Www.thehansindia.com VOL. 4 | NO. 157 | MONDAY 5 APRIL 20 Forecast: Partly cloudy. Temp: Max.39°C. Min.23°C. Humidity: 22% Sunrise: 06:06 Sunset: 06:41

O A SE

• Simultaneously published from Hyderabad | Warangal | Tirupati | Amaravati | Visakhapatnam | Khammam | Kurnool | Delhi: RNI No: DELENG/2017/74095

● Follow @ ● /thehansindia | ● /thehansindia | ● /thehansindia | ● /thehansindia ●

WINDOWS



Jordan prince Hamzah under house arrest

AMMAN: The half-brother of Jordan's King Abdullah II has said he has been placed under house arrest and accused the country's "ruling system" of incompetence and corruption, exposing a rare rift within the ruling monarchy of a close Western ally.

Prince Hamzah's videotaped statement came on Saturday after the country's official news agency reported that two former senior officials and other suspects had

been arrested for "security reasons," even as authorities denied that Hamzah had been detained or placed under house arrest. In a video leaked to the British Broadcasting Corp, Hamzah — a former crown prince stripped of his title in 2004 — said he was visited early Saturday by the country's military chief and told he was not allowed to go out, communicate with people or meet with them. He said his security detail was removed, and his phone and Internet service had been cut. He said he was speaking over satellite Internet and expected that service to be cut as well. The BBC said it

Modi skeds high-profile visit to France in May

received the statement from

Hamzah's lawyer.



NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to attend the India-EU summit at Lisbon before he flies to France for a highprofile bilateral visit, sources said on Sunday. India and European Union are likely to initiate talks for a broad-based trade and investment agreement (BBTIA) at the

Portugal Summit on May 8.
Even as India and the EU are major trade partners since the negotiations started in 2007, the two nations have largely varied in their opinions over tariffs of alcohol, auto components, small cars, and data security. To address these differences, external affairs minister S Jaishankar is also set to hold

talks on a diplomatic level with the EU, to strengthen trade relations. The talks will begin between April 9 and 19. Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and EU executive vice president and commissioner for trade Valdis Dombrovskis will hold talks later in April, while EU diplomats were quoted as saying that "Date for Goyal-Dombrovskis meet are yet

April, while EU diplomats were quoted as saying that "Date for Goyal-Dombrovskis meet are yet to be decided on." Another senior government official hinted that "India and EU have shown more accommodation this time on various issues. The two countries have maintained a positive approach towards over the path

proach towards exports from both blocks." India is also set to sign a bilateral trade agreement with post-Brexit Britain during Prime Minister Boris Johnson's visit to New Delhi on April 26. Given the development, the EU must complete the trade deal with India, according to reports.

CONTAIN COVID SPREAD

PM CHAIRS HIGH-LEVEL MEET ON COVID

- Rushes healthcare teams to Maha, Punjab, Chhattisgarh
- Modi calls for compliance of Covid appropriate behaviour
- Stresses the need for 'Jan Bhagidari' and 'Jan Andolan'
 Highlights importance of 5-fold strategy to check virus surge

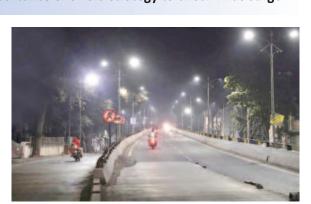
PURNA SINGH NEW DELHI

IN view of the increasing cases of Covid-19 across the country, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday chaired a high-level meeting to review the situation amid a surge in coronavirus cases.

During the meeting,

Modi directed that Central teams consisting of public health specialists and clinicians be sent to Maharashtra in view of high caseload and deaths, and likewise to Punjab and Chhattisgarh because of the disproportionate number of deaths being reported there, Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said in a statement.

Continued on Page 5



Night curfew in Maharashtra

MUMBAI: The Maharashtra government on Sunday declared a night curfew from Monday and a complete weekend lockdown on Friday night and to Monday (April 12) morning in all districts of Maharashtra to curb the coronavirus. The night curfew will be imposed from 8 pm on Friday to 7 am on Monday in the entire State, Maharashtra Minister Aslam Shaikh said after a Cabinet meeting led by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray. As of now, the restrictions have been placed only for the upcoming week, after which a review meeting will be held for further guidelines.

Chhattisgarh encounter toll

• 17 more bodies of security personnel recovered from forest

RAIPUR

THE toll of security personnel killed in an encounter with the Maoists in Chhattisgarh rose to at least 22 on Sunday, after 17 more bodies were recovered from the jungles of Bijapur district.

At least one officer was reportedly missing as rescue teams continued the search operation for the second day. However, unauthorised sources say that the number of missing persons was higher, with three personnel still unaccounted for as of Sunday.

About 30 other personnel were injured in the incident, which took place on Saturday. The gunbattle broke out when a joint team of security forces was out on an anti-Maoist operation. Around 10 Naxalites were also killed in the gunfight, the sources say.

More than 2,000 personnel from at least five camps in Sukma and Bijapur had gone into the forest around Tarrem in Bijapur district. They were trapped in an ambush while returning from the operation. Personnel belonging to the Central Reserve Police Force, its elite unit CoBRA, the District Reserve Guard and the Special Task Force were involved in the operation launched from five places -Tarrem, Usoor and Pamed in Bijapur, and Minpa and Narsa-



Union Home Minister Amit Shah addresses media representatives, at Sualkuchi in Kamrup on Sunday

Shah vows befitting reply

NEW DELHI: Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who cut short his visit to poll-bound Assam and returned to Delhi in the wake of a Maoist attack on security forces in Chhattisgarh, took stock of the situation and said search operation is still on.

Twenty-two personnel of various security forces were killed in the gunfight which took place on Saturday in Chhattisgarh.

The Home Minister, however, said the exact number of casualties is being ascertained. "As far as the numbers are concerned, both sides have suffered losses and exact casualty figures cannot be ascertained immediately," Shah said. "Our security personnel have lost their lives, we will not tolerate this bloodshed and a befitting reply will be given at an appropriate time," the Home Minister said. Before leaving Assam, he gave tributes to

the soldiers and said the soldiers' sacrifice won't go in vain.

A squad of 400 Naxals in ambush

AT least 400 Naxals, led by the most wanted Maoist commander and leader of the so-called 'People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) battalion no 1'-- Hidma-- and his associate Sujatha are suspected to be behind the Saturday ambush that took place in an area that is a strong-hold of the ultras due to the difficult terrain, large tracts of forests and less number of security forces' camps. The Maoists had ambushed the security personnel who were part of a large contingent deployed for a special operation, leading to the killing of at least 22 personnel and injuries to 30 others, official sources said on Sunday



India records biggest single-day jump of 93,249 Covid cases

New Delhi

INDIA on Sunday recorded 93,249 new coronavirus infections, the highest singleday rise so far this year, which took the total Covid-19 cases tol,24,85,509, according to Union Health Ministry data.

This is the biggest daily rise in cases since September 19, when 93,337 fresh infections were recorded.

The death toll climbed to 1,64,623 on Sunday with 513 new fatalities, the ministry data updated at 8 am showed.

Registering a steady increase for the 25th day in row, the active cases surged to 6,91,597, accounting for 5.54per cent of the total infections. The recovery rate further dropped to 93.14 per cent, the data stated.

The active caseload was at its lowest at1,35,926 on February 12, comprising1.25 per cent of the total infections.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease increased to 1,16,29,289, while the case fatality rate stands at 1.32



Micro lockdowns, travel curbs must: AIIMS Chief

NEW DELHI: To arrest the spread of Covid-19 virus in India a new strategy is required, says Dr Randeep Guleria, chief of Delhi's All-India Institute of Medical Sciences and a top member of the government's Covid Task Force.

"We have to aggressively work on reducing the number of cases," through a bigger range of measures, including "containment zones, lockdown areas, ramping up testing, tracing and isolation," Dr Guleria said.

per cent, according to the data.

India's Covid-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16. It went past 60 lakh on September 28.

70 lakh on October 11, 80

lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one-crore mark on December 19.

According to the Indian Council of Medical Research, 24,81,25,908 samples had been tested up to April 3with11,66,716 being tested on Saturday.

Sharpest spike of Covid cases in Pune district

Records 10,827 new cases in 24 hours

PUNE: The second wave of coronavirus infections in Pune is showing no signs of slowing down, with the number of new Covid-19 cases in the district crossing 10,000. A total of 10,827 new cases were reported in the last 24 hours. With 66 persons succumbing to the infection on Saturday, Pune district reached a cumulative total of 10,163 Covid-19 deaths. Of these, a total of 35 were from PMC and 10 from Pimpri Chinchwad. A total of 31,196 samples were tested on Saturday, of which 20.066 were from PMC areas, 5,981 were from Pimpri-Chinchwad and 5,149 were from Pune Rural and cantonment areas. A total of 54,971 persons with Covid-19 are now in home isolation.

JNU issues fresh directions to prevent spread of Covid-19

New Delhi

IN the wake of rising COVID-19 cases, the Jawaharlal Nehru University on Sunday issued fresh directions for students and staff members, including mandatory thermal screening and wearing of face mask at hostels and inside all buildings on campus.

Delhi recorded 3,567 COVID-19 cases on Saturday and the positive rate continued to rise to 4.48 per cent from 4.11 per cent a day ago while 10 more people succumbed to the deadly virus. The national capital has seen an increase in cases with 3.594 cases being reported on Friday, the highest daily count this year, 2,790 cases on Thursday, 1,819 cases on Wednesday and 992 cases on Tuesday, according to official data. In a circular, the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) said face masks will be mandatory for students and employees across the campus, including at hostels, library, administrative buildings and on the road.

"Students and employees will be allowed in hostels, administrative buildings, school buildings and the Dr B R Ambedkar Central Library and other buildings and public spaces, including shopping complexes and walking on the road, if they are found wearing the mask," it said.

Centre punishing AAP govt for supporting farmers' stir: Kejriwal



CHANDIGARH

DELHI Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday alleged that the BJP-led Centre was trying to "punish" his government for supporting the farmers' agitation by creating hurdles in its functioning with the new law that gives primacy to the Lieutenant Governor.

Addressing a farmers' mahapanchayat' in Haryana's Jind district, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener asserted that he is ready to "make any sacrifice" for the sake of farmers who are agitating against the three central agri laws. He went on to say that anyone who opposes the farmers' stir is a

"traitor". "They (BJP) have brought a Bill in Parliament to punish Kejriwal. We bore the brunt. They are punishing us for supporting farmers' agitation," said Kejriwal, while lashing out at the Centre for the enactment of the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill in March The chief minister said all powers will be now be with the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi. "What kind of law is this," he said, adding that his party despite winning 62 seats would have no power.

He claimed that each member of the BJP had said in Parliament that Kejriwal was "punished" for supporting farmers' agitation.

FACEBOOK DATA FOR FREE!

Personal data of 53 crore users leaked online

New Delhi

PERSONAL data of nearly 53.3 crore Facebook users, including 61 lakh Indians, remerged online after a hacker posted the details on a digital forum.

The leaked data includes Facebook ID numbers, profile names, email addresses, location information, gender details, job data, and other details. The easy availability of such data nerable to cybercrime, although Facebook has said that this is "old data". "All 533,000,000 Facebook records were just leaked for free. This means that if you have a Facebook account, it is extremely likely the phone number used for the account was leaked," tweeted Alon Gal, CTO of security firm Hudson Rock. "I have yet to see Facebook acknowledging this ab-

may make users more vul-



solute negligence of your data," he added. Facebook has confirmed

the leak to The Record.

"This is old data that was previously reported on in 2019. We found and fixed this issue in August 2019," a Facebook spokesperson was quoted as saying in the report late Saturday.

With the data now entering the public domain, there is a real danger that this information can be widely used by cybercriminals for email or SMS spam, robocalls, extortion attempts, threats and harassment, etc. The data is reportedly broken up into download packages by country. As Cambridge Analytics still haunts nearly 87 million users, including over 5 lakh users from India, this has come as the biggest ever leak of a social media platform that has billions of users.

'AAP govt didn't build any hospital'

New Delhi: The BJP on Sunday hit out at the ruling-AAP in Delhi alleging that it did not build any hospital and flyover during its rule between 2015 and 2019. Citing replies to two RTI gueries filed in 2019 by Tejpal Singh, a city resident seeking information about healthcare and infrastructure initiatives by the Delhi government, the BJP's national media in-charge and chief spokesperson Anil Baluni said., that by making "false" claims about development works, the AAP has cheated people.



of the past, sir. Now, the excuse



The girl who inspires fellow females

ACKADI TARREI

ith fast-growing followers and subscribers on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, Anisha is one of the top female influencers on the digital platform with 2.7 million subscribers on YouTube and 461k Instagram followers.

Since Anisha's main motive of the channel is to inspire girls, she had the once in a life time opportunity to meet President Barack Obama in person and speak about her aim to do more for women all around the world. Anisha has also collaborated with Priyanka Chopra, Kartik Aaryan, Sara Ali Khan, Rajkumar Rao, Boman Irani and many more.

Before founding her YouTube Channel, Anisha was an actress in multiple films and theatre productions in India, USA, Switzerland and Germany. Anisha studied at the Lee Strasberg Theatre & Film Institute in



Anisha Dixit, previously known as 'Rickshawali' is a girl-centric comedy influencer and Youtuber popularly known for the new spin that she brings on to the day-to-day activities of Indians and most importantly women, through her sketches and comedy vlogs

Sharing about her journey, Anisha shares, "It's been a roller coaster ride with lots of ups and downs, yet an amazing journey. Everything comes with its own pain and pleasures. There have been some terrible times in the journey but also there have been great times too. I was an aspiring actress trying to make it in Bollywood like many others and used to go to auditions day in and day out. After facing more than 500 rejections from my auditions, my then boyfriend Caleb, who happens to be my husband now, suggested that I explore YouTube. So, then I started to figure out how to even make videos because in 2013 there were hardly any independent creators in India. While I was

trying to understand how YouTube works, I was simultaneously giving auditions side by side. At the beginning I had no Idea where this was going or if this even had a future but later on when things started to take off and I gathered a small community I realized I could finally be in front of a camera without being dependent on auditions. And that is how my journey as a content creator started. Initially my family really didn't support me, I mean who will support you in something which is not

one and still is my biggest supporter."
Anisha believes that social media is the perfect platform to inspire women. Infact,

seen as a career option, back then. However,

my mother was always supportive since day

her main aim has always been to speak about problems women and girls go through and try to raise awareness about the same. She also tries try to inspire them in whatever ways possible.

She adds, "I have seen it work. Trust me at the end of the day when you see DMs of girls telling you how you have changed their lives or inspired them to do something, that gives you more satisfaction than anything else in this world. I want to inspire more and more girls out there and to bring more smiles on people's faces and motivate them to follow their dreams and never give up."

Sooner or later, Anisha is going to try her hands on reaction or commentary videos. She has been planning to do this since a long time which will be up on her channel anytime soon.

"I might put my hand on light-hearted Roasting as well, have never done it before but this will be fun," ends the influencer.

On an epicurean journey

Puja Gupta

amiya Jani, who founded Curly Tales in 2017 as a personal blog, says that shad left her job to explore the world. Her videos often pop up on our Facebook feeds and give major travel goals. Mother of one, Kamiya Jani quit her fulltime job as an anchor to follow her passion for traveling and exploring the world. Curly Tales, is one of the most popular online platform that shares recommendations for food and travel.

Jani talks about her journey, her venture, apart from her views on the present scenario of the travel industry.

When did you begin your journey as a content creator, and how has your journey been till now?

Even though I started this journey by writing blogs and articles, I realised that not too many platforms were making videos around this. That is when I forayed into videos, which were very well received by everyone who watched them. The journey has been full of excitement, starting with just me and my passion for food and travel. I now have an amazing team of 25-30 people.

What started as a food and travel platform where I would make 1-minute videos on topics of interest - from street food, unique servings in restaurants, we have surely come a long way. We are now well placed to host celebrity interviews, wherein I invite renowned personalities for a brunch. They then discuss their journey, their passion for travel, and their food experience, through a very candid and freeflowing conversation. This concept became pretty unique, and was well received by the audi-

What was your inspiration to start your journey as a traveler?

I was working as a business news anchor at a renowned business news channel, and I had been a journalist for the past 10 years, before Curly Tales. Although I enjoyed that stint entirely, I used to feel pretty confined in the space. While on the job, I strongly felt that I wanted to enjoy myself exploring the world.

When I switched, I was already mom of a three-vear-old daughter. I wanted to pursue my dreams with a simple thought if not now, then when. I wanted to follow my passion for traveling on a personal level. Initially, I just started documenting my experiences and publishing on Facebook, where I found a community of like-minded people that could relate to my content. Additionally, a lot of women started looking up to me, by telling me that despite being married and a mother I still pursued my passion. This only gave me more motivation and drive to continue my journey, document it and publish it, and engage the community with my recommendations and their suggestions.

The whole journey from content has taken a shift to commerce. We are not just recommending but also selling some of these experiences now. Recently, we experienced a staycation

package for a five-star hotel, and over 500 people bought that experience through Curly Tales on Facebook after watching our video on it. In all, our journey started from a passion, moved to content creation, to curation and it is now in the stage of commerce, where the transactions are happening based on recommendations through Facebook.

Given that you are also a part of Facebook's ongoing 'More Together' campaign which focuses on the power of connections, how do you relate to it?

The power of connections is all about working together. The connection has been with my team who has helped me build the foundation of Curly Tales and the connection with the followers, who have been following us since we started with 300-400 followers. Moreover, some of those followers have now turned into our clients. I feel all this personifies the power of connections - something that has happened through Facebook. This has brought me even closer to the essence of Facebook's More Together campaign.

The pandemic induced disruption in the travel space, forced people and travelers to become homebound. How did you cope up with the situation?

The pandemic allowed me to relook at my business. Even though Curly Tales is in the travel space, travel can never be replaced with an online experience. We did some virtual tours but the joy of traveling outdoors can never be replaced by anything else. We were positive that we will be back. The pandemic also allowed us to relook at our content strategy and position ourselves the way we wanted to. During the pandemic, we got an opportunity to focus on written content, and use instant articles on Facebook as traveling guides for people who needed to be reunited with their families. Through this process, we became

a catalyst and a mediator of informing people as to how they can travel during tough times.

Share some insights into what went in the travel community during the last few months. Are you excited as travel opens up slowly?

We definitely saw a lull period which started from March-end and went out till September-October, up until domestic flights started. Even when flight operations started, it was not much for leisure, and rather about emergency travel, where people were looking to reunite with their family members. Once travel started, the market bounced back due to the pent-up demand of people wanting to travel. The demand was clearly at its peak and there was a 'revenge travel', that we saw, where people were wanting to get out of their homes and explore, even if it meant to get away on road trips.

I do think that domestic tourism is growing and has caught up already. This is also why we have started our new show "I love my India", where we discover hidden gems in India and where Indians can actually find international experiences right here in the home country.

What were some of the challenges that you faced, when you shifted to this from your job? How did you overcome them?

I gave myself a time limit of one year, thinking that I will boomerang into my job. But as fate had it, there was no looking back. The biggest challenge for me in this journey has been to find people with whom I can share my passion. A shared vision fueled by mutual passion leads to the meaningful content of relevance and keeps the team motivated. I feel blessed to have an amazing team that meets these requisites, and have been instrumental in taking Curly Tales to where it is today.

NEWS ROUNDUP



Rakulpreet's motto: Laugh as much as you breathe

Bollywood actress
Rakulpreet Singh
has shared a candid
picture and the mantra
she follows. Rakul
posted a picture on
Instagram, where she is
seen dressed in denim
shorts and white vest.
In the image, she is seen
sitting on a yacht.

"Laugh as much as you breathe and love as long as you live A #sundaymoodA #happyeaster #candidmoments," Rakul wrote.

On the work front,
Rakul features in the
upcoming digital film
"Sardar Ka Grandson"
alongside Arjun Kapoor.
She also shares the
screen with Ayushmann
Khurrana in Anubhuti
Kashyap's "Doctor G".
The actress will also be
seen alongside Amitabh
Bachchan and Ajay
Devgn in Devgn's
upcoming directorial
"MayDay".

DEEP DISH PIZZA DAY



It might be a good idea to start talking about deep dish pizza by taking some time to acknowledge Pizzeria Uno's founder, Ike Sewell, without whom this day wouldn't exist. In fact, without him, the deep-dish pizza wouldn't exist—and that would be a very sad world.

Sewell is credited with creating the spectacular deep-dish pizza in 1943 in Chicago, Illinois, USA. This wonderfully tasty pizza, also known as Chicago-style pizza, is characterised by a superb buttery crust that can be as high as 3 inches tall along the edges, combined with generous amounts of flavoursome sauce, delectable toppings and cheese.



Once the idea for deep dish pizza caught on in Chicago, it was only a short time before it became a trademark of the city-and in doing so it became the exact opposite of its rival pie: thin crust pizza from New York.

The ultimate guide to slay that traditional look slab slim and sleek bottoms such as pants and you will get a stunning



ashion trends are constantly evolving and style enthusiasts are hooked to the latest collections and options that are available on online and offline clothing stores. These traditional wears can swing from being maximalist to minimalist, going well with all body and skin types. However, the idea is to select the Kurti that can be easy to style and compliment the wearer

without being overpowering.

Below are some quick tips and guides by Anuj Mundra, Chairman & MD, Jaipurkurti.com based on each body type to nail the traditional look with manipulation of designs and colours.

Apple shaped body

If your upper body is wide compared to the lower body with rounded shoulders, average to big bust or fullness around the middle, it's best to go for darker

shades with cotton and silk fabrics as they do not cling to the body. Necklines that are V-shaped or embellished will tend to draw attention to the muchendowed bust. Flared and cuffed sleeves will help in highlighting the best assets while accentuating your best features.

Banana shaped body

Banana-shaped body or the rectangular body type, is an evenly proportionate shape, which means that the shoulders, hips, and waist are evenly proportioned. The size can vary from small to medium bust but the waist is not defined. The features for the right Kurti that will compliment this body type include a broad and deep neckline with a clinched waist. One can opt for panel detailing along with pleats and a front placket. While choosing the bottoms, select slightly

slim and sleek bottoms such as churidars or leggings to complete the look.

Pear shaped body

The pear-shaped body types are one with full hips and thighs along with defined waist and narrow shoulders. Wearing lowers which are dark in colour, teaming up with lighter Kurtis will draw attention to the torso. Necklines that have collar patterns, boat, or square cuts will enhance the look. For sleeves, one can go for a bishop and roughed arms. Straight-long Kurtis will add length to your body.

Hourglass shaped body

This body type includes a defined waist and bust along with the bottom and hips. With this body type, you can carry off the Kurtis of all types. Pair them with palazzos and or straight-line

pants and you will get a stunning look. Do not go for ill-fitted Kurtis. A flared Kurti can be the best pick as it will give a fuller look. Additionally, a streamlined cut would prove to be perfect for this body type.

Inverted triangle shaped body

This body type calls for a straight and squared shoulder line along with a smaller bottom. Choosing flared Kurtis that fit well on the bust and slightly low necklines that will take away the attention from broad shoulders. Sleeves in the raglan style create an illusion of an evenly distributed look throughout the body and would be perfect for this body type. Make sure that you go for longer Kurtis and layer them with Patiala or skirt. One can avoid anything with strong shoulder detailing or high necklines to shift to an appealing style.



Akhara Parishad seeks renaming roads, draws Opposition ire

PRAYAGRAJ

THE Akhil Bharatiya Akhara Parishad (ABAP) has demanded renaming of all roads named after the Mughal invaders and British-

ABAP chief Mahant Narendra Giri said, "India got Independence 74 years ago and roads named after Mughal invaders like Tughlak, Humayun and Babur and Britishers in Delhi should be renamed after Chandra

Shekhar Azad, Subhash Chandra Bose, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Gulzari Lal Nanda and Veer Abdul Hameed."

He further said, "Why should roads still be named after Mughal invaders and Britishers who looted and divided the country? Most countrymen, particularly youngsters, feel embarrassed after seeing roads named on invaders. These roads should be renamed on the names of martyrs who laid their lives

for the country." He explained, "Visit any city of the country and you will find roads named on Mughal invaders or Britishers who looted, divided the country. We demand that the union government should re-

name all these roads on our

freedom fighters and mar-

The ABAP statement has led to a controversy with the opposition denouncing the statement. "The government should function according to the Constitution of the country and not as per whimsical demands of priests and saints or else it will set a dangerous precedent. The contribution of Mughal emperors in making India a great nation cannot be forgotten," said Samajwadi Party district spokesperson Daan Bahadur 'Madhur'.

He accused the saffron brigade of diverting the attention of the common man from persisting problems like unemployment and in-

The state Congress leader Mukund Tiwari said, "It is an unfortunate statement. Roads are named on personalities who made our nation

flation to irrelevant issues.

great irrespective of their caste, creed and religion. There were many good administrators who worked for the unity and integrity of the country. The saffron brigade is trying to generate a new controversy to divert attention from core issues in the Panchayat elections."



Take custody of Ansari by April 8: Punjab to UP Govt

CHANDIGARH/BARABANKI /BALLIA

PUNJAB'S home department has asked the Uttar Pradesh Government to take custody of gangster-turned-politician Mukhtar Ansari from the Rupnagar jail on April 8, with BSP MP Afzal Ansari on Sunday saying that his brother's "safety" is now the responsibility of the judiciary and the Yogi Adityanath dispensation.

Mukhtar Ansari, who is wanted in various cases in Uttar Pradesh, has been lodged in the Rupnagar district jail in Punjab since January 2019 in connection with an alleged extortion case. In a letter to the Uttar Pradesh Additional Chief Secretary (Home), the Home Department of Punjab asked for suitable arrangements to be made for the transfer of under-trial prisoner Mukhtar Ansari.

"The said handover is to be made at district jail Rupnagar on/before April 8," the letter stated. It also said that Mukhtar Ansari suffers from certain medical conditions and the same may be kept in mind while making arrangements for his transport from Rupnagar jail to Banda jail in Uttar Pradesh. Afzal Ansari, who is the MP from Ghazipur, told PTI: "The safety of Mukhtar after he comes to the Uttar Pradesh jail is that of the judiciary and of the Yogi Adityanath government. The court should monitor the



safety and medical facilities given to Mukhtar."

He also said that the safety of life of any citizen is the responsibility of the government. "This duty increases by twice when the prisoner is in judicial custody and by four times, when the state government files a petition in the Supreme Court saying that the hearing of the case is getting affected," the MP said.

In its letter, the Punjab home department referred to the March 26 Supreme Court order that had directed the State government to transfer the BSP's MLA from Mau, Mukhtar Ansari, to Uttar Pradesh's Banda jail in two weeks. Delivering the order, the apex court had also noted that Mukhtar Ansari was allegedly involved in various cases of attempt to murder, murder, cheating and under the Gangsters Act, lodged in Uttar Pradesh and 10 of these cases are at different stages of trial.

The Uttar Pradesh Police, officials said on Sunday, has set up a special investigation team (SIT) to further probe into the issue of fake documents of the ambulance which was used to ferry Mukhtar Ansari from the Rupnagar jail to a Mohali court recently. Barabanki Superintendent of Police Yamuna Prasad on Sunday said the SIT has been constituted under the additional superintendent of police (north). BSP MP Afzal Ansari said his brother had nothing to do with the ambulance case.

"The reports of Mukhtar purchasing the ambulance using his MLA funds is false. Had it been the case, it could have been ascertained by going through the government documents," he said. On April 2, a case was registered in Barabanki after the documents of the ambulance bearing a Uttar Pradesh registration number were found to be fake. Mukhtar Ansari was on March 31 produced before the Mohali court in connection with the alleged 2019 extortion matter. Amid tight security arrangements, Ansari was taken into the court in a wheelchair. He was sent back to the Rupnagar jail in the ambulance after the appear-

DIRECT PAYMENT TO FARMERS

Sidhu slams Goyal, says Centre wants to destroy mandi system

CHANDIGARH

CONGRESS leader Navjot Singh Sidhu on Sunday attacked Union Food Minister Piyush Goyal over his letter regarding the issue of direct payment to farmers and alleged that the central government wanted to "destroy and disrupt" the state's tried and tested mandi system.

Goyal had written a letter to the Puniab government asking it to implement a system for direct payment to farmers for crop procurement. The state government was also asked to integrate land records available with the revenue department with the procurement portal. Addressing the media in Patiala, the cricketer-turned-politician alleged that the motive of the letter was to "disrupt" the age-old, tried and tested, and successful mandi system that allows for the implementation of minimum support price (MSP) in



the state. It also intended to create a "division" between arhtiyas (commission agents) and farmers in the state, he claimed.

This letter is part of a "larger conspiracy" to stall the procurement of wheat crops in Punjab and destroy the state's agricultural economy, he alleged. Sidhu said according to Goyal, the revenue department of the state government had all the information about the land records of the state's farmers. But according to the data collected by the National Sample Survey for year 2012-13, it shows that more than 24 per cent of

the land under cultivation in Puniah is under tenancy, he added.

"These tenancy contracts are oral or unwritten in nature," he said, adding that the land under tenancy might have increased and not decreased over the years. If the sale of wheat crop is allowed with ownership rights, then about 25 to 30 per cent farmers will not receive payment for sale of their crops, he claimed. The former Puniab minister accused the centre of planning to "destroy" the state's successful Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee model and also questioned the timing of the letter.

"The timing of this letter is further questionable as farmers prepare for cultivation of Rabi crop," he said. He emphasised that the state and its people should come together and build "an alternative economic model" for Puniab's agricultural prosperity.

UP STF nabs man accused of Maha MNS leader's murder

LUCKNOW

THE Uttar Pradesh Special Task Force (UP STF) has arrested a sharpshooter, Irfan Sonu, in connection with the murder of Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) functionary, Jameel Ahmad, who was shot dead in Thane district of Maharashtra on November 23 last year. Additional Director General (ADG), Special Task Force (STF), Amitabh Yash, said that Irfan has confessed that Nationalist Congress Party (NCP)

corporator, Najibullah, had hired him to eliminate Ahmad. Both Najibullah and Osama are on the run. Irfan, who originally hails from Gorakhpur, was arrested from a place near Kathauta Jheel in Gomti Nagar in Lucknow. The STF ADG said. "We are still tracing other people involved in the murder. Irfan has been handed over to a crime branch team of Thane police." Narrating the sequence of events of November 2020, inspector, STF, Satya

UP panchayat poll candidate shot

BAGHPAT

A candidate in the upcoming panchayat elections in Uttar Pradesh's Baghpat district was shot by unidentified assailants. Shakeel, the gram panchayat candidate, was shot on Saturday night in Osika village. The assailants fled the scene after the incident. Local residents rushed Shakeel to a government hospital in Badaut from where he was referred to Meerut for advanced treatment. The police spokesman said that further investigations were underway and call details of the victim were being scrutinised.

Ayodhya sadhu found murdered

THE body of a sadhu, Mahant Kanhaiya Das of the Hanuman Garhi temple was found at Gaushala of Charanpaduka temple on Sunday. He had been apparently bludgeoned to death in his sleep by unidentified assailants. The Mahant was also the head of Gulchaman Baag of Basantia Patti. Senior police officials rushed to the spot on hearing the news to begin an investigation. News of the murder of Mahant Kanhaiya Das spread like wildfire in the temple town.

Angry over the killing, several Naga sadhus and their followers



assembled at the Charanpaduka temple to lodge their protest against the murder.

Extra police force was deployed to maintain peace and law and order. Superintendent of Police V.P. Singh said that primarily personal enmity seems to be the motive behind the murder of the sadhu.

Forensic experts were called in to take fingerprints from the

3 held for abducting, gang raping woman

SHAHJAHANPUR

THE Uttar Pradesh Police have arrested three men in connection with the alleged gang rape of a 25-year-old woman. The three have been accused of gang raping the woman on March 22 after abducting her from her house. The incident occurred in a village under the Mirzapur police station limits, the police said. On March 22, the woman was allegedly abducted by the accused from the roof of her house after which they took turns to rape her. Soon after, the victim escaped from their custody and reached her house. Jalalabad Circle Officer (CO) Massa Singh said. "The incident came to light when the victim narrated her ordeal to her husband. when he returned from Delhi on Holi. Following this, a case of gang rape was registered on Friday." The police detained the three accused on Saturday and the woman has been sent for medical examination.

Delhi Police deploys Jaguar Highway' patrolling teams

THE Delhi Police has deployed 'Jaguar Highway' patrolling teams at vulnerable stretches in the north district in a bid to curb street crime, officials said.

The initiative has led to the arrest of 21 criminals till March 15, they said. According to police, 16 thieves, two robbers, two people with illegal arms and a snatcher have been nabbed by the patrolling staff. "To curb street crime in north Delhi, a new initiative of deploying Jaguar Highway Patrol Teams at vulnerable stretches, especially Outer Ring Road, was introduced on December 26 last year.

The teams have been deployed at their designated stretches in three shifts, which keep patrolling the area roundthe-clock," a senior police officer said. "These patrolling teams also keep a tab on PCR calls related to their designated routes and nearby area, and reach the spot instantly. These teams also check suspects by implementing 'roko-toko' strategy," he said.

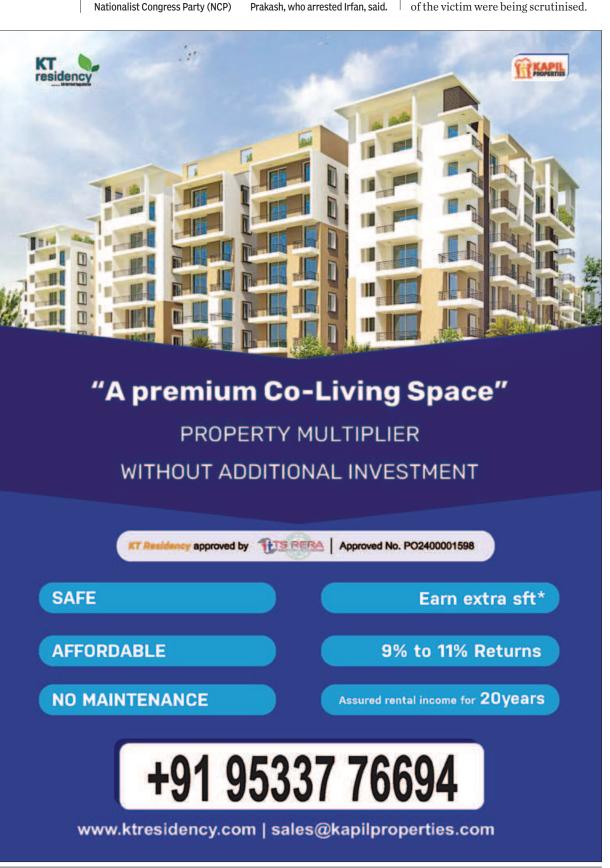


The officer said they have chosen Outer Ring Road as it is usually easy for criminals to escape via this route after committing the crime. The patrolling staff has so far checked 19,786 vehicles. A total of 3,808 vehicles were checked in January, 10.346 in February and 5.632 till March 15, the officer said, adding that 709 vehicles have been impounded this year so far. According to police, 463 vehicles have been deposited under section 66 of the Delhi Police Act (police to take charge of unclaimed property) this

year. This number was 304 in 2020. The number of calls about street

crime has come down due to this initiative. The strategy is effective as criminals know the stretch where strict patrolling is done and they avoid taking that route, police said. Although robbery incidents have marginally gone down, snatching cases have seen a sharp decline as compared to last year in six police stations -- Kotwali, Kashmiri Gate, Civil Lines, Timarpur, Wazirabad and Burari -- which cover Outer Ring Road of the district, police said. In January this year, there were 26 calls of robbery and 83 calls of snatching.

In the previous year, the number of robbery calls were 28 and snatching calls 172, they said. Similarly, in February 2021, police received 31 calls of robbery and 98 calls of snatching. In 2020, the number of robbery and snatching calls were 33 and 140, respectively, police said. Police have received 13 calls of robbery and 43 calls of snatching till March 15. In the previous year, the number of robbery and snatching incidents were 27 and 77, respectively, they added.



Rising corona cases, unfeeling authorities

 $\mathbf{I}^{ ext{NDIA}}$ records this year's biggest spike of over 93,000 Covid-19 cases. Weekend lockdown, night curfew has become imminent in Maharashtra. Pune district alone saw a spike of 10,827 Covid-19 cases and 66 deaths. Centre is rushing health teams to assist Punjab and Chhattisgarh States where the surge is high. Despite such alarming situation and reports that cases are on increase in the two Telugu States, the respective State governments seem to be blinking. 'Track, Trace and Test' concept remains on paper. Real data is being kept under wraps. The State governments have no doubt created medical infrastructure last year when the pandemic broke out. But they do not seem to be putting to use even after the experience they had gained in han-

dling the crisis that struck the world last year. No one wants another lockdown and another financial crisis. The State governments which have not only gained experience in crisis management but are also armed with vaccine this year should have woken up early and taken up firm measures to take up special campaign to ensure that people do not say, "Mask Kaiku, corona tho margayana, Sarkar ne bol diya." But unfortunately, both governments are busy in conducting elections, calculating caste and religious equations and trying to outsmart the Opposition rather than control the spread of coronavirus. One also wonders if the review meetings with the Prime Minister or State Governor hold any sanctity. It is left to the Health Ministers and officials to attend the meeting chaired by the Prime Minister and even if the Chief Minsters participate they read out the script handed over by the officials reeling out data about number of beds, doctors etc but no one highlights what unique measures they had taken or are taking to contain the spread of the virus. No one shows the courage to say that even their own leaders were not following protocols in toto. No State government had taken any special drive to see that people go to vaccination centres. In case of polls, they would send SMS and vehicles for votes. There are reports that in Andhra Pradesh some public representatives are organising huge blood donation camps on the eve of the birthday of the Chief Minister and claim that as against 1,000 donors who used to donate blood every year, this time another 27 people had joined them. This may help them win brownie points from the Chief Minister but, they are putting more and more people at risk. Majority of people in both the Telugu States do not use masks. For them, their leaders are the role models. "Yatha Raja Thatha Praja." Since adults do not use masks, children in the age group of 5 to 15 also do not wear masks. Reports indicate that these kids are proving to be the carriers. The States are repeating the mistake of last year and it cannot be excused in anyway or by anybody. Initially it is fun, but one should know that when you repeat a mistake, it is not a mistake anymore: it's a decision. And no government has the right to take decisions which would affect the lives of the common man and cripple him and the State financially.

Interest rate cut and the U-turn

THE WAY AHEAD

he govern-ment had a cut in small savings rate on March 31st but withdrew it in a few hours. For example, the interest rate on 5year National Savings Certificate (NSC) was cut from 7.9 percent to 6.8 percent. The

interest rates on Kisan Vikas Patra, Senior Citizens Savings Scheme and Provident Fund were reduced and restored in

There is no serious reason for the depositors to cry foul, however. The interest rates need to change in parallel with the rate of inflation. For example, the interest rate on NSC in 2020-21 was 7.9 percent while the rate of inflation was 4.9 percent. The "real" interest rate obtained by the depositor was only 3.0 percent. The real interest rate is less because value of the principal amount reduces in the same measure as the rate of inflation. Let us say you deposited Rs 100 in a fixed deposit with a bank last year with an interest rate of 4.9 percent. You would have got one kilo of high-quality basmati rice last year. Now, you got Rs 104.90 from the bank this year with an interest Rs 4.90 added to it. However, the price of basmati rice has increased to Rs 104.90 per kilo in the meantime. Therefore, you would get the same 1,000 grams of rice for Rs 104.90 this year. The "real" gain to the depositor is the difference between the interest rate and inflation.

The rate of inflation has reduced from 4.9 percent to 3.7 percent at present. The rate of interest on the NSC, however, remains unchanged. The depositor will get Rs 107.9 on a deposit of Rs 100 in an NSC made last year. Thus, the real interest rate obtained by him would be 4.2 percent (7.9 interest rate minus 3.7 inflation rate). The real interest rate was 3.0 percent last year (7.9 interest rate minus 4.9 inflation rate). This has increased to 4.2 percent this year because the rate of interest has remained unchanged while the inflation has reduced. The reduction of interest rate on NSC from 7.9 percent to 6.8 percent done by the government, if it had been implemented, would have led to the depositor still getting a real interest rate of 3.1 percent (6.8 interest rate minus 3.7 inflation rate) — which would be nearly the same as the 3.0 percent real interest rate obtained by her last year.

The second justification for the reduction of interest rates is that the money deposited in these savings scheme is actually a loan taken by the government. About 95 percent of this money is used for government consumption expenditures and only 5 percent are used for public investment. The banks, in contrast, lend more for investment. I reckon about 50 percent of the money deposited with the banks goes to loans given for investments such as in buying taxis or putting up factories. The problem is that the interest obtained by the depositor from NSC is 7.9 percent while a 5-year fixed deposit with the State Bank of India would get him only 5.4 percent. Therefore, the depositors are reluctant to deposit with the banks. Correspondingly, the ability of the banks to give banks for investment is less just as the ability of the homemaker to invest in an online course for the child is less if she has less income. It was necessary to reduce the interest rates on NSC so that it became attractive for the depositors to deposit with the banks.

The third justification for reduction in the interest rate is that the government is able to borrow as much money at it wants through the sale of government securities at an interest rate of 6.2 percent. In comparison, the Government has to pay interest of 7.9 percent on NSC. Thus, the government has to bear an additional burden of 1.7 percent on the monies borrowed from the NSC. Let us say the government pays an additional Rs 1 crore as interest on NSC. The government has to collect taxes from the people from some other method to make this 1 crore payment. Therefore, the high interest rates on NSC only mean that the government will collect taxes from the people and provide additional benefits to the depositors of NSC. This would be like the head of the industrial establishment cutting the salaries of the workers and increasing the salaries of the supervisors.

The reduction of rate of interest on small savings such as NSC was justified for the abovementioned three reasons, namely, lower inflation, encouraging deposits in the banks and burden on the Government. The withdrawal of the reduction was not justified. I am confident that the Government will be compelled to again make this reduction soon.

More important is to note that our economic growth rate has been declining in the last six years. The Covid-19 pandemic has made the situation worse. The second wave of Covid-19 presents a further danger. A shopkeeper told me only the other day that his sales were still down by 25 percent from the pre-Covid levels. Accordingly, his profits were less, the goods purchased by him from the market for his consumption were less, and the total demand for



More important is to note that our economic growth rate has been declining in the last six years. The Covid-19 pandemic has made the situation worse. The second wave of Covid-19 presents a further danger. A shopkeeper told me only the other day that his sales were still down by 25 percent from the pre-Covid levels. Accordingly, his profits were less, the

goods purchased by him from the market for his consumption were less, and the total demand for goods in the market was also less. The businesspersons do not find it profitable to take loans for investment in this condition. They would take loan from the bank and put up a new factory if there is demand in the market. They will not put up a new factory and not take loan from the bank when the demand for paper in the market is less. I think they would not take a loan even if the interest rate was made zero — as is seen in countries like Japan where there is no borrowing from the banks and growth is lagging despite zero interest rates

goods in the market was also less. The ing it easier for the businesspersons to businesspersons do not find it profitable to take loans for investment in this condition. They would take loan from the bank and put up a new factory if there is demand in the market. They will not put up a new factory and not take loan from the bank when the demand for paper in the market is less. I think they would not take a loan even if the interest rate was made zero - as is seen in countries like Japan where there is no borrowing from the banks and growth is lagging despite zero in-

terest rates. The government has focused on mak-

take loans to rev up the economy. However, that is not happening because of absence of demand. Therefore, the government must change gears. Instead of focusing on lowering interest rates alone, the government must in parallel make cash transfers to the common man as done in the United States and other countries to put purchasing power in the hands of the people, create demand in the market and jumpstart the economy.

> (The author is formerly Professor of Economics at IIM, Bengaluru)

Mozambique attack survivors tell tale of horror

EMIDIO JOZINE

UISA Jose, a 52-year-old mother of Lafive, says she came face-to-face with Islamic State-linked insurgents when they attacked the gas hub town of Palma in northern Mozambique 10 days ago.

"I was running to save my life ... they were coming from every street," she said from a stadium in the port city of Pemba housing some of the thousands who fled the violence. "I saw them with bazookas. They wore uniforms with red scarves ... tied to their heads.

Jose said the militants quickly overran her hometown of Palma, next to huge gas projects worth \$60 billion.

Aid workers believe tens of thousands of people fled the assault, which began on March 24. However, just 9,900 of those displaced had been registered in Pemba and other parts of Cabo Delgado province, according to the UN humanitarian agency OCHA.

Many could still be hiding in the surrounding forest, said the international aid group Medecins Sans Frontieres, and those who emerged have recounted seeing bodies of others who died of hunger or dehydration along the way.

Some were also killed by crocodiles or perished in deep mud, according to a con-

tractor whose employee witnessed both. Most communications to Palma were cut when the attack began, and Reuters has not been able to independently verify



witnesses' accounts. A spokesman for Mozambique's defence and security forces declined to comment on Saturday, while calls to the national police went unanswered.

The province of Cabo Delgado, where Palma is located, has been home since 2017 to a simmering Islamist insurgency now linked to Islamic State. Clashes between the militants and government forces around Palma continued as recently as Friday, security sources told Reuters.

South Africa said on Saturday that Mozambique's neighbours would meet next week to discuss the insurgency.

Mozambique's government has said dozens were killed in the attack on Palma but the full scale of the casualties and displacement remains unclear.

Fato Abdula Ali, 29, said she was separated from her husband and three children in the chaos. Nine-months pregnant, she couldn't keep up with other residents as they made their escape and delivered her baby son alone in the bush. She cut the infant's umbilical cord with a tree branch, she said.

The next day, she said, she stripped herself of her blood-soaked clothes and found another group of people who took turns carrying her to safety.

"My whole body aches," she told Reuters at a hotel in Pemba.

Luisa Jose said she spent almost five days in the bush, eating bitter cassava tubers and drinking from cloudy pools of water before making it to Quitunda, a village for people relocated by the mega gas projects led by major oil companies, including France's Total.

From there, she says, she was evacuated by Total but had to leave behind more than six family members, including her husband and a daughter, because

there was no room on the boat. Total on Friday pulled all of its remaining workforce from its project site near Palma, two sources with direct knowledge of site operations told Reuters, leaving it in the hands of the military. Total declined to comment.

Jose has had no news of her family members since she left them behind. They are among thousands believed to be stranded in Quitunda, according to aid workers and diplomats.

"Are they safe? Do they have shelter? Will they come back? I don't know," she



TRAGEDY OF TIBET

LOBSANG SANGAY & KARMA CHOEYING

TIBET, famously called the roof of the world; a State in the Hi-I malayas neighboured by India and China has for long been in a state of tussle with Beijing. China lays the claim over the entire Tibet and calls it its own territory; however, Tibet has always strived for an independent existence. This is among the many conflicts currently brewing in south Asia, probably the worse as far as the power imbalance is concerned. The water tower of Asia has for long witnessed the cold and dark nights under the communist regime of China. The process of democratisation is merely a ghost only if that ghost exists. This makes it imperative for the powers across the globe to play their role in fostering a dialogue between Beijing and Tibet, and only recently we have seen some improvement on that front and some progress will hopefully be on its way.

Tibetan people have struggled under the mighty and brutal fist of Beijing and since the independence of China we have been demanding our separate homeland. The division of Tibet into smaller units and segregating them from the mainland Tibet is a typical example of

engineering. Tibet as known today is only a fraction of the historical mainland of Tibet. The Chinese have created a facade by giving the autonomous region of Tibet, which is what is left of Tibet after its repeated geographical divisions, an autonomy non-existent in practice. People in Tibet demand the unification of all the parts which were historically part of Tibet, and post that want a complete political, economic and religious freedom. People in Tibet have tried to resist the imperialistic control of the communist China in Tibet and have always raised their demand for independent Tibet. The inspiration to the people of Tibet comes mainly from outer Mongolia and Bhutan, both countries are doing quite well in managing their affairs and their foreign policy. The other countries in the region enjoy the power over their own destiny while in case of Tibet, the destiny of people is being meddled with and is mostly in the hands of Han Chinese, who have never been sympathetic to the people of Tibet.

The gross human violations in Tibet is not a new story and is not hidden from anyone despite the media ban and propagandistic approach adopted by Chinese government to have the control of one's destiny is the luxury Tibetans don't have. Young People are abducted from the tribal regions of Tibet and the same are inducted in PLA (People's Liberation Army), who are then sent to various regions of mainland China wherein they go

which would subsequently mean the lost Tibetan culture. The freedom of religious expression is even more hit. The interference in the elections for Dalai Lama by China is not only protested against, but the proxy Dalai Lama which has been put in place in Tibet is not even revered by the people of Tibet. Tibetans have a strong notion of being separated from their religion and fears of Chinese **Buddhism taking over** Tibetan Buddhism under the protection of communist China. This is one of the grave situations as far as the freedom to profess and practice of religion is concerned

The fear of losing identity is

among the worst fears any

community can encounter.

religious identity of the

The cultural identity and the

people of Tibet is among the

worst hit. Tibet and China

are culturally diverse and

common. The Chinese,

however, are trying to

have very little to nothing in

impose their culture in Tibet

through the process of political re-engineering; approximately half a million people have already been inducted in PLA from Tibet tribal regions and same are being engineered to serve the agenda of communist China. One of the major internationally recognized research organizations has stated the conditions being equally worse as that in Syria. The excruciating pain shivers the spine when one sees that people are not even allowed to decide on the number of children they can have. The free and fair process of governance in Tibet is just a mirage and the reality, just the opposite. The dilapidated condition of Tibetans is mostly being ignored and not reported, however, the reports which come out as Tibetans flee from Tibet in search of a peaceful asylum are very disturbing. The missing list of people from Lhasa and adjoining areas is growing and no political rival is left unmonitored. The accounts of the torture being administered to politically active workers in Tibet has seen no parallel.

The fear of losing identity is among the worst fears any community can encounter. The cultural identity and the religious identity of the people of Tibet is among the worst hit. Tibet and China are culturally diverse and have very little to nothing in common. The Chinese, however, are trying to impose their culture in Tibet which would subsequently mean the lost Tibetan culture. The freedom of religious expression is even more hit. The interference in the elections for Dalai Lama by China is not only protested against, but the proxy Dalai Lama which has been put in place in Tibet is not even revered by the people of Tibet. Tibetans have a strong notion of being separated from their religion and fears of Chinese Buddhism taking over Tibetan Buddhism under the protection of communist China. This is one of the grave situations as far as the freedom to profess and practice of religion is concerned.

The world needs to come together to solve this issue of gross human rights violation among other conflicts.

The US, the UK and India have been actively involved in resolving the long pending issue of Tibetans. The US and allied parties have actively participated in resolving the issues around the globe and the same needs to be done in case of Tibet. The democratic powers across the globe should come forth to rescue Tibet from this situation. The Bills must be passed in their respective Parliaments to put pressure on Chinese government to secure rights for Tibetan people. After the US under the Trump regime passed the Bill of Tibet Act, the Biden-led government should smear ahead the campaign while including Tibet in their main agenda. Given China's increasing assault on Tibetan human rights, the US has a larger role to play. They must appoint and empower an individual coordinator committed to the plight of Tibet. White House must step into curb China's role in picking up Next Dalai Lama. The world powers should come ahead and declare the situation as genocide of human rights seeking UN intervention. If the Biden administration chooses to lead it, this might result in exerting control over a situation where China is attempting to assimilate the culture and persecuting the religion.

Tibetans are peace and progress-loving people, however, that has to come along with meaningful freedom.

We also urge the people across the globe to help us raise the issue of Tibet before the world community and be part of securing a mean-

(Lobsang Sangay Sikyong is President of the Tibetan-governmentin-exile, called Central Tibetan Administration. Co-author is Karma Choeying, CTA official spokesperson. Views are personal)

Validity of expired driving licences to be extended for 1 year

- The Centre had taken the decision owing to prevailing corona pandemic in the country
- Asks the State governments to update number of driving licences issued daily
- Auto unions welcome the move

HANS NEWS SERVICE HYDERABAD

THE transport department to extend the validity of expired driving licence for a period of one year after the Centre gave directions to the State govern-

The motorists were asked by the transport department to go for learner's test again for not renewing their driving licence after the lapse of one year after the date of validity. The State government has started implementing this from December 24, last year when a motorist Irudava Rai K, a resident of Lalaguda, Secunderabad applied for renewal of his licence which was due for expiry on June 30,



2018. When he approached the RTA office for renewal of his licence with late fee, Irudaya Raj was asked to go for re-test including learner's licence and also the driving test.

The motorists, especially those in transport sector, opposed as it would be difficult task to get the licence as they have to again secure medical certificate, badge and other formalities.

According to officials, the Centre has issued fresh notification on Saturday making changes to the rules and providing the motorists one year's time. Official sources said that the Centre has conveyed to the State governments to extend the validity of licence for one year in the wake of corona pandemic prevailing in the country. Sources said that the Centre has also asked the State governments to update the number of driving licences issued to the transport ministry on everyday basis. Apart from the driving licences issued, the authorities were

asked to send the details of the

number of vehicles getting

registered everyday in the State, so that a database could be maintained at the national level, said a senior official.

The auto unions have welcomed the decision of the government to extend the validity for one year. The Telangana Auto and Motor Welfare Union general secretary M Dayanand said that this move of the Centre was a welcome one. The State government should also implement these orders immediately as it had implemented the earlier ones, he demanded

SCB gets pleas to extend 50% property tax waiver

MEGHNA NATH HYDERABAD

AS a nationwide lockdown impacted almost everyone financially, taking a cue from GHMC, the residents of SCB are urging waiver of 50 per cent of property tax in Secunderabad Cantonment limits. A representation has been submitted to SCB CEO Ajith

According to the residents of SCB, during the month of November last year the state government waived off 50% property tax in the GHMC limits but still there has been no such relief in the SCB limits. They question why the new rule is being implemented at SCB as Cantonment is a part of the city.

"Due to Covid lockdown and also during recent floods the economic condition of people was severely stressed, especially those of marginalised families. Last year the State government waived off property tax in GHMC limits. Hence, on Saturday, we submitted a representation demanding 50 per cent tax waiver and also requested SCB CEO Ajith Reddy to take immediate action to reduce property taxes in Cantonment



A social activist Telukunta Satish Gupta submitting a representation demanding 50 per cent tax waiver to SCB CEO Ajith Reddy

Board limits," said Telukunta Satish Gupta, a social activist, SCB. The State government announced a 50 per cent rebate in property tax in the State last year. The rebate will be applicable to those who pay tax up to Rs 15,000 a year in the GHMC and up to Rs 10,000 in other municipalities. "The order specifically mentioned other municipalities, and Secunderabad Cantonment Board is also one of the municipal authorities in

the State. Yet, there is no relief provided to the residents of SCB," deplored Venkat Ramana, a resident of SCB.

"Residents of SCB are forced to pay high amount as property tax and most of the State government schemes are also not applicable to SCB. When property registration charges go to State government kitty, why is there a discrimination meted out to us?" asked B Ramesh, a resident of

Perni describes Pawan Kalyan as 'a mike for hire'

HANS NEWS SERVICE

TADEPALLI MINISTER for Information and Public Relations Perni Venkataramaiah slammed Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalvan for his remarks against the State government during his Tirupati electioneering.

Addressing a press conference at the party headquarters here on Sunday, the Minister said that Pawan Kalyan has been trying to whip up the Hindu sentiments, as he has been campaigning for the BJP, the party he earlier alleged was giving two 'rotten laddus' in the name of a special package for the State.

He said that Pawan is more like a rental mike, which would be in anyone's hands that pay for it. He said that politicising God was not a good thing, and one that commits such sin shall re-

Perni Nani said that the same Pawan had remained silent when his allies (earlier TDP-BJP government) had demolished numerous temples in Vijayawada city, but is now targeting the government alleging that 150 temples were destructed in the State.

The Minister alleged that Pawan hosted the TDP and BJP- meeting in Tirupati Referring to former

Minister for I & PR Perni Nani addressing the media at YSRCP Central office in Tadepalli on Sunday

Flays the actor for trying to whip up Hindu sentiments during the public

> Minister Y S Vivekananda Reddy's murder case, Perni says the case is being probed into by the **CBI** which functions directly under Union **Home Minister Amit Shah**

Further says Pawan has no commitment towards public service and he comes out only during elections to seek votes

sponsored event and did full juswas paid for. He said that there is no other actor beyond Pawan Kalyan who brilliantly acts in real life than in reel life.

Although he asked people to question the YSRCP government on irregularities, the public were in return ready to question him over his vague political stand. In 2014, he gave a slogan 'Congress Hatao, Desh Ko Bachavo' and stood by Chandrababu Naidu and the BJP. However, in 2019, he accused

tice to the call sheet for what he States and went to polls, joining hands with the Communist parties and Mayavati, but again after facing a huge defeat, he joined hands with the BJP, he added. Countering the allegations in Y S Vivekananda Reddy murder case, Minister Perni Nani questioned whether Pawan Kalyan knew that Vivekananda Reddy was assassinated during the reign of his partner Chandrababu Naidu or not. He said that the probe was being carried out by the CBI

the BJP for neglecting southern which is working directly under Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and further criticised Pawan Kalyan for being igno-

rant and in exile. Further, the Minister said that Pawan Kalyan has no commitment towards people or public service, and only comes out during elections to seek votes. He said that Pawan was never there for Kapus and was least bothered to stand up for them during hard times under the previous TDP regime.

TDP intensifies focus on Tirupati LS by-poll

- Party State president K Atchannaidu camps in pilgrim town and leads the campaign
- Meanwhile, TDP national general secretary launches campaign for party candidate Panabaka Lakshmi at Satyevedu on Sunday
- On Monday, he will be touring in Tirupati and in the remaining five days he will be covering 5 Assembly constituencies
- Atchannaidu flags off Yuva Chaitanya Yatra organised by Telugu Yuvatha

HANS NEWS SERVICE **T**IRUPATI

THE TDP has intensified its campaign for Tirupati Lok Sabha byelection. While the party State president K Atchannaidu has been camping in the city for the last two days and leading the campaign in Tirupati, the party national general secretary N Lokesh has been busily involved in chalking out the strategies and coordinating between the leaders.

Lokesh has started touring various places from Sunday onwards to campaign in support of party candidate Panabaka Lakshmi. He



TDP State president K Atchannaidu flagging off party's Yuva Chaitanya Yatra in **Tirupati on Sunday**

is expected to stay in the city till the election is over. On Sunday, Lokesh campaigned in Satyavedu constituency while on Monday he will tour in Tirupati city. In the next five days he will be campaigning in the remaining five constituencies.

Meanwhile, Atchannaidu flagged off Yuva Chaitanya Yatra in Tirupati city on Sunday organised by Telugu Yuvatha. The rally commenced from Jyotirao Phule statue at Balaji Colony Circle and proceeded towards NTR Circle, Krishnapuram Tana, Gandhi Road and concluded at municipal corpora-

Speaking on the occasion, the leaders recalled various development activities carried out in Tirupati during TDP government regime with which the youth had benefited a lot. The TDP government has created ample employment opportunities for the youth and put the State on the development path. To continue the development agenda there is a need to vote for the party candidate Panabaka Lakshmi, they said.

Party youth cadre has participated with much enthusiasm in the rally. Telugu Yuvatha State president Sriram Chinna Babu, other leaders Chintakayala Vijay, B V Keerthi, Kesineni Swetha, Hareesh, MVV Bharat, Bandaru Sravani Sree, B Sudhir Reddy, senior leaders M Sugunamma, G Narasimha Yadav, B Sreedhar Varma, K Pattabhi and others took

Contain Covid spread

Continued from P1

The reasons for the sharp rise in cases could be mainly attributed to the severe decline in compliance of Covid-appropriate behaviour, especially in the use of masks and social distancing, pandemic fatigue and lack of effective implementation of containment measures at the field level, it said. The PM also highlighted the need to ensure effective implementation of containment measures, besides the involvement of community volunteers in active case search and management of containment zones. For sustainable Covid-19 management, awareness of the community and its involvement is paramount, Modi said, adding that and there is a need to continue 'Jan Bhagidari' and 'Jan Andolan'.

As a part of spreading awareness about the importance of following Covid-19 protocols, a special campaign for Covid appropriate behaviour with emphasis on 100% mask usage, personal hygiene and sanitation at public places /workplaces and health facilities will be organised from April 6-14, the PMO further stated.

He also said that 5-fold strategy of testing, tracing, treatment, Covid-appropriate behaviour, vaccination will curb pandemic if implemented with seriousness. Vaccine R&D was also discussed along with the production capacity of existing manufacturers and the capacity of vaccines under trials. Vaccine manufacturers are ramping up their production capacity and are in discussion with other domestic and offshore companies to augment the same, the statement added.

BUILDING CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

Govt should disclose facts to people, demands TDP

HANS NEWS SERVICE MANGALAGIRI

TDP executive secretary Buchi Ram Prasad on Sunday demanded that the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) and the Jagan Mohan Reddy government to place the facts before the devotees in the shady MoU signed with a dubious company named Udveg Infrastructure Co Ltd for building a children's hos-

Ram Prasad described Udveg as yet another suitcase company brought forward by CM Jagan Reddy and TTD chairman Y V Subba Reddy to loot the devotees' funds in the guise of donations. In addition to the plundering of sand, liquor, mines and so on, the ruling party has started a donations mafia in the name of God which was something the world has never seen

Addressing a press conference at the party headquarters here, the TDP leader demanded the TTD to immediately cancel the MoU reached with Udveg Infra and instead take up the

- Questions handing over the project to a suitcase company Udveg Infrastructure Co Ltd
- Instead the TTD on its own should take up the construction of the hospital, says TDP leader **Buchi Ram Prasad**
- Then even the devotees will come forward to make donations for the purpose, he points out

construction of the Rs 300 cr children's hospitals on its own without involving any third party. It was found out that the Udveg company put up a photo of a government stadium in Europe on its website to give a false impression on its track record.

Ram Prasad said that the real fact was that the suitcase company was started by Sanjay Kedarnath Singh in 2018 and it had a balance of just Rs 1 lakh in

2019 and only Rs 2,600 as of now. The company claimed to be involved in construction, infrastructure, finance and consulting. But it had no business transactions of any sort till now. Some Telugu persons also be-

came directors on its board. The TDP leader strongly objected to the TTD coming forward now to give 10 acres of prime land to this suitcase company near the Alipiri Gate in Tirupati town for the development of the children's hospital. This land would cost anywhere between Rs 400 crore to Rs 500 crore. Once in possession, the Udveg Company might misuse the land and construct even a shopping mall there to make commercial exploitation.

Ram Prasad said that if the TTD came forward to construct the world-class children's hospital on its own, thousands of devotees would be there to give donations. The TDP would launch an agitation if the valuable lands in the temple town were given to the suitcase companies in the name of false and fake projects.

Daily Covid count goes up to 1,321 in TS

TELANGANA'S daily Covid-19 count climbed to 1,321 as the surge continued in parts of the state, pushing the cumulative tally to 3,12,140 on Sunday. Five more deaths were recorded in the last 24 hours, which increased the total toll to 1,717. The spike in cases continued in several districts.

The daily count in Hyderabad crossed 300-mark to reach 320. Medchal Malkajgiri and Rangareddy districts bordering the State capital were the other worst-hit districts with 144 and 121 cases respectively. Nizamabad recorded 96 cases followed by Nirmal (64), Sangareddy (49), Jagtiyal (46), Warangal Urban (43), Karimnagar (41), Rajanna Sircilla (35), Adilabad (30), and Mahaboobnagar (30). The total number of active cases jumped to 7,923, including 3,866 who are inhome/institutional isolation. Admissions in both government and private hospitals treating Covid continued to be on rise. A total of 4,057 Covid patients were admitted in 61 government and 229 private hospitals. Bed status in government hospitals shows that 7,498 out of 8,542 beds were vacant, while in





private hospitals 5,337 out of 8,350 beds were vacant. A total of 293 people recovered from the pandemic during the last 24 hours, taking the cumulative recoveries to 3,02,500. The recovery rate has come down to 96.91%. It was still above the national average of 93.1%.

Authorities conducted 62,973 tests during the last 24 hours. Of them, 53,960 samples were tested in government laboratories, and remaining 9,013 in private. With this, the number of tests conducted in the state so far climbed to 1,03,92,927.

Samples tested per million population rose to 2,79,229. Marriage party havoc In Siddapur village of Nizamabad District, 86 persons who attended a marriage were affected by corona, creating panic in the village. Following this, officials became alert and started conducting corona testing camps for the last three days. In Nizamabad District, as many as 865 persons were affected by corona during the last 20 days. Minister Prashant Reddy directed the officials to arrange for quarantine camps in the

Youngsters behind UK's 2nd wave, same scenario in India: Prof

'Fatality rates may be somewhat lower for a number of reasons, such as better treatment and clinical management of patients'

SUMIT SAXENA NEW DELHI

In the UK, the second wave of the coronavirus was started by young people and it seems very likely that in India too, youngsters, who have been infected with the new strains of the virus, are spreading to more than one person, said Zhengming Chen, Professor of Epidemiology, Nuffield Department of Population Health, University of Oxford.

Chen added that in the UK, a high proportion of patients have long Covid-19, but reasons for this phenomenon is not clear so far.

enon is not clear so far.

Excerpts from the interview:

Q) Experts say young people may be behind the increase in cases. Is it possible that young people, who

have contracted the new strains of virus are spreading it to more than one person, leading to a spike in cases?

Yes, very likely. In the UK, the second wave started with young people through social mixing and returning

Q) Is there a possibility that a second wave may not lead to increase in fatality or increase in a Covid patient's admission to Intensive Care Unit (ICU), however the viral infection may have a long-lasting health impact in patients, for example, kidney, live or lungs dam-

Very unlikely but the fatality rates may be somewhat lower for a number of reasons, such as better treatment and clinical management of patients, younger age of the newly infected individuals. On the other hand, if the health system is overwhelmed, then the picture may be



different, as now seen in Brazil. In the UK, a high proportion of the patients have long Covid, ie experiencing various symptoms many months after discharge from hospital. The reasons for this phenomenon are not clear and are subject of new research.

Q) Usually, experts say human behaviour is considered major factor linked with spike in coronavirus cases. But some experts also point at a probability of a new strain, possibly behind the second wave, which maybe infectious, not fatal, leading to surge in cases in many places in India?

In the UK, the second wave is related strongly with emergence of the new Kent strain, which is now sweeping through Europe. On the other hand, human behaviour always plays an important role. For example, the UK went down to lockdown in early January and while

the number of cases has decreased steadily from 60,000 a day to 5,000 a day over the last three months, the speed of reduction appears to have levelled off recently due to perhaps lockdown fatigue and poor compliance of population with the roles.

Q) India is amid a second wave of the pandemic. The rise in cases is too steep, sharper than the first wave. Is it consistent with the pattern seen in other virus pan-

Several other countries in Europe and South America have experienced the similar situation, partly due to new variants which are 50-70 per cent more transmissible and partly due to lockdown fatigue of the population. This may also apply to India and I have noticed recently there were several big festivals in India that attracted big crowds.

WINDOWS



Pope Francis celebrates the Eucharist during Easter Mass at St. Peter's Basilica at The Vatican Sunday

Pope celebrates Easter Mass

Vatican City: Pope Francis celebrated Easter Mass for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and offered the "Urbi et Orbi" blessing from St Peter's Basilica on Sunday. The services will take place in a smaller circle because of the anti-coronavirus restrictions in place and as a preventative measure against infection, dpa news agency reported. Before the pandemic, Easter Mass was usually held in St Peter's Square in front of tens of thousands of pilgrims.

41 dead in Indonesia floods

Jakarta: At least 41 people were killed, while two others reportedly missing in flash floods and landslides that hit villages in Adonara Island in eastern Indonesia, an official said. Raditva Jati, a spokesman for the national disaster agency, said heavy rainfall since Saturday caused the flooding that hit East Flores district of East Nusa Tenggara province at 1 a.m. on Sunday, DPA reported. Dozens of houses were buried by mud in Lamanele village, while in Waiburak village, floods swept away villagers' homes and caused a bridge to collapse.

Airstrikes kill 82 militants

Kabul: At least 82 militants have been confirmed dead as warplanes pounded Taliban hideouts and positions in Afghanistan's Kandahar province, the former stronghold of the militant group, a top police official said on Sunday. The sorties began on Saturday night in parts of the restive Arghandab district, Xinhua news agency quoted the provincial police spokesman as saying.

Cobra forced into Maoists' deadly trap

SUJEET KUMAR BIJAPUR

OVER 1,000 police personnel drawn from CRPF's elite CoBRA unit, and the state police's District Reserve Guard (DRG) and Special Task Force (STF) walked into a deadly trap of Maoists in deep jungle in a rebel-dominated patch in Chhattisgarh's restive Bastar, purely on an unverified intelligence input that

top ultra leader Madvi
Hidma was holed up at a
hilly site along with his
colleagues. But the input
was basically a wellplanned trap of the Maoist
guerrillas as they gunned
down 22 security personnel and walked away with
their weapons too. The casualty figure could further
rise as at least 31 security
personnel sustained multiple injuries and were airlifted to Raipur for better
medical attention.

The lengthy gunfight between Maoists militants and security personnel broke out on Saturday at a remote hilly site in Bijapur district, close to Sukma district border in sprawling Bastar division where Maoists are attempting to run a defacto government in deep forests since late 1980s.

"Guerrillas armed with heavy weapons including rocket launchers were waiting for security personnel contingent... once a larger team of the search operation approached a hill, the militants who were positioned on top of the hill started spraying bullets in a flash from three sides," a local DRG policeman who was part of the search team told IANS.

The attack site is located roughly 500 km south of state capital Raipur. "The security personnel were stunned by Maoists' heavy gunfire... actually, it was an ambush designed in U-shape but the troopers too retaliated hard."

Reports say that Maoists brought 3-4 tractors on Saturday night to the attack site to ferry away dead bodies of their comrades. The local police officials are now claiming that in-

telligence inputs should have been verified from multiple credible sources before rushing a larger team to catch Hidma, one of the most wanted terror faces in the mineral-rich Bastar. The brutal killings of troopers have created a widespread anger in the state and people in tribal stronghold Bastar have called for immediate revenge.

Chhattisgarh's Bastar division, which is made up

of seven districts including Bijapur and Sukma, has been the epicentre of major Maoist attacks in past three decades. Rebels had killed 76 CRPF men in a single attack in April 2010 in Bastar which is described the deadliest attack by Maoists on security forces in India.

In May 2013, Maoists carried out an audacious attack on a Congress party convoy at Jheeram ghati in Bastar in which entire top-ranked leaders of the party in the state were wiped out including then state chief Nandkumar Patel, popular tribal leader Mahendra Karma and former Union Minister



A farmer plucks wood apple in an orchard during its harvest season, in Patna on Sunday

Tikait to campaign against Farm Laws in Guj

AHMEDABAD

BHARTIYA Kisan Union (BKU) leader Rakesh Tikait on Sunday kicked off his two-day tour of Gujarat, during which he will campaign against the three Central farm laws, by visiting Goddess Ambaji's temple in Banaskantha district. Taking a veiled swipe at the BJP and the Centre while entering the Gujarat border, Tikait showed his passport to reporters and said he has brought it "in case it is required to enter Gujarat". Tikait alighted from a train at Abu Road station in neighbouring Rajasthan where he was welcomed by farmers. When asked if he is carrying a COVID-19 negative report which is mandatory while travelling in Gujarat,he replied in

the affirmative and said, "I have all the documents with me. This is my passport if it is required to enter Guiarat".

Violence broke out on Saturday after farmers protesting the Centre's new agriculture legislations clashed with police in Haryana's Rohtak resulting in a police officer and an elderly farmer getting injured. The clashes erupted when protesters tried to stop Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar from entering a private university, where he was scheduled to attend a condolence meet, held in memory of Rohtak MP Arvind Sharma's father. As farmers tried to gherao the spot where the CM's chopper was expected to land, police lathicharged them, resulting in violence.

No NRC in Bengal, will implement CAA: BJP

KOLKATA

BJP National General secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya on Sunday said that the saffron party does not have any plan to update the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in West Bengal. This comes in counter to the Opposition's claims that if voted to power in Bengal, BJP will update the NRC, thereby "taking away the citizenship rights of people".

He, however, stated that the saffron party intends to implement the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and provide citizenship rights to refugees who moved in to India after facing religious persecution in neighbouring countries.

"We are only looking forward to implementing the CAA after the elections, as promised in the manifesto. It is an important issue for us, as we strive to grant citizenship to the persecuted refugees. We do not have any plan of conducting the NRC exercise, even if we win the elections," he said.

Meanwhile, in a strongly worded rejoinder to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, the Election Commission has rejected her claim about the presence of outsiders at a polling booth in Nandigram as "factually incorrect" and "devoid of substance".

and "devoid of substance".

In its point-by-point rejoinder, the EC said Banerjee's letter regarding booth capturing and the presence of outsiders at a polling booth in Boyal was "preceded by a massive coverage all over the country... which showed dozens of audio-visual shots of your being in this polling station and literally hurling an avalanche of allegations on some officials working with the government of West Bengal itself, paramilitary forces and eventually the Election Commission"



DMK Youth Wing leader Udhayanidhi Stalin and party candidate from Chepauk-Thiruvallikeni constituency during an election campaign, ahead of Tamil Nadu Assembly Polls, in Chennai on Sunday

Ready to quit cinema, says Kamal Haasan

Actor-turned-politician and Makkal Neethi Maiam founder Kamal Hassan on Sunday said he is ready to quit cinema if it becomes hurdle for his political career, which was meant for serving the people. "I will finish all my present assignments and quit films, if they become a hurdle to my political career," he told reporters in Coimbatore.

Saying his entry into politics was historic, as he was one among the 30 per cent who remained aloof from politics, he said that late chief minister M G Ramachandran had as MLA acted in many films to propagate his ideals and to achieve his goal of serving people.

However, if cinema was becoming an obstacle, Haasan said he would leave it to serve people, the MNM chief said, adding that many of his fellow candidates were of the opinion that he would disappear from politics and reenter cinema. "Let us see who will disappear, which has to be decided by the people," Hassan added. Claiming that he had received some threats from various quarters, about which he refused to elaborate, the actor-politician said that being an honest party, he has submitted the real expenses incurred during the campaign, which was lauded by a few elections officials.

Politician in day and a weaver at night

CHENNAI: The CPI-ML candidate S. Subramani from the Kumarapalyalm Assembly constituency in Tamil Nadu campaigns during the day time and at night turns a weaver for his living and to fund his own election campaign.

Subramani after his day's campaign enters a weaving unit in the night shift and earns Rs 500 per day. This money is used for his living as well as campaign expenses for the next day. The CPI-ML candidate is of the opinion that the AIADMK government at the state and the BJP government at the centre has not done anything for the weavers and workers. He is also the Namakkal district secretary of the All India Central Council of Trade Unions and he wants the government to provide free homes to people in the handloom, construction and other unorganized sectors.

other unorganized sectors.

Subramani while speaking to IANS said, "Kumarapalayam is notorious for Kidney rackets and surrogacy scams, and I will put an end to all this once I am elected from here. The party has already appealed to the Central government to include Kumarapalayam in the Smart City project but nothing happened. If elected, I promise to include Kumarapalayam in the Smart City project".

Smart City project".

The CPI-ML leader also appealed to the people of Kumarapalayam, a textile town to vote for him instead of big parties like the AIADMK and DMK. Subramanai while speaking to IANS said, "I will be always with the people of Kumarapalayam and will be the people's voice of this constituency."

The CPI-ML has already demanded the government to fix a monthly salary of Rs 26,000 for workers from unorganized sectors and a monthly pension of Rs 5,000 per month for aged and retired workers.

Extremely dangerous 3rd wave of corona in Pak: Imran

ISLAMABAD

PRIME Minister Imran Khan said on Sunday that the third wave of the coronavirus was extremely dangerous in comparison to the previous two waves, warning that his government will be forced to impose major restrictions if people will not follow the standard operating procedures (SOPs). Khan, who tested positive last month for the disease which is now raging in the country, was addressing the nation before sitting for a live question-answer session, the second such interaction with masses in recent months.

"We have so far been protecting our people, we are not imposing a lockdown (or) closing our factories. We are only imposing minor restrictions so that this wave doesn't spread rapidly. But if this spreads, it will have a very negative impact and we will be forced to take steps," he said.

He said that people were not taking precautions while going out in public which could have dangerous implications and speed up the spread of the virus. He defended his government for not imposing strict lockdown and instead pursuing the policy of smart lockdowns, saying shutting down the economy would increase financial hardships. He said no one was sure how long the third wave would last but its impact can be mitigated by wearing masks. Prime Minister Khan, 68, tested positive for the virus on March 20.

First baby born in Spain with Covid-19 antibodies; 4th wave in Iran

Madrid

Aboy born last week on the Spanish island of Ibiza has become the first newborn in Spain with Covid-19 antibodies, after his mother received the vaccine in the third trimester of her pregnancy, according to local media reports.

A sample from the baby's umbilical cord analysed at the Hospital Son Espases in Mallorca confirmed that he had developed antibodies

against Covid-19, Spanish media reported.

Manuel Grandal Martin, deputy director of the Madrid Hospital Directorate, said on Friday that the protection that the baby has is equal to that of someone who has been vaccinated, the Xinhua news agency reported.

"At the moment, he is perfectly protected, but it is not yet known how long it will last," said Grandal. The case of the infant, named Bruno, is part of a study on the impact of Covid-19 on pregnant women. The study monitors 88 pregnant women who have caught Covid-19 during pregnancy, including those who are asymptomatic.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said that the fourth wave of the Covid-19 pandemic is already underway in two provinces.

"If people in other provinces do not honour (health guidelines), they may experience the fourth wave as well," Xinhua news agency quoted Rouhani as saying on Saturday.

"According to the statistics, compliance with health guidelines has decreased," he warned.



US halts AstraZeneca vax production

New York

A plant in the US which ruined 15 million potential doses of Johnson and Johnson's Covid-19 vaccine has been asked to stop producing doses for AstraZeneca, the media reported.

The facility at Baltimore, Emergent Biosolutions, was earlier picked as a manufacturing partner for both AstraZeneca and Johnson and Johnson. In a statement, Johnson and Johnson said it was "assuming full responsibility" regarding the manufacturing of drug substance for its Covid-19 vaccine at the Emergent BioSolutions.

The development, first reported by The New York Times, could be a setback for AstraZeneca which is yet to receive approval for its Covid-19 vaccines in the

According to a report in The New York Times last week, a mix-up at the Baltimore manufacturing plant ruined 15 million potential doses of the Johnson and Johnson Covid-19 vaccine.

Johnson and Johnson then said that the "quality control process identified one batch of drug substance that did not meet quality standards at Emergent Biosolutions, a site not yet authorised to manufacture drug substance for our Covid-19 vaccine".















Gold prices fall as \$ holds firm

Dr H C Upadhyay

HYDERABAD: Following the US dollar gaining the strength, gold prices took a southward route during the week ended Saturday. Further, prospects of easing of tensions between US and Iran following the strategic diplomatic moves by both the sides with the overt and covert support of the well-wishing nations such as Russia also helped gold to settle at the realistic level. Consequently, New York gold declined in the global markets and closed at \$1.736.83 (per ounce) while, silver followed suit and closed at \$25.07 per ounce). Platinum and palladium also followed suit and closed at Rs 28,478 per 10 gram and Rs 61,0136 per 10 gram respectively.

Brent closed at \$64.65 per barrel while crude MCX oil was quoted at Rs 4,516 per barrel. Whereas Gold MCX stood at Rs 44,865 per 10 gram, the MCX Silver moved up marginally and closed at Rs 65, 040 per kg. Copper marched ahead and closed at Rs 669.25

In domestic market, due to the recent recurrence of Covid-19, potential buyers preferred to remain indoors for most of the time. However, taking advantage of lower prices in the international market, traders imported sizeable quantity of the yellow metal. Now, this phenomenon is posing the problem of

Barring marriage requirements, the off-take of gold has been minimal from individual side, both the precious metals recorded erratic movements during the week. Standard gold (24 carats) appreciated by Rs 870 and closed at Rs 46,580 per 10 gram. Ornamental gold too, moved in tandem and was quoted in the range of Rs 42,550-42,650 on the closing day. Silver (0.999) too, moved up marginally by Rs400 and closed at Rs 69,700 per kg. Considering the prevailing international scenario, the prices of precious metals are unlikely to rise in a near future.

RBI policy will weigh on markets

RISING BOND YIELDS COULD IMPACT SOME FII FLOW TO EMERGING MARKETS

MARKET

KHABREIN

CHERUKURI KUTUMBA RAO

uoyed by positive global cues and \$2.3-tillion infrastructure package announced by the US President Joe Biden, strong auto sales numbers and record GST collections reflecting improving economic environment, markets snapped two weeks losses to log impressive gains during the week

The Sensex rallied 1,021.33 points, or 2.08 per cent, to 50,029.83, and the Nifty50 climbed 360.05 points, or 2.48 per cent, to 14,867.35. Broader market witnessed outperformance from Midcaps and Smallcaps. Weekend death count of 714 due to Covid was highest since October 21, 2020. Given the increase in cases in recent weeks, there has been lot of restrictions imposed by several States including night curfew, gatherings, ban on hotels & malls etc, which experts feel could impact the economy a bit in coming months, though the vaccination across the country is going on since January. In the coming week, investors will take cues from the outcome of the Reserve Bank of India's first monetary policy meeting of financial year 2021-22. Economists expect RBI to maintain status quo on interest rates given the rapidly evolving inflation trajectory and growth dynamics in the country. Watch out for the MPC's commentary on economic recovery in the backdrop of the second wave of coronavirus infections in the country and its update on inflation pro-

Market observers feel the rising bond yields could impact some FII flow to emerging markets, but overall the indication of improving economic recovery is a positive factor for emerging markets. Rising bond yields in US is driven by improving outlook on economic recovery.

Though this could strengthen dollar and create volatility in emerging markets in the short-term, the revival in US economy is good news for global equity markets. Look out for the minutes of the US Federal Reserve's latest policy meeting, due for a release on coming Thursday.

Market player's focus will shift to Q4 earnings numbers. Q4 numbers could be strong following better-than-expected numbers in previous three quarters. Investors' attention will be shifting back to fundamentals. This time, investors' expectations are rife for a strong earnings season

led by healthy demand recovery and low base effect. On earnings front, revenue growth, margins expansion and management commentary will be key things to watch out for.

Heard on the street

There's always some excitement starting a new quarter and new financial year. However, going by past experience, it can be seen that the market can get stuck on these numbers, too. Lot of times the market has to test the previous high level a few times before it can go higher. Many investors are hopeful that stocks will continue to climb in the Q1. Their optimism is pegged to the prospect of a surge in economic growth amid widespread vaccinations, fresh spending programmes by the government and earnings expectations. Still, they point to risks stemming from the coronavirus which seems to be increasing day-byday as the second wave of Covid-19 has gradually been spreading fast in some parts of the nation, though there has also been an increase in vaccination. Over the past year, stocks have risen sharply in expectation of an economic rebound. Now that it appears to be here, investors have 'Covid jitters', looking warily at inflation expectations and, ultimately, a reversal of RBI policy.

Futures & options

Supported by bouts of short covering, derivative segment witnessed a strong pullback in the holiday-truncated week. Flavours of the week were metal and cement stocks. Reports of fresh increase in product prices and firm demand propelled Tata Steel, JSW Steel, Shree Cements and others to new highs. Stay invested for further gains.

With the Nifty going through a corrective and choppy phase, focus is back on defensives like FMCG, pharma and IT. Expect IT stocks to outperform against the benchmark index. Use declines to buy Infosys, HCL Tech and TCS. Expect sharp trading moves in banking and rate sensitive sectors after RBI announcement of the outcome of its policy review meeting on April 7.

On the back of AGR dues issue, telecom stocks are expected to remain range bound in near term. The issue of further payment and the total amount due by telecom operators, Bharti Airtel, Vodafone Idea and Tata Teleservices, is back in the Supreme Court, which will now have to decide on the matter. However, none of the three companies paid the 10 per cent of the

due amount on March 31, 2021. The reasoning of the companies is that whatever they have paid so far is more than 10 per cent so they were not required to pay anything extra by the March 31 deadline. After the strong pullback last week, markets may consolidate its recent gains in coming trading sessions. Stock futures looking good include Bata, ITC, HPCL, SAIL, Shriram Transport and Motherson Sumi. Stock futures looking weak include Bharti Airtel, escorts, Muthoot Finance, Naukri, Indigo and Godrej Properties.

Power Mech Projects Limited is one among the leading infrastructure-construction companies based in Hyderabad. It has a global presence and provides a spectrum of services in power and infrastructure sectors. With 15,000 direct and 25,000 indirect work force and huge fleet of cranes and machines, it is capable of handling and executing over 4,00,000 MT annually while operating up to 55 sites simultaneously. The company has emphatically established a niche in power generation covering almost every segment including erection, testing and commissioning of BTG and BOPs, and modernisation of power plants and related civil works.

Power Mech extends operations globally and has presence in more than ten countries worldwide. The company has undertaken projects of all types, sizes including ultra-mega power projects,

super critical thermal power projects, sub critical power projects, heat recovery steam generators, waste heat recovery steam generators, etc. and entire civil works for power plants.

The company's subsidiaries include Hydro Magus Private Limited for undertaking hydro projects, Power Mech Industri Private limited in Noida, for fabrication, manufacturing and repairing of BTG parts, MAS Power Mech Arabia in Saudi Arabia, to extend the company's services in this part of the world and joint venture GTA Power Mech Nigeria Limited for undertaking project works in the African region.

Why we are recommending

- The company enjoys market leadership position in power O&M and erection business with a market share of 55-60 per cent. Diversification of business to non-power segment, especially civil (including railway, petro chemical, water etc) has helped the company to be in the growth track.
- The company has an order backlog of Rs 7,353 crore (as on February 16, 2021), which shows revenue visibility for next
- Expect order backlog to grow at 14 per cent with an average order intake of Rs 3,500-4,000 crore per year. Revenue is expected to grow at a CAGR of 30 per cent during FY21-23 and ROE to be at 16.3 per cent by FY23.

Buy between Rs 565-580 for medium term price target of Rs 925-975. In the event of sharp correction in the broader market, stop loss should be at Rs 525. We are looking at a risk reward ratio of

> (The author is a stock market expert. He is former vice chairman of AP Planning Board)



s the financial year came to a As the maintain year called the close on March 31, 2021, there was a circular released by the government notifying the changes in the interest rates for various smallscale savings and that of the provident funds. There has been a drastic reduction in the rates among many schemes. There was an uproar among the opposition parties and general public alike on the reduced rates. The move, however, has been withdrawn the very next day owing to an oversight in the communication. While some expressed that the announcement was withdrawn due to political compulsions as multiple State elections are due, some think these could be temporary.

The last one year has been an extraordinary one with the pandemic ravaging the population and the government imposing strict lockdowns to contain the spread of the virus. This has impacted the economy in an adverse way. Leading into the pandemic, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has been cutting the interest rates and it had cut by 100bps in Feb and March of 2020 itself. A further 40 bps rate cut was announced in May 2020, taking the key rates to almost twodecade lows.

The subsequent opening up of the economy in a phased manner

Would falling interest rates affect your retirement plans?

has initially brought back the consumption demand while the supply side bottlenecks are still being pursued. These imbalances have resulted in inflation pressures. Though, not at an alarmed level but certainly beyond the comfort zone of a conventional setup. This is not a domestic trend

but has been a feature across the countries as the supply chains struggled to pace up with the growing demand.

In addition to the various fiscal measures by the govt., RBI has been on a forefront in dealing with the fallout of the pandemic restrictions by employing numerous liquidity methods and also announcing a six-month period of moratorium on existing loans. The central bank was also involved in other activities to ensure sufficient liquidity in the banking system. The government while announcing various PLI (Production Linked Incentives) schemes across sectors in an effort to boost the revival has also announced the stalling of the IBC (Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code) procedures for a year.

The Union Budget has clearly articulated the increased borrowings for the past financial year and the continued pursuit of aggressive fund raising into this year. This has led to market participants to alter the anticipations of the bargain for them with the yield spikes.



The RBI has been on multiple 'operation twists', where they tried to tame the yield curve to their desired levels by trading instruments at various timelines simultaneously. This way they tried to sap the energy of the market participants.

While the demand has ramped up to pre-covid levels in many of the sectors, the supply didn't catch up to that level leading to some inflationary trend especially among commodities, etc. This global reflationary pressure has increased expectations of the market participants for a better yield than being offered, leading to completely abandoning of fresh auctions by the RBI. What investors need to acknowledge is that the reducing interest rate is not a new phenomenon but has been happening for decades and particularly evident in the last couple of decades. This is part of the unraveling global deflationary trend and India stands no exception. Moreover, the change in the accounting of borrowings (FCI from NSSF) has also put direct pressure on the government to

come clean on the cost of funding. This limits the options for investors pursuing these kinds of instruments in the fixed income space.

So, what options are left out for those depending upon these kinds of securities? One could continue to invest in these with lower expectations in the coming years but car-

rying the sovereign guarantee or foray into other asset classes to derive better yields. Of course, the choice to continue to invest in PPF or small savings schemes is not universal and has to be dealt at a personal level. But this is certainly a wakeup call for the young investors to have a sizable equity exposure into their retirement portfolios.

The government has been making multiple efforts for retail investors get access to the debt market through offerings like Bharat 22 ETF, etc. Though this is not a guaranteed return proposition, it does fall under the fixed income category and would deliver the results in the long run although with volatility. Also, the returns are not taxed in similar ways but through capital gains. The older generation, however, have to stick with the traditional options despite lower

(The author is a co-founder of "Wealocity", a wealth management firm and could be reached at knk@wealocity.com)

Q4 results to shape market trend

Watch out for companies declaring earnings growth above 20%

THOVITI BRAHMACHARY

Indian stock market bounced back in a truncated week. It opened with a gap-up and traded within the Tuesday's range. The Nifty advanced by 375.90 points or 2.56 per cent during the week. All the sectoral indices gained. Nifty Metal and PSU Bank Index were top gainers with 8.7 per cent and 4.7 per cent, respectively. Remaining indices gained by 1.2 per cent to 3.2 per cent. Overall market breadth is not encouraging. FIIs invested Rs 1245.22

crore in March. In the three trading sessions last week. Nifty traded in a defined range. It opened with a big gap and sustained the gains until the end on Tuesday and ended with 338 points. But, the following two days of trading, it traded within the range of Tuesday. It tested 14880 level four times in last nine days. This level has become a strong resistance for now. On a weekly chart, it has made

a higher low, which is a positive sign. At the same time, it reclaimed 50 DMA, and 20 DMA is another positive sign. Even though it gained 360 points last week, the MACD histogram showed an increased bearish momentum. All the directional movement indicators, ADX, +DMI and -DMI, are below the 25 level on the weekly chart.

Even on the daily chart, the ADX is below 25 levels, and the -DMI is above the two. This structure is not indicating any great 93 levels and the 10 year US bond positive strength on the chart. But, the positive thing is, on a 75 minutes chart. Nifty formed an inverted head and shoulders kind of pattern, which is bullish. A close above 14880 is positive and can lead to a sharp upside move. This move can be a 600 point length, and the target is almost the previous lifetime high.

But on the downside, the 20 weekly average at 14230 is strong support. This average line is moving precisely like a trend line drawn from March lows. For next week, it is very difficult to forecast the trend. As long as it sustains above 14880, it will be with a bullish bias. Trading below this level means the consolidation phase will continue mostly within Tuesday's range. A move below 14617 is negative for the market, and it can fill the gap by testing 14500 levels. For a long-term trend. moving below 14230 is a very big negative for the intermediate trend.

The global markets are buoyant as S&P 500 hit an all-time high. But, dollar still trading above vields are consolidating for the consecutive week after touching the 14 month high. As we keep mentioning about the inverse relationship between bond yields and equities, let us wait for this historical fact to repeat this time.

Nifty Price-Earning (PE) ratio has changed as the calculation method has changed to consolidated earnings. With this new method, Nifty PE drastically came down from above 40 levels to 33.60. Even this figure is much higher than earlier tops in 2000 and 2008. The Price Book Value ratio remains at a higher level of 4.25. The earnings are due in another one week to ten days. These earnings will play a major role in market trend. Watch them closely for any improvement that will lead to a sharp jump in the stock prices. Watch out for the companies that declare earnings growth above 20 per cent.

journalist and technical analyst. He can be reached at tbchary@gmail.com)

(The author is a financial

DERIVATIVES OUTLOOK

Call writers shifting to higher bands

DASARI SREENIVASA RAO

The NSE Nifty recorded a sharp **■** pullback above 14,800 after touching a low below 14,300 last Thursday. Analysts attribute reason for buying support across the board to the financial year-end short covering during the truncated week as there was no trading on Monday and Friday on account of Holi and Good Friday respectively. Options data is indicating that Call writers

are moving to higher bands. The 15,000 strike has the highest Call OI followed by 14,900/15,100/ 15,200/15,500 strikes. The 14.900 strike recorded a reasonable addition of Call OI, while remaining strikes witnessed offloading of Call OI. Coming to the Put side, highest

Put OI was seen at 14,000 strike followed 14,500/ 14,800/14,700/14,600 strikes. Highest Put OI build-up was at 14,850/14,800/14,750 strikes, while remaining majority strikes recorded a fall in Put OI.

Dhirender Singh Bisht, senior research analyst (derivatives) at SMC Global Securities Ltd, said: "From the derivatives front, the 14,600 and 14,700 strikes seen adding hefty Open Interest in Puts. while Call writers were seen shifting to higher bands which points towards strength in current rally from lower levels. On the higher side, the 15,000 level would act as a major hurdle for Nifty in upcoming sessions, while on downside bias will remain in favour of bulls as far Nifty holds above the 14,60014,550 zone." Moreover, record GST collections also helped in improving sentiment further as the Nifty closed at the highest levels seen since mid-March. The Nifty gained almost 2.5 per cent during the week, while mid-cap and smallcap saw gains of more than 3.5 per cent during the week. Going ahead. analysts expect the NSE Nifty to find fresh upside momentum if it is able to sustain itself above 14,700

From the options space, while the Call base remains at 15,000 Call strike, the Put base has inched up and moved to 14,700 strike. Despite the truncated week once again, options prices are richly valued, clearly suggesting expectations of volatility next week as well. According to ICICI Direct.com, the

F&O TRADING Turnover (Rs/cr) Contracts Premium (Rs/cr) **Index Futures** 3,98,709 37,987.24 **Stock Futures** 6,12,224 59,750.55 16,169.92 Index Options 7,66,45,897 71.40.199.53 **Stock Options** 10,23,153 1,03,100.89 2,642.94

14,700 points should be important support for the Nifty in the shortterm and further strength can be seen if the closure among Call

ICICI Direct.com further stated that post February, volatility index continued to decline, which suggests more of a consolidation in broader markets and the Nifty has been largely in the range of 14,500 to 15,200 since then. Unless Nifty

moves out of this range, we can't expect any major change of trend, said analysts. Hence, stock-specific moves may continue in the result season, accordingly, Nifty may also move in this range only.

The metal space out performed as it gained nine per cent last week. Analysts forecast FMCG and pharma stocks to continue upward movement in the week ahead.

"Indian markets ended the week

Majority strikes record offloading of OI; Bank Nifty-Nifty price ratio drops to 2.28 level, may consolidate in broader range

on a positive note as bulls took the charge and lifted the sentiments for Nifty and Bank Nifty. Nifty ended the week above 14,850 mark, while leading banking names like Axis bank, ICICI Bank and Kotak Bank provided a boost to the banking index," said Bisht.

For the week ended April 1, 2021, BSE Sensex closed at 50,029.83 points, a net recovery of 1,021.33 points or 2.08 per cent, as against 49,008.50 points. NSE Nifty gained 360.05 points or 2.48 per cent and closed at 14,867.35 points from 14,507.30 points.

"The Implied Volatility (IV) of Calls closed at 20.57 per cent, while that for Put options closed at 21.13 per cent. The Nifty VIX for the week closed at 20.65 per cent. PutCall Ratio of OI for the week closed at 1.67 and it indicates more Put writing than Calls," remarked Bisht.

The NSE's banking index Bank Nifty closed at 33,858 points, a net fall of 539.8 points or 1.62 per cent from 33,318.20 points. The banking stocks underperformed as they're under selling pressure at every rise, declines among heavyweights have been used as buying opportunity. Ahead of the result season, analysts predict short covering in the banking space if it is able to sustain above 34,200. As per data from ICICI Direct.com, the current price ratio of Bank Nifty-Nifty fell marginally to 2.28 level. The Bank Nifty may consolidate in a broader range.

Azharuddin offers to host IPL games in Hyderabad

New Delhi

FORMER India skipper and **Hyderabad Cricket** Association president. Mohammed Azharuddin on Sunday offered the state body's facilities to BCCI to host the upcoming IPL matches in case the games are shifted out of COVID-hit Mumbai.

The BCCI has decided to

keep Indore and Hyderabad as stand by venues for the upcoming IPL beginning on April 9 following a massive surge in COVID-19 cases in Mumbai, which is scheduled to host 10 games. The move came after 10 groundsmen of the

Wankhede Stadium and a few event managers had tested positive for the deadly virus "In these difficult times there is all the more reasons for us to stand by each other. Hyder-

abad Cricket Association would like to offer its facilities to @BCCI to ensure that IPI 2021 is conducted in safe and secure venues.' Azharuddin wrote on his twitter handle. Mumbai reported 9,108 new cases of coron-

avirus on Saturday and if things spiral out of control there could be a mini lockdown. However, a senior BCCI office-bearer on Saturday exuded confidence of hosting the games in Mumbai even if the situation worsens.

"Look, even if there is a lockdown, the teams are in bio-bubble and also it's a closed-door event. So we are still confident that IPL games in Mumbai will be held as per schedule with Delhi Capitals playing Chennai Super Kings on April 10 on the second day of the tournament," he had

"But Hyderabad and Indore are there on stand by in case the situation goes out of hand." As of now, none of the teams currently in Mumbai -- Delhi Capitals, Mumbai Indians, Rajasthan Royals, Punjab Kings -- have access to the Wankhede Stadium.

The first match at the Wankhede is scheduled to be held on April 10, with last year's finalists Delhi Capitals taking on three-time champions Chennai Super

Indian Premier League

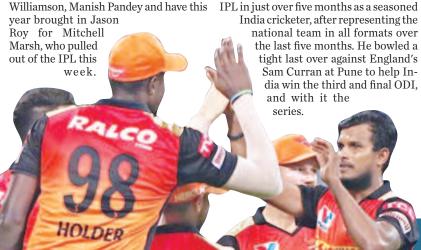
Consistent Sunrisers look for play-offs spot again

NEW DELHI

SUNRISERS Hyderabad (SRH) have made the play-offs for the last five years in the Indian Premier League (IPL), during which they became champions (2016) and runners-up (2018) once. Yet the team has never hogged the limelight like many other franchises. They have silently gone about their task of performing.

It was no wonder that in the mini-auction ahead of this IPL, they picked just three players. The franchise finished third last season, beating Royal Challenger Bangalore in the Eliminator, but lost to Delhi Capitals in Qualifier 2.

The team, led by David Warner, has a power-packed batting line-up. Along with Warner, they have Jonny Bairstow, Kane Williamson, Manish Pandey and have this



The Bairstow-Warner pair recorded four century stands and put on 791 runs in the 2019 season. Last year too, they were involved in a century stand and when Bairstow was rested owing to team requirements, Wriddhiman Saha stepped in and clicked, making a 45-ball 87 against Delhi Capitals to keep SRH alive. Such is the top-order batting strength of the Hy-

derabad franchise. SRH also have a very strong bowling line-up, led by pace bowler Bhuvneshwar Kumar, who has returned to the squad after missing a major part of last year's IPL due to an injury. He is in form, and did well for India in the recent limited overs series against England.

Left-arm pace bowler T. Natarajan has had a fairytale last season and returns to

> national team in all formats over the last five months. He bowled a tight last over against England's Sam Curran at Pune to help India win the third and final ODI,

Known as the yorker king, Natarajan will have the support of Sandeep Sharma, a seasoned new ball bowler.

SRH's major strength is its spin bowling with leg-spinner Rashid Khan leading the charge. He will have fellow Afghanistan spinners, offies Mohammad Nabi and Mujeeb Ur Rehman, as well as India internationals Shahbaz Nadeem and Kedar Jadhav to support him.

Both Jadhav and Mujeeb were bought this season along with J. Suchith. These were the only three changes made to the squad by SRH which shows that they have been a fairly settled unit.

Jadhav has been brought in to provide the fillip to their innings towards the end. SRH also have the services of Jason Holder, the West Indies all-rounder who

turned up late in last year's tournament and then replaced Bhuvneshwar and performed very well with the ball. Holder, Rashid, Vijay Shankar and Nabi are the all-round options

Warner is eying the final again. "It would be great to be able to make the finals again, but there is a lot of hard work beforehand to get there," he said.

"The biggest strength of SunRisers Hyderabad is that we go about our jobs quietly and calmly. We're not like other teams because we don't show off or brag about ourselves. We just calmly play the game," Shreevats Goswami was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo.com.

SRH Squad

David Warner (captain), Abhishek Sharma, Basil Thampi, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Jonny Bairstow, Kane Williamson, Manish Pandey, Mohammad Nabi, Rashid Khan, Sandeep Sharma, Shahbaz Nadeem, Shreevats Goswa Siddharth Kaul, Khaleel Ahmed, T Natarajan, Vi jay Shankar, Wriddhiman Saha, Abdul Samad, Ja-son Roy, Jason Holder, Priyam Garg, Virat Singh, Kedar Jadhav, Mujeeb ur Rehman, J Suchith.

Tom Moody (Director of Cricket), Trevor Bayliss (Head coach), Brad Haddin (Assistant coach), VV.S. Laxman (Batting mentor), Muttiah Mu-ralitharan (Bowling mentor), Biju George (Field-ing coach), Theo Kapakoulakis (Physio), Mario Villavarayan (Physical trainer), S Chandrasekaran



DUBAI

TOP Indian shutters, Pramod Bhagat, Sukant Kadam and Nitesh Kumar, had a memorable outing as they sailed into the finals of the singles and doubles events in their respective categories at the 3rd Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid Al Maktoum Dubai Para Badminton International 2021.

On a day when the Indians assured themselves of a bagful of medals, reigning world champion Manasi Joshi, promising Palak Kohli and top seed Krishna Nagar too entered the final, while Prem Kumar Ale would be eyeing two gold medals, as he entered the men's doubles and mixed doubles finals.

In the men's singles SL3 final, Bhagat will take on compatriot Nitesh, who defeated fellow Indian Manoj Sarkar in a nail-biting contest 21-19, 22-20.

"I am very happy to start the season on a strong note. Game wise I am feeling the same as I didn't take any break from my training in the lockdown. I am going with the flow as I always do," Bhagat said after beating Malaysia's Muhammad Huzairi Abdul Malek 21-7, 21-17 in the semis.

A delighted Kadam, who thrashed German Marcel Adam in the semi-finals 21-11, 21-11 and will take on Lucas Mazur in the title clash said, "I have worked a lot on my mental strength for important matches like these. I lost many semi-finals in 2019 and I am happy to start this year by entering the final. Looking forward to playing the final now," said Kadam who alongwith Nitesh entered the men's doubles SL3-SL4 defeating the Malaysian duo of Muhammad Huzairi Abdul Malek and Muhamad Zulfatihi Jaafar 21-19, 19-21, 21-13,

In an all-Indian affair, Sukant and Nitesh will take on the Bhagat-Sarkar duo in the men's doubles Sl3-Sl4 final. Promising Palak Kohli overcame a tough Portuguese challenge from Beatriz Monteiro before winning 21-18, 21-15 to set up a women's singles SU 5 final against Megan Hollander of the Netherlands, while Krishna Nagar had an easy outing against France's Charles Noakes 21-14, 21-8 in the combined men's singles and women's singles SH6 category.

A total of 127 shuttlers from 29 countries, including hosts UAE, are competing in the BWF Para Badminton tournament after more than a year because of the Covid-enforced cancellations. (IANS)

Smooth sailing for Indians in Mussanah Open



two Asian spots each in the Laser

Radial and Laser Standard

classes, while all other classes have one Asian spot for Tokyo.

In the 49er FX Class, the In-

dian pair of Ekta Yadav and Ri-

tika Dangi finished the opening

day placed third. The duo had an

excellent third race where they

finish on top but because of their unimpressive showing in the

Race 1 and 2 they are currently

third with eight points. China

are leading the event followed

A total of 19 Indians are talk-

ing part in six qualifying events.

Indians' standings after Day 1

Laser Radial class: 2. Harshita

Tomar (6 points); 4. Nethra Ku-

manan (9 points); 7. Ramya Sar-

avanan (16 points); 12. Jayalak-

shmi Sundaravadivel (21 points).

Laser Standard class: 4. Upa-

manyu Dutta (11 points); 7.

Vishnu Saravanan (14 points);

12. Mohit Saini (23 points); 15.

Ram Milan Yadav (29 points); 16.

49erFX class: 3. Ekta Yadav and

49er class: 4. Ganapathy Chen-

gappa and Varun Thakkar (18

points); 11. Prince Noble and

Manu Francis (26 points); 12.

Sandip Jain and Munna Pandit

RS:X Women class: 3. Ishwariya

RS:X Men class: 5. Ebad Ali (10

points); 11. Jerome Savarimuthu

Gitesh (32 points).

(29 points).

Ganesh (5 points)

Ritika Dangi (8 points).

closely by Thailand.

OMAN

IT was smooth sailing for the Indians on the opening day of the Mussanah Open Championship 2021 at the Millennium Resort in Mussanah, Oman with many sailors placed between second and fourth positions in the last qualification round for this year's Tokyo Olympics from Asia and Africa.

In the Laser Radial category, in which two Olympic quota places are up for grabs, Harshita Tomar was placed in second place with six points behind South Korea's Jung Hyewon who is just a point ahead.

The top-ranked Indian in the fray, Nethra Kumanan, is placed fourth, despite getting a great start in Race 1 where she finished second behind Jung. But in the second race, Nethra, who became India's first World Cup medallist in 2019, finished seventh. She can still make up for the disappointing second race as there are eight more races to go followed by the medal race.

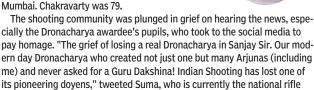
In the 49er category, the team of Ganapathy Kelapanda Chengappa and Varun Ashok Thakkar was placed fourth behind two Chinese and a South African team with 18 points after the first three races, while China are sitting comfortably on seven 7 points. Only one team can earn

a Olympic quota in the category. The Mussanah Open provides

Chakravarty passes away aged 79 NEW DELHI: Renowned rifle shooting coach Saniav

Narang, Karmakar's coach

Chakravarty, who is credited with mentoring the likes of 2012 London Olympic Games bronze medallist Gagan Narang, and Olympians such as Joydeep Karmakar, Suma Shirur and Anjali Bhagwat in his career spanning more than four decades, passed away due to Covid-related complications on Saturday night in Mumbai. Chakravarty was 79.



coach and working with shooters bound for this year's Tokyo Olympics. "With a very heavy heart, we share the bad news of legendary coach Sri Sanjay Chakravarty's passing away a few hours ago in Mumbai. He was a Dronacharya awardee for shooting sports and has coached and mentored many stalwarts in Indian shooting. Earlier he battled cancer to be back with us again, but Covid 19 finally got him away from us. We at Indian Shooting Team convey our deepest condolences on his demise. An era gone," wrote Karmakar, who represented the country in 28 World Cups, two Commonwealth Games, the Asian Games and three World Championships, besides narrowly missing a medal at the 2012 London Olympics, losing in the shootoff to finish fourth.

Though Chakravarty represented the country in quite a few international events, coaching was his true calling. (IANS)

Railways beat Jharkhand to win 13th women's ODI title

RAJKOT: A clinical bowling performance, coupled with half-centuries from Punam Raut and Sabbhineni Meghana, helped Mithali Raj-led Railways beat Jharkhand by seven wickets in the final of the Senior One-day Trophy and clinch the title on Sunday at the Saurashtra Cricket Stadium. Chasing a target of 168, Railways opener Nuzhat Parween was run out before she could score a run. However, the in-form Punam and Meghana put up a 107-run stand for the second wicket to close any opportunity that Jharkhand may have seen due to the early breakthrough. Punam was the first to be dismissed, falling to Ravinder Devyani for 59 runs from 94 balls. Meghana fell shortly after to Devyani for a 67-ball 53. Mona Meshram and Sneh Rana then made sure that Railways crossed the line in 37 overs without losing any further wickets. Brief scores: Jharkhand 167 all out in 50 overs (Indrani Roy 49; Sneh Rana 3/33, Meghna Singh 2/22) lost to Railways 167/3 in 37 overs (Punam Raut 59, Sabbhineni Meghana 53; Ravinder Devyani 2/36) by seven wickets with 78 balls remaining. (MASS)

Miami Open: Barty wins title as injured Andreescu retires

MIAMI: World number one Ashleigh Barty of Australia took the Miami Open women's singles title as Bianca Andreescu of Canada had to retire in the second set of the final. Barty completed the 6-3, 4-0 victory after Andreescu was forced to retire in tears with an injury to her right ankle in the second set on Saturday, Xinhua news reports. "It's never the way you ever want to finish a match, particularly in a final," Barty said. Barty completed a tremendous turnaround from the start of the event. In her two-and-ahalf-hour opening clash against Kristina Kucova of Slovakia, Barty needed to save a match point before staving off the challenge from the qualifier.

Sania, Ankita hit the courts in Dubai ahead of Latvia tie

DUBAI: India's tennis ace Sania Mirza and Ankita Raina began their preparations for the Billie Jean King Cup, previously Fed Cup, tie against Latvia in Dubai in a bid to get back to peak fitness as quickly as possible for the two-day away contest on April 16-17. The duo will be working together for a week before boarding the flight to Latvia. This is the first time in history that the Indian women's tennis team has made it to the World Group play-offs. The pros will be leading a fivemember team that includes Karman Kaur Thandi, the fast-improving Zeel Desai and Rutuja Bhosale. Last month, the AITA selection committee had selected the team, to be captained by Vishal Uppal.

Bhaker to represent India in three events in Olympics, Elavenil included as Chinki misses out

New Delhi

WORLD number one Elavenil Valarivan was on Sunday included in a 15-member Indian shooting contingent for the Tokyo Olympics where the highly accomplished Manu Bhaker will represent the country in three events. However, Olympic quota winner Chinki Yadav could not make the main team despite winning a gold medal in the Delhi World Cup last month.

It was decided by the national selection committee that the quota won by Chinki in the women's 25m pistol would be swapped in favour of Anjum Moudgil, to enable her to compete in the women's $50 \, \mathrm{m}$ rifle 3 positions event as India's second entry alongside former world champion Tejaswini Sawant.

Reigning world number one in women's 10m air rifle, Elavenil, is the only member in the Olympic team to have not secured a quota for herself but performed consistently in the Olympic qualifying cycle, forcing the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) to include her in the women's 10m air rifle team in place of Moudgil.

To deal with the uncertainty caused by the pandemic, the NRAI named two reserves in each discipline where its shooters have won quota places. In the individual events, Bhaker

will be fielded in both the women's 25m pistol alongside the experienced Rahi Sarnobat and in her pet 10m air pistol event with Yashaswini Singh Deswal.

Besides, the 19-year-old Bhaker will partner with Saurabh Chaudhary in the 10m air pistol mixed event. The shooters were selected based on their performance in the NRAI's Olympic qualifying cycle, starting with the 2018 Jakarta Asian Games which was followed by World Championship (both in 2018), all four World Cups and Asian Championships in 2019 and selection trials stage 1 and 2 earlier this year.

As per the NRAI's stated policy, an average of five best scores in an international competition, starting with the Jakarta Asiad, was taken into account while picking the final team. Commenting on the team, NRAI president Raninder Singh said, "The main focus was to select the strongest squad for the Games and to ensure that the most consistent performers in each event, during the course of this entire Olympic cycle, do not miss out."

He added, "The selection I believe has been done purely on merit and in keeping with the provisions of NRAI's Olympic selection ranking policy." The quota belongs to the country and not the shooter who seTeam: 10m Air Rifle Men: Divyansh Singh Panwar, Deepak Kumar Reserve Shooters: Sandeep Singh, Aishwary Pratap Singh

50m Rifle 3 Position Men: Sanjeev Rajput, Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar Reserve Shooters: Swapnil Kusale, Chain Singh 10m Air Pistol Men: Saurabh Chaudhary, Abhishek Verma Reserve Shooters: Shahzar Rizvi, Om Prakash Mitharval 10m Air Rifle Women: Apurvi Chandela, Elavenil Valarivan Reserve Shooters: Anjum Moudgil, Shreya Agrawal

50m Rifle 3 Position Women: Anjum Moudgil, Tejaswini Sawant Reserve Shooters: Sunidhi Chauhan, Gaayathri N 10m Air Pistol Women: Manu Bhaker,

Yashaswini Singh Deswal Reserve Shooters: P. Shri Nivetha, Shweta Singh 25m Sports Pistol Women: Rahi Sarnobat, Manu Bhaker Reserve Shooters: Chinki

Yadav, Abhidnya Patil Skeet Men: Angadvir Singh Bajwa, Mairaj Ahmad Khan Reserve Shooters: Gurjoat Siingh Khangura, Sheeraz Sheikh

10m Air Rifle Mixed Team: Divyansh Singh Panwar, Elavenil Valarivan Deepak Kumar, Anjum Moudgil

10m Air Pistol Mixed Team: Saurabh Chaudhary, Manu Bhaker Abhishek Verma, Yashaswini Singh Deswal. (PTI)