

Delhi recorded 145 fresh COVID-19 cases and two new fatalities on Tuesday, while the positivity rate stood at 0.25 per cent, authorities said. With this, the toll from the coronavirus infection has gone up to 10,903 and the case tally rose to 6,38,173.

Womenia

TWEET PATROL


KAJOL
@ITEKAJOLD

"And you sir, you're very attractive.
Therefore, I will stare at you!"
- Anonymous & Me
@ajaydevgn

#22years #stillgoing #grateful #laughingalways



GRAPES FOR GREAT HEALTH

Adding grapes to your diet can aid in promoting healthy clean arteries and help in preventing the oxidation of bad 'LDL' cholesterol which can lead to plaque formation

I love these tiny gems an array of colours. Be it a mystical red, a deep violet, black or a bright, happy green, grapes are easy to consume and a refreshing bowlful of immunity. They are truly your health booster!

Let me share with you that grapes owe their hues to the presence of flavonoids and antioxidants and other polyphenols in high concentrations. These naturally occurring chemicals neutralize harmful free radicals to help prevent the process of oxidation that damages healthy cells.

If you love your heart then I know for a fact these chemicals reduce the risk of heart diseases. The most important point to note is that it is the seeds of the grape that is the main contributor for your cardiovascular health and well-being of heart muscle cells. Human studies have shown that eating a variety of grapes may help support a healthy heart by improving blood flow, arterial flexibility and blood vessel function. Grape consumption may also help prevent platelet aggregation, which can lead to clot formation. So adding in grapes to your diet can aid in promoting healthy clean arteries and help in preventing the oxidation of bad "LDL" cholesterol which can lead to plaque formation.

You will be delighted to know that for all my clients I always prescribe grapes, during the season, as they are zero in fat, and are full of natural sugar. I have observed over the years with my clients that when they have sweet cravings, just a handful of grapes can



cut it down tremendously. Why don't you try this out for yourself too?

If you have elevated blood pressure levels, during the grape season, add it in your diet as grapes are an excellent source of potassium and their sodium content is close to negligible.

I have to tell you that for good eye health grapes prevent age related loss of vision and cataracts due to anti-aging properties.

Often when people complain of constipation in this season I recommend grapes. The high dietary fiber content of grapes aids in smooth bowel movement and help unclog you!



Naini Setalvad

During my research I came across a study "A Boost for Colon Health. In a small human study of colon cancer patients, those who ate 2 1/2 cups of grapes per day for two weeks were able to inhibit certain genes that promote tumor growth in the colon. This benefit was observed in the healthy tissue of the subjects' colons, not the cancerous, indicating a potential role for grapes in maintaining a healthy colon."

Simply put, it's no surprise that these little grapes look like little jewels. Nutritionally, they are extremely high in value and are also delectable!

NEWS ROUNDUP

First beauty pageant from 'Grehlakshmi Mrs India 2021' announced

Grehlakshmi, India's No. 1 Hindi women's magazine is all set to make its mark in the pageant industry by announcing its very first season of 'Grehlakshmi Mrs. India 2021'. The last date of entries to reach will be on 1 April, 2021.

Grehlakshmi magazine has always been synonymous to celebrating womanhood. As a fastest growing woman's monthly, the magazine has become a face for the woman of substance and always takes an honour to acknowledge their achievements and applaud their valiant efforts against all odds. Through this pageant, the magazine aims to provide aspirations to every housewife who walks a trapeze all her life balancing all her responsibilities equally with love and dedication. The pageant is set to happen in one of the five star proper-



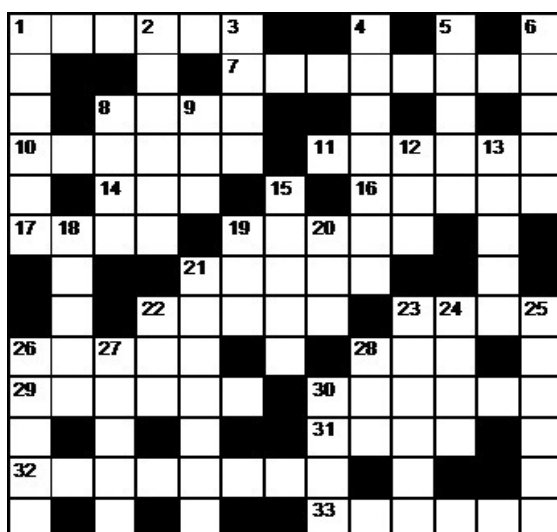
ties in New Delhi with auditions happening in major cities of the country. The pageant is the brainchild of a vi-

vacious and talented personality, Mrs Vandana Verma, the chief editor of Grehlakshmi Magazine. Driven by her aesthetic vision and entrepreneurial skills, Mrs. Vandana Verma has used her insight and experience combined with her educational background in making Grehlakshmi, a favourite among new age multifaceted, multi-tasking women.

Grehlakshmi Mrs India will be a platform that not only gives women the opportunity to showcase their beauty, intelligence and talent, but also provides a space where they explore and discover themselves through a challenging journey. This platform will offer every single contestant the opportunity to receive the best advice and tips to take on the world on an international stage. The contestants will wit-

ness their transformation journey up close in the guidance of industry's best groomers, make-up artists, fitness experts, celebrity judges etc. The winner of Mrs Grehlakshmi India 2021 will be adorning the cover of this national magazine and will be entitled for an International holiday package of 4 days & 5 nights. The event is partnered by major brands along with media partners like Daily hunt, Josh app etc.

Lady Star Universe - 2018 & Mrs India - Empress of the Nation 2018 Simran Godhwani is the city director for this prestigious event where she will groom all the aspiring contestants from Bangalore for this pageant. She is an accomplished Kathak artist and is the founder of Krshala Dance Theatre and Co-founder of School of Meaningful Experiences.



SOLUTION TO FEBRUARY 24

CROSSWORD

Across

- 1 Brownish gray baboon (6)
- 7 Refutation (8)
- 8 Hindu god of love (4)
- 10 Intelligent (6)
- 11 Different ones (6)
- 14 Small enclosure for animals, especially sheep (3)
- 16 Designations (5)
- 17 Like it is depicted ? (2,2)
- 19 Island in New York Bay (5)
- 21 Small harbour (5)
- 22 Hanging loosely (5)
- 23 Affectionate (4)
- 26 Hindu ascetic (5)
- 28 Dark red resin (3)
- 29 Steal (6)
- 30 Bump against (6)
- 31 As many as (4)
- 32 Thought of or considered (8)
- 33 Weirder (6)

Down

- 1 Father's brother in India (6)
- 2 Lacking courage (6)

- 3 Hebrew month (4)
- 4 Soviet satellite (7)
- 5 Tribal emblem (5)
- 6 Kick up ____ (1,4)
- 8 French military hat (4)
- 9 Male persons (3)
- 12 Possesses (3)
- 13 Pine exudation (5)
- 15 Song of lamentation especially for the dead (5)
- 18 Mother of Isaac (5)
- 19 Work unit (3)
- 20 Land temporarily under grass ? (3)
- 21 "Vary cue" anagram for a South Indian river (7)
- 22 Pronoun for a girl (3)
- 23 Speedier (6)
- 24 Eight as a prefix (4)
- 25 More profound (6)
- 26 A large shop (5)
- 27 Dull and shabby (5)
- 28 Cut off (3)
- 30 Hey ____ : Beatles hit (4)

SUDOKU



SOLUTION TO FEBRUARY 24

Creativity can't be clocked

As long as the length of the workday remains the same, the four-day workweek seems to bear sweet fruits. India Inc has joined the global chatter on the four-day workweek. A recent announcement about the much-talked-about new labour code suggests that organisations may be allowed to offer the option to employees. However, the ministry keeps the 48-hour cap on the workweek "sacrosanct". Much before the pandemic, remote work and flexible work policies became a part of our lives, companies around the world had begun litmus testing a three-day weekend for employees.

Zahara Kanchwalla, co-founder & COO, Rite Knowledge Lab lists down a few things to consider if you're giving the four-day workweek a thought for your workforce:

More hours in exchange for extra off

One of the primary arguments in favour of the four-day workweek is that the extra time off leads to better productivity at work. However, look closely and you find that it's only when a four-day workweek is accompanied by reduced weekly work hours that the concept bears fruit.

Perpetual Guardian, a New Zealand-based company, the first to grab headlines for testing the four-day workweek in 2018, asked its employees to work 30 hours a week and paid them for 37.5 hours. Similarly, Spain experimented with the four-day workweek in response to the pandemic, asking workers to clock in 32 hours a week. Finland's Prime Minister, Sanna Marin has floated the ambitious idea of 6-hour 4-day work weeks.

Longer hours means less focus

The brain is known to concentrate for 2-hour stretches with 15 to 30-minute intervals in between. Employee focus is usually at its peak at the beginning of the shift with concentration levels gradually dipping as the hours pass. By the 8th or 9th hour of the workday, workers are fatigued and unlikely to be at their productive-best for the additional hours they now have to clock in. It also raises the likelihood of mistakes, errors and accidents.

Creativity can't be clocked

In a digital agency where a majority of the roles are of a creative nature, twelve-hour workdays are impractical. Sure, pulling a caffeine-fuelled all-nighter a day before an important pitch may get those creative juices flowing but that's just the pressure of the deadline in action on a creative brain.

Writing, designing, creative visualising and ideating aren't functions that can be dictated to work for 12-hour stretches. Besides, one can only focus on the same project for so long before mental fatigue and the infamous creative block sets in.

To be able to look at the same problem afresh, taking breaks at regular intervals throughout the day is a crucial part of the thinking and ideating process. It cannot be crammed into four days and switched off for the other three.

A long break is priceless

Having said that, a long break away from work is indeed priceless. Employees have long grumbled about the two-day weekend passing by in a blink. On the flip side, a four-day workweek could prove as motivation for the long weekend. Knowing that the workweek is now shorter may encourage employees to complete tasks faster. The promise of three full days to oneself may inspire employees to focus fully while at work.

Besides, a three-day weekend allows one to plan longer holidays out of the city. It may also open up opportunities for employees to engage in long-forgotten hobbies, sign for an upskilling program or take up gigs on the side!



Zahara Kanchwalla

Shahjahanpur woman was set ablaze after failed rape attempt



SHAHJAHANPUR

THE BA second year student who was found half-burnt near a highway in Shahjahanpur, has now told the police that three people tried to rape her in a field near Rai Kheda village on Monday evening and when they did not succeed, they poured kerosene and set her on fire.

Superintendent of Police S. Anand said that the girl gave

this statement to the investigators. She has not yet named the accused.

The victim has now been admitted to Civil Hospital in Lucknow. She has suffered more than 70 per cent burn injuries on the stomach chest and neck.

The police officer, however, said that she frequently changed her statements and also said that she was not aware how she reached the

hospital from the third floor of her college building.

In CCTV footage, the girl, a student of a college run by a trust of former union minister Swami Chinmayanand, was seen coming down alone from the third floor, the police said.

The SP said, "With the help of CCTV footage, we have found that the girl went out of the college campus from a broken outer wall about 20

minutes after entering the premises and was seen walking alone on a canal road."

Before that, the girl could be seen talking to her friends outside a classroom and visiting a library.

Three teams led by deputy superintendents of police (DSP) as well as an SOG team have been deployed. Besides, another team led by a Dy SP with five policemen is present in Lucknow's Civil Hospital

where she is undergoing treatment for burns.

Over a dozen students of the college, including her friends, have been questioned. The girl had called one person of her village on her mobile phone on the day of incident and he has also been questioned, the SP said.

The SP said that in the field where she was lying, some tumblers were found but there was no trace of liquor.

MURDER OF UNDERTRIAL INSIDE TIHAR

Shocking, says Delhi HC



NEW DELHI

THE Delhi High Court on Wednesday expressed shock at the alleged murder of an undertrial inside Tihar jail.

The father of the victim Dilsher Azad moved the court seek-

ing Rs five crore as compensation for the custodial death. "It is shocking," Justice Prathiba M. Singh said while hearing the matter.

The judge said such incidents are only seen in fiction. "I do not know how something like this

Retd IFS officer shoots self in Defence Colony, dies

NEW DELHI

AN 81-year-old retired IFS officer shot himself in south Delhi's Defence Colony on Wednesday morning. He was rushed to hospital but he later succumbed to his injuries.

A PCR call was received at 7.25 a.m. that Ranjeet Sethi, aged 81 and a retired IFS officer residing in Defence Colony, had shot himself. The caller stated that the person was alive

and needed an ambulance. He was immediately moved to the hospital for treatment but later died.

"Enquiries revealed that Mr Sethi was discharged yesterday from a hospital. A suicide note has been found. We are investigating the case," said Atul Thakur, DCP South Delhi.

Sources said that the deceased was ill for sometime. He is survived by his wife and two children.

Gurugram school manager shot dead

GURUGRAM

A manager of a private firm was allegedly shot dead late on Tuesday night at the under-construction Delhi-Mumbai Expressway near Sancholi village in Sohna area in Gurugram.

The police said on Wednesday that an accused, who has been identified as Bhim of Nuh district, has been nabbed. Bhim is involved in the smuggling of stolen iron rods. According to the police, the deceased was identified as a 37-year-old Rohit Sharma, who was a manager in a private firm located in Sancholi village in Sohna. The complainant, Ajay Vikram Singh, a senior manager of the firm in his complaint said on Tuesday night around 11.45 pm Sharma was about to leave his office.

"When Rohit come out he asked the occupant of an I-20 car parked outside the company as to the reasons for being present on the spot. On this the accused fired a single shot into his chest and rode away from the spot. Later the victim was rushed to a private hospital in Gurugram by his colleagues where the doctor declared him brought dead," Singh told the police.



Four missing UP girls found in Uttarakhand

LAKHIMPUR KHERI

THE four girls who went missing on their way to school on Tuesday, were found in Uttarakhand on Wednesday. SP Vijay Dhul said that the girls had left their homes to visit Uttarakhand. They were staying at a hotel under Muni ki Reti police station in Tehri Garhwal district.

They have been safely recovered by a police team that went from here. The Uttarakhand police also helped in tracking down the girls. The police team is now bringing the girls back.

According to the police, technical surveillance was used to track down the girls, three of whom are minors.

One of the girls, 20, a student of Class 12, had left home with Rs 25,000 cash. She, along with three minor girls aged between 15 to 16 years, were seen boarding the bus.

The SSP said, "The bus conductor, who identified the girls, said he had dropped them at Sitapur bus stand. It appears from the CCTV clips and the conductor's account, that the girls left home on their own. We do not see anyone accompanying them."

The girls had all turned off their mobile phones and their last location was traced to Sitapur.

The police scanned CCTV footages of the bus stand and railway station and coordinated with their counterparts in Sitapur and Lucknow in the search operations.



UP high school student gang-raped, stabbed

GONDA

IN yet another shocking crime in Uttar Pradesh, a high school girl student in Mankapur Kotwali area of Gonda district was gang-raped and then stabbed by four men.

The girl was returning home from school on Tuesday evening when she was waylaid by four accused and dragged to a sugarcane field.

The four men, one of whom belongs to her village, raped her by turns and then stabbed her on the hand, warning her not to report the incident.

The girl returned to her home and informed her parents after which she lodged a complaint with the police.

The police spokesman at Mankapur police station said that a case had been registered against the four accused for rape and under provisions of the POCSO Act.

The girl has been sent for medical examination.

The police said that there was a dispute between the families of the accused and the victim.

Rishiganga water level lake falls by 1 foot



DEHRADUN

SDRF personnel aided by the villagers have managed to widen the discharge area of a Rishiganga lake in Uttarakhand, bringing down its water level by one foot, top police officers said on Wednesday.

For the past few days, villagers have joined hands with the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) personnel in uprooting some trees and widening the lake's discharge area to release more water. By doing this, the discharge area has been widened by 20 to 50 feet which in turn brought down the water level of the lake by more than one foot, they said.

The SDRF personnel are on

alert in Chamoli district after the lake was formed at the catchment area of the turbulent Rishiganga river which had caused the February 7 deluge, wreaking havoc in the district. The lake has been formed at a height of 14,000 feet.

SDRF personnel have also been deployed at Pang and other areas along the Rishiganga lake to closely monitor the flow of water, SDRF Commandant Navneet Bhullar said. In addition to this, alert sensors and a quick deployable antenna (QDA) have also been set up at the lake side. Through the QDA, the SDRF has established video communication with the lake area from Dehradun.

VIOLATION OF MCI REGULATIONS

SC imposes ₹5 crore fine on medical college

NEW DELHI

THE Supreme Court Wednesday imposed Rs 5 crore fine on a private medical college in Unnao for granting admission to students in violation of the Medical Council of India (MCI) regulations.

A bench of Justices L Nageswara Rao and S Ravindra Bhat noted that Saraswati Medical College admitted 132 stu-

dents on its own without seeking a nod from Director General Medical Education (DGME), Uttar Pradesh. The bench held however that cancelling the admission of the students would serve no purpose, but directed them to do 2-year community service after their MBBS course as they were not innocent and knew their names were not recommended by the DGME. It said: "Being

aware of the fact that admissions cannot be made from students not allotted by the third Respondent (MCI), the College admitted 132 students on its own.

Thereafter, the college permitted the students to continue their studies in spite of the direction by the MCI to discharge the students not being stayed. "Intentional violation of the regulations by the college while granting ad-

mission to 132 students in the first year MBBS course for the academic year 2017-2018 cannot be condoned. The Petitioner-College is directed to deposit an amount of Rs 5 crore in the Registry of this Court within a period of 8 weeks from today". The apex court also directed the medical college not to recover the amount from the students in any manner whatsoever.





"A premium Co-Living Space"

PROPERTY MULTIPLIER
WITHOUT ADDITIONAL INVESTMENT

KT Residency approved by  Approved No. PO2400001598

SAFE

Earn extra sft*

AFFORDABLE

9% to 11% Returns

NO MAINTENANCE

Assured rental income for 20years

+91 95337 76694

www.ktresidency.com | sales@kapilproperties.com

RIFT BETWEEN VASUNDHARA RAJE AND SATISH POONIA

Central, State leadership can't be challenged: Raj BJP in-charge

ARCHANA SHARMA JAIPUR

BJP state in-charge for Rajasthan, Arun Singh, has openly announced that Central and State leadership cannot be challenged and each party worker needs to follow party guidelines and discipline.

Singh was addressing a press conference in Jaipur soon after the conclusion of a BJP core committee meeting.

His statement came in the wake of a rift seen in BJP state units led by two leaders, former Chief Minister Vasundhara Rajé, and Satish Poonia, BJP state president ever since the latter was appointed as state party chief.

On Tuesday night, Arun Singh met a few BJP MLAs from Rajé's camp at MNIT, Jaipur and reminded them to follow party guidelines.

These MLAs along with other team members had written a letter to national president J.P. Nadda, and state BJP president Satish Poonia alleging that they were treated partially in the Assembly session and were not been given a chance to speak in Assembly.

The letter went viral on social media, however, as per Poonia's team, but did not reach both the people it was addressed to.

Sources said that it was an effort to dent on Poonia's image which did leave the state BJP unit in red.

The letter was shot the same day when Poonia and Rajé were together in Delhi to attend the BJP organisation meeting where Prime Minister Narendra Modi was also present.

Poonia, sources said, had taken a complete set of records to be presented to central leadership which

also included the stories of parallel unit being formed on social media by Rajé followers, her silence on all such activities and her plans to organise 'yatra' from Bharatpur's Krishna temple.

Eventually the central leadership ringed in a truce. Singh asked these MLAs to avoid flouting party lines and directed them saying, "Whatever you want to discuss should be discussed on a right platform in one on one manner but not in this way," he said.

Those MLAs who were called, included Pratap Singh Singhvi, Kalicharan Saraf, Narpat Singh Razvi and former MLAs Yunus Khan, Rajpal Singh and former state president Ashok Parnami. They have complained to Singh that they were being ignored by new team despite being senior members.

Skyrocketing fuel prices and unyielding govts

INDIA should become Atmanirbhar. India has excellent human resources. Corruption in any form will not be tolerated.' These are some of the nuggets we hear from the political leaders, be at the national level or the State level. Yes, we have excellent human resources, but the problem is they are being strangled. They are not allowed to live or die. There was a time about four decades ago when the common man's monthly grocery basket used to cost him Rs 150 or so. But today an average middle-class family shells out nothing less than Rs 3,000 per month for the same. The wages of employees have not risen corresponding to the increase in monthly expenditure. With consecutive hike in petrol and diesel prices, the pinch is greater. While the Centre has washed its hands off saying that country's dependence on energy import is the main reason for the current spike in fuel prices and blamed the

previous Congress regime for being responsible for it, the State governments are maintaining stoic silence. The Centre argues that at present, the share of imports in the country's overall crude requirement comes to 89 percent while it is pegged at around 53 percent for gas. This always makes India vulnerable to volatility in the international crude market. "There are two main reasons behind the fuel price rise. International market has reduced fuel production and manufacturing countries are producing less fuel to gain more profit. This is making the consumer countries suffer," the NDA government claimed. Along with that another reason for the steep hike in the fuel prices is highest Central and State taxes. During the pandemic, the Central government had raised the Excise Duty on petrol to Rs 32.98 a litre from Rs 19.98 a litre. A similar increase was affected on diesel, where Excise Duty was increased to Rs 31.83 a litre

from Rs 15.83 a litre. Several State governments too had increased the Value Added Tax (VAT) on fuel during the same period. During pandemic, the Central and the State governments asked people both in the government and private sector to sacrifice part of their salary to protect the economy and people did rise to the occasion. But at a time when the economy is on path to recovery and the common man is suffering, none of the governments is willing to sacrifice even part of their income. Let the common man bleed but we won't forego any amount is what the attitude of the governments is. The common man with his meagre income must readjust his budget but the governments are not willing to cut down on their expenditure or rationalise them at least for a short period. This becomes clear from the statement of the Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman who said the Centre has little role be-

hind the astronomical rise in the price. "It's a very vexatious issue in which no answer except for reducing the price (of fuel) will convince anyone. I know I am trading on an area where whatever I may say to bring the reality into picture will only sound like I'm obfuscating, I'm avoiding the answer, I am shifting the blame...." true, the government is shifting the blame and has no heart to reduce the taxes. West Bengal is among the few States which had reduced the tax by a token amount of Re 1 per litre on petrol and diesel because it is election time. Union Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said that the Centre and the State governments rely heavily on collections from taxes on crude oil "for meeting their developmental and welfare priorities". Taxes make up for over 61 per cent of retail petrol price while they constitute more than 56 per cent of diesel rates. Neither the Centre nor the States seem to be in a mood to bring fuel under GST even though it defeats the purpose of 'one nation one tax' to a great extent. Let's hope that leaders will stand behind the people.

PART-I

Innovation needs bigger encouragement

TALKING OF MANY THINGS



Dr Mohan Kanda

USHING back the frontiers of scientific and technological knowledge has for long been a passionate endeavour for humanity. Scientific research, however, has, over the ages, flourished largely on the support and assistance received from the rulers of the day. Patronising cutting-edge research, and advancing the cause of making inventions and discoveries, have fortunately always remained high on the agenda of reigning regimes and those at the helm of affairs of governments.

The Modi government is continuing the tradition of according high priority to the field of Science and Technology (S&T), an approach instituted by Jawaharlal Nehru, and followed by every other Prime Minister since then.

From the days of Aryabhata, Dhanvantari and Varāhamihira, through the times when brilliant scientists such like C V Raman, Hargobind Singh Khurana, (both Nobel laureates), J C Bose, Homi J Bhabha and Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar who did the country proud, to our own times, in which we have seen the likes of Venkatraman Ramakrishnan and Abdul Kalam make India's flag fly high in the international brotherhood of scientists. India has always been a country that contributes great minds whose work advance the cause of the growth and development of the human race as a whole.

Research and Development (R&D), has been accorded the pride of place in the budgets presented by governments from time to time, both the Central and the State levels, especially in the areas of S&T, agriculture, industry and economics.

It is a reflection of the priority

and importance accorded to S&T and, in particular, the needs of R&D that the Council of Scientific and Industrial research (CSIR) is headed by none less than the Prime Minister himself, and there is also in place an Advisory Committee on S&T to the Prime Minister comprising eminent practising scientists and researchers.

It is with generous support from the Central and the State governments that Centres of Excellence such as the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, and Indian Institutes of Technology in various parts of the country, have come up.

There are two aspects to R&D which deserve close examination. One is the amount of energy, effort and support the field is receiving from the governments, the corporate sector, the scientific community, academic institutions. And the other is the extent to which the fruits of research are finding productive application in the development and growth of the nation, in a sustainable and equitable manner.

As a person acquainted with issues related to the agriculture and allied sectors, I am able to state that the extent to which research findings have translated into field level results has been far from satisfactory. I was in Israel about a quarter of a century ago where I found that over 85% of the research conducted by the Agricultural Research Organization (ARO), the premier agricultural research institution of that country, was driven by the demands made by farmers, and the funds provided by them. I doubt that it would be an exaggeration if I stated that even the remaining 15% or so is yet to be solution oriented and demand driven in our country. That, however, is another story.

India's spend on R&D, which stands at about .9% of the GDP, is well below that of major nations such as the US, China, Israel and Korea. There was, in fact, a time when brilliant persons such as Dr C R Rao and Ramanujan had to opt for offshore study for lack of remunerative employment in India. This is in spite of the fact that, measured in terms of Gross Expenditure on R&D (GERD), it has more than tripled



- There are two aspects to R&D which deserve close examination. One is the amount of energy, effort and support the field is receiving from the governments, the corporate sector, the scientific community and academic institutions. And the other is the extent to which the fruits of research are finding productive application in the development and growth of the nation, in a sustainable and equitable manner.
- India's spend on R&D, which stands at about .9% of the GDP, is well below that of major nations such as the US, China, Israel and Korea. There was, in fact, a time when brilliant persons such as Dr C R Rao and Ramanujan had to opt for offshore study for lack of remunerative employment in India. This is in spite of the fact that, measured in terms of Gross Expenditure on R&D (GERD), it has more than tripled in the previous decade and more. The country's aim should be to reach the desired level of 2% in as short a time as possible.

in the previous decade and more. The country's aim should be to reach the desired level of 2% in as short a time as possible.

Indians are undoubtedly experts at what Swetha Murali, in her article "Research and Development in India - an Overview", identifies as 'Jugaad' which in Hindi, means the ability of solving a problem, with limited resources, but in an innovative manner (a word with such a well-known meaning that even the Oxford dictionary has officially accepted as a part of its lexicon!). That does not, however, take away from the fact, that R&D requires greater support. Murali goes further to offer the fact of

the doubling of patent filings by Indians in the previous decade, as evidence of that phenomenon. The country's abundant resources of skill and education provide fertile ground for cerebral research, which can help cash opportunities available, across a range of sectors, for innovation to bring in rich dividends.

While that, by itself, is hardly a reassuring situation, more disturbing is the fact that private investments in R&D have severely lagged behind those made by the public agencies, quite contrary to the situation that obtains in other countries. The country consoled itself with their

achievements elsewhere. The need to provide adequate allocations to the sector has also yet to catch the attention of the state governments. While R&D, no doubt, is not an area that promises attractive returns on investment and, therefore, carries with it a certain amount of risk, it remains crucial for corporates to acquire larger shares of the market in the future.

Governments, both the Central and the States, need to realise that R&D expenditure impacts positively the Total Factor Productivity (TFR) or increasing output per worker. It also offers an opportunity to scientists, especially researchers, to explore the possibilities of developing new knowledge, techniques and technologies. Which, in turn, can spur production and productivity. R&D is also known to be effective in reducing costs, improving quality, diminishing risks, responding to market signals and speeding up production processes. That is another reason why countries should create a policy environment that supports innovation, which is at the heart of R&D and drives economic growth. Other measures, such as speeding up patent application interview processes and providing grants to industries to develop their own R&D divisions are also necessary. It is, in addition, known that investments in R&D positively impact on the growth of GDP. Well-directed R&D can also provide the right ambience for innovation. In this endeavour, however, care must be taken to identify what is real innovation, which is content-oriented, while improvements are process-oriented. Inspiration for innovation usually stems from many factors which include the need for change, how that change is perceived and an enabling environment that encourages effort. Real innovation is also a function of passion, pressure and circumstances, and requires determination and perseverance. It has, in fact, been observed that globalisation itself was a product of innovation.

(To be continued on next Thursday)

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



Reopening of varsities needs greater precaution

MAJ GEN A K SINGH (RETD)

IN the wake of the novel coronavirus pandemic, uncertainty hovers. One of the major shifts that have occurred in the past few months is that educational institutes have quickly moved to an online model of teaching and learning to ensure continuity. While online education has helped us during these difficult times, it has its limitations. Collaborative learning, that is important has been impacted, and not only students, but teachers are also experiencing a great deal of fatigue. The low level of engagement hinders learning for the students and they also experience boredom. The teachers, on the other hand, are not only challenged by technology but also have to continually think of innovative ways to keep an online class engaged.

Students need to get back to their campuses and UGC has already set down guidelines for reopening. Residential universities across India are gearing up to reopen by taking precautionary measures for the safety and wellbeing of students as they return to their campus. Major questions that we need to address are: How do you prepare for the return of students, faculty and staff to your campus? Once they arrive, how will you manage your residence halls, dining halls, classrooms, and offices, and serve your mission in a challenging fiscal environment?

Our immediate priority should be to build a roadmap for the campuses that ensure proper sanitisation at every corner while keeping social distancing in mind. These new practices will encompass myriad of issues beyond social distancing, including use of protective gear, cleaning protocols, classroom management and campus visitor screening protocols. In whatever we do for safety of students, faculty and staff should be of prime concern.

'Appropriate Covid-19 behavior', that includes wearing masks, washing hands frequently with soap and maintaining social distancing must be practiced at each juncture. One must ensure that all students and staff members know the common symptoms of infection as a precautionary measure for early detection.

To exercise adequate control and ensure comprehensive briefing of students, it would be advisable to let students return in a staggered manner, preferably 50% of each batch in one lot. Maintaining one-week gap between two batches will help in identification and management of any infection that may occur, while at the same time reducing the risk of follow up batches as well as attending to individual needs of each student. On arrival from their respective countries and States, it would be advisable for students to self-quarantine for 14 days in their individual rooms. This will ensure that chances of Covid-19 infection from new arrivals and intra-batch/group infections are almost eliminated.

It would be a good idea for Institutions to assume this responsibility. A travel advisory outlining how to prepare for travel and in-travel precautions could be shared with students and their parents to ensure that students' reception arrangements are done as per their convenience, as they leave their homes in such uncertain times. Handholding by institutions could include obtaining travel details in advance and organising transport facilities with sanitisation and segregated driver seats for student's safety. Upon arrival, one needs to make sure that students are carrying the necessary precautionary tests with them such as RT-PCR test.

Universities could limit occupancy in lecture halls to allow adherence to physical distancing norms. It will require 'hybrid mode' of delivery of the learning process after dividing sections/groups into two; one group in face-to-face interaction in classrooms and the other in hostel rooms; changing places on alternate days. Another approach could be a 'flipped classroom' where the faculty records and shares lectures in advance followed by discussion sessions and short quizzes in smaller groups. This may require extended class hours every day and six days engagement in a week.

It should be ensured that ample and easily accessible hands-free sanitisation stations are placed at the entrance of every building and all corridors for maximum utilisation by all. Norms to sanitise before entering the classroom and after leaving should be strictly implemented. In addition, all classrooms and labs should be specifically sanitised after each session.

To prevent entry of any infected person to the campus, a pre-arrival test by each returning student, faculty and staff should be the start point of testing protocol. This will eliminate entry of infected persons into the campuses except for the travel component. A combination of protocols for subsequent testing could be followed thereafter. One recommended process is to test all after 7-8 days of joining the campus and repeat the same two weeks after the first test. This will cover both self-quarantine and post quarantine periods. Subsequent testing could be as an outcome of daily health checkup. Daily health checkup may consist of temperature check, SpO2 level check and monitoring of other ILI symptoms.

While students are away from home, attention needs to be paid to provide them with nutritious food in designated messes and create options for obtaining the same from other points of sale. Given the challenge of managing adequate distancing and constant sanitation in large dining halls, universities should re-appropriate the dining spaces to cater to these requirements. In the quarantine period, it should be managed through delivery of all meals only in their respective rooms. Other approaches include staggering the timing batch-wise to avoid crowding, spaced seating and proper hygiene, sanitization, daily health check and appropriate kitting of the mess staff.

One of the biggest challenges faced by the universities would be control and management of students in their residential areas. Involvement of students and making it a student-led process is likely to yield best results. While security and admin teams may assist the wardens in this process, 'Students Safety Squads' could provide the best shield. Wherever possible, students should be housed in a single room occupancy and should consist of detailed procedure for disinfection and cleaning of rooms, of washrooms and common areas.

Getting students back to campuses should not create a feeling of deprivation from social and cultural engagement. It is equally essential to create opportunities to enable students to undertake physical and cultural activities which are a must for their psycho-social wellbeing and development. For some time to come Covid-19 may restrict activities like swimming and team games, one can indulge in individual sports like badminton, tennis, table tennis, apart from activities like jogging, running, yoga and walking, which can be done with very little effort and precautions. It would certainly require monitoring and sanitisation of equipment after individual use. As the situation improves other sports and social activities may be commenced.

There is only so much that the administration can do, and students would have to make a conscious effort for their safety as well as wellbeing of their peers. Maintaining social distancing, wearing a mask, ensuring proper sanitisation, and motivating their peers and subordinates to do the same may be the only way to keep the infection at bay and ensure safety of the campus communities at large.

The new normal is here to stay. Safe reopening for the education sector requires all of us to work together, employing the recommended best practices and maintaining safe daily habits to reduce the risk of exposure to Covid-19 and return of students to their second home.

(The writer is Chief Operations Officer & Dean, Student Affairs, NIIT University. Views expressed are personal)

LETTERS

Safety of students should be top priority

PHYSICAL classes for students of class 9th and above had started from February in Telangana State. Now the State government has decided to allow physical attendance of students from class 6th to 8th and is obtaining consent of parents for allowing students inside the schools. As well as physical classes and online classes are also being given to 6th to 8th class students but

It depends upon parents' consent for students to attend the physical classes. In view of Covid-19 pandemic, schools were shut down across the country. The Central government said as per the state government guidelines, schools can be reopened, and students should be allowed to attend schools class-wise. On one hand, it is necessary to allow the students to attend physical classes but on the other, Covid-19 pandemic once more is spreading in an alarming proportion in some of the States. It is tough situation for reopening schools and maintaining precautionary measures. So, school manage-

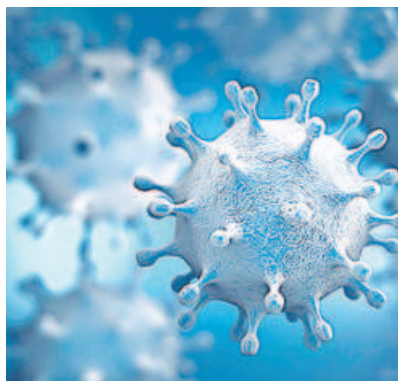
thehansreader@gmail.com

ments must take precautionary measures strictly to curb the pandemic in view of the protections of the students. If any untoward incident occurs among students, it will be very difficult to control. Managements should provide all items as per government guidelines and the Education Department officials also should inspect all the schools in their jurisdiction and take stringent action on errant managements. This is very important to control Covid-19 among students as well as to contain the spread of pandemic in the society. Parents should also procure and provide sanitisers, masks and other corona prevention items and educate their children and ensure that they follow those measures. School managements, teachers, parents and educational officials must take precautionary measures for the safety of the students in the State.

Abhignav Siddhartha, Hyderabad

Covid-19: Govt should act before it is too late

THE country is inoculating its people with Covid-19 vaccines. But in some States, the Covid-19 is still spreading at a fast rate and also there is lockdown in certain districts. With people starting to lead lives in a normal way similar to the pre lockdown times, slowly the government



is opening the cinema theatres with 100% occupancy, schools are being reopened and people are under the impression that everything is back to normal. But in reality, the situation is becoming different and there are different Covid-19 mutants spreading in many parts of the country. So, before some disaster takes place, the government should look into the matter. We have to pull up the socks to bring back normalcy.

Manoj Kumar Rathna, Chennai

BJP govt digs its own grave

FUEL prices witness a continuous hike for the past several days. Petrol is

close to make a century in several parts of the country. The question arises, when the price of unrefined fuel is at 20 USD per barrel, why the Central government did not reduce the price? Though the Central government is repeatedly hiking the fuel prices, never do they think about decreasing them. While the OPEC nations are trying to bridge up the loss incurred during lockdown, the Centre just wants to wash its hands, it seems. The people are aware and know better, how to utilise their electoral right. They are astonishing as when the government used to be in the Opposition, it used petrol hike as a tool of winning the election, but today they have fallen in their own net, and now holding Opposition responsible for the hike. People think about the promises and vote, therefore, if the government does not solve this issue, it might face problem in the upcoming elections in Bengal, Assam and UP. If the government wants, it can motivate and provide subsidy to promote e-vehicles, which will also be eco-friendly. LPG, PNG and other natural gas grid are on process of setting up. According to experts, use of natural gas as fuel will increase from the present 6.2 percent to 15 percent by 2030. Hope, if the government enlists fuel also in the GST, that would help make 'One Nation, One Fuel Price'.

Aman Jaiswal, Delhi

Day temperatures set to rise in City

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

WITH summer not far away, the day temperatures are set to rise in Hyderabad if the forecast during February 25 and March 2 is any indication. According to the IMD bulletin issued on Wednesday, days are going to become hot with rising temperatures of 34, 34, 34, 34, 35 and 35 degrees Celsius during the six days, with the outlook of mist for the first four days and fog or mist on March 1 and 2.

Across the State too the day temperatures rose during the last 24 hours with Bhadrachalam (35.2) crossing the 35 deg C mark for the first time this season. The

other temperatures were: Mahbubnagar 35.1, Adilabad & Ramagundam 34.8 each, Nizamabad 34.6, Khammam 34.2, Hyderabad & Nalgonda 33 each, Dundigal 32.4, Medak 32.2, , Hakimpet 32.1, , Hanamkonda 32.

Meanwhile, the night temperatures in the City during the period February 25 and March 2 are to be 18, 19, 19, 19, 20 and 20 degrees Celsius respectively.

The rising temperatures are attributed to mainly low level easterlies/North-easterlies (winds) prevail over the State.

The bulletin said during the last 24 hours ending at 8.30 am on Wednesday, dry weather prevailed over Telangana with the lowest

minimum temperature of 14.2 degrees Celsius recorded in Adilabad, point seven degrees more than the previous day.

There was no large change in the temperatures, ranging from -2 to +2 degrees Celsius, in most parts of the State. They were below normal by -1.6 to -3 degrees Celsius in some parts and appreciably below normal by -3.1 to -5 deg C in some others.

The other night temperatures recorded in the State were: Ramagundam 16.2, Medak 17.2, Hyderabad 17.1, Hanamkonda 17, Nizamabad 18.2, Dundigal 18, Hakimpet 19.6, Mahbubnagar 19.5, Bhadrachalam 19.4, Nalgonda 19.2, Khammam 21.6.

Governor decides to give virtual appointments

HYDERABAD

GOVERNOR Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan will meet people virtually and hear their grievances. As she is in Puducherry, where she recently assumed an additional charge as the Lt. Governor, she has decided to meet the people through virtual appointment mode. The virtual appointments will be fixed by the Raj Bhavan officials, duly following the procedures in place. Those who get the appointments will be asked to come to Raj Bhavan Durbar Hall to interact with the Governor through the video conferencing facility established there.

Reviewing the State affairs with the Raj Bhavan officials through the video conference mode from Puducherry on Wednesday, the Governor stated that the e-office launched in the Raj Bhavan has been proving very useful in accessing and clearing the files on a daily basis. "There are no files pending in my in-box right now. Though I am in Puducherry, I am always concerned about the Telangana. On a priority basis, I am clearing all the files within no time through the e-office mode," she added.

Promote blood donation

Governor Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan urged people to come forward for blood donation to save precious lives. She reviewed the functioning of Red Cross blood banks and the status of blood re-



► The Governor who is also Lt Governor for Puducherry now states that the e-office launched at Raj Bhavan has been proving very useful in accessing and clearing the files on a daily basis

► She directs officials to sanction financial help to paralysis-affected woman staff of the Raj Bhavan, from her discretionary grants

quirement and supplies with the Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS) state general secretary Madan Mohan Rao. She directed the IRCS to increase the participation of the Youth Red Cross members and Junior Red Cross members in the Red Cross activities and urged right training for them. "The youth and junior Red Cross volunteers will be of great use in offering their services during the calamities and they must be trained thoroughly, and we need to reach out to all those who have got registered earlier," she added.

Intensify alumni connectivity

The Governor directed the Na-

tional Informatics Centre (NIC) officials to intensify the efforts to connect the possibly maximum number of alumni through the Chancellor Connects Alumni initiative facilitated in the Raj Bhavan website. "The Chancellor Connects Alumni initiative is aimed at benefitting the present students in the universities through the services and contributions of the alumni," she added. The Governor stated that the alumni were very eager to join the network and it was for the NIC and other agencies to gear up and address all the technical glitches so as to facilitate the seamless connectivity of all alumni.

Financial help to Raj Bhavan employee

Moved by the plight of a paralysis-affected woman employee of the Raj Bhavan, the Governor directed officials concerned to sanction financial help to the staffer from her discretionary grants. The Governor is constantly monitoring and keeping a track on the developments in the Telangana State and has been getting regular updates. Secretary to Governor K Surendra Mohan joined the Governor in the video conference from Puducherry Raj Nivas, while the joint secretaries and other senior officials joined the conference from Raj Bhavan.

TN devotee offers ₹2 cr worth gold to Lord Balaji

TIRUPATI

A devotee from Tamil Nadu on Wednesday donated gold ornaments worth Rs 2 crore to the Lord Venkateswara temple here.

After offering worship, the devotee Thangadurai belonging to Theni in Tamil Nadu handed over the gold shanku (conch) and chakram (discuss), weighing 3.5 kg, to the temple authorities.

The main deity of the ancient shrine would be adorned with the donated ornaments, said TTD officials.

The devotee made the offering as a fulfilment of a vow, he



A devotee from Tamil Nadu, Thangadurai, is handing over Shanku & Chakra weighing 3.5 kg to TTD authorities on Wednesday

recovered from a serious illness during the Covid-19 lockdown,

an official quoted the devotee as saying.

Vidya Deevena in April, Rythu Bharosa in May

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

MINISTER for information and public relations Perni Venkataramaiah (Nani) on Wednesday released welfare calendar for the financial year 2021-22.

According to the calendar, the first phase of Jagananna Vasati Deevena and Jagananna Vidya Deevena along with zero-interest loans for farmers and women self-help groups will be provided in April 2021. Similarly, Phase-I of YSR Rythu Bharosa, Matsyakara Bharosa, diesel subsidy for the fishermen and crop insurance for kharif 2020 will be given in May 2021. In June YSR Cheyutha and Jagananna Vidya Kanuka will be implemented. In July, second phase of Jagananna Vidya Deevena, YSR Kapu Nestam and YSR Vahana Mitra will be taken up.

In August 2021, zero interest loans for farmers for kharif

2020, Industrial incentives to MSME sector, Nethanna Nestam and compensation for AgriGold victims will be paid. YSR Aasara for 2021 will be issued in September, followed by second phase of YSR Rythu Bharosa, Jagananna Chedodu and Jagananna Thodu in October 2021.

The new scheme, EBC Nestam for the women of upper castes, will be implemented in November 2021. Second phase of Jagananna Vasati Deevena, third phase of Jagananna Vidya Deevena and YSR Law Nestham will take place in December 2021. In January 2022, third phase of YSR Rythu Bharosa, Jagananna Ammavodi and enhancement of Pension Kanuka will be taking place, where Rs 2,500 will be given every month instead of Rs 2250. In February 2022, the final tranche of Jagananna Vidya Deevena will be released, he said.

Inflatable hangar comes up for aircraft maintenance

It is equipped with doors, lighting, fire detection & extinguishing and ventilation system with centralised computer-based monitoring system including remote diagnostics

HYDERABAD

THE MRO (Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul) division of GMR Aero Technic (GAT) and GMR Air Cargo and Aerospace Engineering Limited (GACAEL), has taken a leap in terms of aircraft maintenance and service in Asia, by adopting a technology in the form of an Inflatable Hangar on Tuesday. The 'Inflatable Hangar' maybe used for multiple purposes including scheduled and unscheduled maintenance, engine or landing gear replacement.

According to the GMR Group, the one bay narrow body hangar is sufficient to take one B737 or A320 series aircraft which will add one additional bay to GAT's already existing seven-bay capacity. With this additional line, GAT would be able to handle additionally 15 to 20 smaller base maintenance checks or four to five end of lease checks per year.

It takes considerable amount of time to source an available hangar to undertake the unscheduled repairs. On the contrary, an Inflatable Hangar is cost-effective, reduces downtime



to a minimum and saves time and money as compared to building a conventional hangar, at the same time catering for all the functionality, safety features and structural stability of the conventional hangar.

Ashok Gopinath, CEO, GMR Aero Technic, said, "The latest edition of this Inflatable Hangar to our MRO will meet timelines and commitments of aircraft operations and redeliveries. Such

hangars are used as a proper alternative to conventional hangars by MROs in Europe and GCC for many years now. In the long term, we are looking at adding a couple of more hangars aimed at upgrading to include wide-body aircraft capability including painting, certain critical components workshops and military MRO business."

The Inflatable Hangar is formed by low-pressure tubes

- The one bay narrow body hangar will add one additional bay to GAT's already existing seven-bay capacity
- It would enable GAT to handle additionally 15 to 20 smaller base maintenance checks or four to five end of lease checks per year
- It is cost-effective, reduces downtime to a minimum and saves time and money as compared to building a conventional hangar



hangar is designed to withstand wind speeds up to 158.4 km/hr and can handle temperatures from -30 degree Celsius to +70 degree Celsius which makes it a perfect alternative for conventional solid metal hangars which are both expensive and time-consuming to build.

The Inflatable Hangar will serve as a base maintenance facility complementing the existing facility in GMR

Aero Technic in Hyderabad and help in optimizing the already available resources in terms of manpower, tooling, support workshop. The Inflatable Hangar is equipped with doors, lighting, fire detection & extinguishing and ventilation system with centralised computer-based monitoring system including remote diagnostics. It is designed and built for regular continuous usage.

Naidu set to mollify angry TDP cadres in Kuppam

HANS NEWS SERVICE
TIRUPATI

AMID the tense atmosphere that prevailed in his stronghold Kuppam, TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu will be visiting extensively in all four mandals of the constituency for three days from Thursday. He has never faced this kind of rough weather since he first entered there in 1989. The debacle in the recent panchayat elections has created a gloomy situation among the party cadres.

This was evident during the preparatory meeting with party workers in Kuppam on Tuesday. Party constituency-in-charge P S Munirathnam, MLC G Sreenivasulu and Naidu's personal assistant in the constituency P Munirathnam could not escape from bearing the brunt of the anger of defeated candidates.

They made their point clear by saying that they became the scapegoats in the election process. They had to contest against their will but never got any kind of support from local leadership. No leader had even

come for the campaign leaving aside helping them financially. The party workers pointed their fingers at the three leaders for the party's huge defeat in the elections. They pointed to the defeat of a party-supported sarpanch candidate and all the three wards in MLC's native village Kenamakulapalle. Shocked by the anger of party cadres, the three leaders announced that they were ready to resign from their posts which was not objected to by anyone.

With these unexpected developments, the meeting ended abruptly without reviewing the arrangements for party chief's tour. In this backdrop, Naidu is going to concentrate on listening to the feelings of cadres and to motivate them for parishad elections.

Naidu will reach Bengaluru from Vijayawada on Thursday at 8.30 am and proceed to his constituency by road. He will first hold a meeting with party workers at Gudupalli Ralla Gangamma temple from 12 noon to 4 pm. This will be followed by Kuppam rural mandal meeting at TDP office.

EYESORES ON OUTSKIRTS

Garbage tossers make it tough for civic staff

- With no dumping yard in the municipality, Jalpally sanitation workers find it difficult to dispose of trash

ESA BIN ABDUL REHMAN
HYDERABAD

IN the absence of a systematic garbage collection mechanism and lack of proper awareness among the public itself about safe disposal of the trash, an unhealthy atmosphere is prevailing in Jalpally Municipality that may lead to several health-related issues if remedial steps are not taken. Spread over an area of 30 square kilometers with a mixed population of around 80,374 (as per 2011 census), this municipality was carved out in 2016 by merging areas of Jallapally, Balapur, Kottapet and Pahadi Shareef. Together these areas carry around 23,961 families that are divided into different socio-economic groups. However, garbage collection became the biggest challenge ever since the Jalpally emerged as a municipality. Garbage scattered around the roads, on open plots, in streets and on the banks of water bodies are a common scene in several areas of Jalpally municipality.

In colonies, which are largely not yet filled and gradually evolving into habitations, people are seen throwing trash in nearby open plots turning the ambience completely vulnerable for seasonal diseases. "To address the issue in a comprehensive way we rolled out door-to-door garbage collection programme seven months ago in the area but in the absence of a dry resource centre (DRC) to dump and treat the trash, they are facing hardship to dispose of the trash making this issue remain stinking and persisting," informed Abdallah Sadi, Chairmen Jalpally Municipality. To cart away the garbage being collected on a daily basis from different colonies, the Jalpally municipality has a sanitary wing with a supporting strength of 100 staff members butressed with a fleet of 16 autos, 4 tractors and one gopher sewer machine. "We even proposed to purchase a JCB and two more tractors to consolidate the sanitary fleet. Also, there is a plan to introduce driver-cum-owner scheme to catalyze a comprehensive way of garbage collection in Jalpally.

Forest dept aims to plant 20 cr saplings

In the six phases of the Haritha Haram programme carried out so far across the State, as many as 210.85 crore saplings were planted

HYDERABAD

AS a part of the 7th edition of Haritha Haram the Forest department has set a target of planting over 20 crore saplings which is scheduled to take place in 2021-22 during monsoon seasons.

A decision to that effect was taken at a state-level monitoring and coordination meeting held here on Wednesday at Aranya Bhavan. The meeting was presided over by Special Chief Government Secretary A. Santhi Kumari. Officials addressed the preparations to be made for the subsequent Haritha Haram sev-

enth step programme.

In the six phases of the Haritha Haram programme carried out so far across the State, as many as 210.85 crore saplings were planted, officials said. Since the State government's goal was to set up a nursery in each village, the number of nurseries has now risen to 14,924.

As against the planting target of 29.86 lakh saplings, over 27.31 crore saplings were planted during the sixth phase of last year's Haritha Haram program, officials said.

Santhi Kumari advised the officials concerned to take the neces-

sary measures during the summer to ensure the provision of water for the safety of the plants. Officials concerned should, with the coordination of elected officials, take steps to increase the survival rate of saplings planted, she said. She instructed officials to make large plants available at all nurseries for planting on highways as part of a multi-level avenue plantation, stating that officials should strive for Green Telangana with the same spirit shown during the PallePragathi and PattanaPragathi programs. If necessary, the officials can avail technical assistance from the forest department.



Iranian woman hanged despite suffering heart attack

TEHRAN

IN a bizarre incident, an Iranian woman who died of a heart attack while waiting to be executed was hanged anyway. Zahra Ismaili was convicted of killing her husband Alireza Zamani, an Iranian intelligence official, who was abusive to her and her daughter.

The mother of two was to be executed at Rajai Shahr Prison, a notoriously harsh jail in the town of Karaj, around 20 miles from Tehran. But while waiting to be executed, she suffered a fatal heart attack before her execution.

According to her lawyer Omid Moradi, she was forced to wait in line at the gal-

lows behind 16 men whom she watched die before her and passed away due to heart attack. Her body was taken up to the scaffold and hanged from the noose anyway. Moradi claims 'they hanged her lifeless body so that her husband's mother could exercise the right to kick away the chair from under her lifeless legs. The cause of death is stated as 'cardiac arrest' on Ismail's death certificate, according to Moradi. Ismail acted to defend herself and her daughter from her abusive husband, he adds.

As per Arab News, the execution is being condemned by human rights activists and analysts. An analyst at the Tony Blair Institute, Kasra Aarabi describes the



She was forced to wait in line at the gallows behind 16 men whom she watched die before her and passed away due to heart attack. Her body was taken up to the scaffold and hanged from the noose anyway

killing as 'truly barbaric' and urges world leaders to speak out. Kylie Moore-Gilbert, a British-Australian academic described it as 'gruesome.'

Sharia Law of Qisas (eye for an eye) grants the victim or victim's family the right to retributive justice. A mass execution of 17 convicts in one day is not uncommon in Iran, which stands after China in its use of capital punishment. Iranians are executed for non-violent crimes like for being gay, having sex outside marriage, drug trafficking and for drinking alcohol. Small children as young as 12, are also sentenced to death which is against International law.

In 2019, two 17-year-old boys were secretly flogged and executed for rape without informing their families.

The incident sparked outrage over child executions.

NAME CALLING BEGINS BEFORE WEST BENGAL ELECTIONS

Modi biggest rioter: Mamata

Mamata requests PM to help Bengal get vaccines for people before polls

Feel ashamed to see BJP getting involved in sale, purchase of MLAs: Shanta

SAHAGANJ / KOLKOTA/NEW DELHI

WEST Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday lambasted Prime Minister Narendra Modi, branding him as the "biggest rioter", who will face an "even worse fate" than former US President Donald Trump. Banerjee, speaking at a rally at Sahaganj in Hooghly district, also said Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah are spreading lies and hatred throughout the country.

"Narendra Modi is the biggest 'dangabaaz' (rioter) in the country... What has happened to Trump, he (Modi) will meet an even worse fate. Nothing can be gained from violence," she said. "I will be the goalkeeper in the assembly polls and you (BJP) will not be able to score a single goal. All shots will fly above the goal post," Banerjee added.

The chief minister also condemned the recent CBI interrogation of TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee's wife in connection with a coal pilferage scam, saying it was an "insult to our women". Meanwhile, cricketer Manoj Tiwary and sev-



eral Bengali actors joined the TMC at the rally in presence of Banerjee.

Aiming at inoculating people of Bengal for COVID-19 free of cost before the upcoming assembly election, Mamata wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi urging him to help the state in procuring vaccines.

A rapid vaccination programme is

needed immediately for the interests of health and well-being of all concerned, Banerjee said in a letter to Modi.

India cricketer Manoj Tiwary on Wednesday joined TMC in the presence of Mamata Banerjee.

After joining the party, Tiwary said Mamata Banerjee is trying to unite people together. "The BJP is playing divi-

sive policy and Mamata Banerjee is trying to unite people together. When I play cricket, I play for the country, not on the basis of religion," he said.

Meanwhile, without mentioning the fall of the Congress government in Puducherry this week, BJP veteran and former CM of Himachal Pradesh Shanta Kumar said he feels "ashamed" to see his party getting involved in "sale and purchase of MLAs". People made the BJP the world's largest party due to its value and idealism, but it has now become power-hungry," Kumar wrote in his autobiography. Kumar also cautioned the BJP that by practising "unprincipled politics, governments can be changed but not the society". Quoting former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Kumar said, "We came to politics to change the society and not the government."

"Society will change only by practising value-based politics. Atal ji used to say 'Chal-kapat ki rajneeti se sarkarein toh badli ja sakti hain, par samajh nahi (Governments can be changed through politics of deceit, but not society)."

TN IPS officer sexually harrassed by senior

CHENNAI

A woman IPS Officer in Tamil Nadu has alleged sexual harassment and misbehaviour by a high-ranking male colleague while she was on duty during Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami's tour of central districts a few days ago.

The state DGP office has confirmed the report, according to NDTV, and added that the woman officer had alleged she was asked to get into the senior officer's car and had faced misbehaviour.

Sources said no action has been taken against the male officer as yet, but confirmed that he had been excluded from meetings related to security cover for Prime Minister Modi's visit to Coimbatore on Thursday.

Sources also said the department would refer the complaint to a committee in accordance with the Vishaka guidelines.

A six-member committee - to be led by Jayashree Raghunandan, Additional Chief Secretary of the Planning and Development Department

- has been set up to investigate the complaint, an order from the Tamil Nadu Home Department said.

The Inspector-General of Police (IGP) to whom the woman officer had reported the matter did not respond to calls, and neither did the officer who has been accused of harassment.

The situation has swiftly taken a political turn, with DMK MP Kanimozhi tweeting: "The protector also needs protection during AIADMK rule. When a woman IPS officer is sexually harassed by a higher-ranked officer and the Chief Minister takes no notice of it, what hope do 'ordinary' women have in this regime?"

DMK chief MK Stalin, who is Leader of the Opposition in the state, has criticised the ruling AIAMK for "shielding such officers".

Stalin said: "It is a shame that the government shields such officers. This is (the) peak of ugliness... a reflection of arrogance. I bow my head to the woman officer for her courage."



Mom spends night next to son's body thinking he is alive

MUMBAI

BELIEVING her son is alive a mother spent an entire night besides her son's body and attended to his wounds. The son had got injured fatally during a fall at home in Mumbai, police said on Wednesday.

The man, who hailed from Meghalaya, received fatal head injuries, a police official said. The incident took place in the wee hours of Monday when the 42-year-old victim, who was in an inebriated state, fell in the bathroom at their home in Kalina area.

After some time, when the 70-year-old woman saw him lying there motionless, she dragged him out of the bathroom and laid him next to her elder son, who is also bed-ridden, he said. Believing him to be alive, she applied turmeric powder on the victim's injuries. Next morning, when he did not wake up, the woman informed her relatives who rushed to her house. The family members alerted the police who reached the spot and took the victim to a nearby hospital where he was declared dead, the official said.

PROTEST AGAINST FARM LAWS

'Caged tiger' Rajnath can resolve impasse if allowed: Naresh Tikait

Govt ready to talk with farmers on 3 laws: Tomar

Will march to Parl if farm laws not repealed: Tikait

BARABANKI

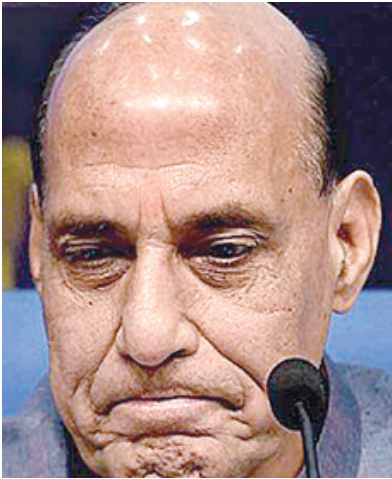
BHARATIYA Kisan Union president Naresh Tikait on Wednesday called Defence Minister Rajnath Singh a "caged parrot" and said the farmers' issues could be resolved if he is given the freedom to talk with them.

He accused the BJP-led central government of being "stubborn" over the three new laws, which farmer unions want repealed. The protesting farmers too are not ready to go back on their demands, he said.

"The government has made Defence Minister Rajnath Singh a caged parrot ('pinjre ka tota'). If he is given the freedom to talk to farmers, I can guarantee that there would be a decision and the BJP's prestige will also remain intact," he said.

He said farmers respect the Defence Minister, but he is not given a chance by the government to deal with the farmers' issue.

The government is ready to resume talks with protesting farmers if they respond to its offer to put the three contentious farm laws on hold for one-and-a-half year and work out the difference during that time through a joint committee, Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said



Wednesday. The government and unions representing farmers, who have been camping at Delhi's border for about three months in protest against the three laws that they see will end state procurement of crops at MSP, have held 11 rounds of talks, the last being on January 22.

Talks broke after widespread violence during a tractor rally by protesting farmers on January 26.

Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) leader Rakesh Tikait has said that the farmers would march to the Parliament if the three agricultural laws are not taken back.

IANS spoke to Tikait and he said, "A call would be made for taking farm protests to the Parliament."

Tikait claimed that farmers would do farming on the lawns located near Parliament and when the crop would mature, the government could analyse

the financial yield of the crop. He further said that a Parliamentary Standing Committee should be formed and monitor this and then the government would get to know about the gains and losses related to it.

While speaking to IANS, Tikait also said that the movement would spread to other states such as Telangana, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka



Women commandos show their skills during their induction into the Uttarakhand Police following a training, in Dehradun on Wednesday

4 terrorists killed in encounter

SRINAGAR

AS many as four unidentified terrorists have been killed in an ongoing encounter in Anantnag, said Jammu and Kashmir police on Wednesday.

Earlier, a source in the CRPF had said that two to three terrorists are believed to be trapped at the site of the encounter in Anantnag.

On February 19, two policemen were killed in a terrorist attack in Srinagar's Baghat area of Barzulla.

In another encounter on the same day, three terror associates affiliated were also killed in the Budgam area of the Shopian district.

No sign of China-Pak collusion: Army chief Naravane on LAC

The disengagement of armies of India and China from north and south banks of Pangong Tso is a "very good end result" and a win-win situation for both the sides, Army Chief Gen M M Naravane said on Wednesday, stressing that there are strategies in place to address other pending issues in eastern Ladakh.

He said there were no signs of an "overt collusion" between China and Pakistan during the Ladakh

standoff but India also caters to a long term strategy for not a two, but a two-and-half front war. With the half front, he was referring to the internal security.

He said right from the beginning of the standoff, all sides on the Indian side worked together.

Be it at the political level, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar spoke to their Chinese counterparts, he said.

France makes all menstrual products free for students

Strong need to ensure effective management of menstrual waste in India

PARIS

THE French government announced that it would be making period products available for free for students in the country. The European nation's decision comes in the wake of advancing towards ending 'period poverty' across the world.

French Higher Education Minister Frederique Vidal said that tampon and sanitary pad vending machines, sanitary towels and other menstrual products will be made available free of cost for students at the student residences and university health services in the next few weeks.

'Period poverty' is defined when there is a significant lack of menstrual hygiene and other essential sanitary products along with toilets and clean water.

This is usually found in areas that are financially not well off, thus subjecting young girls and women and even men to lack of hygiene. Although the United Nations has already recognized menstrual hygiene as a global public health and human-rights issue, an overwhelming number of women in Asian nations are still suffering from lack of menstrual and basic sanitary hygiene issues. Reports conducted by the UNICEF and Water-aid have shown that a lot of girls do not have the full understanding of menstruation and even a lot of them



even have to miss schools on their first day of periods because of lack of facilities for menstrual hygiene.

Scotland last year became the first country in the world to make period products free for all, thus kick-starting a movement that inspired feminists and anti-period poverty campaigners around the world to also take up the issue with other governments. England has made free period products available in all primary and secondary schools.

Schools in New Zealand will also start offering free period products from June as authorities have felt female students have been forced to skip school during periods because of non affordability of menstrual prod-

ucts like tampons and sanitary pads.

Some US states have also passed laws ensuring free period products to be provided in schools.

The WaterAid report said that in India, over 1 billion sanitary pads are disposed of annually, which is why there is a strong need to ensure effective management of menstrual waste. The Indian government had in 2018, after years of campaigning by activists, had scrapped a controversial 12% tax on the feminine hygiene products. However, reports from various sources still say the country has a long way to go before we can achieve menstrual hygiene for girls and women to a large extent.

PATEL UPROOTS ENG

Scalps 6 to bowl out visitors for 112; India trail by 13 runs

AHMEDABAD

INDIA took charge of the third Test on the first day itself with local boy Axar Patel, the left-arm spinner, leading the way with the second best spell in day-night Test matches, picking six wickets for 38 to help bowl out England for just 112 in first innings here on Wednesday. India were 99 for three at the draw of stumps, 13 runs behind England.

India lost the wicket of captain Virat Kohli late in the day after he had put on 64 runs for the third wicket with Rohit Sharma, who was batting on 57 (off 82 balls) at stumps. India had earlier lost Shubman Gill and Cheteshwar Pujara early, both falling within six balls.

Gill and Sharma had survived the new ball in twilight period. India, who had gone into the dinner break at five runs for no loss in five overs, had added 94 in the last session, losing all three wickets that fell on the opening day.

Earlier, Patel took six wickets and off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin bagged three as India blew away England for 112 runs in their first innings.

Opener Zak Crawley was the top scorer for England with 53 -- the solitary half-century of the innings. The next highest score

was captain Joe Root's 17.

Patel ended the innings with 6/38 at the Narendra Modi Stadium, following his 5/60 in the second innings of the second Test in Chennai. Ashwin captured 3/26.

England started the second session of the day-night Test at 81/4 after Patel, Ashwin and fast bowler Ishant Sharma, playing his 100th Test, gave India the upper hand before tea. Ollie Pope was bowled by Ashwin in the very first over the session, as he was deceived by a straight delivery that followed three consecutive balls that turned. Ben Stokes fell to Patel leg before the wicket in the next over, the dismissal being confirmed by the third umpire despite Stokes going for the review after the on-field umpire raised his finger.

Jofra Archer and Ben Foakes survived the next five overs before the former became Patel's fourth wicket of the day. Ashwin struck again two overs later as Jack Leach edged the third delivery of his over to gully.

Patel then waited for just under 10 overs for his next wicket as Stuart Broad holed out at deep square leg. Ben Foakes was the last wicket to fall for England as he was bowled by Patel in the 49th over.

Ishant gave India the initial breakthrough in the third over of the match with the dismissal of opener Dom Sibley. Patel then trapped Jonny Bairstow in front of the stumps off his very first ball of the match.

Captain Joe Root then stuck with Zak Crawley as the latter hit a counter-attacking half-century. However, the pair couldn't see England

Stokes applies saliva on ball; spoken to by umpires

AHMEDABAD

ENGLAND all-rounder Ben Stokes was seen applying saliva on the ball on the opening day of the day-night third Test against India here on Wednesday, following which the ball had to be sanitised.

The incident took place at the end of the 12th over when Stokes was seen using saliva to shine the ball, prompting umpire Nitin Menon to have a chat with him.

The ball was subsequently sanitised. The International Cricket Council (ICC) had banned the use of saliva to shine the ball due to the COVID-19 pandemic in June



last year.

As per the ICC's COVID-19 regulations, a team can be issued up to two warnings per innings but repeated use of saliva on the ball will result in a 5-run penalty to the batting side.

Motera pitch bucks a trend: not seamers, Indian spinners hold sway

AHMEDABAD

THE newly-built stadium in Motera, built with Australian expertise in design and costing Rs.800 crore in all, gave a new twist to pink ball Test cricket with spinners bucking the trend and dominating unlike the previous pink ball Tests where seamers have held sway and took more than three times the wickets taken by spinners.

Before this Test, 354 wickets (at 24.47 runs per wicket) had been taken by pace bowlers in 15 day-night Tests. As against that, spinners had taken 115 wickets (at 35.38 runs per wicket).

On Wednesday, however, India's seamers bowled just 11 overs picking one wicket while the spinners took nine scalps, bowling 37.4 overs on a surface that has less grass than is usually required for pink ball Test.

Left-arm spinner Axar Patel (6/38) and off-spinner R Ashwin (3/26) shared nine wickets as England struggled, partly because of the pitch that began to help spin early and partly because of their inability to play spin and stay confused.

When contacted by IANS to comment on Motera wicket, Damian Hough, the chief curator of Adelaide Oval, the venue that has hosted most day-night games -- five -- refused to comment, saying he prefers to avoid commenting "out of respect to other curators and given the

SCOREBOARD DAY 1

England 1st Innings	
Zak Crawley lbw b Axar	53
Dominic Sibley c Rohit b Ishant	0
Jonny Bairstow lbw b Axar	0
Joe Root lbw b Ashwin	17
Ben Stokes lbw b Axar	6
Ollie Pope b Ashwin	1
Ben Foakes b Axar	12
Jofra Archer b Axar	11
Jack Leach c Pujara b Ashwin	3
Stuart Broad c Bumrah b Axar 3	
James Anderson not out	0
Extras: (B-1.1LB-2,NB-3)	6
Total: (all out in 48.4 overs)112	
Fall of Wickets: 1-2, 2-27,3-74/-80,	

5-81, 6-81,7-93, 8-98, 9-105, 10-112.	
Bowling: Ishant Sharma 5-1-26-1, Jasprit Bumrah 6-3-19-0, Axar Patel 21.4-6-38-6, Ravichandran Ashwin 16-6-26-3.	
India 1st Innings	
Rohit Sharma not out	57
Shubman Gill c Crawley b Archer	11
Cheteshwar Pujara lbw b Leach	0
Virat Kohli (c) b Leach	27
Ajinkya Rahane not out	1
Extras (b 2, w 1)	3
Total (For 3 wickets in 33 overs)	99
Yet to bat: Rishabh Pant v, Washington Sundar, Ravichandran Ashwin, Axar Patel, Jasprit Bumrah, Ishant Sharma	
Fall of wickets: 1-33, 2-34, 3-98	

Indian bowler Axar Patel celebrates after taking the wicket of England batsman Zak Crawley during the third Test match in Ahmedabad on Wednesday

VIJAY HAZARE TROPHY

Baroda continue winning run beat Hyderabad by 110 runs

SURAT

BARODA continued their winning streak in the Vijay Hazare Trophy after beating Hyderabad by 110 runs in their Elite Group A match here on Wednesday, courtesy Kedar Devdhar's hundred and impressive show by the bowlers.

This is Baroda's third win on the trot after they had defeated Goa and Tripura.

Put into bat at the Lalbhai Contractor Stadium, Barode rode on Devdhar's stroke-filled 131 to post a competitive 316/7 on the board, and then bundled out the opposition for 206, with Babashafi Pathan (3/37) doing the bulk of the damage.

Hyderabad could not capitalise on a 75-run strong start given by openers Tanmay Agarwal (34) and Tilak Verma (47) and suffered a middle-order collapse.

Both the openers perished in quick succession as Hyderabad slipped to 83/2.

Baroda rattled Hyderabad by striking twice, first Ninad Rathwa ran out Himalaya Agarwal (17) and Babashafi Pathan then sent back Mickil Jaiswal (5).

B Sandeep (18) and T Ravi Teja (19) weren't able to convert their starts as Hyderabad found themselves reeling at 143/6.

Hyderabad were eventually bundled out for 202. (PTI)

BRIEF SCORES

Group A

Baroda 316/7 (Kedar Devdhar 131, Krunal Pandya 55; Ajay Dev Goud 2/68, CV Milind 2/74) beat Hyderabad 206 all out (Tilak Verma 47, Tanmay Agarwal 34; Babashafi Pathan 3/37, Lukman Meriwala 2/39) by 110 runs.

Gujarat 336/7 (Het Patel 114, Dhruv Raval 83; Rana Dutta 5/74, Manisankar

Murasingh 1/68) beat Tripura 204 (Udiyan Bose 65, Hardik Patel 3/25, Ripal Patel 2/26) by 132 runs.

Goa 210 (Darshan Misal 56, Amit Verma 46; Veer Pratap Singh 4/29, Sumit Rulkar 2/24) lost to Chhattisgarh 213/2 (Rishabh Tiwari 91 not out, Harpreet Singh Bhatia 56; Amit Verma 2/34) by eight wickets.

Group B

Andhra 175 all out in 48.1 overs (Nitish Kumar Reddy 30; Siddarth Kaul 4/27, Barinder Sran 3/29) lost to Punjab 176 for 3 in 36 overs (Mandeep Singh 64 not out, Abhishek Sharma 32, Prabhsimran Singh 32) by seven wickets.

Vidarbha 288 for 9 in 50 overs (S R Ramaswamy 82, Akshay Wadkar 76, Aditya Sarwate 37; Vikash Singh 4/65) lost to Jharkhand 294 for 7 in 49.3 overs (Kumar Deobrat 100, Utkarsh Singh 49; S R Dubey 3/59) by three wickets.

Madhya Pradesh 225 all out in 48.2 overs (Aditya Shrivastava 46, Parth Sahani 46; M Mohammed 3/39) beat Tamil Nadu 211 all out in 49 overs (Shahrulkh Khan 67 not out, Dinesh Karthik 37, B In-drajith 32) by 14 runs.

Group E

At KSCA Ground, Alur: Bihar 193 in 46.1 overs (Yashasvi Rishav 67; Shivam Sharma 7/31) lost to Uttar Pradesh 194/5 in 28 overs (Priyam Garg 57, Akshdeep Nath 54, Upendra Yadav 51 not out) by five wickets.

At KSCA Ground 3, Alur: Karnataka 329/5 in 50 overs (Devdutt Padikkal 152, Ravikumar Samarth 60, Krishnamurthy Siddharth 41, Abhimanyu Mithun 40 not out) beat Odisha 228 in 44 overs (Subhranshu Senapati 78, Ankit Yadav 56; Prasidh Krishna 3/46, Shreyas Gopal 3/47) by 101 runs.

At Just Cricket Academy: Kerala 351/6 in 50 overs (Vishnu Vinod 107, Robin Uthappa 100, Sanju Samson 61, Vathsai Govind 46) beat Railways 344 in 49.4 overs (Murali Devdhar 79, Arindam Ghosh 64, Saurabh Singh 50; MD Nidheesh 3/83) by seven runs.

Amodini, Adith win Championship Series under-18 titles

BENGALURU

AMODINI Vijay Nayak continued to display her brilliant run of form to grab the AITA Championship Series under-18 honours at the Fortune Sports Academy here on Wednesday. In the finals, Amodini, 14, brushed aside the challenge of Siri Patil in just about an hour with a clinical 6-0, 6-2 victory.

Amodini, a ninth standard student of New Horizon Public School, thus captured her second straight title after she

had won the AITA U-16 championship last week.

Fifth seed Adith Amarnath who had sent the top seed Ravi Nainad home in the semi-finals on Tuesday, found a bit of resistance from Mandeep Reddy before prevailing 6-3, 6-1 to win the Boys U-18 title.

Final Results

Boys U-18: 5-Adith Amarnath bt Mandeep Reddy 6-3, 6-1.
Girls U-18: 8-Amodini Vijay Nayak bt Siri Patil 6-0, 6-2

Jamshedpur, Bengaluru look to end season on a high

VASCO (GOA)

WITH their playoff hopes over and with one final game to go, Jamshedpur FC and Bengaluru FC will be aiming to end the Indian Super League (ISL) on a winning note as they face each other at the Tilak Maidan Stadium here on Thursday.

Lack of consistency over the course of the season cost both sides a playoff berth.

Jamshedpur currently find themselves sixth on the table, two points above their opponents. While a draw would be enough for Owen Coyle's men to finish sixth, a defeat could see them lose their spot to Bengaluru. In the previous fixture, Jamshedpur beat Bengaluru with Stephen Eze's goal separating the two sides.

They would be hoping for more of the same and will certainly be riding high on confidence after

derailing Mumbai City's hopes of grabbing the League Winners Shield with a 2-0 win.

"We want to replicate the performance we showed against Mumbai City," Coyle said. "We came very close to achieving those playoff (spots) so we want to finish on a strong note. To do that, we have to play very well and try to win three points. Bengaluru still have the AFC (Cup) to play, they will be very focused, so we will have to be ready for the challenge."

For Bengaluru, this is the first time that they have failed to qualify for the ISL playoffs. Their chances of reaching the top four appeared grim ever since Carles Cuadrat's departure midway during the season. But despite a lack of wins, interim coach Naushad Moosa was proud of the way his side fought till the end.

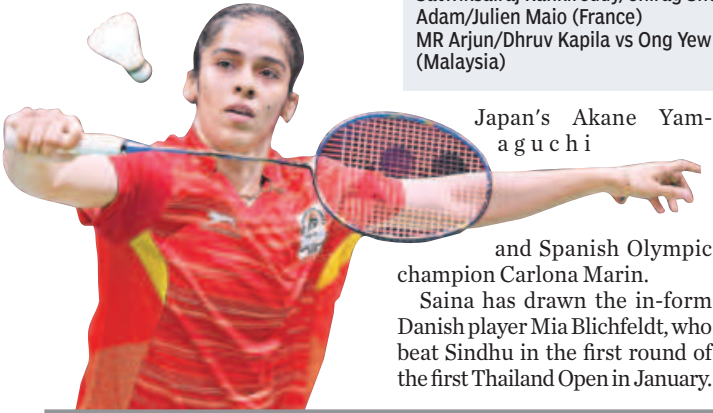
"The consistency was not there but we were always positive, trying to see if we can make it (to the playoffs) with whatever strength we had," he said.

Saina, Srikanth receive tough draws

NEW DELHI

LONDON Olympics bronze medalist Saina Nehwal and former world no.1 Kidambi Srikanth were handed tough draws in the 2021 All England Championships.

Reigning world champion PV Sindhu, meanwhile will face lower ranked opposition in the initial rounds before potentially coming up against



Japan's Akane Yamaguchi

and Spanish Olympic champion Carlonia Marin.

Saina has drawn the in-form Danish player Mia Blichfeldt, who beat Sindhu in the first round of the first Thailand Open in January.

ALL ENGLAND OPEN DRAW FOR INDIAN PLAYERS

Women's Singles

PV Sindhu vs Soniia Cheah (Malaysia)

Saina Nehwal vs Mia Blichfeldt (Denmark)

Men's Singles

Kidambi Srikanth vs Tommy Sugianto (Indonesia)

Parupalli Kashyap vs Kento Momota (Japan)

Lakshya Sen vs Kantaphon Wangcharoen (Thailand)

HS Prannoy vs Liew Daren (Malaysia)

Sameer Verma vs Ygor Coelho (Brazil)

B Sai Praneeth vs Toma Junior Popov (France)

Men's Doubles

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy/Chirag Shetty vs Eloi Adam/Julien Maio (France)

MR Arjun/Dhruv Kapila vs Ong Yew Sin/Teo Ee Yi (Malaysia)

Women's Doubles

Ashwini Ponnappa/ N Sikki Reddy vs Benyapa Aimsaard/Nuntakarn Aimsaard (Thailand)

Meghana Jakkampudi/Poorvisha Ram vs Alexandre Boje/Mette Poulsen (Denmark)

Ashwini Bhat/Shikha Gautam vs Chloe Birch/Lauren Smith (England)

Mixed Doubles

Dhruv Kapila/Meghana Jakkampudi vs Praveen Jordan/Melati Oktavianti (Indonesia)

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy/ Ashwini Ponnappa vs Yuki Kaneko/Misaki Matsutomo (Japan)

Pranaav Jerry Chopra/ N Sikki Reddy vs Max Flynn/Jessica Pugh (England).



(IANS)

30th Telangana State Ranking Chess Tourney begins on Feb 28

HYDERABAD: Telangana State Chess Association will be conducting the 30th Telangana State Ranking Chess Tournament at Yoghahalli, L B Stadium, Hyderabad on February 28.

For Under-7, 9, 13, 15 Boys And Girls with time control of 30minutes +5 seconds increment from move one for each player. under Swiss format total five rounds for each age Group.

Those who wish to participate must register their names before 6 pm on February 27 through website www.chessteelangana.com.or Phone 7337578899 or 7337399299. There will be no spot entries and the tournaments will begin at 10 am on February 28.

Participants must strictly comply with all Covid-19 precautions.

30 Indian wrestlers, including Punia, for World Ranking Series

NEW DELHI

INDIA'S star freestyle wrestler Bajrang Punia would look forward to win back-to-back titles in the men's 65kg when the World Ranking Series begins on March 4 in the Italian port city of Ostia. In the previous edition, held in January last year, the 26-year-old Haryana international had outplayed Jordan Oliver to win gold.

The Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) on Wednesday announced a 30-member national squad, including eight in Greco Roman category, for the season-opening international event.

The competition is expected to attract more than 300 wrestlers from as many as 32 countries.

Apart from Punia, the WFI has also selected Rohit in the 65kg weight category, to give exposure to second bench. The men 74kg group will feature newly-crowned champion Sandeep Singh

from Punjab and former world bronze medallists Narsingh Yadav from Maharashtra.

Team

Women
50kg: Meenakshi; 53kg: Vinesh Phogat, Nandani Bajirao; 57kg: Anshu Malik; 59kg: Sarita; 62kg: Sonam Malik, Sakshi Malik; 65kg: Nisha;

68kg: Anita; 76kg: Kiran
Men
57kg: Ravi Dahiya, Pankaj; 65kg: Bajrang Punia, Rohit; 70kg: Vishal Kalxiraman; 74kg: Narsingh Yadav, Sandeep Singh; 79kg: Rahul Rathi; 86kg: Deepak Punia, Parveen Chahar; 97kg: Satyawart Kadian; 125kg: Sumit Kumar

Greco Roman
55kg: Arjum Halakurki; 60kg: Manish; 63kg: Neeraj; 67kg: Gaurav Duhoon; 72kg: Kuldeep Malik; 77kg: Gurpreet Singh; 82kg: Harpreet Singh; 87kg: Sunil Kumar



Yadav, 31, though had lost in the group stages of the 74kg event in the last month's national championships held in NOIDA, but he has been selected for the Italy Ranking Series for exposure.

The 74kg event of the Ranking Series has become more interesting as the 2012 Olympic champion Jordan Burroughs of USA is also in the fray.

National 77kg Greco Roman champion Gurpreet Singh, who had won gold in the 82kg category in the previous edition of the World Ranking Series held in January last year, will be competing in the 77kg group this time to prepare for the Asian Olympic qualifier, to be held at Almaty, Kazakhstan, from April 9 to 11.

The 2019 world bronze medallist and Jakarta Asian Games champion Vinesh Phogat (53kg), Asian medallists Anshu Malik (57kg), Sonam Malik and 2006 Olympic Games bronze medallists Sakshi Malik (62kg) are some of the prominent wrestlers in the women's group selected for next month's international competition in Italy. (IANS)