of military talks with a focus on taking forward the disengagement process in Hot Springs, Gogra and Depsang in eastern Ladakh and bring down the tensions in the region, official sources said. The 10th round of Corps Commander-level talks are taking place two days after the Chinese and Indian militaries completed the withdrawal of troops, weapons and other military hardware from the North and South banks of Pangong lake areas as part of an agreement.

The meeting started at 10 am at the Moldo border point on the Chinese side of the Line of Actual Control and it was continuing, the sources said.

They said India will insist on a faster disengagement process in remaining areas like Hot Springs, Gogra and Depsang to bring down tension in the region that has witnessed a tense standoff between the two militaries for over nine months.

MCT POLLS

20 TDP candidates seek nod to file nominations again

HANS NEWS SERVICE
TIRUPATI

ALLEGING that they were prevented from filing nomination in February last year during filing of nominations for contesting the Tirupati municipal corporation election, 20 TDP candidates appealed to the district collector who is the election officer for the conduct of local body elections in Chittoor district to permit them to file nomination again for contesting as corporator in the Tirupati municipal election. Former MLA and TDP Tirupati constituency in-charge M Suguna said that on Friday the 20 TDP candidates filed a written appeal in the office of the district election officer at Chittoor for permitting them to file the nominations again for contesting the Tirupati corporation election.

Speaking to media along with the 20 candidates here on Saturday, Suguna explained that following the SEC's recent decision to accept complaints regarding forcible withdrawal of nominations for municipi-



Tirupati former MLA M Sugunamma addressing the media at TDP office in Tirupati on Saturday

palities till March 2, for consideration based on proofs, the 20 appealed for permission to file nomination again.

The 20 who were party candidates for contesting from different divisions in the Tirupati corporation tried in vain to file the nomination due to the intimidation and large scale violence unleashed by the YSRCP activists which was reported widely in media and led to the SEC directing government to immediately shift the then collec-

tor and also Tirupati Urban SP, she alleged. The relevant proofs on the violence incidents at the time filing of nominations along with media reports was also attached, as required by SEC.

She also appealed to the SEC to consider receiving nominations afresh for contesting in the Tirupati corporation election, duly taking into account the violence took place at the election offices in the city at the time of filing of nominations, in February last year..

India staring at massive inflation

Petrol and diesel prices are skyrocketing. In the State, a litre of petrol costs Rs 93 and diesel Rs 87. The price of a cylinder, which was Rs 771 on February 5, has now risen to Rs 821. Ordinary, middle-class people are choking on this. Transport costs have risen as diesel rates have raised. As a result, the prices of all essential commodities have gone up.

Vegetables are widely available in the market during the months of January-February. But vegetable prices are skyrocketing this season as never before. In the past, employees used to spend Rs 1,500 a month to go to the office, but now it is over two thousand. Eighty-one percent of petrol users are motorcyclists! With the rise in energy rates the oil is being released on the people, especially the middle class. Petrol and diesel prices have been rising on a daily basis since the central decided to review fuel prices on a daily basis in line with oil barrel prices in the international market. If it had increased tenfold in January, it would have already increased nine-fold this month. If the price of fuel has gone up by twenty times in the last 48 days, the burden on the people has to be imagined.

There is also lack of clarity in what the central government is saying about fuel rates. Crude oil barrel prices fell by half when the world froze during the corona period. However, petrol and diesel prices have not come down in the country. The reason is that the central government considers oil as a golden duck. It is unreasonable to think of tax revenue from energy sales as a source of income.

Social media is buzzing over this century of achievement of petro products as the common man bears this burden of toothache as there is no other way but to burn like moths in petro fires. Taking this lightly, the Narendra Modi government is acting as if it is celebrating instead of taking steps to alleviate the people. World crude oil prices have fallen sharply since 2014, when the Modi government came to power. As a result, prices of petro products have fallen in many countries.



But in our country, it is different! As crude oil prices fall in the international market, the prices of petro products in the country are running beyond the drops. The basic price of petrol, which was around Rs 47 when Modi came to power, has now dropped to Rs 29.34. At the same time, the selling price rose from Rs 71.40 to Rs 95 across the country. Could this be the only example of the way petro exploitation is taking place!

The Modi government has made it a priority to suck the people out of the country even during the Corona crisis. Special programs have been launched in almost all countries, including the United States, to make cash available to poor people. The Modi government, however, announced huge packages for corporates and distributed pulses and jaggery to the poor. Considering the buzz in the form of indirect taxes, the impact of pulses is almost nil, the burden of hardships is solid! Look at these calculations!

Crude oil prices have fallen 5 per cent against the dollar over the past 14 months in international markets. Petrol and diesel prices in the country have gone up by 20 per cent compared to January 2020. In the United States, along with neighbouring Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal, prices fell by 5 to 7 percent during this period. The decline was also seen in countries such as China and Korea, where the local currency is stronger than the dollar. It is shocking that in our country, prices are not falling, but are moving towards the highest growth in the world.

Energy consumption cannot be detached in modern development. In civilized life it has become a necessity. Under these circumstances it is irresponsible for the government to leave fuel prices to the market. The new budget imposes a cess on agricultural infrastructure and development (AIDC) to replace the basic, exclusive additional excise duty rates. On the other hand, the excise duty was hiked by Rs 3 per litre after March 2020 due to declining tax revenue during the corona period. With this, the excise duty on a litre of petrol has gone up to Rs 32.98 and on diesel to Rs 31.83.

In fact, the price of a litre of petrol at a retail dealer in Delhi was only Rs 19.48 as on January. Dealer commission is Rs 3.50. And everything else is a tax burden. It is the responsibility of the Central Government to make the fuels available to the masses. Even in low-income, backward neighbouring countries, petrol and diesel prices are lower than ours. The central's free advice is to skip the issue so that states can reduce VAT on whoever asks to reduce prices.

The state governments, which are vying for a share in the taxes levied by the central, have not even nominally questioned the burden being placed on the people. Over the past three years, the excise burden on the central and state governments has been around Rs 14 lakh crore across the country. States usually have a share in central government taxes. However, in recent times, the Center has been importing that share by imposing cess which the states are not required to share.

Of the budget proposals recently tabled in Parliament, it is estimated that Rs 3.20 lakh crore will reach the central exchequer through petro sales for the 2021-22 financial year, of which the share of state governments is only Rs 7000 crore (2.1 per cent)! State governments are levying additional taxes and VAT to replenish their own coffers. The result was a blow, a slap in the face to the common man. All sectors will be severely affected by the rise in petro prices. Commodity prices will rise. The purchasing power of the common man drops. This will further collapse the country's economy. However, if the Centre thinks that the interests of the corporates are paramount, then the common man must reach the point where he can no longer bear the flames of prices and touch that hot central ruling party seat!

— Dr N Khaleel, Hyderabad

Honouring Lal Bahadur Shastri

The government should honour our Shastriji's ideology by using the gold worth Rs.27.29 crore, which is lying in a cupboard in Udaipur Collector's office (THI 20, Feb). I am sure that Shastriji would not have yielded to weigh him with 56 kg gold even if he'd returned alive to India in Jan.1966 after Tashkent talks if not were otherwise destined. I know of politicians who were weighed with gold and have dubious standards not to disclose the gold thus weighed but thanks to the Rajasthan/ Udaipur admn./Courts have kept that unused gold safe. Shastriji was a poor student to the extent that he'd to cross the river to go to his Institution for want of ferry fare. He'd rather be pleased had that gold's value escalated been utilised for a noble cause as such deemed fit, educating poor worthy students, Shastriji's was a selfless PM who did not own a house, but his memory dwells in countless hearts.

— Dr T Ramadas, Visakhapatnam

Sharmila is welcome in TS

This is with reference to V.Ramu Sarma's article "Will Sharmila make an impact on TS politics". Sharmila was known as Jagannanna Banam and she was majorly responsible for Jagann Mohan Reddy's success in A.P. You rightly said that many disgruntled people from these sections will support Sharmila. Motivational speaker Brother Shafi and revolutionary singer Gaddar meeting Sharmila assumes political significance. Running a political party in this current circumstance would not be easy and it will be a herculean task for her to float and sustain a party, yet it is appreciable that she is starting a new party.

Some are terming sharmila's proposed party as benami party. Congress party accuses that it is a KCR's game plan to split the anti-incumbency votes in the next elections. Some opine that Sharmila is B team of BJP party. TRS failed to achieve. Bangaru Telangana, BJP is not strong enough in all parts of Telangana and Congress is leader-less. So there is a political vacuum in Telangana. Sharmila believes that there is scope for a new player in T.politics. So sharmila will be welcomed by Telangana people.

— Zeeshaan, Kazipet.

Our democracy deserves electoral reforms

This is with reference to the edit page article "One nation and one election" by K. Krishna Saagar Rao (THI: 19-02-2021). Our democracy is virtually at the crossroads as much as we have presently in siege of a misplaced opportunity providing for a single political party in ruling as against an opposition party to counter the former. Hence, a catch 22 situation has been created in our country wherein the Centre and the States are not in unison politically with regard to governance leading to fragmentation of democracy on party and political lines.

In the present day socio-political set-up of our democracy, the concept of one nation - one election has become a far cry and an elusive proposition or a reality. A less dearer / costlier concept of one nation and one election has of late become a misplaced privilege and opportunity for India, because of decentralisation of governance by states wherein the ruling parties are regional and distinct from that at the centre.

Ever since the coalition party governance has come to exist at the Centre with a national party in the lead, there has been a privileged opportunity for the regional parties to take up the reins of power at the states thus giving rise to a paradoxical situation contradicting uniformity of governance between the states and the centre. Hence, this anomaly has given rise to the hiatus in regard to the conduct of elections to the parliament and the state assemblies.



Due to the phenomenal increase in the number of political parties across the states, the electoral process too has undergone a change due to more number of contestants present in the fray each time. This paradox has obviously given rise to the complex and complicated conduct of electoral process which involves not only political corruption but also a great deal of expense of public and government exchequer rendering such a process more dearer and redundant in true letter and spirit.

In view of inapt electoral system existing in our democracy, there is a dire need to bring about a new political and electoral reform that not only changes the very quality of governance but also impacts poverty alleviation, public welfare and scientific approach /logic present behind the current election system continuing unchanged over the decades.

The current electoral system is

basically replete with massive corruption and inefficiency in the nation. During the last 70 years, the successive governments and the Election Commission of India have seldom initiated electoral reforms except changing the mode of election nuanace from ballot to EVMs. It is really undaunting to note that there is an allusion by the present government under Modi to bring in electoral reforms during the current term.

The current electoral system that breeds corrupt and criminal minded people's representatives should be given a quiet burial. As the electoral process has turned the voters into a corrupt lot due to a new political and electoral reform that not only changes the very quality of governance but also impacts poverty alleviation, public welfare and scientific approach /logic present behind the current election system continuing unchanged over the decades.

— Bh Indu Sekhar, Hyderabad

PAST AND PRESENT

WHY TIME MANAGEMENT IS LINKED TO PROGRESS

ASHOK GOSWAMI

TIME is immemorial and waits for none. Back in early seventies, our English professor used to teach us importance of time. We saw him in time every time and he wanted same discipline from us. He used to wonder why he was punishing us even for one minute late. He was actually preparing us for life lessons. It helped me in my professional career which went on to reach top positions with strict personal discipline. No one can vouch that someone waited for me in my entire career. My motto remained 'Every time on time'.

During my 40 odd years of professional career, I had made it a thumb rule to be in time every time. I waited upon everyone right from the person at lowest rung of hierarchy and also for who were at the top of it. But I made sure that I didn't change my habit. In my initial years at Bombay in the early eighties, in order to survive in the meagre salary, I was doing part time freelance film journalism. In those days a cover story earned me two hundred bucks and an interview would earn me one hundred and fifty bucks.

I used to stay at King's Circle in shared accommodation. On Sunday morning, I set out for Film-City, in Dindoshi, based on my initial talk with late actress Smrita Patil. It was not confirmed by her. When I approached her, she gave me a lesson of life. She said you must value time, more than her than mine. She said she hate to wait people on her and certainly don't want people like me who are struggling to survive lose money on transportation. She had insisted on confirming before coming to meet her. Back then people were honest to admit the real reasons for not keeping times as there were no excuses like 'caught up in the traffic' 'my maid had not come' and 'trains are running late'. Time is not elastic, neither it expands. No one can pass the time but time passes us all.

In one of my visits to Singapore, we took sightseeing tour for the day. The guide was a 65-year-old lady. On the first stop she announced that we should realign our watches with her so that there is no confusion about time. She told us to be back exactly after fifteen minutes or

Clamp down on anti-national protests

Of late the voice against the central government in general and brickbats against the PM in particular is ringing loudly in public and social forums. Our PM seems to be the most criticised PM in the world. Criticising of his actions by the Opposition and Rahul in particular, has become a daily routine of a day.

Also the urban naxals, so-called social activists, anti-nationals, left leaning press, mislead the youth of this nation by train their guns against the government. This is quite unfair and runs against the tenets of a democracy. The recent arrest of Disha Ravi is a witness to this action. A 22-year-old girl, who herself is not a farmer, alleged to have subscribed to the farmers agitation electronically.

Furthermore, there are certain group of people who participate in all the protests held at the NCR against the government, whether it is students protest, CAA protest or farmers' one. They create chaos and violence. The farmers protest went on peacefully for over two months. But the Republic Day violence seems to have been staged. These trouble mongers should be taken to risk.

The raise of such voices should not be allowed to grow in a democracy. It cuts the very root of democracy. In the name of freedom of speech and expression, government, the judiciary, the people, law and order should not be taken for granted. The government and the Judiciary must wake up to the situation and see such unnecessary anti-national voices disrupting the peace of the nation do not ring again loudly. Law, peace and order must be maintained at any cost.

— Sravana Ramachandran, Chennai

'Metro Man' may be derailed by BJP

Propos to your report "Metro Man" throws his hat in the right for Kerala CM Post" (THI 20 Feb). There is no doubt the technocrat who was instrumental in developing Metro trains in different cities across India had impeccable character and down to



earth honesty who cannot tolerate anybody with vested interest attempting to realign metro lines for their own benefit. It is well known in the initial stage of Hyderabad metro, an attempt was made to change lines and the way the Metro should be built and run, he realised something fishy is happening to align the lines in the interest real estate, he opted to withdraw from the project.

We have similar seen personalities with no political background entering politics to do something for the people without any personal ambition for power etc unlike the real politicians. Unfortunately, we do not know their whereabouts now. Legendary T N Seshan made an attempt to enter politics and finally had to come out. While I have nothing against Sreedharan joining BJP at the age of 88 years, will he be made Chief Minister when the current leadership of BJP have packed of hard core veterans like Advani, Joshi and others in "Margdarshak Mandal". The former straight forward General Khanduri who initiated Highway development was shunted off for raising various on Defence as Chairman of parliamentary committee.

What happened to Jaswant Singh and the list are endless. Though the BJP

may take him on great fanfare as they will have someone whose face well recognised not only Kerala and rest of India, it is premature on his part to have straight away thrown his hat for the post of Chief Ministership of Kerala shows that technocrat is yet to understand the politics in India irrespective of the party which one wants to serve. Even former Congress Chief Minister of Karnataka and Union Minister S M Krishna got a grand welcome and was thereafter seen in few election rallies and nowhere to be seen. One would be sorry for Metro man meeting the same fate after BJP achieves its purpose of making solid ground in Kerala.

Moreover the Kerala voters unlike other states do not simply vote for the sake of voting a particular party or person, they always think before casting their vote, no wonder they would not allow any party stagnate for too long for years like West Bengal, Gujarat etc where a party has been allowed to continue in power for years. As Metro man and technocrat like the people of rest of India people of Kerala may respect and like him, but once the person shows his true ideology and thinking join politics, they would look upon him differently even if the person is clean and honest as it had happened when Dr Mannohan Singh fought his first and only LS Election of from South Delhi and T N Seshan from Gandhinagar did not get the voters support.

— S Natarajan, New Delhi

Rapid depletion of human values

It is very difficult for any psychologist to define human nature which travels in different routes. We often find good samaritans who render succour spontaneously as we have observed to migrants on their way during peak corona pandemic period. At the same time we succinctly witnessed people becoming spectators when accidents occurred on the roads.

In the recent gruesome twin murders of couple advocates on broad day light, hundreds of bus passengers and road users faltered to thwart the criminal act but shamefully immersed in video recording in their mobiles. Humanity significantly relegated

to utter neglect. Another inhuman and unforgettable incident experienced by the family members of Covid deceased was the prevention of entry into burial grounds for fear of their lives. We listen to thought provoking discourses of scholars in media but do not learn and walk on the righteous path.

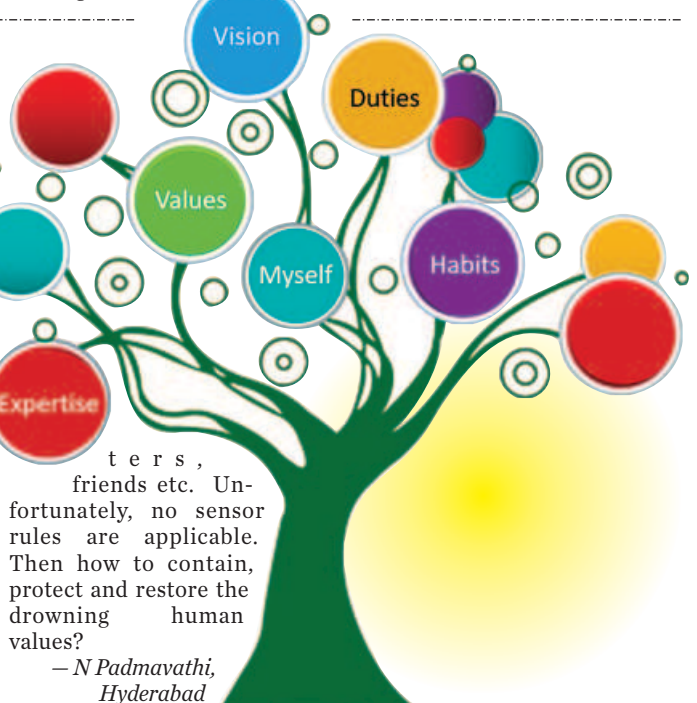
Our scriptures evidently disclosed that conducting last rites even to an unknown dead person is equivalent to performing one thousand yagnas and there is no more pious act than this. This clean cut aphorism failed to settle in our minds. A life lived in service of others can also be discerned as more than meditation. True

meditation is a way of life and the truest life is literally a way of meditation.

Secondly, consumption of liquor is ruining the family bondages besides spoiling health, wealth and social movement. Governments say major income that goes to their coffers is from sale of liquor. They garland the statues of Mahatma Gandhi and advise the public to inherit the ideals bequeathed by him. Father of the Nation felt that his country be filled with beggars but there should not be drunkards in our midst. What is in reality is crystal clear. This egregious addiction is resulting in tempest leading to severance of family lineage. This

is one more point for dying humanity. Married women and men are entangling in illicit, illegal and lustful affairs and their obstructing hubbies or wives or children or friends lives are being heinously liquidated. This lawless lasciviousness destroys the conjugal relations. Today's youth are also falling prey to deceitful chats and meetings through face book, twitter etc., and forfeiting their piety and prestige.

Not to talk about the idiot box serials which are worthless, harmful, imitative with full of family feuds such as how to kill husbands, wives, daughters, daughters line law, bothers, sis-



ters, friends etc. Unfortunately, no sensor rules are applicable. Then how to contain, protect and restore the drowning human values?

— N Padmavathi, Hyderabad

Pakistan out to repeat 1990 in J&K

DAR JAVED

AS the delegation of envoys from 23 countries concluded their Kashmir visit on Wednesday evening, militants made their presence felt by attacking the son of the owner of a famous eatery, Krishna Dhaba, at Sonawar in uptown Srinagar.

Aakash Mehra (22), son of Ramesh Kumar Mehra, was fired upon by the gunmen when he was busy with his work.

On December 31, 2020, when Kashmir was filled with tourists, militants shot dead a 65-year-old jeweller in Sarai Bala area of Srinagar. The goldsmith Satpal Nischal, son of Amarnath Nischal, owner of Nischal Jewellers living in Indira Nagar area in Srinagar, was fired upon by the militants at his shop.

The deceased was a non-state subject but was living in Kashmir for the past 50 years. He had received the Domicile certificate just a few days before his killing.

Guns of militants turning towards members of the minority community, who stayed in Kashmir even after 1990, indicates the desperation and frustration of their bosses sitting across the Line of Control as all their strategies have failed. Strike calls are not working. Militants are not being allowed to sneak in as they are being neutralised at the LoC itself. People of Kashmir seem least interested in taking part in street protests and becoming a part of the separatist politics.

Businessmen from minority community becoming soft targets, has not gone well with the members of the majority community. After Nischal was killed, Sarai Bala and other areas of the city centre observed a complete shutdown to express solidarity with the bereaved family.

It appears that ISI is trying to

The huge influx of tourists during the past few months has infused new life into the ailing tourism industry in Kashmir. People are busy with their daily chores and the revival of night life has turned the Valley vibrant once again



repeat 1990. When militants appeared in the streets of the Valley in the nineties, the first thing they did was they carried out selective killings of Kashmiri Pandits which led to their mass exodus from the Valley.

After the scrapping of J&K's special status the union territory has been thrown open for all. Anyone who has been staying in Jammu and Kashmir for the past 15-years is eligible to get a Domicile Certificate. It looks like attacks on members of the minority community are being carried out to create fear psychosis as lakhs of Domicile Certificates have been issued till date. Kashmiris not opposing the new domicile law has disturbed the militant handlers and their bosses.

The huge influx of tourists

during the past few months has infused new life into the ailing tourism industry in Kashmir. People are busy with their daily chores and the revival of night life has turned the Valley vibrant once again.

After the abrogation of Article 370, Pakistan made desperate attempts to send militants into Kashmir but the robust counter infiltration grid along the Line of Control and alert soldiers foiled the nefarious designs of our rogue neighbor.

After failing on all the fronts the militants are trying to use Improvised Explosive Devices to target the security forces as they are aware of the fact that it's an easy way but the security agencies have been detecting these IEDs and thwarting their plans. On the second anniversary of

Pulwama attack this year, Jammu Police arrested an Al Badr militant Suhail and seized 6.5 kilogram IED from him at Jammu bus stand. The arrested militant had been given three to four targets, including the bus stand and railway station. He had been instructed to place the explosive at one of the spots. But the attempt failed.

The developments that have taken place post August 5, 2019—when the Centre announced its decision to bifurcate J&K into two union territories and scrapped the Article 370—have left Pakistan guessing. None of their strategies and plans are working. Their attempts to cause disruption and once again put Kashmir are on fire seem to have no takers. People have outrightly rejected the idea of separatism.

No one in Kashmir is talking about Azadi anymore.

Another factor which is proving to be the last nail in the coffin of Pakistan sponsored militancy in Jammu and Kashmir is that the strength of militants is depleting and they are running short of weapons. In the recent past many local militants have given up arms and have returned to the mainstream. Youth seem to be choosing life over death as the realization seems to have dawned upon them that the life span of a militant is too short. Kashmiri youth for a long time have been used by Pakistan as cannon-fodder to fight its own war.

The envoys who visited Kashmir didn't find anything unusual as they were greeted warmly by everyone. People who met them spoke about development and other governance related issues. No curbs on the internet and no strike call on their visit made the envoys feel the change.

It's high time for Pakistan to realise that the situation in Jammu and Kashmir has changed for the better and its machinations are not going to work anymore. The handful of militants who have been left cannot survive for long as the fear of the gun is disappearing fast. The attacks on members of the minority community are not going to change the fact that J&K has merged completely with the Union of India and people getting the Domicile Certificates has become a norm. J&K is changing fast and this time around no adversary will be allowed to disrupt the normal life.

(The writer is a student of Craft Management and Entrepreneurship and a resident of Lolab Kupwara. He is doing his research on peace initiatives in Kashmir)



The pink ball affair: India versus England

YAJURVINDRA SINGH

THE third Test match between India and England starting on February 24 at the huge and magnificent newly constructed Motera Stadium in Ahmedabad should be a very interesting affair. The stadium is named after the Ironman of India, Sardar Patel, and the Indian team will need to imbibe the same qualities of the 'Man of Steel' who played an important role in the freedom movement against the British Empire.

India will not only need to play to win the series against England, but need to ensure a win to stay alive to qualify for the first World Test Championship (WTC) final in June. At one match all, the four-Test series is at a very crucial stage.

England, on the other hand, require to win the two remaining Test matches to qualify for the WTC final. The pink ball battle will require a positive and aggressive approach, as winning for both sides is the only way forward. This itself should be enough to make the match enthralling and exciting. When two teams in any sport are set to play a game with a positive state of mind, the competition that emerges is what makes it wonderful to watch.

The day/night encounter will be played with the Sanspareils Greenlands (SG) pink ball. This is a new experience for most international cricket players. The challenge that they face would also create that extra bit of interest for the millions of viewers watching the match. The pink ball has a coat of lacquer similar to the white ball, so the new ball swings a fair amount. Both India and England have world class pace bowlers in their midst to exploit the movement and hence batting against them will require good technique and temperament to be successful.

Furthermore, an interesting aspect of a day/night match is also the change in conditions that emerges as dusk falls and then again under the illuminated dark night sky. This makes batting even more difficult.

The newly laid pitch in Motera is expected to have a good bounce. The wicket during the domestic T20 Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy tournament recently showed that it spun viciously and most teams struggled to put up a good score. The wicket has not had a first-class five-day match played on it as yet and, unlike Chennai, preparing a vicious turning surface would not be easily possible.

India have shown in the second Test match in Chennai that not only do they have better spinners to bowl on a turning track than England, but also their batsmen are more skilled to play the turning ball. The English batting struggled against spin and most of them looked terrified to be out there in the middle.

The Motera stadium, with the largest spectator capacity for a cricket venue in the world, is built to offer every modern facility for the cricketer. It is expected to be the showcase venue of Indian cricket. India, therefore, cannot afford to pro-

vide a wicket that is not of Test standard. The cricketing world will be watching the match with added interest as Motera will also be the venue for the T20 World Cup final later this year.

The interesting factors that the Test match in Ahmedabad will provide will be that both the pace bowlers and the spinners will play a part in the match. This is where India have the edge as they have a good pace and spin attack. Furthermore, with Rishabh Pant and Ravichandran Ashwin in good batting form, the only change that may come about would be Jasprit Bumrah to replace Kuldeep Yadav.

England, however, have some major issues in selecting their playing side. Their spinners have not shown the accuracy and guile required to be consistent and effective. Jack Leach, their left-arm spinner, has bowled reasonably well in patches, but his lack of experience and control of length has not made him a match-winning threat.

Dom Bess, their off spinner in the first Test match, also did not show the ability to be accurate and effective and so England have a major dilemma as to whether to play with an additional pacer instead of him. England, one feels, cannot go in with only one frontline spinner and therefore will have to sacrifice either Stuart Broad or Jimmy Anderson for Dom Bess. The problem that faces England is that Ben Stokes has not been at his best as a bowler. They need him to contribute much more for them to become an effective bowling unit.

One major issue that the Indian side will need to forget is their disastrous batting performance in the last day/night pink ball Test match in Adelaide against Australia. The 36-run total will definitely rankle in the minds of their batters. They will need to reflect on their wonderful performance at Kolkata's Eden Gardens when they played their first ever day/night Test match against Bangladesh in November 2019.

Their three top line batsmen -- Cheteshwar Pujara, Virat Kohli, and Ajinkya Rahane -- scored runs in that match that was played with a SG pink ball. Their mental strength as to how they will forget the disastrous Australian debacle will play a major part in the Indian team's performance. They will need to show resilience and positivity facing the wily English pace attack of Jimmy Anderson/Stuart Broad and Jofra Archer.

The third Test match will be a seesaw battle between India and England. India at home with over 50,000 spectators behind them at the stadium will be the firm favourites. Cricket, however, is an uncertain game and with the playing conditions being far more uncertain both by way of the wicket and the day/night affair, victory or defeat will depend on the side that plays cautiously, sensibly and most importantly fields and catches well.

(Yajurvindra Singh is a former Test cricketer. Views expressed are personal)

Drought conditions in Pakistan may worsen

SAJJAD HUSSAIN

PAKISTAN'S meteorological department has warned that drought-like conditions currently prevailing in parts of Sindh and Balochistan provinces may exacerbate and cause water stress in cultivated lands, according to a media report.

The National Drought Monitoring Centre, part of the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD), issued an advisory on Thursday which showed the situation has emerged due to overall below than average rainfall in the country from October 2020 to January 2021, Dawn newspaper reported.

According to the advisory, most of the central and southern districts of Balochistan are experiencing mild to moderate drought. Keeping in view the climatology and current seasonal forecast of the PMD for these areas, drought conditions may exacerbate and affect agriculture and livestock.

"Dry conditions will cause water stress in the cultivated lands/areas of the country due to limited supply of irrigation water for Rabi crops," the advisory said.

Most districts in the west to south-west Balochistan are winter rainfall dominant and rainfall amounts lie between 71mm and 231mm, it adds. In Sindh, drought conditions are prevailing in the south-eastern parts of the province. Explaining the prevalent drought conditions, Sardar Sarfaraz, representing the Met department, said Balochistan's weather pattern showed that it received 60pc to 70pc of its annual rainfall in winters, while Sindh remained dry from October to May.

"Since, the dry spell this winter has led to mild to moderate drought conditions in most parts of Balochistan, the situation may go worse as the province normally doesn't receive good rains in the monsoon season," he said.

Documentary pays homage to Jews victimised during World War II

S RAVI

KEEPING alive the horrors of the genocide that the Nazis committed against the Jews is required for soul-searching and impressing upon the millennials to rise beyond caste, creed, race and religion. Recently, the International Holocaust Remembrance Day was commemorated world over to recall the killing of six million Jews and 11 million others by the Nazi establishment led by Hitler.

Coinciding appropriately with this year's event is the DW Doc-Film The Warsaw Ghetto: Memories of Horror, a touching film about the suffering that Jews had to undergo at the hands of the Nazis. The documentary was screened virtually by the India International Centre, New Delhi.

The 40-minute-long film, directed by Eric Bednarski, explains how the Warsaw Ghetto came into being, how the Jews -- both Polish and others -- brought from Europe, fared there. Besides the first-hand account of the Warsaw residents, including Jews, the film is insightful as it includes rare footage of an amateur 8 mm film shot by a Pole, Alfons Ziolkowski. He filmed the Ghetto, risking his freedom and life, and left for posterity, invaluable evidence.

All those Jews interviewed fondly remember the Warsaw they lived in. Krystya Budnicka says she spoke Yiddish and Polish, and had no problem with the Poles while Zygmunt Walkowski, recalls his Jewish neighbour and shopkeeper, who impressed him and other children by performing a trick of stitching his fingers.

Notably, Warsaw then, a major centre of Jewish life and culture boasted of more than 3.5 lakh Jews, the second largest in the world after New York City. As



Chief Rabbi of Poland, Michael Schudrich puts it, "Jews were almost everywhere, and interacting with non-Jews daily."

All that bonhomie came to a halt with the Germans invading Poland in September of 1939, which they occupied from October till January 1945. Right from the beginning, the idea was to dismantle Warsaw and build a city for the Germans with no Jews. As Niels Gotschow, an architectural historian, remarks, "It was to reduce Warsaw next to nothing; the intention was to destroy the capital of Poland." With no capital, the concept of Poland would cease to exist.

Pursuing this objective, the Jews were isolated in a section of the city called Warsaw Ghetto, a settlement surrounded by a wall. The footage vividly depicts heart-wrenching scenes of families with children and individuals, carrying in the hands and carts, their meagre possessions, shifting to the Ghetto. The displacement shattered them physically but also psychologically.

Irena Agata Boldok who earlier lived in a decent neighbourhood, says she didn't want to live there and wanted to return. As a child on seeing a poster showing a Jew as evil, she says, "I didn't want to be a Jew." So deep was the

psychic impact!

With hundreds packed like sardines, survival in isolation on meagre ration was a nightmare. Those with money or Polish friends managed to survive. Smuggling became rampant. Ziolkowski's film shows little children with small packets and firewood bundles, passing them through holes in the wall. It has scenes showing a policeman beat up these kids with a broom and baton. A small boy battered mercilessly with the baton makes one revolt in anger!

The footage also shows the mass graveyard for burying the exterminated Jews, ironically located in a vast field right next to the Jewish cemetery. Intrigued by the sickening odour, Ziolkowski, enquired from a Jewish policeman, and learnt about it.

With the 1943 Uprising by the Jewish resistance opposing the transfer of the remaining Ghetto population to death camps, the place was burned down and its inhabitants killed. Walkowski in a pensive tone says the Germans wanted to cover the place with earth and create a park on the demolished ghetto, a garden paradise. Amidst all this misery, the footage showing a group of Jews playing violin, drums, trumpet and accordion, displays the ray of hope the human race has even in the gravest of situations.

Bednarski weaves a seamless narrative through the interviews, footage and pictures making it an immersive viewing. His last shot of the historic tram, which runs with a Star of David atop every year on January 27 to remind Warsaw residents of their murdered Jewish, returning to the depot, with the door slowly closing, has sub-text for the viewers. The haunting background score by Daniel Bloom fits well with the subject.

Employers keen on hiring freshers across job roles

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

HIRING of entry-level professionals is likely to witness a significant uptick going ahead as corporates are keen to hire freshers across job roles, according to a survey by TeamLease EdTech.

According to TeamLease EdTech, formerly known as SchoolGuru Eduserive, India Inc is keen on hiring fresh skilled talents and more than 15 per cent of

the corporates have expressed an intent to hire freshers. The 'Career Outlook Report Feb-Apr 21' report noted that business development, sales professionals, graphic designers, digital marketing associates, content writers and web developers are the leading job roles for freshers' recruitment. The Career Outlook Report provides insights into job roles, skills the market requires and the types of courses that prepare job

seekers to effectively respond to market demand.

The report analyses insights gathered from 815 employers, across 18 sectors and 14 cities in India. "Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, hiring of freshers continues to be on a strong growth trajectory. For the period February-April 2021, freshers hiring intent has improved by 2.5 times from the lockdown period and as the economy opens up, it is ex-

pected to go up further," said TeamLease EdTech founder and CEO Shantanu Rooj.

Rooj further said that "apart from the buoyancy, what stood out was the growing focus on specialised skills that employers expect from fresh job entrants". Out of the 90 job roles that corporates are looking at hiring freshers, over 65 per cent are the ones that require specialised skills, Rooj added. As per the findings, em-



ployers expect freshers to be equipped with domain skills like product and service advertising, data analytics, web and mobile app development, and spreadsheet skills.

Additionally, according to the report, employers also expect freshers to possess soft skills like reasoning, analytical thinking, complex problem solving, active learning and critical reasoning. The courses that freshers can look

at to improve their employability are automation, software development and graphic designing. "Most of the sought-out jobs profiles for freshers require additional learning, and freshers need to constantly invest in upskilling themselves and staying ahead of the curve. The need of the hour is not just home domain skills but also soft and niche skills," said TeamLease EdTech co-founder and President Neeti Sharma.

2-day BioAsia meet in Hyd from tomorrow

HANS BUSINESS
HYDERABAD

BIOASIA 2021, global bio business forum, will host its 18th edition with the theme "Move the Needle" in Hyderabad on February 22 and 23.

The event will be supported by the life sciences industry and will have a participation of about 30,000 life sciences professionals from around the world, organisers said in a statement.

The two-day event will feature global leaders including Satya Nadella, CEO, Microsoft, Soumya Swaminathan, Chief Scientific Officer, WHO, Peter Marks, Director, CBER, FDA, and several others.

The forum is set to be interesting with promising discussions by delegates with deep domain knowledge in healthcare and technology. Corporates across the life-sciences industry have shown support to spark and accelerate development conversation. "We are extremely glad to have industry partners on board for BioAsia 2021. Over the years, the partnership between the government and industries has only grown in the State and this has transformed into many success stories in the Life Sciences sector," said Jayesh Ranjan, Principal Secretary, Industries and Commerce Department, Telangana. Hailing the industry for the support extended to the event, Shakthi Nagappan, CEO, BioAsia and Director of Telangana Life Sciences, said, "An event of this scale would not have been possible without the cohesive support from the industry. With the support we have been receiving for the forum, we are able to expand the platform and gain higher participation on a global scale."

IS INDIA READY TO TAKE UP GAMING IN A BIG WAY?

Asian countries, especially Korea, Singapore, Japan, and China, are a decade ahead of us in the field of gaming



L MARUTI SANKER

"THERE are enormous opportunities in the digital gaming sector. Become a global leader in the field of international digital gaming by creating innovative games based on Indian culture and folklore", says Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

It is clear that there is a growing demand for online games in the face of the global digital transformation. Movies, theatre, and sports were some of the entertainment elements in the recent past. But with the spread of digital technology, gaming entered into the computer and mobile screens as a new entertainment opportunity. Man needs entertainment after his basic needs Roti, Kapada, Makan (food, clothes, and shelter). That is why online, mobile games are rapidly penetrating the life of man. These are attracting the children and young people and enticing the elders and the adults in the house.

In this context, it is up to us to decide whether to satisfy the imported foreign games such as PUBG or online poker or turn it into a business opportunity and create a new industry that promises many new jobs. Without technical knowledge, people with creativity, drawing skills, and rational thinking can get jobs in



We will be surprised by looking at gaming companies' market value on the Hong Kong and Taiwan stock exchanges. Not to mention that the Covid-19 pandemic has contributed to the realisation of opportunities in the digital gaming segment

Under these circumstances, efforts should be made to excel in the global market and cater to do-

this sector. Simultaneously, the aspiring entrepreneurs and startups, which would turn into big companies, will provide revenue in the form of tax to the government, while earning a market share of billions.

If we look globally, the largest gaming companies after the United States are in Korea and Japan. Asian countries, especially Korea, Singapore, Japan, and China, are a decade ahead of us in the field of gaming. We will be surprised by looking at gaming companies' market value on the Hong Kong and Taiwan stock exchanges. Not to mention that the Covid-19 pandemic has contributed to the realization of opportunities in the digital gaming segment. People who have been confined to their homes for a long time are spending more time on computers and mobile phones. They are playing games on a mobile phone at some point and also slowly liking them.

mestic opportunities in the digital gaming segment. What to do to make it possible? What conditions should be created? How to provide infrastructure, human resources, marketing power? How to earn? These are the challenges before us.

Beginning from New York

Computer games may be new for us, but they have six decades of history. The first video game machine was introduced in 1940 in New York. It attracted children and adults. Slowly, video gaming parlours popped up in the main squares and shopping malls in the US and Europe. Video gaming entered home in the 1970s with the design of the home game' to be played on TV sets. Computer games expanded in the 1980s and 1990s and mobile gaming grew after 2010. Currently, 250 crore people around the world are entertained by playing online computer games. The global gaming

industry has an annual turnover that has gone beyond Rs lakhs of crores. On top of that, it is registering at least 10 percent growth annually. The number of jobs created in this sector is very high. With smartphones and the 4G revolution, the online gaming industry is expanding much faster than expected. Over the last ten months, the number of people attracted to online and mobile games has increased dramatically due to Covid-19. This culture is spreading in our country as well. We are in a situation where we cannot step out of the home but need some pastime. So, we open a game on a smartphone or in a tab and immerse ourselves in it.

The gaming industry in our country is still in its infancy. It's always a small gaming company. It's an unorganized sector, though several startups, online or computer games were established by some people with a keen interest in gaming. Some companies tried to take the gaming sector forward. But they did not grow as expected. Industry experts believed that the gaming sector might not achieve industry status like that in Far East Asian countries like Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore.

But the sector rejuvenated by the Covid-19. Enthusiastic entrepreneurs are coming forward as the number of players is increasing, and some state governments like Telangana and the Centre are again focusing on the gaming sector. In addition to companies already in the segment, some startups have also ventured into the gaming sector. Apart from this, with the prime minister's call, there is a growing hope that the gaming industry can grow as a business sector in our country.

(The author is Managing Director of 7Seas Entertainment Ltd, a Hyderabad-based gaming and animation company)

SRM hosts global meet on biz finance

HANS BUSINESS
HYDERABAD

SRM Institute of Science and Technology conducted an international conference on "Business Finance and Management Sciences" for two days from February 18. At the conference, scholars, academicians and researchers presented 68 papers and conference proceedings with 174 papers had been released.

Prof Mwaf Dandan, Albalqua University, Jordan, addressed about the 'Indo Arab Issues' and underlined the need for strong trading relations between India and the Arab region which is ushering in reforms and transformational changes in the economy. Both India and Arab world will benefit if trade increases between them, he added.

Dr S Vengadamani, Director, Global School of Business, Amity Chennai, emphasized that how the Covid-19 had created an impact on the life of common people. Saying that people faced innumerable hurdles during the Covid crisis, he said people should face such hurdles courageously. Prof Muhammed Ahamed Tsuani of Bayero University, Nigeria, explained about how Nigeria was being considered as a highly vulnerable country to the global economic disruption caused by Covid-19, particularly due to steep all in oil prices. Nationally, 40 per cent of Nigerians (83 million) live below the poverty line, while another 25 per cent (53 million) are vulnerable and they could fall into poverty. The magnitude of the health impact depends on the duration and the domestic spread of the outbreak, while the economic impact hinges on oil prices, he said.

Dr K Selvasundaram, Head, Department of Corporate Secretaryship and Accounting Finance, College of Science and Humanities, SRM Institute, delivered welcome address and Dr A Irin Sutha, coordinator of the conference, outlined the main theme of the conference.

AP needs State-specific bulk drug policy

JNPC the only pharma SEZ in India that offers integrated environmental management services in one place

SANTOSH PATNAIK
VISAKKHPATNAM

When the Jawaharlal Nehru Pharma City developed by Ramky became operational?

JAWAHARLAL Nehru Pharama City (JNPC), a sector-specific pharma industrial park, the biggest in India, developed by Ramky Pharma City (India) Ltd, is a joint venture project with the Andhra Pradesh Government and Ramky before bifurcation. This project was awarded under Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model on Build, Own & Operate (BOO) basis. The concession agreement was executed between Ramky Pharma City (India) Ltd (RPCIL) and Andhra Pradesh Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (APIIC) on March 12, 2004, and foundation stone laid during 2005. Pharma City came into operation during 2008 in a record time. Companies started operations during 2008. This is the only one park in India offering integrated environmental management services in one place. JNPC was selected by UNIDO as Eco Industrial Park.

What is the extent of SEZ and non-SEZ area? How many units are in operation and how many more are in the process of launching commercial activities?

The total extent of the park is 2,400 acres out of which 611 acre is the designated Special Economic Zone (SEZ) area and balance is the domestic area (non-SEZ). In the non-SEZ, 250 acres is meant for a reservoir for continuous/uninterrupted supply of water to the pharma units, which is essential for the manufacturing of bulk drugs (APIs), drug intermediates (DI), key starting materials (KSMs) and formulations. Around 1000 acres is plotted area in non-SEZ and balance is common facilities/ utilities/ amenities. As of now, 86 units are in operation out of allotments made to 103 units. In near future, it is possible to

Dr PP Lal Krishna, CEO & Managing Director, Ramky Pharma City (India) Ltd, popularly known as Jawaharlal Nehru Pharma City, developed as the State's first sector-specific cluster at Parawada in Visakhapatnam district. The cluster has turned into a big hub for pharmaceutical units and it has become such a big hit with an estimated turnover of Rs 20,000 crore. Of late, major manufacturers have started demanding establishment of another Pharma City/cluster near Visakhapatnam between Nakkapalli and Payakaraopeta to give further boost to exports from the booming sector. "Visakhapatnam has a bright future when it comes to pharma exports," **Dr Lal Krishna** told **Bizz Buzz** in an exclusive interview



establish another 20 units. JNPC has become a role model for the entire India. Based on this park, the Government of India is proposing three parks in India with an aid of Rs 1,000 crore for each park through State implementing agencies.

What is the number of direct and indirect employment provided by units at JNPC?

The employment provided by the Pharma City is around 32,000 people as of now both direct and contract. There is an opportunity to increase employment to the tune of 50,000 in next two years. AP Skill Development Corporation is conducting skill development training programmes for the graduates of chemistry for the placement into the industry, which is very welcoming step from the industry point of view.

How much is the estimated annual turnover from JNPC and the expectations during 2021-22 fiscal? What is the total investment made into the city?

Out of 1,400 acres of plotted area, 1200 acres are allotted to the industries who brought investment to the tune of Rs 25,000 crore and annual turnover is around Rs 20,000 crore. We are expecting the

1,200 acres out of the 1,400 acres of plotted area are allotted to the industries, which brought investment to the tune of Rs 25,000 crore and their annual turnover is around Rs 20,000 crore. We are expecting the investment and revenue will improve year-on-year. Multinational companies like Pfizer, Mylan, Eisai, Indian giants like Aurobindo, Biocon, have set up their units at JNPC

investment and revenue will improve year on year.

What issues do you think need to be addressed by the authorities?

We already approached the government to support the pharma Industry in the AP. It is better to have a separate Bulk Drug Policy for this State to attract investments. We also approached the government to support in establishing NIPER (National Institute of Pharmaceutical Engineering Research), Pharmexcell (Pharmaceutical Exports Promotion Council of India) campus, Indian Institute of Packaging and an ecosystem to

provide a pharma innovation centre.

To strengthen the ecosystem for growth of pharma exports from Andhra Pradesh, there was a proposal to develop another pharma cluster. What's the status of the project?

In the State of AP, total pharmaceutical production is 10 per cent of the nation. It is possible to produce 35 per cent of the national requirement and exports from AP. We have skilled manpower, qualified personnel, educational institutes, long coastal corridor, supply of potable water, sufficient power, road rail connectivity, port and airport connectivity. We understand the government is also exploring the possibilities of setting up Pharma Park to take the advantage.

What kind of pharma Industries have come up at JNPC?

Multinational companies like Pfizer, Mylan, Eisai Pharma, Pharmazell, Ajinomoto and few others and Indian giants like Aurobindo, Biocon, Laurus Labs, Natco, GVK Bio and Granules have set up their units. We also have Indian companies like Vasudha, Rakshit group and Virchow Group. Basic chemicals manufacturing group like Kanoria,

Vishnu Chemicals, catalyst converter like Arora, gas manufacturing companies like Allen-berry and Linde and animal health care units including Alvira have established their facilities. In Pharma City, most of the companies are having two or three units, because of the world-class infrastructure and facilities and uninterrupted utilities making JNPC the most successful park in India and Asia.

Any plan for similar parks in future?

Representatives from many countries have visited Pharma City. President of Tatarstan (Providence of Russia), Health Minister from Sri Lanka, Ambassador from Ethiopia, Pharma Manufacturer Association from Bangladesh, Government officials from Gabon, etc., came to study the SEZ.

Ramky Group developed 2,700 acres of wood-based processing park in Gabon and common facilities centre in Bangladesh by providing common effluent treatment plant and hazardous waste management facility. Ramky Group is exploring to develop similar parks in India with the support of the Government of India.

QUIZ NO.
161

HANS BIZ QUIZ

INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY

1. UNESCO declared February 21 as the International Mother Language Day to honour the sacrifice by several students from East Pakistan who were killed. Which language did they demand to include as an official language?

- a) Hindi b) Bengali
c) Urdu d) English

2. As Greenberg's diversity index shows which countries speak the most languages?

- a) Cameroon
b) Indonesia
c) Papua New Guinea
d) India

3. Identify the first Indian language to be conferred the status of a classical language first?

- a) Assamese b) Bengali
c) Tamil d) Sanskrit

4. Which languages have been conferred the status of a classical language?

- a) Kannada, Malayalam, Odia, Sanskrit, and Telugu
b) Kannada, Marathi, Konkani, Sanskrit, and Urdu
c) Assamese, Bengali, Kannada, Sanskrit, and Telugu
d) Assamese, Bengali, Kannada, Konkani, and Sanskrit

5. Which is the only Indian State that has recognized Sanskrit as the States' second official language?

- a) Uttar Pradesh b) Karnataka
c) Bihar d) Uttarakhand

6. Besides International Mother Language Day, which another event the people of Bangladesh have been observing on the 21 February?

- a) Language Martyrs' Day
b) Bengali Language Movement Day
c) Language Movement Day or Language Revolution Day
d) All of the above

7. There are 22 official languages in India as per Articles 344(1) and 351 covered under the 8th schedule of the Indian Constitution. How many languages were recognized at the inception of the Indian constitution in 1950?

- a) 11 b) 14
c) 19 d) 21

8. Bengali surpassed Telugu and became the second most widely spoken language in India. Apart from West Bengal, which other Indian states/regions have Bengali as an official language?

- a) Tripura and Barak Valley
b) Mizoram and Kamrup region
c) Meghalaya and Goalpara region
d) Andaman and Nicobar Islands

9. The Department of Official Language was set up in June 1975 as an independent Department of Home Affairs Ministry. Central Institute of Indian Languages was



set up in 1969. Where is CIIL located?

- a) Kanpur b) Coimbatore
c) Mysore d) New Delhi

10. Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights holds references to several policies and empowerment of linguistic rights. Which other bodies have given importance to mother languages?

- a) The Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National, Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities
b) The Universal Declaration of the Collective Rights of Peoples
c) Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities
d) All of the above

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

KEY

1B 2C 3C 4A 5D 6D 7B 8A 9C 10D

Osaka eases past Brady, lifts 2nd Australian Open crown

MELBOURNE

JAPANESE tennis sensation, Naomi Osaka won her second Australian Open title by beating American Jennifer Brady 6-4, 6-3 in the women's singles final here on Saturday for her fourth Grand Slam title.

Before this, Osaka had won the 2019 Australian Open and 2018 and 2020 US Open crowns.

"I didn't play my last Grand Slam with fans so just to have this energy it means a lot," Osaka said to the fans during the presentation.

"Thank you so much for coming. I feel like playing a Grand Slam is a super privilege right now and it's something I won't take for granted. Thank you for this opportunity."

The 23-year-old from Japan faced challenge from her American challenger in the first set with the two holding serve till the ninth game which Osaka had to fight for and take on advantage. However, Osaka broke the 25-year-old Brady's serve in the 10th game and clinched it after being 30-40 down.

The second set was a much easier ride for the Japanese as she raced to a 4-0 lead. Brady broke back in the fifth game and held her serve in the sixth game. From thereon, Osaka held her serve to win the second set and the title.

Brady praised Osaka at the presentation.

"I'd like to congratulate Naomi on another Grand Slam title," Brady said after the match.

"She's such an inspiration to us all and what she is doing for the game is amazing in getting the sport out there, and I hope young girls at home are watching and are inspired by what she is doing."

"Hopefully, I'm on this stage next time with this girl over here," she added, referring to the winner's trophy.

Osaka hit six aces against two from Brady. She also had fewer double faults -- two against Brady's four. This was Osaka's 21st consecutive match victory. (IANS)



Japan's Naomi Osaka holds the Daphne Akhurst Memorial Cup after defeating United States Jennifer Brady (left) in the women's singles final at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne on Saturday

Medvedev looks to challenge Djokovic in men's final

MELBOURNE

DANIIL Medvedev, who is looking to become Russia's first Grand Slam champion since Marat Safin in 2005, said he is pleased to see himself playing with an amount of confidence that can scare his opponents. The 25-year-old Medvedev faces Serbian top seed Novak Djokovic in the final of the Australian Open on Sunday. Djokovic has won the Australian Open title eight times and will be gunning for his ninth title here.

"Of course, for the confidence, when you beat everybody, it is just great, because I think people

start to be a little bit scared about you," he said after beating Stefanos Tsitsipas in straight sets (6-4, 6-2, 7-5) in the Australian Open semi-final.

Medvedev will move to the world No. 2 spot if he wins the final. The 25-year-old is now unbeaten in 20 matches with 12 of these wins coming against top-10 opponents.

"I remember one moment when I was already playing quite good, I actually was struggling with the top 10 guys when I was maybe around top 20 or top 30," added Medvedev. The world No. 4 called himself an underdog in the final against Djokovic.

"I'm the challenger, the guy that challenges the

guy who was eight times in the final and won eight times. And I'm happy about it. I like to play against Novak. We have, since the first one when I was ranked 60, we had always tough matches physically, mentally. And he's one of the greatest tennis players in the history of tennis. So playing a final against him is superb. I'm really happy about it. Let's see what happens on Sunday."

Djokovic had said in a recent broadcast interview that the young challengers, who look to take over from him, Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer, including Medvedev have a "lot of work to do" to catch up with the big three of men's tennis.

LAHORE

CRICKET Board (PCB) on Saturday said it wants written assurance from India for visas for its national team, fans, officials and journalists by March for the T20 World Cup scheduled to be held in India in October-November failing which they will push the International

Cricket Council (ICC) to move the event to United Arab Emirates (UAE).

"We will wait till March this year for visa assurance in writing as per [what] ICC told us earlier. Otherwise, we will appeal for change of venue to the UAE," said PCB chairman Ehsan Mani while speaking to the media on Saturday.

"We are not seeking written assurance for the

visas of the national team only, but [also] for the fans, officials and journalists as well," added Mani.

The PCB chairman lashed out at Cricket Australia for refusing to tour South Africa due to Covid-19 pandemic despite being promised a tight bio-secure environment. "There is a need to change the 'Big Three' mindset. At the peak of the virus in England in the summer of 2020,

the Pakistan men's team toured England."

He added that had Pakistan and West Indies not toured England, it would have cost England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) around 3.5 million pounds.

"Similarly, had India not travelled to Australia it would have made Cricket Australia face heavy losses," added Mani. (IANS)

Bhadradi, Mahabubabad enter Finals

HYDERABAD: Sai Krishna's quickfire 146 off 72 balls helped Bhadradi District enter the finals of the TCA U-19 East Zone Inter Districts

Championship with an emphatic 169-run victory over Khammam District. They will now lock horns with Mahabubabad District, who defeated Bhupalapally Dist by just four runs.

Sai Krishna of Bhadradi and Md Sameer of Mahabubabad received the man of the match awards for their match winning contribution

to their respective teams.

Semi Final results
TCA-Bhadradi Dist. 241/6 in 20 Overs (Sai Krishna 146(72b, 19*4, 8*6), Dinsh Karthik 2/31) and TCA-Khammam Dist 72/9 in 20 Overs (K Ponting 22, Uday Kiran 3/10). TCA-Bhadradi Dist. won the match by 169 runs
TCA-Mahabubabad Dist. 108/10 in 16.5 Overs (N Venu 19, M Nithin 2/7, haseeb 2/19) and TCA-Bhupalapally Dist. 104/6 in 18 Overs (K Sreenivas 35, Ramesh Chary 2/12, Md Sameer 2/19). TCA-Mahabubabad Dist. won the match by 4 runs

TODAY'S MATCH		RESULT	
Bengaluru FC vs FC Goa	at Fatorda Stadium 5pm	Jamshedpur FC beat	Mumbai City FC
Kerala Blasters FC vs Chennaiyin FC	at GMC Stadium Bambolim 7.30pm	2-0	

ISL STANDINGS

CLUB	M	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
ATK Mohun Bagan	18	12	3	3	26	11	15	39
Mumbai City FC	18	10	4	4	27	17	10	34
Hyderabad FC	18	6	9	3	25	17	8	27
FC Goa	18	6	9	3	29	22	7	27
NorthEast United FC	18	6	9	3	27	24	3	27
Jamshedpur FC	19	6	6	7	18	20	-2	24
Bengaluru FC	19	5	7	7	23	23	0	22
Chennaiyin FC	19	3	10	6	16	22	-6	19
SC East Bengal	18	3	8	7	16	25	-9	17
Kerala Blasters FC	18	3	7	8	22	33	-11	16
Odisha FC	19	1	6	11	18	33	-15	9

Indian hockey team to travel to Europe

NEW DELHI: A year after it last played an international match, the Indian men's hockey team will travel to Europe for a 17-day tour to play two matches each against Germany and Britain. The 22-member squad is scheduled to leave for Krefeld, Germany, from Bengaluru on February 21. India will play host Germany in Krefeld on February 28 and March 2. They will then travel to Antwerp, Belgium where they are scheduled to play Britain on March 6 and March 8. The Indian men's team last participated in an international competition in February, 2020 when they took on Australia during the FIH Hockey Pro League matches in Bhubaneswar. As a result of good performances, the team had climbed to fourth in the FIH world rankings, India's highest ranking till date. (IANS)

Smith might pull out of IPL: Clarke

Sydney: Former Australia captain Michael Clarke has hinted that batsman Steve Smith might pull out of the Indian Premier League 2021 citing injury after being picked for a relatively small amount at the auction. Smith, the Australian batting mainstay was picked for Rs 2.2 crore by Delhi Capitals at Thursday's auction after he was released by Rajasthan Royals (RR) for below-par performance in IPL 2020. RR, who retained Smith in 2018 for Rs 12.5 crore, finished at the bottom in the points table in IPL 2020 under Smith's captaincy. "I know his T20 performances haven't been as good as he would have liked. Last year's IPL wasn't great. I'm very surprised he has gone for the amount of money he has, just under \$400,000 - which is still good money," said Clarke on the Big Sports Breakfast Podcast after calling Smith among the top three batsmen in the world. "But when you look at what he was getting (last season) and his role as captain of Rajasthan, don't be surprised if there's a little hamstring strain the day the plane is meant to fly to India," Clarke added.

Lyon beat Brest to stay on top of the table

BREST: Lyon survived a scare against Brest before edging out the hosts 3-2 in a Ligue 1 match. The visitors led 3-0 at the break through Lucas Paqueta, Houssem Aouar and Dutch striker Memphis Depay's penalty. But Brest fought back with goals from Brendan Chardonnet and Irvin Cardona in the second half. Lyon are on top of the table, ahead of Lille, on goal difference whereas Paris St-Germain are a point behind the two on third with 54 points. In the Premier League, Ilan Meslier's own goal helped Wolves beat Leeds United. Adama Traore's long-range shot hit the crossbar and hit Meslier's back to rebound into the net in the 64th minute. Wolves are 11th on the points table while Leeds United are 12th. At the La Liga in Barcelona, meanwhile, Spain's Borja Iglesias converted a penalty to give Real Betis a 1-0 win over Getafe.

Adriatic Pear boxing

After Alfiya's opening gold medal, India eye more

NEW DELHI

ASIAN junior champion Alfiya Pathan set the ball rolling the 30th Adriatic Pearl Tournament by winning the first gold medal for India, in the women's 81kg-plus category by defeating Daria Kozorev of Moldova 5-0 in in Budva, Montenegro.

Alfiya, who won the Asian junior crown in 2019, exhibited good fitness to notch up an easy win on Friday night

With Babyrojisana Chanu (51kg), Vinka (60kg), Arundhati (69kg) and Sanamacha Chanu (75kg) also making it to the finals, Indian team is on track for more gold medals.

Alfiya, an 18-year-old from Nagpur, took control of the bout from the word go and with precise punches continued to collect points to score a comfortable win.

In the 51kg category, India's Babyrojisana Chanu faced a stiff challenge

from Uzbekistan's Feruza Kazakova. But Babyrojisana managed to pull off a winning punch in the closing stages of the bout to score 3-2 verdict and sail into the final.

But it was an easy win for Vinka in the 60kg category. The Haryana boxer made lightwork of her Finnish opponent Suvi Tujula. Suvi was no match for the Indian as she conceded a series of punches, forcing the referee to stop the contest in the second round. Vinka will face Kristian Kiper of Moldova in the final on Saturday night.

Arundhati Choudhary advanced into the final of the women's 69kg.

In the 75kg semi-finals, Sanamcha Chanu defeated Uzbekistan's Sokhiba Ruzmetova in a unanimous 5-0 win to stay on course for gold. It will be an all-India final as Sanamcha will face Raj Sahiba.

In the 48kg category, Gitika will face Uzbekistan's Farzona Fozilova in the final while Preeti (57kg) and Lucky Rana (64kg) will play their semi-final bouts on Saturday night.

In other matches, Neha lost her 54kg semi-final bout 0-5 to Claudie Totova of Czech Republic.

In the men's category, Priyanshu Dabas (49kg) and Jugnoo (91kg plus) will compete in the semi-finals.

Akash Gorkha (60kg) and Ankit Narwal (64kg) lost their bouts by 3-2 margins. (IANS)



BALANCING ACT



Children showcase stiff competition during the 7th Annual Hyderabad District Roller Skating Championship held at GHMC Indira Park recently. The championship was organised successfully by Hyderabad District Roller Skating Association. (Photo: Ch Prabhu Das)