

Tourists visit Taj Mahal amid coronavirus pandemic, in Agra, on Saturday

### Govt to revamp Narcotics Control Bureau

NEW DELHI: The Union government is planning to revamp its federal drug law enforcement and intelligence agency - Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) -- with creation of 3,689 new posts, canine squads, cyber and intelligence units and creation of a dedicated prosecution wing for the organisation.

### MP Cabinet okays Bill against love jihad

BHOPAL: The Shivraj Singh Chouhan cabinet on Saturday approved the "Madhya Pradesh Religious Freedom Bill-2020 to check the rising cases of "love jihad" in the state. The Bill will be introduced in the upcoming Assembly session, and once passed will become a law.

### PM launches 'Ayushman' for J&K

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday launched Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) SEHAT scheme via video conferencing to extend health insurance coverage to all residents of Jammu and Kashmir. The scheme will ensure universal health coverage and focus on providing financial risk protection and ensuring quality and affordable essential health services to all individuals and communities.



## 1 killed in Mayapuri mask factory fire

NEW DELHI

A 45-year-old man died in a fire at a mask manufacturing factory in west Delhi's Mayapuri on Saturday morning, a Delhi Fire Service (DFS) official said.  
A call about the fire was received around 3.50 am, and six fire tenders were rushed to the spot, he said.  
A case was registered against the factory owner and he was later arrested, police said, adding that short circuit is suspected to be the reason behind the incident. DFS director



Atul Garg said fire officials broke down the door of the factory and rescued three people, one of whom was unconscious. The man was taken to Deen Dayal Upad-

hyay Hospital, where he was declared brought dead, he said, adding that he was identified as Jugal Kishor. The fire broke out on the third floor of the

factory where machines and raw materials were kept, Garg said.  
According to fire department, the factory did not have adequate fire safety measures in place nor did it have a No Objection Certificate from fire authorities.  
Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (West) Subodh Kumar said a case was registered under IPC sections 285 (negligent conduct with respect to fire or combustible matter) and 304 A (causing death by negligence).

Continued on Page 4

## Farmers ready for talks on Dec 29

### Now the ball is in govt court, says BKU leader Tikait

NEW DELHI

THE protesting farmer unions on Saturday decided to resume the dialogue with the Centre and proposed December 29 as the date for the next round of talks, farmer leader Rakesh Tikait said.

The decision was taken during a meeting of Sanyukt Kisan Morcha, an umbrella body of 40 farmer unions camping at various Delhi border points protesting the three contentious farm laws for the last one month.

So far, five rounds of talks have taken place between the protesting unions and the government but a stalemate has continued with farmers refusing to accept anything less than the repeal of the laws, which they fear would leave them at the mercy of corporates by weakening mandi and MSP systems.

In a letter to Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Vivek Aggarwal, the body said, "We propose that the next meeting between the farmers' representatives and the Government of India be held on December 29, 2020 at 11 am."



Farmers during their 'Delhi Chalo' protest march against the new farm laws, at Ghazipur border in New Delhi on Saturday

"As the government is willing to hold talks with us and asking us for date and our issues, we have proposed to hold dialogue on December 29. Now, the ball is in the court of the government when it calls us for talks," Tikait said.

Tikait, a senior leader of Bharatiya Kisan Union, however, said the modalities for the repeal of three farm

laws and guarantee for minimum support price (MSP) should be part of the agenda for the discussion with the government. After multiple discussions between the two sides failed to reach a conclusion, the Centre had invited the farmers' organisation to engage in more talks with them to resolve the gridlock over the laws.

Continued on Page 4

### Farm fire rages in Rajasthan

## Ally RLP quits NDA

NEW DELHI

BJP's lone ally in Rajasthan Rashtriya Loktantrik Party (RLP) walked out of the ruling National Democratic Alliance on Saturday amid massive farmers' agitation over the new agri-marketing laws, the second NDA constituent to do so after the Shiromani Akali Dal of Punjab. RLP leader and Nagaur MP Hanuman Beniwal announced the decision, while addressing farmers at a rally in Shahjahanpur in Alwar district. "I am not stuck with Fevicol with the NDA. Today, I separate myself from the NDA... I have left the NDA in protest against the three farm laws. These laws are anti-farmer. I have left the NDA, but won't forge alliance with Congress," he said. Beniwal said he would resign from the Lok Sabha as well if the Centre does not roll back the laws. Earlier on

### Not stuck to alliance with Fevicol: RLP chief Beniwal



Saturday, Beniwal joined thousands of farmers who launched their 'Delhi Chalo' protest march from near Jaipur. He had earlier written to Union Home Minister Amit Shah threatening to reconsider his alliance with the BJP if the farm laws were not withdrawn. He had also quit three parliamentary committees this week in support of the farmers' protest. Beniwal was a member of parliamentary committees on industries; petroleum and natural gas; and petitions.

## Lakhs of Raj farmers plan big march to Delhi today

JAIPUR

RESPONDING to a call given by RLP leader and Nagaur MP Hanuman Beniwal, thousands of farmers are gathering at Kotputli near Jaipur to march to Delhi on Saturday. Beniwal, who is the

convenor of Rashtriya Loktantrik Party (RLP), who has just snapped the alliance with the BJP at the Centre, had claimed at one of his gatherings earlier that over 2 lakh farmers shall march with him to Delhi. They will march up to the national capital

and stand by the protesting farmers in solidarity of their demands to withdraw three contentious farm laws passed by the central government in September, which they believe will ruin their livelihood. An RLP worker said: "We shall

leave here at 11.30 am for Delhi. Farmers from different parts of the state are gathering here. we will be on Delhi borders to stand in solidarity with our brethren who have been protesting for a month demanding the rollback of controversial

farm laws." A statement issued by the RLP on Friday said that people and farmers from different districts of Rajasthan would gather in Kotputli and would travel towards Shahjahanpur border under the leadership of MP Hanuman Beniwal.



## India set to become 5<sup>th</sup> largest economy by 2025

- ▶ Will overtake UK by 2024, forecasts CEBR
- ▶ Indian economy will expand by 9% in 2021

PURNA SINGH  
NEW DELHI

BY 2025, India will overtake Britain to become the fifth largest economy in the world and will reach the third position by 2030.

India is one of the worst-affected countries due to coronavirus but it'll become the world's fifth-largest economy by 2025 and the third-largest by 2030 after overtaking the UK in 2025, said the UK-based think tank - Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR). India will surpass Germany in terms of GDP by 2027 and Japan by 2030, it said.

India had overtaken the UK in 2019 to become the fifth largest economy in the world but has been relegated to the 6th spot in 2020.

"India has been knocked off course somewhat through the impact of the pandemic pushing it down by one spot. However, by 2024 India will take over the fifth spot again," the CEBR said in an annual report published on Saturday. CEBR's estimate suggests

India's GDP per capita in 2020 was \$6,284, making it a lower-middle-income country.

It said though Covid-19 delivered a major blow to the Indian economy, it was losing momentum even ahead of the pandemic due to fragile banking system, adjustment to reforms and deceleration of global trade. "The rate of GDP



growth sank to a more than 10-year low of 4.2 per cent in 2019, down from 6.1 per cent the previous year and around half the 8.3 per cent growth rate in 2016."

Notably, India is the second-worst affected country after the US when it comes to Covid-19. So far, over 1.4 lakh people have already died with a total caseload of over 1 crore.

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# Vice Prez expresses concern over the erosion of values in public life

**THUS SPAKE V-P**

- Lawmakers told to always adhere to 3Ds—discuss, debate and decide—avoid the 4th D-disrupt
- Emphasises the need to make anti-defection laws more stringent and effective
- Asks political parties to shun populism and accord priority to long-term development

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD

EXPRESSING concern over the erosion of values in public life, the Vice President of India M Venkaiah Naidu said that if urgent and collective action was not taken to cleanse the system people will lose faith in the political class.

Delivering the 3rd Atal Bihari Vajpayee Memorial Lecture organised by the India Foundation on Saturday, Venkaiah Naidu emphasised that it was the duty of all political parties to ensure that their members, including legislators, always maintain ethical conduct, and at all places. He also appealed to the legislators to raise the level of debates, follow standards, avoid unruly behaviour and always adhere to 3Ds—discuss, debate and decide—avoid the 4th D-disrupt. He said the absence of value-based politics, lack of ideology, hunger for power, muscle and

Says it is the duty of all political parties to ensure that their members, including legislators, always maintain ethical conduct, and at all places



Vice President of India M Venkaiah Naidu delivering the 3rd Atal Bihari Vajpayee Memorial Lecture organised by the India Foundation in Hyderabad on Saturday

money power and the entry of people with a criminal background into politics is leading to violence in the political arena and debasing politics. “Unless these undesirable trends are checked, the situation will further deteriorate and cause irreparable damage to the country’s polity.”

Drawing attention to the way the anti-defection laws have been rendered ineffective, Venkaiah Naidu emphasised the need to make anti-defection laws more stringent and effective. He wanted that it should be

made mandatory for the presiding officers to dispose of defection matters within three months.

Naidu wanted all political parties to put an end to ‘politics of convenience’ and practice the ‘politics of conviction’ and ‘politics of consensus’ as demonstrated by late Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

He also called upon the political parties to shun populism and accord priority to long-term development. “Political parties should not resort to competitive populism. Such policies will

prove to be unproductive in the long run”, he said.

Expressing dismay over the sway of 4Cs - cash, caste, criminality and community—in Indian politics, he appealed to the people to elect their representatives based on other 4Cs—Character, Conduct, Calibre and Capacity.

Naidu said Vajpayee fast-tracked development in various sectors, from rail connectivity, air connectivity, tele connectivity, and he even achieved political connectivity! He appealed to the youth to learn from the lives

of visionary statesmen like Atal ji. Terming former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee as an embodiment of decency, dignity and decorum, Venkaiah Naidu said that Vajpayee inspired the people of the country and enjoyed their goodwill and confidence.

“For people of his generation, Atal Ji and Advani Ji are gurus, guides, philosophers and mentors,” he said. Vajpayee only had friends and no foes across the political spectrum. He had enriched the debates with the force of his thoughts, the flow of language, the punch and the wit and his occasional poetic expressions. He was a towering intellectual and an orator par excellence. The Parliament was missing such leaders, he remarked.

His consensual approach enabled him to successfully lead a large coalition to its full term in an era of unstable coalition governments. He is the ‘Father of Coalition Practices’ in India, Naidu added.

He further said, “Vajpayee fast-tracked development in various sectors and it was a golden era for the economy as it grew at a rate of 8% per year. The Vice President said that his decision of conducting nuclear tests in 1998 and deft handling of the economic sanctions thereafter amply demonstrated this.

## Delay in renewal of driving licence to cost dear

K CHANDRASHEKAR  
HYDERABAD

RENEWING driving licence one year after its validity ended is a thing of past as the Transport Department has decided not to renew such licences at all. One has to go obtain a learner’s licence first following all the norms laid down by the department for a new permanent licence.

According to sources, the Centre has brought a provision in the MV Act rules that if the motorists do not renew their license even after one year of expiry of the license, the motorist would have to go for retest including learner’s license tests and pay fee for all categories of licenses once again. The State government has started implementing this from December 24 where a motorist, who could not get his license renewed one year after the expiry date, was asked to go for learner’s license.

The rule until now was payment of a late fee of Rs 1,000 per year and the grace period was for five years. However, there are some exemptions in case of the driver being out of town or in another country. Now the motorists are directly asked to go for retest.

A motorist Irudaya Raj K, a resident of Lalaguda, Secunderabad, applied for renewal of his license to drive auto rickshaw, non-transport and motorcycle with gear. The validity of his license was June 30, 2018. When he approached the RTA office for renewal of his license with late fee, Irudaya Raj was asked to go for retest including learner’s license and also the driving test.

According to transport unions, the latest move by the authorities is nothing but ways to make more revenue. They want to take money for every class of vehicle only to fill the coffers. If there are three categories in a vehicle (two-wheeler, four-wheeler and heavy vehicle), the fee for adding every class of vehicle would be Rs 300. The motorists would be ending up by paying Rs 2,000 and more for getting the license with three categories, the unions alleged.

The motorists especially with a transport licence cry foul over the new rule, which is brought by the department. The union leaders said that the transport license would be expensive because after taking the learner’s license, he would have to get a medical certificate and also training certificate from the Health Department to get the badge. The driver would have to wait for one month to get the permanent license until then he cannot use the vehicle during the training period.

“The government is only focused on increasing their revenue. With this, many will become unemployed as they cannot take their lorry, auto or cab on the road. If I take out a vehicle with a learner’s license, my vehicle will be seized and my family would come onto the road,” said The Telangana Auto and Motor Welfare Union general secretary M Dayanand. He said the government should have given an advertisement in the newspaper about the new rule. Without giving any information in advance, it has implemented a new rule, said Dayanand.

### NEW CORONAVIRUS VARIANT

## Fearing stigma, UK returnees play hide and seek

- Not ready to cooperate with health staff
- Asking health workers not to wear PPE kit while visiting home
- Some say they are out of town
- Some provide UK addresses
- 184 furnish wrong details

MAHESH AVADHUTHA  
HYDERABAD

THE Telangana Health Department officials are experiencing a tough time in their efforts to track down or reach out to the UK returned flyers in Telangana from December 9, the data of which was shared by Central agencies to various State governments including Telangana.

Because of social stigma and fears of neighbours in the locality getting to know, some of the UK returnees are reportedly not extending co-operation to Health Department officials contacting them over the phone. The returnees are asking the officials not to come to their homes but express their willingness to come down to health centres for tests. When told that it was not advisable to move out of the houses, the returned pas-

Give wrong contact details to the Health staff; put down conditions for Covid-19 test

sengers were making conditions to the health staff not to come in ambulances or wearing PPEs, but to come on two-wheelers. Some others are not cooperating and making the health staff or the ANMs wait for nearly one hour sometimes, said a senior Deputy DMHO. Only when told that the Health Department would pass on their information to the police to intervene, the stubborn passengers are falling in line and agreeing to give

samples.

Some passengers said they were out of the town or State on some work and would return home after a few days and hence no sample tests were done on them. This is not the end of woes of the ground level Health staff. In some cases, the addresses and phone numbers shared to them were found to be different or the phone numbers are not of India but the UK, which are of no use.

### Two more UK returnees test positive

TWO more UK returnees tested Covid-19 positive on Saturday taking the total infected count so far to 18. The two of them are from Medchal-Malkajgiri district. Also, another three primary contacts of the infected passengers were found to be positive. All the 18 virus-infected passengers and the three contacts were shifted and put up in special wards in government hospitals in various districts.

According to Director of Public Health, Dr G Srinivasa Rao, 1,216

Warangal Urban districts.

The 79 persons who were in close contact with the 18 infected were identified and placed in quarantine and their health condition is being monitored closely. Positive samples of all the infected persons have been sent to CCMB for genome sequencing to check for the presence of the new variant. Also, among the flyers who travelled to Hyderabad from the UK, 92 belonged to other States and their data has been shared with the respective governments.

“A UK returnee’s address when visited by the Health staff was found to be a school and not house. Hence the person was not located. We were told to submit details of passengers with incorrect addresses or phone numbers to the State Health Department, which it will collect from all districts and try to address it probably by taking help from the police,” the official said. The Health Department in its press note stated that they identified 184 UK returnees whose addresses and phone numbers were incorrect and not helping it to locate them.

## Four of a family among 5 killed in road mishap

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD

IN a ghastly road mishap, five persons including four persons died on spot and several others were injured in a road accident involving an auto-rickshaw, a truck and a TSRTC bus in Vikarabad district on Saturday morning.

The four victims who belonged to a family were identified as Sheni Bai (55), Sandhya (18), Nithin (15) and Sona Bai (15), who were aboard the auto. Another unidentified woman died while being shifted to a nearby hospital. Whereas five others travelling in the same auto-rickshaw were also injured and shifted to Sangareddy government hospital by the police with the support of villagers. Three of them are said to be in critical condition.

According to police, the incident happened at Izra Chitampalli village of Mominpet block, when the auto-rickshaw, carrying the victims who were agriculture labourers and were

Auto-rickshaw carrying agriculture labourers on their way to cotton fields at Shankarpalli, was hit by a speeding truck coming from opposite direction

on their way to cotton fields at Shankarpalli, was hit by a speeding truck coming from opposite direction, while the auto driver waited on the road side to pick up some more workers from the village.

The truck, travelling from Sangareddy to Tandur was speeding and the driver may have failed to notice the auto-rickshaw parked on the side of the road and rammed into it. Preliminary investigation revealed that due to poor visibility also, the driver could not spot the auto and went onto hit it and the RTC bus which was also coming in the opposite direction of truck rammed into the truck and turned upside down due to which some of the passengers travelling in the bus were also injured, said the police.

## MRCE clarifies on NAAC blacklisting

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD

THE Malla Reddy College of Engineering (MRCE) on Saturday clarified that it has not resorted to any “intentional forgery of any official signatures from the organisations as well as letterheads.”

The college clarification has come following the news reports published that the NAAC has blacklisted the institution from the accreditation process.

The MRCE clarified, “We have applied for NAAC accreditation & received B++ ranking in the year 2018,” the NAAC is only an additional accreditation status for the college rankings. Further, the college has reapplied to the NAAC for reassessment for getting better grade. NAAC has withdrawn the accreditation because of a documental error.

The management is also looking forward to verifying the documents and the college is in process of sending compliance in response to the letter received from NAAC.

## Factory worker loses life on duty, family stage protest

HANS NEWS SERVICES  
BIBI NAGAR

A worker from Jain Irrigation systems died in the factory while discharging his duties, this incident took place at Jain Irrigation systems located under the jurisdiction of Kondamadugu mettu of Bibinagar mandal in the district on Saturday. As per the SI Ragavender and kin of the deceased worker, Godugu Narayana (43) has been working in Jain Irrigation systems located in Kondamadugu mettu for the past 15 years and collapsed all of a sudden while discharging the duties, after which he was shifted to Apex hospital located near Uppal bus depot in Hyderabad. Relatives of Narayana staged protest for compensation before the factory after Narayana Breathed his last in hospital.

On Information, CI Janaiah rushed to the spot and had discussions with deceased relatives and Ghatkesar MPP Sudarshan Reddy who led the protest. Protestors withdrew their dharna after Jain irrigation systems management agreed to pay Rs 4 lakhs compensation to the bereaved family members.

Later the body of the worker was shifted to government area hospital in Bhongir where the police took up the investigation.



## Cops crack farmer’s murder case

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NAGARJUNA SAGAR

NAGARJUNA Sagar CI Gouri Naidu stated that the police officials have cracked the murder case of Ramavath Swamy (35) and have arrested the culprits.

According to the Circle Inspector, Ramavath Swamy, a resident of Sambapuram of Pedda Adiserla Pally mandal took the lease of Mosambi garden and agriculture land located on the outskirts of Parvedula village in Peddavoora mandal.

On December 22, Swamy’s wife Pushpalatha lodged a complaint at Peddavoora police station that his husband Swamy had committed suicide at his agriculture field on December 21 by consuming pesticide due to family issues, but the police had registered a case of death under suspicious state and took up the investigation.

During the police investigation, police officials came to know that Swamy’s wife Pushpalatha had an extra marital affair with Ramavath Ravi of Parvedula village.

The deceased Swamy picked up a quarrel with Pushpa and Ravi when he caught them alone in his field on December 21. Both Pushpalatha and Ravi murdered Swamy by pressing his neck as they thought that Swamy had become a major obstruction in their illegal affair.

They poured pesticide in the mouth of Swamy to make it look as a suicide but the duo accepted their crime during police investigation. Police remanded the culprits.

## NAAC to go in for digital forensic investigation of SSR, SSAs

- National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and National Board of Accreditation (NBA) are roping in the digital forensics to run the online submitted SSR and SARs by the HEIs.
- Academic studies of the students studying in these institutions and students who have already taken admission will not be affected

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD

HIGHER Educational Institutions (HEIs) submitting manipulated and fabricated Self Study Reports (SSR) and Self Assessment Reports (SARs) to the regulatory and assessment authorities are soon going to be a thing of past.

Reason being, the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) are National Board of Accreditation (NBA) are roping in the digital forensics to run the online submitted SSR and SARs by the HEIs.

Speaking to The Hans India, an official dealing with the assessment wing of the NAAC, Bengaluru said, “We cannot disclose the specifics about a particular college. But, the expert assistance is being sought wherever the officials concerned



found the credentials of a document submitted are questionable.” Once the experts confirm any digital manipulation of the documents, then, we will call the concerned colleges for explanation. “If the answer tendered by them is not satisfactory, then, the issue is placed before the NAAC council to take a decision,” he added.

It was following the process that two colleges, one in Telangana and another in Andhra Pradesh have been issued notices blacklisting them resubmitting the SSRs.

According to the sources from Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University, Hyderabad (JNTUH), “if the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and University Grants Commission (UGC) takes any such action, then, they communicate with the affili-

ated universities like JNTUH. However, NAAC and NBA, being independent entities can directly take a decision and communicate to the colleges concerned,” the official said.

However, the colleges in question were barred from resubmitting SSR for upgrading their existing NAAC rating of accreditation for five years. And, it is nothing to do with the blacklisting the college.

Students who have already taken admission and academic studies of the students studying in these institutions will not be affected, he clarified. But, the NAAC decisions might have an adverse effect at the time of inviting corporate entities for campus recruitments. Unless the colleges go for an appeal over the NAAC decision by submitting evidence and get themselves cleared, the sources added.



# Trump refuses to sign Covid aid Bill, millions to lose jobless benefits

WASHINGTON

MILLIONS of Americans saw their jobless benefits expire on Saturday after US President Donald Trump refused to sign into law a \$2.3 trillion pandemic aid and spending package, protesting that it did not do enough to help everyday people.

Trump stunned Republicans and Democrats alike when he said this week he was unhappy with the massive bill, which provides

\$892 billion in badly needed coronavirus relief, including extending special unemployment benefits expiring on December 26, and \$1.4 trillion for normal government spending.

Without Trump's signature, about 14 million people could lose those extra benefits, according to Labor Department data. A partial government shutdown will begin on Tuesday unless Congress can agree a stop-gap government funding bill

before then. After months of wrangling, Republicans and Democrats agreed to the package last weekend, with the support of the White House. Trump, who hands over power to Democratic President-elect Joe Biden on January 20, did not object to terms of the deal before Congress voted it through on Monday night.

But since then he has complained that the bill gives too much money to special interests, cultural

projects and foreign aid, while its one-time \$600 stimulus checks to millions of struggling Americans were too small. He has demanded that be raised to \$2,000.

"Why would politicians not want to give people \$2,000, rather than only \$600?...Give our people the money!" the billionaire president tweeted on Christmas Day, much of which he spent golfing at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Palm

Beach, Florida.

Many economists agree the bill's aid is too low but say the immediate support is still welcome and necessary.

A source familiar with the situation said Trump's objection to the bill caught many White House officials by surprise. While the outgoing president's strategy for the bill remains unclear, he has not vetoed it and could still sign it in coming days.



## Mutant strain: 800 tourists from UK land in Rajasthan

JAIPUR

THE new corona strain in the UK is keeping the Rajasthan government on edge as over 800 British tourists have entered the 28 districts of the state in the last one week. Tracking them will be a nightmare.

A bulk of these British (333) visitors have arrived in Jaipur which is followed by Jodhpur (73), Ajmer (70), Alwar (48), Udaipur (43), Kota (39), Jhunjhunu (24), Ganganagar (38), Rajasamand (35) and many more, said health officials.

Rajasthan has been victim of tourists spreading the virus. The first Covid case in Rajasthan was an Italian tourist, who had come on a tour to India when his country was in the throes of the pandemic. This first case was reported on March 2, when this 69-year-old Italian tourist who was part of a group of 23 tourists tested positive for Covid-19.

"The screening and sampling work of these UK tourists have started. We are monitoring all those who have arrived from the UK. In three-four days, we shall be able to reach out to every sin-



gle tourist from the UK who entered the Pink City," said Jaipur's Chief Medical Health Officer Narottam Sharma.

Additional Director (Health) Raviprakash Sharma said they have forwarded the details to district collectors and directed them to ensure isolation and testing of the tourists.

"The department is on its toes and there is no need to panic," he added.

All CMHOs have been instructed to make rapid response teams and survey the British tourists by tracking them to hotels and houses, where there is bed and breakfast options or even house guests.

The idea is to quarantine them at the earliest, the official said.

In 10 months, the Covid numbers have reached 3,03,732 in the state. Till Friday, the toll stood at 2,657.

The active cases are 11,700 while the recovered number is 2,89,375.

## Govt will have to listen to farmers: Rahul

NEW DELHI

CONGRESS leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday said that the government will have to listen to the farmers protesting against the new farm laws.

Gandhi posted a video of protesting farmers and wrote: 'Mitti ka kann kann goonj raha hai, sarkar ko sun na padega ---The government will have to listen (to the farmers).'

Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi, Ghulam Nabi Azad and Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury visited Rashtrapati Bhavan on December 24.

Rahul Gandhi submitted the party memorandum having two crore signatures to President Ram Nath Kovind for the repeal of the farm laws, against which farmers are protesting on the Delhi borders since last month.

"I told the President that these farm laws are anti-farmer. The country has seen that farmers have stood up against these laws," Gandhi had said.

Farmers are protesting at the borders of Delhi since November 26 against the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020; the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection)



### FARMERS FROM MAHARASHTRA REACH DELHI BORDER

NEW DELHI

A group of farmers from Maharashtra on Saturday joined protesters at one of the borders of Delhi, an All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) leader said and added that tillers have expressed willingness to discuss issues with the government but wanted certain clauses from the three agri laws removed. On Monday, thousands of farm-

ers from Maharashtra had left for Delhi from Nashik in vehicles to join the ongoing agitation seeking the repeal of the legislations.

"We received a rousing welcome at a New Delhi border. Farmers sitting on protests here welcomed us and thanked us for joining them," All India Kisan Sabha Secretary, Maharashtra, Ajit Navle, said in a statement.

Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020;

and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020.



### Two Al Badr terrorists killed in Shopian encounter

SHOPIAN

TWO terrorists affiliated to Al Badr outfit were neutralised in an encounter in the Kanigam area of Shopian, said Dilbag Singh, Director General of Police (DGP), Jammu and Kashmir on Saturday.

According to the official, two jawans sustained injuries during the operation and they have been hospitalised for treatment.

The encounter between security forces and terrorists started on Friday night on specific inputs.

"Last night, we started an operation in Shopian on specific inputs. Two Army Jawans were injured last night and were hospitalised. Both terrorists have been neutralised today. They belong to Al Badr," Singh told reporters in Shopian.

## Feeling ashamed to be part of Trinamool for 21 yrs: Suwendu

KOLKATA

FORMER West Bengal minister Suwendu Adhikari, who recently jumped ship from the Trinamool to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), said on Saturday that he feels really ashamed to be a part of the Trinamool Congress for 21 long years of his political career.

Addressing an event at BJP party office in Hastings, Adhikari said: "I feel really ashamed that I was part of that political party (Trinamool Congress) for 21 long years. It follows no



discipline at all. It has become like a company. We have come out of that company and got membership in a proper political party."

He said that for over two decades, Bengal is following the culture of "for the party, of the party and by the party". The CPI-M-led Left Front government did it for 34 years, and then the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress followed in the same footsteps, he said.

"Only BJP can establish the culture of 'for the people, of the people and by the people' in Bengal. If we really want economic reform and

generate job opportunities in Bengal, we should go for the BJP, which is ruling at the Centre. The saffron party should come to power in Bengal as well," he pointed out.

Referring to the death of 135 BJP workers in the state, Adhikari said that already the party workers, under the leadership of BJP state unit chief Dilip Ghosh, have consolidated its base in Bengal. "They have gone a long way. Now it is our responsibility as obedient party workers to take it forward," he said.

He said the people of West Bengal should work towards transforming the state into "Shonar Bangla" in the time to come, a slogan raised by the BJP.

### School teacher jumps off Delhi high-rise, dies

NEW DELHI

IN a suspected case of suicide, a 32-year-old school teacher jumped to her death from the third floor of a high-rise building in west Delhi's Janakpuri on Saturday afternoon. Police received a PCR call at around 1:06 p.m. that a woman had fallen from the DDA building. After a police team reached the spot, the woman was found dead on the spot with blood oozing out of her head.

"A two-page note has been found near the body. The deceased has been identified as Sneheep Kaur, aged 32, a resident of Virender Nagar, Janakpuri. The body has been sent for post-mortem," said Deepak Purohit, DCP West Delhi.

## Woman, three children die in fire in UP

BANDA

THREE children and their mother were burnt to death in a fire which spread from a bonfire in Dubey Purva Mau village in Banda district of Uttar Pradesh.

Additional Superintendent of Police, Mahendra Pratap Chauhan, said, "Kallu, a resident of Dubey Purva village in Marka

police station area in Banda district is a daily wager from Jaipur, Rajasthan. He lived there along with his wife and three children. The sparks emanating from the bonfire lit due to the cold gutted the entire house. Possible other reasons behind the fire are also being probed."

According to the locals, the villagers raised an alarm when they

saw the flames engulfing Kallu's house. By the time they were able to break open the door, the entire house had turned into rubble. There was only burnt debris and smoke everywhere. On receiving information, the police arrived and the fire brigade too reached the site.

Villagers said the mother and her three children were burnt to

death in the fire in the kuccha house which began from a bonfire. The police and the fire brigade personnel put out the fire and removed the bodies from the rubble. The Sub-Divisional Magistrate said prima facie the cause of the fire appears to be the sparks from the bonfire. But only an investigation can confirm the actual reason.

## US doctor suffers severe allergic reaction to vaccine

BOSTON

A doctor in Boston with a shellfish allergy developed a severe allergic reaction after receiving Moderna's coronavirus vaccine on Thursday, the New York Times reported, citing the doctor. Dr Hossein Sadrzadeh, a geriatric oncology fellow at Boston Medical Center, said he had a severe reaction almost immediately after being vaccinated, feeling dizzy and with a racing heart, the NYT reported.

It is the first severe reaction publicly linked to Moderna's vaccine, which is in its first week of a nationwide rollout.

David Kibbe, a spokesman at the Boston Medical Center, said in a statement that Dr Sadrzadeh "felt he was developing an allergic



reaction and was allowed to self-administer his personal epi-pen. He was taken to the Emergency Department, evaluated, treated, observed and discharged. He is doing well today."

A US Food and Drug Adminis-

tration official said last week that the FDA is investigating around five allergic reactions that occurred after people were administered Pfizer Inc and BioNTech SE's COVID-19 vaccine in the United States.

### Saudi Arabia's crown prince gets vaccine

RIYADH

SAUDI Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman received the COVID-19 vaccine, state media reported.

The country's Health Minister Dr Tawfiq al-Rabiah extended his gratitude to the Crown Prince for his "keenness and continuous follow-up" to provide vaccines to citizens.

"Within the framework of Vision 2030, there is a policy of prevention is better than

cure, which was represented by intensifying preventive measures, emphasising that human health is first, and providing safe and internationally approved vaccine in record time and providing it to citizens and residents," Al Arabiya news channel quoted Dr al-Rabiah as saying.

This comes after Saudi Arabia received shipments of the coronavirus vaccine developed by Pfizer and BioNTech earlier this month, The Hill reported.

## Covid: Daily deaths below 300 after over 6 months

NEW DELHI

INDIA'S daily new COVID-19 fatality count was reported below 300 after over six months, taking the death toll to 1,47,343, while the infection tally rose to 1,01,69,118, according to data updated by the Union Health Ministry on Saturday.

A total of 251 more deaths and 22,273 new infections were reported in a 24-hour period, the data updated at 8 am showed.

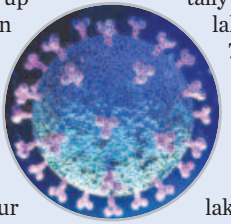
The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 97,40,108, pushing the national recovery rate to 95.78 per cent, while the COVID-19 case fatality rate stands at 1.45 per cent.

The active caseload re-

mained below three lakh for the fifth consecutive day. There are 2,81,667 active coronavirus infections in the country, constituting 2.77 per cent of the total caseload, the data stated.

India's COVID-19 infection tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16.

It went past 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one-crore mark on December 19. According to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), 16,71,59,289 samples have been tested up to December 25, including 8,53,527 on Friday.



## Tej Pratap: After Arunachal, JD(U) will break in Bihar too

PATNA

RASHTRIYA Janata Dal leader and former Bihar Health Minister Tej Pratap Yadav on Saturday predicted that the Janata Dal (United) will soon disintegrate in the state. The son of RJD chief Lalu Prasad said on Saturday: "The decline of JD (U) is now certain. It has begun in Arunachal Pradesh and soon it will disintegrate in Bihar as well. It is breaking into smaller units and its future in Bihar doesn't look bright either."

It may be recalled that in a big setback to the JD(U), six out of its seven MLAs in Arunachal Pradesh joined the ruling BJP.

Following this, the opposition has been targeting the party since the JD(U) is an ally of the BJP in Bihar. Even leader of op-

position Tejashwi Yadav has raised concerns over the possibility of the JD(U)'s falling apart.

The RJD hinted at the possibility of a fresh alignment in Bihar if Chief Minister Nitish Kumar chose to snap ties with the BJP following the "humiliation" in Arunachal Pradesh. RJD national vice-president Shivanand Tiwary, however, made it clear that the ball lies in the court of the JD(U) boss who needed to realise that the development in the north-eastern state, where his party MLAs defected en masse to the BJP, was aimed at "settling old scores". The veteran RJD leader, who has also been with the JD(U) for some time, insisted that the development in Arunachal Pradesh was "part of the chain of events that began with Chirag Paswans rebellion".





ROPING IN GODS IN THEIR ‘ROWS’

# AP witnesses a ‘war of oaths’

RANI DEVALLA  
VISAKHAPATNAM

‘OTTESI oka maata, veyyakunda oka maata’ goes the dialogue in a popular Telugu movie Chatrapathi. Of late, a few political leaders, both in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, are taking a cue from the film as they seek divine intervention, ‘swearing’ in the name of Gods and Goddesses.

Making tall statements fails to hold much significance these days unless and until they are accompanied by an ‘oath’. For a few who want to emphasise that they are free of any allegation, swearing on God has become a way of life.

Now the oath-taking ritual seems to be trending in both the Telugu-speaking states.

Earlier, it was between the BJP Telangana state president Bandi Sanjay Kumar who challenged Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao to take an oath of truth at Bhagyalakshmi temple in Hyderabad Old City for making false allegations to malign the image of BJP ahead of GHMC polls.

Similar trend seems to be followed even in Andhra Pradesh.

After engaged in a war of words, the differences between former TDP MLA N Ramakrishna Reddy and YSRCP Anaparthi MLA Sathi Surya-

The latest exchanges of challenges between YSRCP and TDP leaders in East Godavari and now in Vizag follows a similar episode in Hyderabad involving BJP and TRS

- ❖ TDP MLA Ramakrishna Reddy and YSRCP Anaparthi legislator Suryanarayana Reddy brought in Gods and Goddesses to defend themselves against corruption allegations by swearing at Bikkavolu Lakshmi Ganapathi temple
- ❖ In port city, Vizag East MLA of TDP Velagapudi Ramakrishna Babu throws a challenge at ruling party MP Vijayasai Reddy to swear at Shirdi Saibaba temple at East Point Colony temple to prove corruption allegations against him



YSRCP leader Akkaramani Vijaya Nirmala carrying the portrait of Saibaba in response to the challenge thrown by MLA V Ramakrishna Babu in Visakhapatnam on Saturday

narayana Reddy reached a crescendo in East Godavari district. Both of them sought divine intervention to defend themselves against corruption allegations by swearing at Bikkavolu Lakshmi Ganapathi temple.

The tradition of swearing in the name of Gods did not stop there. In Visakhapatnam, similar trend is gaining momentum between the YSRCP and the TDP.

Rajya Sabha member V Vijayasai Reddy alleged that

Visakhapatnam East MLA Velagapudi Ramakrishna Babu amassed benami assets and the latter reacted and challenged the MP to prove the same by swearing on Shirdi Saibaba at East Point Colony temple. “I threw a challenge at

the MP not at YSRCP leader Akkaramani Vijaya Nirmala,” clarifies the MLA when Vijaya Nirmala along with party workers readied for the challenge.

Responding to Ramakrishna Babu’s remarks, the MP stated that the MLA is not worthy of considering the challenge. In continuation with this, Anakapalle MLA Gudivada Amarnath brought another God into the picture. “If there is any trace of truth in Ramakrishna Babu’s statements, he should prove so by swearing on Sri Varaha Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy of Simhachalam,” Amarnath demanded.

Meanwhile, carrying a portrait of Saibaba, Vijaya Nirmala turned up at Shirdi Saibaba temple along with the party supporters. They waited for the MLA’s arrival in vain and later headed to his camp office. On the other hand, TDP leaders reached MLA’s camp office in support of Ramakrishna Babu.

They wondered why the YSRCP cadres were reacting when the challenge was thrown at MP Vijayasai Reddy.

A challenge that started between an MP and an MLA has ended up between the two parties. At present, swearing in is trending in AP and TS as the political leaders consider it an effective tool to dust off the allegations levelled against them.



Task Force team with seized red sanders logs

## ₹ 2 cr worth red sanders logs seized on TN border

TIRUPATI

IN a major haul, Red Sanders Anti-smuggling Task Force (RSATF) on Saturday seized 227 logs that were readied for transport at Appambedu in Pichatur mandal in Chittoor district. The logs which are of B quality weighing about 4 tonnes, are said to be worth around Rs 2 crore. Task force DSP Venkataiah speaking to the media said following a tip-off, task force personnel were since five days keeping a watch on the district border with Tamil Nadu which ultimately yielded a rich dividend to the force with the seizure of 227 logs which is the highest catch in the recent times.

The truck driver was arrested and the logs and the vehicle were seized, DSP said adding that intense search is on in the state borders to find out the persons behind the failed smuggling of the huge quantity of the red sanders believed to be to Tamil Nadu.

- Task Force personnel lay in wait for 5 days before making the biggest catch
- the 227 logs were kept ready to be smuggled to TN
- Truck driver arrested, search is on for the smugglers

The smugglers in a tactful move deferred and delayed the clandestine transport of the red sanders logs but the task force stubbornly stayed put on the borders resulting in the seizure of a large quantity of red sanders, he said, lauding the team of task force, including Tirupati task force team and the Kodur sub-control team playing key role.

CI Subramanayam, RSIs Bhaskar, Vasu, Suresh, Venkata-muni(Koduru),FRO Prasad, Kodanda and others involved in the operation were also present.

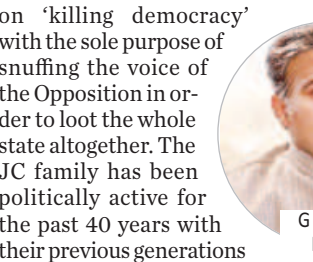
## TDP slams Home Minister’s ‘lies’ on Tadipatri incident

AMARAVATI

TDP national spokesman G Deepak Reddy on Saturday accused the Jagan Mohan Reddy government of ushering in an oppressive regime similar to those of the erstwhile Palegars without any respect or commitment to the democratic rights and development aspirations of the people in the state.

Deepak Reddy alleged that the YSRCP MLA along with his son, henchmen and the local police attacked the residence of J C Prabhakar Reddy in Tadipatri. Very strangely, the DSP and other police officials were showing their weapons to the victims rather than the ruling party MLA’s supporters who entered into the JC’s house in violation of the laws.

Addressing a press conference here, the TDP leader termed it as unfortunate and sad for democracy that the home minister herself was telling outright lies and falsehoods that the YSRCP MLA only came for peace talks with the JC family in Tadipatri. If that was the case, the home minister should explain why they brought sticks and axes along with them and forcibly entered the JC house and beat up persons there. The video cameras clearly showed how the ruling party MLA behaved atrociously and how the local police fully supported him during the attack, he said. Deepak Reddy deplored that the Chief Minister has been hell bent



G Deepak Reddy

on ‘killing democracy’ with the sole purpose of snuffing the voice of the Opposition in order to loot the whole state altogether. The JC family has been politically active for the past 40 years with their previous generations also having a record of taking part in freedom struggle. They have not allowed a single untoward or violent incident in the five years of the TDP regime. But now, in just 19 months, so many attacks and harassments were carried out. Like nowhere else, the police themselves were openly encouraging the ruling YSRCP leaders’ oppressive activities.

Deepak Reddy said that instead of resorting to violence, the YSRCP MLA could have clarified to the people that his family members did not demand any money for the sand being taken away in bullock carts in the constituency.

It was alleged in social media that the MLA’s wife was asking for Rs 10,000 for a bullock cart load of sand. Instead of giving clarifications, the MLA and his henchmen and his son also wrongfully entered the JC house and created tensions. What is more, SC, ST atrocities cases and an attempt to murder case were filed against the victims, he said.

## Jagan fanning caste feelings for political gains, alleges Lokesh

AMARAVATI

TDP national general secretary and former minister Nara Lokesh criticised Chief Minister Y S Jaganmohan Reddy for ‘deliberately misinterpreting’ demographic imbalance as caste imbalance with the ulterior motive to derive undue political advantage. Lokesh said that the Chief Minister was telling all lies only to rake up caste feelings and thereby to divert the attention of the people from the pressing issues and

problems in the state. Jagan Mohan Reddy fully well knew that demographic imbalance had nothing to do with caste but yet he was resorting to cheap political gimmicks with utter disregard for decorum and decency, he added. In a statement here on Saturday, Lokesh said that it was because of his non-stop lying that Jagan was being called as a ‘fake CM’. No section of society in was now ready to trust the words and statements of the Chief Minister, he said.

## TAX HIKE APUCF to protest at secretariats on Dec 28, 29

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VIJAYAWADA

ANDHRA Pradesh Urban Citizens Federation (APUCF) will organise demonstrations in front of the ward and village secretariats throughout the state on December 28 and 29 to mark their protest against the municipal laws that would enable the urban local bodies to impose house tax based on the property value and also to enhance garbage tax, drinking water tax and underground drainage tax in the name of user charges.

APUCF convenor Ch Babu Rao appealed to the local citizens associations, colony and apartment welfare bodies and trade and commerce associations to participate in the protest demonstrations through the respective joint action committees.

Recalling the amendment to the municipal laws made by the Assembly in the recent session, Babu Rao said that it was a unilateral decision and the taxes were raised without any discussion on the issue. The house tax would be decided basing on the latest property value of the land as per the amendment.

He said that the state government is imposing the latest taxes at the behest of the Central government.

## Student unions decry withdrawal of fee sop



SFI activists protesting against fee reimbursement withdrawal at RDO office in Tirupati on Saturday

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
TIRUPATI

STUDENT associations are up in arms against the GOs No 60 and 115 issued by the social welfare department depriving 1.50 lakh post-graduate students studying in private colleges of fee reimbursement benefit.

The government clearly indicated in the two GOs that from now onwards, Jagananna Vidya Deevena and Jagananna Vasthi Deevena schemes will not be applicable to PG students studying in private colleges.

Students Federation of India (SFI), All India Students Federation of India (AISF) and other student unions are strongly op-

- The State govt issues GOs No 60 and 115 exempting private PG students from Jagananna Jagananna Vidya Deevena and Jagananna Vasthi Deevena schemes

posing the withdrawal of benefits. Up to now, private college students were also provided with fee reimbursement under the Vidya and Vasathi Deevena.

The fee reimbursement will not be applicable from December 25 PG students who have been

pursuing their MSc, M.Com, MBA, MA and other courses in private educational institutions.

In Chittoor district alone, more than 6,000 students will be affected by these new GOs. Members of SFI in Tirupati staged a protest in front of RDO office here on Saturday demanding withdrawal of orders. They raised slogans against the social welfare department decrying the withdrawal.

SFI district secretary N Madhava Krishan criticised the YSRCP government for pursuing anti-poor policies. He said SFI would continue the fight until the government withdraws the anti-student GOs.

## CPI accuses Modi of fomenting fascism

TIRUPATI

SLAMMING Prime Minister Narendra Modi, CPI national secretary K Narayana accused him of fomenting Fascism. Speaking at a public meeting held on the occasion of CPI 95th anniversary here on Saturday, Narayana said that the red flag (Leftists) alone can stop the surge of saffron and added that the only party that fought for the unity and integrity of the country was the CPI. Stating that the new farm laws opened the floodgates for the corporates, he said it would ultimately enslave 80 per cent of the farmers as they (farmers) will not be in a position to sell their produce but only to the corporate companies.

## 1 killed in Mayapuri mask factory fire

Continued from P1

The owner of the factory identified as Rakesh Khanna, a resident of Paschim Vihar, was arrested in connection with the incident, he said.

The deceased was a resident of Kanpur in Uttar Pradesh and had been working at the factory as a tailor for many years. He usually slept inside the factory after work, the officer said. Kumar said the man was sleeping inside the factory when the fire broke out. It is

suspected that he died due to suffocation after inhaling smoke.

The garment manufacturing unit had been operating since the last six years. It was shut briefly amid COVID-19 outbreak, but resumed work with four workers and started manufacturing masks, the police officer added.

The two people rescued were identified as Aman Ansari (18) and Feroj Ansari (24), officials added.

## India set to become 5<sup>th</sup> largest economy by 2025

Continued from P1

However, it equates to around 10 deaths per 100,000, significantly lower figure than much of Europe and the Americas. As Covid-19-induced lockdowns stopped most economic activities in India, it April-June quarter GDP took a massive hit of 23.9 per cent below its 2019 level. The economic shock was so strong that nearly a quarter of the country’s economic activity was wiped out by the drying up of global demand and the collapse of domestic demand. Only the agricultural sector, buoyed by a bountiful harvest, remained largely unaffected and emerged as an important driver of India’s economic recovery.

As restrictions were gradually lifted, many parts of the economy were able to spring back into action, although output remains well below pre-pandemic levels. India recorded a GDP contraction of 7.5 per cent in Q2.

## ‘Tractor march’ if talks fail: Farmers

NEW DELHI

THE farmer unions said that they will hold a “tractor march” from Singhu border on December 30 if the Union government does not talk of repealing these laws during their proposed talks on December 29.

The farmer unions held a joint press conference at Singhu border on Saturday and proposed holding talks with the government on December 29 at 11 am.

Rajinder Singh of Kirti Kisan Union said that “if the government does not talk of repealing the new farm laws on December 29, we will hold tractor march from Singhu to Tikri to Shahjahanpur (in Alwar district) with hundreds of tractor-trolleys on December 30.” Darshan Pal, President of Krantikari Kisan Union, also said they will organize “tractor march” from the Singhu border on December 30.

“Toll plazas in Punjab and Haryana will remain permanently open. People are invited

## Farmers ready for talks on Dec 29

Continued from P1

Meanwhile, carrying ration and other essential items with them, several batches of farmers from Punjab headed towards Delhi borders on Saturday to join the protest at the doorstep of the national capital. According to farmer union leaders, peasants from various places, including Sangrur, Amritsar, Tarn Taran, Gurdaspur and Bathinda districts were headed towards Singhu and Tikri borders.

Despite fog and biting cold wave conditions in many parts of Punjab, they started their journey on Saturday. “We will rest only when the Modi government repeals the farm laws,” said an elderly farmer headed to Singhu border from Amritsar.

to come and celebrate their New Year on January 1, 2021, at Singhu border,” he said. Addressing the press conference at Singhu border here, Swaraj India president Yogendra Yadav said the government has asked for talks with farmer unions.

“We are making this proposal on the behalf of Sanyukt Kisan Morcha after talking to all organisations that talks between representatives of farmers and the central government should be

held on December 29 at 11 am,” he said.

“The first two points in our agenda for talks are - modalities to repeal the three farm laws, and mechanism and procedure to bring a law for providing a legal guarantee on MSP,” Yadav added.

He said there was “letter diplomacy” and the Central government has written to them to hold talks. “Letter diplomacy is going on. We reply to the letters sent by the central government in

about two days and the government replies to our letter within hours. Within a few hours of our last letter, Joint Secretary of Agriculture Ministry wrote to us and proposed talks. So, we have decided to go for talks,” he said.

Joint Secretary in Agriculture Ministry Vivek Agarwal had written a letter to farmer unions on December 24 urging them to decide the date and time for the next round of talks.

The farmers have been protesting since last month at Singhu border against Farmers’ Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020, the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020 and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020. They are demanding the repeal of the three laws. The farmer unions have held five rounds of talks with the government and attended a meeting called by Union Home Minister Amit Shah.



## Will Trump return in 2024?

THIS has reference to the editorial- Trump packs a punch (December 25).US election is far from over, with Trump not ready to concede and waging relentless legal war to reverse the election. Another suit filed by him to challenge Pennsylvania is in offing. There are wild rumours that he may impose martial law, possibility though seems remote but his one time advisor Mike Flynn and few others are advising Trump to take that route to subvert this election.

Chronicling 2020 specially and full tenure of Trump shall be a difficult task. How every American Institutions which stood for the democracy had been under shadows. America which never had this suspicion of upholding voices of dissent and disagreements and values of free speech came to abysmal depths of taking sides on racial lines. It's debatable whether under Trump America First policy American were made to suffer the high costs of Trump's waging war on Imports and necessities from China and other countries.

By rejecting the Bill, Trump has made Biden look like a 'compromised' leader who is more concerned to turn America to older ways where America was more concerned about the world



than people at home. Divide which has been created during 'Black lives matter' movement has fully exposed the racial fault lines in American society. Trump has emerged the face of supremacist chauvinism and there seems to be no apology for that. Handling of Covid-19 by Trump administration was pathetic. If Brazil PM suggests that new vaccine may turn men into crocodiles and women will grow hairs, Trump's suggestions were equally insane when he suggested to take disinfectants as remedy to Covid. America lost three lakh lives and its healthcare system broke under its pressure but govt was missing in action.

It was also alleged that Democ-

rats abetted and fanned the fires emanating from 'Black lives matter' campaigns in states ruled by them. Democrats ruled New York saw biggest looting and arson. So, the politics had started long time back to influence the election.

Trump had alleged postal ballot fraud one of the reason of his defeat. States in which he lost edge in electoral votes was Arizona, Georgia and Wisconsin where he lost by 42918 votes combined, thus surrendered the chance to be at par with 269-269 tie with Biden.

During the entire campaign Trump got positive votes means 'vote for him to be President' but Biden got votes for 'vote against Trump'. One of the major reasons that after William McKinley's 1900 election this was highest voter turnout ever at 66.2 per cent. So it was wafer thin margin where he lost out to Biden in three important states is the real bone of contention.

With Trump on pardon spree where he has already signed 'pardons & clemencies' to 46 people, his forcing Congress to raise limit from 600 dollars to 2k dollars and leaving behind a robust economy, are all signs of prolonged fight, if not this time, it may be 2024. Second coming may not be ruled out.

Ashok Goswami, New York

## Mock drill welcome

TO conduct dry run, a pilot mock drill for Covid vaccination in two districts each of four states is a good idea. The real vaccination programme is going to be humongous and a herculean task with multiple challenges at mul-

tiple points. It needs meticulous planning, good number of trained personnel, logistics and fail-safe mechanisms. Given the large scale requirements, greater demand and patently inadequate supply of vaccine, India, being second worst

victim to corona, cannot afford any failure in the upcoming massive flagship programme of vaccination. The dry run will expose the lacunae in preparedness and execution that need to be rectified. It should be carried out in all states involving all stakeholders.

Dr D V G Sankararo,  
Nellimarla



## The great battle for Bengal

V Ramu Sarma, in his article (The battle for Bengal enters a critical phase.) gave correct analysis of West Bengal elections. Though Congress and Left parties have approved the electoral alliance, their impact will be less in Bengal elections. There is only a two-party fight between TMC and BJP. BJP is in aggressive mood and is expecting to defeat TMC in

coming assembly elections. TMC's trusted vote bank are Muslims. Asaduddin Owaisi now plans to win big in elections in Bengal. But analysts and critics are in dilemma whether Owaisi's growth is hurting or aiding BJP. Critics say that Owaisi divides Muslim votes which will help saffron party.

Zakir Hussain, Kazipet.

## Shamsur Rahman Faruqi:

### A multi-dimensional personality

IT was really stunning to hear about the sad demise of a multidimensional personality Shamsur Rahman Faruqi (1935-2020). On one side he was poet, novelist, critic, literary historiographer, translator, editor, publisher, professor, literary modernist as well as postcolonial revivalist of traditions; one the other hand he was a good civil servant in Indian postal services where he served initially for the Indian postal service (1960-1968), and then as a chief postmaster-general and member of the Postal Services Board, New Delhi until 1994.



He was born on 30 September 1935 in Azamgarh UP and flourished in an academic friendly family. He was editor of his literary magazine "Shabkhoo"-Blood of the night that he singlehandedly ran for 40 years (1966-2006).

There is no room for doubt that now though he is not among us but he will be forever with us guiding students and scholars by his unprecedented works. It is a high time for us to take inspiration from his biography and illuminate our careers.

Md Azim, MANUU,  
Hyderabad

# Celebrating the birth of New Year over the years...



SIXTY six years have passed, sixty six summers with the length of sixty six long winters (with due apologies to Wordsworth). I am, like many more millions of people, constrained to celebrate this 2021 New Year's Day in a low profile, thanks to the COVID-19 infested times. My advanced age is yet another reason to hold back my still burning and rather buzzing zeal to chill out on this 'once-in-a-lifetime' occasion. As you know this January month is named after Roman God Janus, who had two faces, to look to the future and to look to the past at once. Hence the New Year Eve (December 31st) is traditionally meant for us to rejoice, to sit and take a cool look at the days gone by with sighs and look to the future with fond hope.

But now I am wont to look back at some of the celebrations on the New Year's Day in my life so far. To begin with, as a college going young man, I was eagerly looking forward to celebrating each New Year Eve with a small gang of my bosom friends. Sometimes we all used to meet at a pub or at a bar hours before the midnight to talk about our plans in the new year.

Though I was a teetotaler, I sat with my friends who would make new year's resolutions over glasses of beer. The funniest part of it was that some of them tanked up soon and would suddenly start talking in kitchen English! A couple of them would

break down while nostalgically talking about the people and things they loved and lost. The finest part was in the morning when we exchanged greeting cards, sweets, cakes, small trinkets like pens, new diaries and the visits to the homes of some lady classmates. One young unmarried Commerce Lecturer was very close to our group of friends and he used to treat us in the evening.

From 1985 to 1991, I worked in the Head Office of AP Panchayati Raj Department in Hyderabad. During this period it was rather an insipid affair--no parties, no exchange of greeting cards, sweets, cakes, trinkets and no home visits. However, some of my crafty colleagues were in the habit of fawning for favours from our senior officers. They used to do all sorts of things that were popular during the Raj to stay in the good books of the bosses.

From 1991 to 2015 I had worked as a Degree College Lecturer in an aided college at Badvel town of Kadapa District. Then it was a small, seedy town where just two political families dominated everything. During this long and eventful period, I witnessed some of the practices of the Raj on the New Year's Day! Every year early in the morning, all the college staff members would meet on the spacious grounds of our college and exchange greetings with one another.

From there we all would go in a small, rickety van to the house of our Principal where we would garland him profusely and exchange pleasantries over cake and tea. Then he would join us to go to our college chairman who was a very powerful long time State Level leader. Amid hundreds of his partymen, local officials, general public, waiting to greet him, the Chairman

would grant us just a few minutes of time to meet and greet him as per the protocol and accept reverentially whatever he offered us.

The brighter part of it was the way our students enjoyed themselves on this day. Most students would form into small groups to go to greet their teachers at their homes, give them beautiful cards, and sweets. Some rich students would pamper their favourite teachers with gifts and apples, a costly affair in those days. It was a symbol of a teacher's popularity. A couple of my colleagues from Science Departments would basket hundreds of them that day and they would boast about it in the staff room the next day. But in the efflux of time, this practice of visiting homes and gifting trickled down and soon disappeared. With the advent of the mobile phones, students started calling their teachers to greet them and many even simply sent greeting messages over the mobile!

Now once again back in Hyderabad since 2015 after my retirement. Here on the New Year's Day, I usually exchange some messages and memes on the mobile with my children, siblings, and relatives only. And a few old students still post greetings on my Facebook page, though some of the practices of the Raj continue in official circles!

M Somasekhara Prasad,  
Hyderabad

## Let's usher in 2021 optimistically!

AFTER year 2020 starting on a quiet note, people woke up to a big surprise in the second quarter after coronavirus pandemic striking with vengeance dished out tough challenges forcing people to take care and be vigilant by strictly following the Covid norms compulsorily--wearing mask and maintaining social distance to ward off Covid.

In fact, as each day after the outbreak of pandemic life became more painful looking at the reports of rise in deaths and increasing positive cases in print and TV media. This created a scare and unerved people due to public healthcare not matching up to the expectations even as private health care was beyond the reach of the common man. Suddenly, everyone started feeling jittery seeing the upswings and downswings in their daily lives even as negative thoughts swirling in their minds increased anxiety and restlessness.

In this context, experts coming out with varying degrees of contradicting reports only added to the confusion after it became certain that pandemic is certain to spill over to 2021. Notwithstanding the intense sufferings of migrant labour and employees due to sudden shut down of market and business houses on account of lockdown for most part of the year due to Covid, the extraordinary situation only complicated economic policy, as a result states had to bear the brunt of revenue shortfall.

The Centre failing to play a bigger role to extend help to States coupled with public healthcare woefully falling short due to inadequacies had a cascading effect on both people leaving them helpless. Moreover, it was a pathetic sight everywhere

after coronavirus exacerbated a number of challenges as we prepare to enter the third decade of the 21st century leaving behind bitter and sad memories of turbulent 2020.

Still, one is not sure as to how long the ordeal would continue encircle and trouble us despite the Covid contagion has come down considerably. Thus this bringing the death toll to lower level not only gives a relief but a bright hope to people with Covid positive fighting for survival. In spite of the improvements visible on the ground, government and the people cannot afford to remain complacent. In other words, tentative gains in the battle against the coronavirus must be kept up by remaining vigilant.

Also, in the aftermath of death of unfortunate thousands due to the pandemic, it must not deter taking proactive action even if the stress is too very high to handle in the coming days. In this moment of crisis faced by the world one must not take chances because even a die-hard pessimist accepting the ground realities would change his/her mind and come forward to meet and manage the challenges for greater good of the people.

As it was quite right that China used covid-19 pandemic to its advantage to pressurise the world to listen to its terms by sending a strong message to the west that it cannot take them for granted anymore, its unacceptable behaviour thwarted by alert Indian security when it tried to push inside our territory at Ladakh and other borders on the north eastern side by force sounded an alarm to China to give up its policy of trying to covet others' territory by force now when the world is

faced with a major challenge to defeat the virus or any time after.

Until then, with bated breath let us wait for the vaccine till it comes out to immunise us from falling a prey to this virus which has been playing havoc with the lives around the world. The announcements that vaccine is in the final stages before it is administered to all gives a sense of great relief even as history proves to this effect that after a global pandemic, lifestyle, social behaviour, economy and governance are bound to change.

Therefore, being optimistic in the toughest times is crucial for each one to focus on the task on hand in order to ward off negative thoughts from our minds and as well to minimise the spread of virus. Summing up, India after coping up the intense struggle for nearly a year must continue till covid retreats fully as visualised by experts by fighting with full resolve without getting an iota of feeling that in the end we land up as a loser.

K R Srinivasan,  
Secunderabad

## What an year it was!

THE year 2020 will have made an everlasting and inerasable mark in the history of humankind and still frightening the same with deadly pandemic Coronavirus infection second wave. The pandemic Coronavirus has made the people more insecure and uncertain about their lives and forced to follow certain preventive measures. However, across the world the scientists are trying to reduce the effect of Coronavirus with an effective vaccine the virus is rapidly mutating to produce new variants. The mutations of virus and its self-rejuvenation making the scientists

more astonished and transforming them as ostrich heads in research. Thank the almighty! Owing to a mystic reason in our country, the mortality rate is low when compared to the other nations across the globe.



FAREWELL  
2020  
YOU WILL NOT BE MISSED

Thanks to our traditional knowledge, that has fed us immunity providing ingredients along with our food. The lockdowns unlock downs, great services of frontline warriors saved our country from virus destruction. Though, we have avoided mass destruction the pandemic has debased our economy to a great extent.

However, fortunately the positive case reduction and the endeavors of governments yielded better results. This deadly and ever-changing virus has pushed the entire world into a pupated state. Therefore, the year 2020 will become an unforgettable year in human history. So, leaving all this wicked past, we will hope for Better tomorrow... Better days. That will help us to bounce back into the normal life stream that will lead towards a sustainable and study growth of the human kind. It is so right that "our hope waters the roots of the flowers that have yet to bloom". But hope has many constraints, so we will pray the almighty with the words of Alfred Lord Tennyson "Ring out the grief that saps the mind; for those that here we see no more; Ring out the feud of rich and poor, Ring in redress to all mankind"

E Gajendra  
Nath Reddy,  
Badvel

## Today, India has more problems than prospects...

UNTIL liberalisation happened in India, our government used to talk about the ways to control the unchecked growth of population. We forgot about the implementation of family planning which till then was given wider publicity. Suddenly we started talking about the demographic dividend by having majority of Indians as youth in the population and the country progress can be carried on the shoulders of young and we soon turn an economic power that can dictate the globe, this is a myth, the population growth is in fact a great liability, a ticking time bomb.

As per estimates by 2025, 50 per cent of India would be below 25 years of age. Unlike China we



cannot reap the demographic dividend as it concentrated on manufacturing, it became a factory to supply all needs required by

world. China wisely invested huge amounts in infrastructure development sustaining a positive cycle but China despite being

the economic power centre never ignored the population control and succeeded in containing the surging growth of population, the result is that we are racing ahead to become the world's most populous country overtaking China by the end of 2022.

The scary part is that we are doing so with one of the most ill equipped, inadequately skilled youth in the world. We have the world's largest number of illiterates, as per estimates 26 per cent of our population cannot read or write. Apart from this disadvantage about one crore youth enter the job market every year with just about 15 per cent has some sort of formal skills, the rest are unemployable, this is true at all levels. As per the experts assess-

ment less than 10 per cent of Indian engineering graduates are employable and rest are hardly employable, devoid of any skills.

The huge number of educated youth without occupation become more a liability to nation than we expected as dividend, adding to this by 2024 more than 35 crore people above the age of 60 years remain active and with the increase of life span, the economic strain of nation going to be unbearable. The service industry that was the engine of Indian growth has scant presence.

Our larger states are basically dependent on agrarian income, these states account for least progress and most votes which imbalances the economy. We are having a peculiar combination

here: a youthful population having no skills and jobs and feudal social structures in majority of large states, this is a recipe for the social strife, crime, sexual assaults and communal riots. Add to this disastrous cocktail, the politics of caste, religion, hate that is being used to divert the youth anger by self-centred political parties for short time gains and the recent evil freebies offered by all political parties draining the tax payer's money to win elections messed up the governance of states and as whole Nation. We are already staring at a demographic nightmare which has started unraveling.

The focus needs to change from giving corporate giants and

flop banks some tax rebates or tweaking tax structures, the immediate need is to focus on social parameters like literacy, health, skill development and prioritized family planning etc. As proclaimed by our PM Narendra Modi during the last Independence Day address, the need of the hour is controlling the booming population but unable to put it in practice, no concrete steps are taken to contain and control the population. Population explosion disproportionate to our economic growth is a social virus harmful than Covid-19 virus and it is to be tackled with same urgency the government showing towards containing the dreaded Coronavirus.

Rama Krishna M, Kakinada



# How safe is the digital world?

FATIMA HASAN

DURING the time of Notebandi, one of the objectives, as stated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for demonetisation, was to usher in ‘Cashless Economy’ and going ‘Digital.’ With the advent of the e-wallets and Paytm, the digital economy was making forays and penetrating the Indian economy. But with new ideas come new problems. It is often that we have heard of looting of banks and the cash thefts but the illegal digital lending apps is the digital world issue that has come to the fore in recent times.

The usurious money lenders are occupying the first seat in this digital cashless economy. The digital applications and transactions were already in place since 2016. In the past two months, in between the chaos caused by coronavirus, there have been many suicides by defaulters because of their incapacity to repay the loans taken by them online.

Amid the growing suicides in Telangana, the RBI has cautioned the public to be wary of unauthorised digital lending apps and mobile apps. The RBI took note of the reports of individuals and small businesses falling prey to a growing number of unauthorised digital lending platforms. “Members of the public are cautioned not to fall prey to such unscrupulous activities,” the RBI said and also urged the public to first verify the antecedents of the company offering such online loans before taking it.

A research study carried out in 2019 by Global Data shows 83.6 percent of survey respondents in

## Looking at the other side of the coin

India confirmed they have a mobile wallet and regularly use it—compared with 31.5 percent in the US and 24.6 percent in the UK. Interestingly, Paytm is the most preferred mobile wallet while Google Pay occupies the second place. The Cyberabad police, on December 22, busted a multi-state online money-lending racket with heavy interest rates up to 35 percent on the loans in Hyderabad. As per the investigation, as many as 70,000 people had fallen victims to this online money-lending racket.

When we note 2020 figures, the number of transactions for PPIs (Prepaid Payment Instruments) (Wallets + PPI Cards) increased by 94.6 million in May 2020 and this growth again can be attributed to the financial crunch and crisis caused by coronavirus. Both the digital transactions, lending and borrowing, and the fraudulent extortion of money have been rampant ever since.

### Can India be another US?

Now the question arises whether the dream of cashless economy can be achieved anytime soon and can India actually walk parallel to the US economy in this aspect. The cashless economy is an economic system where small amount of cash is used in transactions. Cashless economy is based on transactions made by credit cards, debit cards, wallets or digital modes.

After the best cashless economies in the world—Sweden and Canada—US accounts for 45

percent transactions in terms of cashless economy while India is far behind with just 5 percent but growing faster. Yes, India can be another US and can go on to become the best cashless economy and this can happen only when the illegal lending apps and illegal extortion are brought under foot.

### Need more robust digital security

In the wake of rising instances of illegal digital transactions, there is every need for more robust anti-apps to counter such illegal apps. Hence, the IT professionals and companies should first engage in developing digital security apps to counter the illegal usage. The police can also work best in this regard by hunting down all the racketeers involved in such immoral acts.

Can this be taken as the good side of demonetisation or side effects of coronavirus?

When we trace the trends, we see that at two different times, the cashless economy was taking a gallop in the Indian economic scene, that is, in 2016 post-demonetisation and now when the unprecedented cash crunch is brought out by stalling of businesses, loss of jobs and slowing down of the economy itself.

Every move has both sides—good or bad to it—and thus the increase in digital economy can be taken as the good side of demonetisation. The current crisis may prove to be launching pad for the digital transactions again but it has also brought with it the pitfalls of the modern day world—the fraud and illegal extortion by digital gangsters. Thus, there is an immediate need to bring in digital security to check misuse.

# Why vehicle subscriptions are a win-win approach

ANANNYA DAS

I recently came across a poster advertisement on Twitter. It said: ‘Maruti Suzuki Subscribe.’ The first thing that struck me was: If I subscribe, how am I owning and not renting?

Diving into the details, I found it did mean owning a car and not renting one. It is an innovative way to own a vehicle.

It is perfect for someone like me who is sceptical about owning a personal vehicle for daily use as I am scared about driving on Delhi roads, but might do so occasionally. It is also perfect for people who are reluctant to own a car immediately, people who might change cities, people who shifted to public transport or are looking for a shift from personal to public transport and so on.

### A win-win approach

The usual chain of events for owning a vehicle involves compulsory interaction with multiple stakeholders right from purchasing, registration, taxation, insurance, usage, maintenance throughout the vehicle’s lifetime, de-registration and scrapping.

Ownership without having to worry about any of these and a single-window transaction through an original equipment manufacturer (OEM) makes it a hassle-free approach for the user.

Whether it is for the undecided first-time user, or the users’ part of the cyclic (reselling-purchase) car-consumer-market, such an ownership model will indeed increase the flexibility of options.

A quick calculation showed that



‘ownership rent’ enlisted on the manufacturer’s website for 25 variants of four-wheelers for 24 months ranged from Rs 3.8-8.4 lakh for models priced between Rs 5.7 lakh and Rs 12.6 lakh.

This is considering that the depreciation value of 30-50 percent on the same models for 2-3 years is Rs 3.4-7.6 lakh, that is quite close to the rental value of ownership.

Additionally, 24x7 on-road assistance, with no extra cost other than rental, makes it a win-win approach. Contrarily, other existing rental options in the Indian market are expensive for a similar period.

### Changing consumer market

Consumer attractiveness drives a change in market and mobility behaviour in cities. Lately, innovative marketing approaches have become synonymous to ‘flexible-vehicle-ownership’ in the global market.

‘Zoomcar’ is another rent-based subscription model that has gained immense popularity in Indian cities, where the idea is on shifting from car-owning to car-experiencing.

### Shared mobility

Over the past few years, the concept of shared mobility has gained huge popularity in Indian cities, including app-based mobility services. Delhi alone has about two lakh app-based vehicles approximately.

A recent Deloitte study shows that with flexibility in mobility options, 51 percent of millennials have re-considered the need to own a car while 44 percent of Gen-X were sceptical about owning a car today.

Subscription models is a vast shared mobility segment. It is expected to grow by a compound annual growth rate of 65 percent at \$9.15 billion from 2020-2024.

The segment provides the perfect opportunity for introducing a wider range of flexible ownership models in order to prevent long-term commitment to a vehicle.

This is a move forward for driving the vehicle restraint narrative, the very idea about lesser on-road vehicles, moving or still.

It will drastically impact the growth of piled up vehicles, control the plying of older vehicles, ease scrapping end-of-life vehi-

cles, keep a check on the unregulated market of older vehicles and hence regulate emissions from transport vehicles.

### Minimising a long ordeal

The study Towards effective scrappage policy and infrastructure by Delhi-based Centre for Science and Environment highlights that old vehicles are an integral part of India’s vehicle market.

However, the quantification of volume remains a challenge. The Central Pollution Control Board estimated about nine million end-of-life vehicles to be on the road in the country in 2016. This number is estimated to increase to 22 million by 2025. This is almost equal to Delhi’s population today.

With limited land resources, our cities are already burdened with a lot of old and abandoned vehicles on the road, a usual sight around the lanes of Delhi’s residential areas. These vehicles don’t just pollute but encroach expensive land and act as heat trapping machines. Another lacuna is that centralised vehicle registration data maintains a database for every new registration but not vehicles de-registered or due for de-registration. This is owing to a lot of factors including the time-consuming process itself.

However, the challenge is far beyond policy. It is about implementation with the lack of a database, the volume of vehicles, the shift of addresses, multiple ownership that increased multi-fold with time, etc. Additionally, the presence of informal scrapping centres makes it tricky.

(Courtesy: Down to Earth)

AKSHITA SHARMA

THE COVID-19 pandemic has made hand hygiene crucial for disease prevention. This has led to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) gaining greater importance in households, schools, health facilities, and communities.

It is evident that inadequate WASH services disproportionately burden women, and hence, policy framing and implementation must recognise the experiences, needs, and barriers faced by women and girls.

Although India does not have an umbrella WASH policy, several policies for improved sanitation, clean drinking water, and menstrual hygiene, each focusing on different aspects of WASH have been undertaken.

We apply the ‘Gender Responsive Assessment Scale’ developed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to evaluate those policies and programmes on a five-point scale: Gender-unequal: 1, Gender-blind: 2, Gender-sensitive: 3, Gender-specific: 4 and Gender-transformative

### Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM)

The Government of India re-structured and subsumed the National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP) into the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) in 2019. The policy aims to ensure affordable and adequate drinking water supply through Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTC) to every rural household by 2024.

The JJM guidelines released in 2019 note that the provision of tap water connections to households will relieve women and girls of the struggle of walking miles to fetch water, alleviating ‘time poverty’.

It emphasises women’s role in leading and participating in JJM activities, especially at the village level. Women are required to constitute 50 percent of the Village Water and Sanitation Committees. The ‘Swajal’ programme, under JJM, comprises a Women’s Development Initiative (WDI) designed to upskill them, improve their income-earning capabilities, and connect them to the market, through help from Support Organisations.

However, habitations with less than 25 percent of the population having access to safe drinking water were granted lower priority in coverage than other categories. This indicates that water-stressed regions continue to suffer, and so do women and girls in those regions.

Nevertheless, the JJM presents a unique opportunity to undertake gender-transformation in rural India through promoting women’s leadership.

# India’s WASH policies unduly burden women

## Need to build sensitive ecosystem, communication for social change

Atal Bhujal Yojana

The gender strategy for the policy tracks the participation of women in the scheme. It requires 33 percent women members in Water User Associations (WUA) at the Gram Panchayat level to allow holistic participation of women in water budgeting, water security planning, and monitoring implementation progress.

Apart from providing training, gender issues are also addressed in meetings of WUAs. Women members of Self-help Groups (SHGs) are also required to constitute a substantial number of Water Management Committees (WMC).

Although the on-ground gender transformation is yet to pan out, evidence indicates that women’s participation in resource management improves their bargaining power and leadership skills while upholding more efficient water use.

### Swachh Bharat Mission - Gramin (SBM-G)

Through its ‘Gender Guidelines’, the mission recognises the importance of adequate sanitation and menstrual hygiene management for women’s health, privacy, safety, and socio-economic outcomes. It requires the active participation of women not only in campaigns but also as leaders constituting 50 percent of the Village Water and Sanitation Committees (VWSC).

The Information, Education, Communication (IEC) campaigns are targeted not only towards women but also men, to challenge gender stereotypes. It also encourages women to work as masons to help in toilet construction, adolescent girls to raise awareness of menstrual health management in their communities, and men to participate in maintaining toilets.

The programme has also incorporated trained foot soldiers, or swachhagrahis, mostly women, from self-help groups, ASHA workers, and other community-based organisations who motivate improved sanitation practices in their villages. In Jharkhand, 1.5 million women led a hygiene campaign and constructed 1.7 lakh toilets in less than a month.

Although India was declared open-defecation-free (ODF) in 2019, several reports indicate the persistence of open-defecation in regions labelled ODF, defunct toilets, and discrepancies between the SBM administrative data and National Sample Survey data.



There have also been reports of non-payment of wages to swachhagrahis. If such policy implementation gaps are not bridged, regions with poor sanitation and lack of adequate toilets will continue to fail their women.

### Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM)

The MHM guidelines, issued by the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, provide a well-defined MHM framework that incorporates IEC initiatives, better WASH infrastructure, availability and safe disposal of menstrual absorbents, and participation of communities and schools, to make adolescent girls capable of continuing their education and ending the taboo around menstruation. It also brings together various ministries to collectively act towards the cause.

However, MHM is still recognised as one of the least prioritised components of SBM-G. On the Lok Sabha question of allocation of funds to the MHM component of SBM-G, the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation answered that they do not release component-wise funds and do not have any monitoring mechanism in place.

Ground reports show that knowledge of proper menstrual hygiene practices is still lacking. Girls have access to sanitary napkins as long as they are provided with the same from the school and later stop using them because of non-affordability or non-availability.

Even though ASHA workers continue to raise awareness, there are cases where 80 percent of women and girls in villages continue to practice unhygienic MHM.

Swachh Bharat Mission - Urban (SBM-U)

Although the SBM-Gramin has tried to be gender-transformative while recognising the burden of poor sanitation on women, SBM-U seems to have left that out entirely. The only gender-sensitive point included in SBM-U’s guidelines is that “adequate provision for separate toilets and bathing facilities for men, women and the physically-disabled” must be ensured.

This can be problematic. In 2018, 35.2 percent of India’s urban population was living in slums, and with the ever-increasing urban population, this is only going to rise. Urban slums with poor sanitation, privacy, and infrastructure pose several challenges for women.

Since girls and women mostly use community toilet complexes or public toilets—often located on the outskirts of the slum within 1-2 km radius—they are prone to harassment and violence. These privacy and safety concerns are magnified in the evenings and late nights.

The paucity of clean and separate toilets for women in the urban working landscape can discourage and restrict women from joining the workforce, in addition to several factors that already hinder their labour force participation. The toilets are also poorly maintained and lack of water connection and proper waste disposal methods. To arrange water for household use, women and girls need to stand in long queues to collect it from the water tankers.

### Swachh Vidyalaya Abhiyan

The Clean India: Clean Schools campaign under SBM has recog-

nised separate toilets and clean water in schools is crucial to a girl’s education. It provides for barrier-free access to clean toilets and clean drinking water for all children.

The programme also includes education on menstrual hygiene management, sanitation, and handwashing. However, while there have been significant improvements in sanitation and clean water availability post this campaign, some problems remain.

In 15 percent of schools assessed by WaterAid, drinking water was not safe, and half of them lacked a water storage facility. While 95 percent of the schools had functional toilets, these toilets were locked in 39 percent schools and some students were still defecating in the open. A third of the schools had no running water for handwashing, and only about 20 percent of schools assessed had “some facility for girls to manage their menses”.

### Kayakalp initiative

Launched by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to supplement the efforts of SBM, this initiative aims to promote cleanliness, hygiene and infection control in public health facilities, encourages regular performance assessment, and develops sustainable cleanliness practices to improve health outcomes.

The scheme also recognises and awards the best-performing public health facilities. However, although the guidelines mention toilets and labour rooms’ cleaning, the gender dimension is not considered.

### Policy recommendations

Evidence from across the globe

finds that involving women in designing, planning, and implementing WASH programmes helps in decreasing dropout rates from school, increasing school attendance, improving literacy rates and health outcomes, ensuring greater privacy and dignity, and reducing child mortality and the risk of harassment and violence.

Hence, women’s participation in WASH services benefits not only them but also their families and entire communities.

1. Integrate existing policies into a single WASH policy for India

While it’s notable that policies such as the Jal Jeevan Mission and Kayakalp scheme are recognised as being in tandem with the Swachh Bharat Mission, the convergence of these policies under the umbrella of WASH would provide the synergy and holistic implementation that India’s WASH sector needs.

2. Train swachhagrahis for wider communication and ensure timely wage payments

The network and reach of swachhagrahis must be utilised beyond the basic sanitation and toilet construction concerns. They must be trained to propagate gender-sensitive IEC, promote women’s access to toilets, and build more gender-friendly toilets, to challenge certain social norms in practice.

It must be ensured that due wages are paid to them on time as per the swachhagrahi guidelines.

3. WASH in schools: Amplify the policy focus on Menstrual Hygiene Management

The availability of separate functional toilets for girls and boys and adequate handwashing stations needs to increase. The schools must have adequate MHM infrastructure, which includes private spaces, clean water supply, and waste disposal facilities. The school management committees (SMC) must ensure that WASH services and awareness are maintained.

The local self-governments and authorities must ensure women’s leadership to eliminate the taboo around menstruation and gender-inclusive decision making. The use of cheaper and sustainable options for MHM must be encouraged.

The government can incentivise and support grassroots entrepreneurs to scale production and distribution of their biodegradable menstrual hygiene products, to maintain a sta-

ble supply even for last-mile populations.

4. Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) needs to be sensitive towards women in urban slums

It is crucial that designers of public toilets or community toilet complexes are cognisant of factors such as privacy, hours of availability, distance from the residential areas, design of toilets that can impact women and girls, and employ innovation in building gender-sensitive structures. This will require sufficient initiative from the government’s end.

To ensure the right to hygiene and sanitation, licenses for setting up shops, factories or workspaces must be issued only if women-friendly toilets are available, irrespective of whether women are employed or not. The government must pursue urban sanitary infrastructure with due rigour and monitor compliance efficiently.

5. WASH in health facilities must be gender-sensitive

WASH policies in health facilities must integrate the special needs of women and children, which includes safe, hygienic and accessible health centres and functional toilets. The Kayakalp Awards must include ‘gender-inclusive infrastructure’ as a metric in assessing health facilities for their health environment.

Monitoring systems must be set up to track WASH performance of health facilities and its impact on health outcomes of women and girls.

6. Develop a ‘Gender Tracking’ system and favourable ecosystem for change

Even while WASH policies are gender-sensitive or gender-transformative in their design and planning, they fail to measure the gendered impact of the policy. Most evidence available is anecdotal, and there is no quantitative data or monitoring to depict where the policy stands on bridging the gender gap.

Policies must employ gender analysis tools to develop a framework for such measurement and integrate it with the Management Information System (MIS) or mobile apps to track progress on gendered outcomes.

To create an ecosystem for gender transformation, it’s crucial for WASH policies to go beyond gender sensitivity and address the causes of gender inequality and bring forth positive changes in the power dynamics between women and men.

\*Time poverty refers to the lack of time for personal recreation or leisure due to long working hours. In the case of women, it indicates the shortage of time due to domestic chores or care activities that take up most of their hours.

(Courtesy: Firstpost)



# MSMEs seek sops to tide over Covid crisis

South India MSME JAC bats for substantial stimulus to spur faster GDP recovery

HANS BUSINESS  
HYDERABAD

BUDGET  
2021

THE micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) sector in South India, which has been trying very hard to re-establish its operations by reviving production in the aftermath of the lockdown, is urging the Union Finance Ministry to extend more relief measures, including providing easy access to finance, interest subvention and creation of specialised banks on the lines of micro finance institutions to cater to the industry.



In these circumstances, FSME India is requesting the Finance Ministry to consider making credit available without complex collateral requirements, provide for a longer moratorium period of two to three years while sanctioning bank loans, do away with the CIBIL scoring for at least three years for MSMEs alone etc

to ensure the industrial activity regains normalcy. According to Arasappa, like agriculture, the MSME sector is labour-intensive and the operational problems and risk exposures are also identical. The contribution of the small scale sector is equally significant as that of agriculture. "We urge the government to advance money on par with the agriculture sector to MSMEs through the banks by subsidising the interest. The amount of loan made available at this rate may be capped at Rs 5 crore," he added.

Stating that the credit-linked capital subsidy scheme for technology upgradation in the MSMEs expired in March 2020, Reddy said the scheme be renewed with effect from April 1, 2021 for two years while increasing the credit under the scheme to Rs5 crore from the earlier Rs 1 crore for 15 per cent capital subsidy with proportionate hike in the upfront subsidy cover to Rs75 lakh.

"Income tax reduction of 15 per cent allowed to companies registered after 2019, be extended for the sole proprietary and partnership firms also. The government must extend the 25 per cent corporate tax slab benefit given to corporate SMEs to the other categories of SMEs also such as partnership, proprietorships etc, as most SMEs are not incorporated and thereby are left uncovered," APK Reddy told Bizz Buzz.



Undoubtedly, the Central government has come forward and stepped up financial and other assistance to MSMEs in various ways by pumping in liquidity and access to credit, which have been helpful. However, many problems still persist

— APK Reddy,  
Vice Chairman, South India  
MSME JAC

start the economy. This requires immediate attention in order to sustain the industry, particularly MSMEs, in what is likely to be a prolonged drop in global and domestic demand for the foreseeable future even if the pandemic is brought under control or peters out in the next six months to a year," said KB Arasappa, Chairman, JAC, and president, Karnataka Small Scale Industries Association (Kassia).

"Undoubtedly, the central government has come forward and stepped up financial and other assistance to MSMEs in various ways by pumping in liquidity and access to credit, which have been helpful. However, many problems still persist

Covid-19 has caused irreparable damage to the small industry, which is still reeling under the impact of the pandemic due to disruption in supply chains, absence of demand, loss of jobs and unavailability of labour force, cancelled orders, over-extended payments and dried up financials.

According to the JAC's rough estimates, about 20 per cent of MSMEs may never be able to restart as a result of the disruptions caused by the pandemic.

"Primarily, absence of demand requires economic stimulus on a substantive scale in order to kick-

# Anywhere Operations, the new tech trend of 2021

COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS FUELLED REMOTE WORKING



Suresh Reddy



It was March 17, 2020, when the second case of Covid pandemic surfaced in one of the premier offices of Hi-Tech city in Hyderabad. Till that point, IT companies in the area were only reading about the pandemic across various countries. This event triggered them all to the reality of the Covid coming into their neighbourhood. This was just one snapshot of the same story that happened across various parts of the world.

Once businesses were forced to work from home and run operations remotely, they noticed their systems' deficiencies. A lot of thought went to how an ideal 'anywhere operations' set up should be.

To get to the productivity levels of the pre-Covid days, the first step was to introduce videoconferencing tools like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, GoToMeeting and such. The augmented office was the next level of innovation - this needed integration of 3D replica of the office with video calls and task management tools.

Employees were able to see the presence of co-workers, arrange meetings, manage projects and have watercooler talks from the comfort of their home. Managers could still plan space usage and have full control of security and energy consumption.

However, this required a significant upgrade in the IT infrastructure of the companies; remote IT support, reliable security solutions and the apps that blended the real and virtual experiences. This was the right way to take on the new reality of work.

Slowly but surely, the benefits of such upgrades started to accrue in terms of productivity improvement and better problem-solving. Irrespective of the pandemic, the

We can expect to see this hybrid model of working with co-workers and clients from a distance to become a part and parcel of our new working life. The good side of this trend is it gives employees more freedom to get things done on their terms yet not compromise productivity

need for a new model of hybrid working, a so-called 'Anywhere Operations' in which employees use their office as a business hub and are capable of working from home as efficiently and as productively as from the office took birth in 2020. A few salient attributes that make the "Anywhere Operations" extremely new age and an emerging trend of the future years are:

## XR tools with clients

What would need a visit to a client site is now addressable by communicating with your clients through XR tools, which help you share digital replicas of devices, track analytics in realtime and

provide the needed support on time and well.

## Cloud and edge infrastructure

Project management and product development tools have all been moved to the cloud from the operations side. CRM tools for the sales and marketing departments were moved to the cloud as well.

## Secure remote access

Remote access security to the company for the teams and the clients took the front seat in a lot of ways. Be it VPN channels or cybersecurity mesh around people. Innovations continue to happen in this area. Most of all these happened through cloud-based systems as well.

## Automation to support digital Operations

A lot of manual processes were automated to make the system more full-proof and human-independent.

All in all, we can expect to see this hybrid model of working with co-workers and clients from a distance to become a part and parcel of our new working life. The good side of this trend is it gives employees more freedom to get things done on their terms yet not compromise productivity.

(The author is Chairman and CEO of Hyderabad-based Brightcom Group)

## Cos will benefit from cloud

While 2020 saw an acceleration in the adoption of Hybrid Cloud, allowing organisations to run workloads on-premises, in the private cloud and the public cloud, the next year will see six key technology priorities for firms of all sizes to adopt in the country, a key IBM executive said on Saturday.

In 2021, not only will organisations continue to focus on ensuring they make the right technology

choices, they will adopt a holistic, hybrid multi-cloud architecture, allowing them to easily build and modernise applications and make their data ready for their journey to AI across the company, said Subram Natarajan, Chief Technology Officer, IBM India/South Asia.

"The next chapter of the cloud demands the power to quickly in-

novate and respond to changing market and client demands - build once and deploy anywhere. With cloud investment being key, we will witness six major technology priorities enabled by cloud in 2021," Natarajan told the reporter.

A recent IBM study highlighted that organisations in India will increase the share of spend on Hybrid

# 'Economic recovery unlikely to be V-shaped'

KUMUD DAS

We did face great economic crisis of 1930s and the Global Financial Crisis starting in 2007. How the ongoing Covid-19 crisis is different from those crises?

Great Depression of 1928-1933 and even the recession of 2008 were basically demand problems. Demand was short in the economy. Now, because of the lockdown, it is a voluntary cessation of economic activities. So, production came to a halt, except for some essential commodities. As a result, save for sectors such as, agriculture, pharma, FMCG and IT, everything else came to a halt.

In April, the economy declined by 75 per cent, compared to a year-ago period. Roads were empty, offices and factories closed and so on.

Due to the lockdown, supply of inputs froze and also demand declined. Lots of people lost their jobs and/or their salary was cut, so that their income came down substantially.

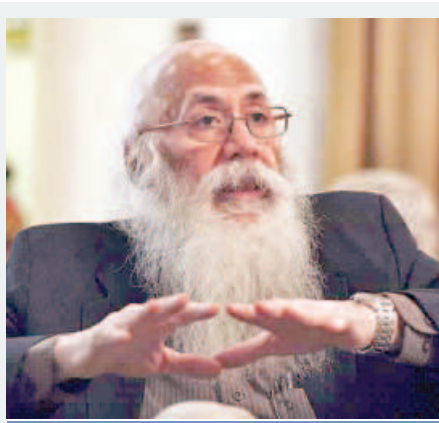
## What is the impact of Coronavirus on the Indian economy?

Coronavirus is one among several such viruses of similar nature. But unlike others, it is quite virulent and spreads from person to person. So, to stop its rapid spread, contact between people has to be minimised.

New viruses keep appearing due to mutation. Because the environment is disturbed, many animals have come close to human beings. Also, we keep animals in very congested conditions and viruses jump from one to the other and also mutate quickly. Something like this happened in Wuhan wet market, where Coronavirus originated from and spread to the rest of the world.

What is so unusual about the Coronavirus, especially since viral attacks-HINI, SARS, MERS, Zika, Ebola and Nipah have taken place in the last two decades?

You are correct, we have been witnessing a new virus every 3-4 years. The only difference being that these viruses were not so virulent. But, this one (Corona) is spreading fast but the redeeming feature is that it doesn't kill so many people. In the case of Ebola, 50 per cent of people who were affected by the virus, died. Whereas, in the case of Covid-19 about 2 per cent of the affected people have lost their lives. We also know that Coronavirus is resulting in long-Covid, that is, there are long-term side effects, even after recovery. The Covid-19 victims have faced neurological, heart and kidney related ailments post recovery.



ARUN KUMAR

## Which sectors of the country's economy have been hit the hardest?

Only 25 per cent of the country's economy was able to function during the lockdown period. Services sector was largely at a standstill. The unorganised sector had also been hit badly. Even agriculture was in difficulty because demand declined and produce could not come to the markets.

## Are there any sectors that have got benefited out of it?

Parts of organised sector which produced essentials and those parts that could work from home did well during the lockdown period. Then, there are sectors like Pharma where demand increased due to the disease or those that are to produce vaccine or those producing masks, temperature gun and medical equipment, which did well. IT and telecom sector are doing well as people are using more of software and communicating more with each other or getting entertainment and news.

## How has been India's response to the Coronavirus?

Government should have done a lot more. Unorganised sector is currently in a very difficult situation. The people working in this sector work and earn daily and buy their necessities on a daily basis. They can't survive more than a week without an income. Decongestion of our slums was necessary for the success of lockdown. The government should have allowed the migrant slum-dwellers to go back to their villages after testing them. Those who stayed back also needed to be decongested and provided with necessities of life.

Moreover, the government needed to ramp up medical facilities quickly. Our medical infrastructure is quite weak. We couldn't test adequately for the virus. Government should have

ARUN KUMAR is a veteran Indian economist. He studied at the Delhi University, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and Princeton University, US, and taught economics at JNU for three decades, until 2015. Kumar has written widely on various subjects, both in the popular press and at present, he is the Malcolm S Adeshiah Chair Professor at the Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi. His book, 'Indian Economy's Greatest Crisis' is creating ripples. In an exclusive interview with Bizz Buzz, he says that post Covid-19, the economic recovery of the country will be slow and not 'V-Shaped one, as it is being suggested by the government.

started relaxing the lockdown after controlling the spread of the disease.

But due to pressure from businesses, the relaxation started before the disease was controlled. Besides, government needed to increase support to the unemployed poor and later on provided them with employment. Last but not the least, government should have expanded a host of its ongoing people-oriented welfare schemes which could have generated jobs and led to increase in demand in the economy. In fact, the government missed the bus.

## What are the grey areas of Indian economy which have been exposed by you in the book?

Indian economy consists of primary (agriculture, mining and forestry sectors), secondary (like, manufacturing) and tertiary (like, public service, trade, finance and transport) sectors.

I have argued that even the agriculture sector declined food items could not reach the market. As a result, agriculture sector could not have grown by 3 per cent during the lockdown. Tertiary sector (which contributes 55 per cent of the country's economy) is the worst affected since it requires proximity among people and that is what is to be avoided. For instance, in public transport or for personal services like, barber and beautician or doctor or teaching.

So, I have sections in the book on how various sectors (like agriculture, education and media) got affected.

## How can the country's economy be brought back on track?

There is need to increase demand. That would happen if government increases expenditures. Rural employment guarantee scheme needs to be expanded and a similar scheme started in urban areas.

## What is your view on the Rs 20 lakh crore stimulus package which was announced by the government to tackle Covid-19?

Out of the Rs 20 lakh crore package, merely Rs 2.5 lakh crore is out of the budget and would raise demand. The balance is all credit for businesses but unless they work well they will not take more credit so this part of the package will not boost the economy.

## Why do you think that economic recovery will be slow and not 'V-shaped' as it is widely predicted?

This book highlights the enormity of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on India. It critically examines the government's efforts to control the disease and mitigate its adverse effects on Indian economy and society. An economy is not like a rubber ball, which, if dropped on a hard surface, will bounce back to its original position. The book provides incisive reasons as to why economic recovery will be slow and not 'V-shaped'. There is unemployment, slowdown in demand and in investment so the economy will recover slowly

## What is the road ahead, according to you?

I suggest that the development paradigm which has led to problems for the economy needs to be revisited. Good governance is crucial and so are a robust public-health system, and clean and representative politics. Only these can bring Indian society and economy back on track.

## What is your expectation from the forthcoming Budget?

Government needs to increase employment generation, investment in general and specifically on health infrastructure and help boost demand in the economy.

QUIZ NO.  
153

## HANS BIZ QUIZ

### COVID TAX RELIEFS, SCHEMES

1. Which country provided emergency rent subsidy relief to businesses, nonprofits that experience a revenue drop would be eligible to claim a subsidy up to a maximum of 65% of the rent, interest on commercial mortgages, and eligible expenses from September 2020 to June 2021?

- a) Argentina b) Brazil  
c) Canada d) Denmark

2. The European Member States decided to provide a VAT exemption for EU hospitals, medical practitioners, and individuals when acquiring coronavirus (Covid-19) vaccines and testing kits. The VAT exemption will remain in place until?

- a) June 2021 b) Dec 2021  
c) 2022 d) 2023

3. Which country extended the deadline for waiver of penalties for Zakat, income tax, withholding tax, value-added tax (VAT), and excise tax from March 2020 through 30 June 2020, and then again extended through 30 September 2020 before being ultimately extended through 31 December 2020?

- a) UAE b) Saudi Arabia  
c) Oman d) Doha Qatar

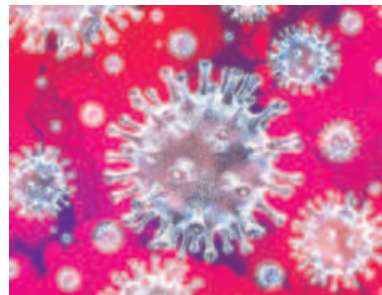
4. Poland introduced a relief package referred to as "Shield 6.0." to provide workplace protection aid to support. Which sectors are covered under the Shield 6.0 scheme?

- a) Entertainment (stage events, museums, film, and photography industry) and Retail sales sector (clothing shops and retail sale on stalls and markets)  
b) Educational sector and Sports industry (gyms, fitness clubs, swimming pools, aquaparks, health resorts)  
c) tourist and transport industry (catering, hotels, travel agents, tour operators, and tour guides, cabs, transport)  
d) All of the above

5. The deadline for the 2019 corporate and individual income tax returns in Luxembourg has been extended from 31 December 2020 to which date?

- a) 31 March 2021 b) 31 January 2021  
c) 31 December 2021 d) 31 December 2020

6. Which of the below extended the relief and recovery package to until 1 April 2021 under which homeowners can claim the mortgage interest deduction if they obtain



a mortgage repayment break from their mortgage lender?

- a) The Philippines b) The Netherlands  
c) India d) Kenya

7. Which country announced to offer an 80 per cent discount on penalties applicable for customs cases and violations detected or committed before 31 March 2020?

- a) Germany b) Hong Kong  
c) Singapore d) Dubai

8. Which country introduced a temporary income tax and Class 1A NIC exemption for employer-provided Covid-19 tests in 2020-2021?

- a) South Africa b) Russia  
c) The United Kingdom d) Pakistan

9. Which of the below is correct concerning the Covid restrictions support scheme (CRSS) stimulus plan in Ireland to extend certain tax and financial measures to support Irish businesses adversely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic?

- a) 10% of the business' average weekly turnover for 2019 up to a €20,000 limit  
b) If the business' average weekly turnover for 2019 exceeded €20,000, 5% of the average weekly turnover for 2019 that exceeded the €20,000 limit  
c) There is a cap for weekly CRSS payments of €5,000 per week  
d) All of the above

10. Law on corporate governance in the country requires a registered company to have at least one ordinarily resident director (being resident for at least 183 days every 12 months. However, Relief has been provided for company directors who have not been able to comply with the requirements. Identify the country?

- a) Austria b) Bolivia  
c) China d) Myanmar

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

KEY

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



DAY 1 OF SECOND TEST AT MCG

SCOREBOARD

Australia Innings

Joe Burns c Pant b Bumrah -----	0
Matthew Wade c Jadeja b Ashwin-----	30
M Labuschagne c Shubman Gill b M Siraj --	48
Steven Smith c Pujara b Ashwin-----	0
Travis Head c Rahane b Bumrah -----	38
Cameron Green lbw b Mohammed Siraj ----	12
Tim Paine c Vihari b Ashwin -----	13
Pat Cummins c Mohammed Siraj b Jadeja --	9
Mitchell Starc c Mohammed Siraj b Bumrah	7
Nathan Lyon lbw b Bumrah -----	20
Josh Hazlewood not out -----	4
Extras: (B-10, NB-3, W-1) -----	14
Total: (All out in 72.3 overs) -----	195
Fall of wickets: 1-10, 2-35, 3-38, 4-124, 5-134, 6-155, 7-155, 8-164, 9-191, 10-195	
Bowling: Jasprit Bumrah 16-4-56-4, Umesh Yadav 12-2-39-0, Ravichandran Ashwin 24-7-35-3, Ravindra Jadeja 5.3-1-15-1, Mohammed Siraj 15-4-40-2.	
India 1st Innings	
Mayank Agarwal lbw b Starc-----	0
Shubman Gill not out -----	28
Cheteshwar Pujara not out -----	7
Extras: (NB-1) -----	1
Total: (For one wicket in 11 overs)-----	36
Fall of wickets: 1-0	
Bowling: Mitchell Starc 4-2-14-1, Pat Cummins 4-1-14-0, Josh Hazlewood 2-0-2-0, Nathan Lyon 1-0-6-0	

Bumrah, Ashwin get Oz out for 195

India at 36/1, trail by 159 runs

MELBOURNE

INDIAN bowlers, led by ace pacer Jasprit Bumrah, came out with a brilliant bowling performance on Saturday to help the team take Day One honours against Australia in the Boxing Day Test being played at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG).

Losing the toss, the Indian team, led by stand-in skipper Ajinkya Rahane, first bowled out the hosts for a paltry 195 and then ended the day at 36/1, trailing by 159 runs.

For Australia, Marnus Labuschagne was the highest scorer as he amassed 48 runs off 132 balls before becoming the first Test scalp of debutant pacer Mohammad Siraj.

Earlier the hosts, after electing to bat, lost the wicket of opener Joe Burns early with Bumrah having him caught behind for duck.

Left-handed opener Matthew Wade, who played aggressively for his 39-ball 30, helped Australia move to 35 before off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin removed him. Wade tried to take the attack to the bowler by trying a slog-sweep but instead top-edged it for Ravindra Jadeja to take a catch at mid-wicket.

Soon Ashwin had Steve Smith for 0. Smith tried to turn a delivery on the middle and leg towards square leg only to find Cheteshwar Pujara take the catch at leg slip. At that point, India had Australia on the mat at 38/3

However, Labuschagne and Travis Head made sure Australia didn't lose any further wicket going into Lunch.

Resuming the second session at 65/3, Labuschagne and Head shared a 86-run partnership before Bumrah got Head caught at slips by Rahane at his individual score of 38.

Labuschagne, who had survived a couple of lbw calls and a blow on the helmet as well, looked all set for a well-deserved half century until got out against Siraj, just two runs short of the milestone.

Skipper Tim Paine and Cameron

Rahane has great sense of where his fielders should be: Gavaskar

MELBOURNE

INDIA'S stand-in captain Ajinkya Rahane has a great sense of where his fielders should be, said India batting great Sunil Gavaskar after the first day of the second Test against Australia here on Saturday.

Gavaskar, a former India captain, said that he has made the observation from the few Test matches that Rahane has captained in before the second Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG).

"From what I have seen in the last two Tests he captained and the one-day matches he captained, he has got a great sense of where the fielders should be kept. Having said that, it's very



important for the bowlers to bowl to their field. If the bowlers bowl to the field, as they did today, then the captain looks very good," he said.

Gavaskar said that it is a combination of Rahane's captaincy and the Indian bowlers' efforts that India are in a good position in the match. The visitors dismissed Australia for 195 in the first innings.

"It's important for India to look beyond the fact that it's only Ajinkya Rahane's captaincy. It's the way Ashwin bowled, it's the way Bumrah bowled, it's the way Siraj made his debut. I mean imagine, being a new-ball bowler, and you don't get to bowl a single delivery before the second session. Only in the sec-

ond session, you get to bowl in the 27th over but he showed great spirit in the way he came and bowled," Gavaskar observed.

"These are the things we should enjoy. It tells you a lot about this Indian team that they were at the Australians and they got the early wicket. If they hadn't got the early wicket, if Australia had gotten to a 60 or 70 for zero kind of start, then their body language might have been different."

Gavaskar also joked that he doesn't want to praise Rahane too quickly considering the Mumbai connection between the two.

"Importantly, let's not jump to conclusions too quickly. If I say that his captaincy is outstanding, then again, I will be accused of backing a Mumbai boy and all kinds of things will happen. So, I don't want to get into that because these are early days," he said. (IANS)

Ashwin bowled before Siraj due to moisture in wicket: Bumrah

MELBOURNE

INDIA'S decision to bring off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin early in the first session of the opening day of the second Test against Australia was prompted by the presence of moisture in the wicket, said India pace bowler Jasprit Bumrah on Saturday.

Ashwin was brought into the attack in only the 11th over while debutant fast bowler Mohammed Siraj was not given the ball until the second session. The senior off-spinner impressed as he picked a couple of early wickets, removing Matthew Wade in his second over and then getting rid of Steve Smith in his third, having him caught at leg slip for a duck. Ashwin had also removed Smith in the first innings of the first Test in Adelaide for one.

"When we were bowling in the morning, there was some moisture in the wicket. As you saw Ashwin and Jaddu (Ravindra Jadeja) also got some spin. Because we wanted to make the most of the moisture, we were trying to use that (strategy of bringing in spinners early). He was getting some good bounce as well," said Bumrah while speaking to the media after the first day's play as Indian bowlers bowled out Australia for 195 in the first innings.

"Ashwin got turn and that was because of the moisture," he added.

The right-arm pace bowler, who played a key role on the last tour of Australia taking 21 wickets, said Siraj was eager to bowl in the first session itself.

"He was very eager to bowl in the first session. He was waiting for his chance. He has worked really hard, he has come up through the ranks. He is bowling very well. He was in the midst of a good spell. When he came after the first session, there was not a lot happening but he bowled with control. Suddenly he started getting movement. He tried to make the best use of it," said Bumrah who was the pick of the Indian bowlers, returning with figures of 4/56.

"Playing his first Test, he (Siraj) bowled really well and he used all his confidence and skills. A very heartening sign for us. Hopefully he continues like this," he added.

The 27-year-old also said there was a lot of discussion on the field between the bowlers and captain Ajinkya Rahane and they wanted to help each other.

"We decided that everybody is going to help each

other. Siraj was making his debut... there was lot of communication about what was going on, how the wicket was changing and what the batsman was thinking. All these things were there in our mind," said Bumrah.

"There was constant discussion going on between the bowlers and the other guys with the captain. The wicket changed after the session as well. It got better to bat on. The moisture went away. So we were adjusting according to that, adapting to the wicket and the lines

we were going to

bowl. So we were just trying to communicate on what kind of lines we wanted to bowl so we could set the field accordingly. When there was less help, we tried to change the line a little bit and kept the field accordingly...our

main goal today, help each other and try to create pressure from both ends so that we get opportunities," he added.

Bumrah said the team is looking to put up a big total and is not looking too far ahead into the Test. (IANS)



“Excellent day's play for India. Bowlers were once again sensational, both the debutants looked confident, Rahane captained the side really well but most importantly they didn't carry the baggage of the loss from Adelaide —VVS Laxman, Former cricketer

India's MD Siraj (left) and Jasprit Bumrah chat during play on day one of the Boxing Day Test against Australia at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, Australia on Saturday

Kerala eye first win, Hyd look to bounce back

BAMBOLIM (GOA)



STILL in the hunt for their first victory in the Indian Super League (ISL), Kerala Blasters will be aiming to end the year on a good note when they clash against Hyderabad FC at the GMC Stadium here on Sunday.

Both sides have played six matches so far with seventh-placed Hyderabad sitting just two places above Kerala on the table, but with a difference of six points. While Kerala have suffered three defeats, Hyderabad saw their unbeaten streak end in their previous game against Mumbai City.

Although conceding goals has been an issue plaguing Blasters since the start of the season, their attack is also yet to click. They have attempted just 54 shots in the season so far -- the lowest by a team -- and have also created the least chances per 90 minutes.

Kerala coach Kibu Vicuna expects his side to make improvements but knows they won't

HFC head coach Manuel Roca

MATCH SC East Bengal draw RESULT with Chennaiyin FC 2-2

have it easy against Hyderabad.

"Every game is difficult," said Vicuna. "Hyderabad had positives in the last match (against Mumbai). They didn't play bad but they lost. So yes, we are expecting a tough challenge but we are training well. We are improving and taking steps forward. I have confidence we are going to play a good match."

Hyderabad will be aiming to expose Kerala's vulnerable defence, which has the second-worst defensive record this season. But defensively, Manuel Marquez's side has also been struggling of late. Five of the six goals they conceded this season have come in the last three games. Unlike Hyderabad, who have been reliant on Aridane Santana for goals, Kerala have had six unique goal scorers -- joint-most alongside Bengaluru FC. This presents a tricky challenge for Hyderabad.

"They (Kerala) have very good players and maybe they deserve more points than they have," said Marquez. "They have great players in all positions from the goalkeeper until the forwards and the coach (Vicuna) won the I-League last season. For sure, it will be an equal game. Let's see what happens." (IANS)

TODAY'S MATCH Kerala Blasters FC vs Hyderabad FC at GMC Stadium Bambolim 7.30pm

Former England pacer Jackman passes away

LONDON



ROBIN Jackman, former England fast bowler and commentator, has passed away at the age of 75. He is survived by his wife Yvonne and two daughters.

Born in Shimla, India, Jackman played four Tests and 15 ODIs for England, picking up 33 international wickets between 1974 and 1983. His domestic career began in 1966 and he played nearly 400 games, taking 1402 first-class wickets. He was useful with the bat too, having scored 5,681 first-class runs with 17 half-centuries. "We are saddened to learn about the death of legendary commentator and former England bowler Robin Jackman," the ICC said.

Kakatiya Kings, Suryapet Sunrisers book semis berth

HYDERABAD

KAKATIYA Kings from Group A and Suryapet Sunrisers from Group B cruised into the semi-finals of the of the Telangana Cricket Association (TCA) Kakatiya Cup 2021 here on Saturday. Meanwhile, K. Venu of Bhongir Bradshaw's 5/34, Raghu of Suryapet Sunrisers 4/8, Aqueeb Yaser 4/25 of Indur Icons, Naveen's 4/15 and Rajesh 4/9 of Tandur Tigers, Sidharth 4/19 of Mulugu Masters and Khaja Bakshi 50 of Indur Icons were the star performers in the matches played during Day Five.

In the first match of the day Suryapet SUNrisers clinched a resounding 102-run victory over Bhongir Badshaws. Opting to bat, Suryapet Sunrisers were all out for 142 in 17.5 overs and their bowlers did a splendid job in defending the total by restricting their opponents Bhongir Bad-

shaw to 40/9 in the stipulated 20 overs.

**Brief scores**

Suryapet Sunrisers 142/10 in 17.5 overs (Usmad 48 (43b, 7\*4), Raghu 26 (26b, 2\*4); K Venu 5/34) beat Bhongir Badshaw 40/9 in 20 overs (Raghu 4/8, Manish 2/8). Man of the Match: Raghu (Suryapet Sunrisers).

Indur Icons 101/10 in 20 overs (Aqueeb Yaser 26 (38b, 4\*4), Ahsan 25 (26b, 4\*4); Khaja Bakshi 3/13, Mahesh 2/14) beat Medchal Giants Score 95/10 in 15.2 Overs (Khaja Bakshi 50 (42b, 7\*4, 2\*6); Aqueeb Yaser 4/25, T Adarsh 3/19). Result: Indur Icons won the match by 6 runs and Man of the Match: Aqueeb Yaser (Indur Icons).

Kakatiya Kings 97/10 in 19.5 overs (Manoj 38 (43b, 4\*4); Naveen 4/15, Rajesh 4/9) lose to Tandur Tigers 98/9 in 17.2 overs (Vinay Raj 15 (22b), G Shashivardhan 15 (10b, 3\*4); Aditya 3/12). Result: Tandur Tigers won by 1 wicket and Man of the Match: Kalyan Pavar (Tandur Tigers).

Nirmal Thunders 93/10 in 17 overs



A Raghu



Aqueeb Yaser



K Naveen

(Mahesh 43 (50b, 5\*4), Yashwanth 23 (27b, 2\*4); Siddarth 4/19, Sajeed 3/14) lose to Mulugu Masters 94/7 in 20 overs (Sameer 20 (37b), Anvesh 15 (19b, 2\*4); Yashwanth 3/14). Result: Mulugu Masters won by 3 wickets and Man of the Match: Siddarth T (Mulugu Maters).