



Devotees gather at Har Ki Pauri Ghat on the occasion of 'Magh Purnima' in Haridwar on Saturday

### US House passes \$1.9 tn pandemic bill

WASHINGTON: The House approved a \$1.9 trillion pandemic relief bill in a win for President Joe Biden, even as top Democrats tried assuring agitated progressives that they'd revive their derailed drive to boost the minimum wage. The new President's vision for flushing cash to individuals, businesses, states and cities battered by Covid-19 passed on a near party-line 219-212 vote early Saturday. That ships the massive measure to the Senate, where Democrats seem bent on resuscitating their minimum wage push and fights could erupt over state aid and other issues.

### Victory of BJP's TS MLC candidate imminent: Javadekar



HYDERABAD: Union Minister of Information and Broadcasting Prakash Javadekar said the victory of BJP candidate and sitting MLC N Ramachandra Rao is imminent. Addressing an event, organised in support of party contestant of Hyderabad-Rangareddy-Mahbubnagar Graduates MLC constituency, he said, "The increasing attacks and criticism against Ramachandra Rao itself is an indication that the ruling TRS, the Chief Minister and his ministerial colleagues are scared of the BJP. If Rao returns to the Council, then, he would enough to give a tough time questioning the government, he added.



100-year-old Soran Singh from Bulandshahr speaks to family members over phone, during their ongoing protest against the new farm laws, at Ghazipur border in New Delhi on Saturday



# VAX DRIVE FROM TOMORROW

## Govt caps Covid jab at ₹250/dose in private hospitals

NEW DELHI

PRIVATE hospitals can charge up to Rs 250 per dose of Covid-19 vaccine, the Union government said on Saturday as India prepares to vaccinate people aged above 60 years and those over 45 with comorbidities from Monday. The vaccine will be given free of cost at government hospitals, while people will need to pay for it at private facilities.

States have been given the freedom to use all private hospitals empanelled under the State government health insurance schemes as Covid vaccination centres. States can also use health facilities of all PSUs and all government health facilities as CVCs.

Close to 10,000 hospitals under the Ayushman Bharat-PMJAY scheme and 687 under CGHS can be used by States as Covid vaccination centres.

Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan interacted with health secretaries and MDs of States and UTs on the vaccination of age-appropriate groups via video-conference.

States have been told that private hospitals functioning as CVCs can charge subject to a ceiling of Rs 250 per person per dose. **Continued on Page 4**



## Don't lower guard: Centre

### ALERTS 8 STATES SHOWING SPIKE IN COVID CASES

NEW DELHI: The Union government on Saturday advised States and UTs reporting an increase in coronavirus cases to enforce Covid-appropriate behaviour by dealing firmly with violations and ensure effective surveillance in case of potential super spreading events so as not to squander last year's gains.

Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba chaired a high-level review meeting with Chief Secretaries of States and UTs of Maharashtra, Punjab, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal,



Telangana, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Punjab, West Bengal and Jammu and Kashmir have been advised to enforce Covid-appropriate behaviour and deal firmly with violators

Telangana and Jammu & Kashmir.

"The States were advised not to lower their guard, enforce Covid-appropriate behaviour and deal firmly with violations. It was strongly underlined that they need to follow effective surveillance strategies in respect of potential su-

per spreading events," the Union Health Ministry said in a statement. At the meeting, the Cabinet Secretary stressed upon the need for effective testing, comprehensive tracking, prompt isolation of positive cases and quick quarantine of close contacts.

**Continued on Page 4**

### India records 16,488 new Covid cases, 113 deaths

NEW DELHI: India registered a single-day spike of over 16,000 Covid-19 cases for the third day in a row on Saturday, pushing the infection tally to 1,10,79,979, while the recoveries surged to 1,07,63,451, according to Union Health Ministry data. A total of 16,488 novel coronavirus cases were reported in a day, while the death toll rose to 1,56,938 with 113 new fatalities, showed the data updated at 8 am on Saturday. The active case count has further increased to 1,59,590, which comprises 1.44 per cent of the total infections, the data stated.

### Maha extends lockdown in Amravati

NAGPUR: Lockdown in Amravati city in Maharashtra was extended for a week on Saturday in view of the coronavirus situation, while restrictions were also imposed for the weekend in Nagpur, Buldhana and Yavatmal. These cities in Maharashtra's Vidarbha region have reported a spike in the cases of Covid-19 in the last one week.



## AP soft drink factory shut after 3 employees test corona +ve



Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages Private Limited at Atmakuru near Mangalagiri in Guntur district

### HANS NEWS SERVICE GUNTUR

THE Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages Private Limited at Atmakuru near Mangalagiri was shut down on Saturday as three of its employees tested positive for coronavirus.

This has caused concern among the people as so far the general impression was that the corona was on its way out and with vaccines having become available, one need not fear the virus. But

reports of surge in cases from Maharashtra and Kerala and some parts of Telangana has put the entire government machinery on high alert.

Of the three workers who tested positive, one was from Sangamjagarlamudi, another is from Mangalagiri and the third one is from Pedavadlapudi.

Mangalagiri tahsildar GV Ram Prasad visited the company and held negotiations with the company management. **Continued on Page 4**



Congress leaders Ghulam Nabi Azad, Anand Sharma, Kapil Sibal, Bhupinder Singh Hooda and Raj Babbar during a 'Shanti Sammelan' event in Jammu on Saturday

## Cong 'getting weaker' G-23 Congress leaders meet in Jammu to 'strengthen party'

NEW DELHI/JAMMU

THE group of 23 dissenting Congress leaders (commonly known as 'G23'), who wrote a strongly worded letter to Sonia Gandhi over the party's leadership crisis last year, met in Jammu on Saturday and said the party is getting 'weaker' and they are raising their voice for the party's betterment.

The G23 leaders, comprising Congress veterans like Ghulam Nabi Azad, Kapil Sibal, Anand Sharma, among others, said they are seeing the Congress party "getting

**The group comprises Congress veterans like Ghulam Nabi Azad, Kapil Sibal, Anand Sharma, Bhupinder Singh Hooda, Raj Babbar, Manish Tewari and Vivek Tankha**

weaker" across the country.

"The truth is that we see Congress party getting weak. That is why we have gathered here. We had gathered together earlier too and we have to strengthen the party together," Kapil Sibal said in Jammu.

**Continued on Page 4**

## Factory fire kills one in Delhi's Pratap Nagar

NEW DELHI: A charred body was recovered after a fire broke out at a factory in North Delhi's Pratap Nagar area in the early hours of Saturday, a Delhi Fire Service official said. One of the firemen suffered minor injury on his finger during the fire-fighting operation but was given first aid at the spot, the official said. A call about the blaze was received at around 3.47 am and 18 fire tenders were pressed into service, he said. Later, 10 more fire tenders were rushed to the spot and the flames were doused while the cooling process is under way, he added. The fire broke out on the first floor of the factory and spread to the second floor. Plastic and nail polish materials stored in the factory caught fire and a charred body was recovered from the first floor, said Atul Garg, Director, Delhi Fire Service. The cause of the blaze is being ascertained, he said.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses during inauguration of the India Toy Fair 2021, in New Delhi on Saturday

# PM opens India's first toy fair

PURNA SINGH NEW DELHI

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday inaugurated the first India Toy Fair 2021 via video conference during which he urged the country to become 'atmanirbhar' in the toy manufacturing sector.

During the inauguration of the country's first-ever toy fair, the Prime Minister said Indian toys project the 'reuse recycle' culture that has been a part of the Indian lifestyle and asked the manufacturers to use less plastic and more recyclable material. This fair organized

### Pushes for use of less plastic

for the promotion of indigenous toys will last for 4 days.

"Our toys reflect reuse and recycling that has been a part of the Indian lifestyle. Most Indian toys are built out of natural and eco-friendly materials. The colours used in them are natural and safe.

"I would like to appeal to the toy manufacturers of the country to build such toys that are better both for ecology and psychology. Can we try to make minimal use of plastic in toys and use such

material that can be recycled?" Modi added.

During the virtual event, Modi interacted with several toy clusters from across the country. While speaking to Karnataka's toy cluster Chan-napatna, which has been manufacturing toys for 200 years, Modi urged them to come up with innovative ideas to build toys for India's toy industry to grow.

The Toy fair, Modi said, will bring together stakeholders in the sector, which will add to the effort of the industry to

grow. "This Fair will bring together various stakeholders associated with the sector. Through such efforts, we aim to add momentum to the efforts of toy industry to grow further," he tweeted.

Aimed at providing a platform to states to develop toys reflecting the history, culture and social milieu specific to the states and also to revive traditional and indigenous toys in the lives of children, the national toy fair claims to also boost the economy by supporting local toy industry under 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'.

# ISRO begins countdown for first mission in 2021

### ■ launch at 10:24 am today from Sriharikota ■ new satellite to carry Gita, Modi's photo

SRIHARIKOTA

THE Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is gearing up for its first launch of 2021, which is scheduled at 10:24 am from the SHAR Centre in Sriharikota on Sunday. This is for the first time that an Indian rocket will launch 637-kg Amazonia-1 of Brazil as primary satellite from the

launch pad of the Sriharikota spaceport in Andhra Pradesh's Nellore district, about 100 kms from Chennai.

Named Satish Dhawan Satellite or SD Sat, after the founding father of the Indian Space program Prof Sathish Dhawan, it will send names of 25,000 individuals to space. The nanosatellite will carry a copy of the Bhagavad Gita



in the form of an SD card and a photograph of Prime Minister Narendra

Modi on the top panel to show solidarity and gratitude for his Aatmanirbhar

initiative and space privatisation. The names of Isro chairperson Dr K Sivan and scientific secretary Dr R Umamaheswaran have been etched on the bottom panel.

The satellite will carry 18 co-passenger payloads (four from ISRO's Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre, three UNITYsats from a consortium of 3 Indian academic institutes and the SD SAT from SKI) and 14 from NSIL. Developed by Chennai-based

SpaceKidz India, it will also carry three payloads — one to study space radiation, one to study the magnetosphere, and another that will demonstrate a low-power wide-area communication network. PSLV-C51/Amazonia-1 is the first dedicated commercial mission of NSIL, which is undertaking it under a commercial arrangement with Seattle, US-based satellite rideshare and mission management provider, Spaceflight Inc. "We are

eagerly looking forward to the launch. We are very proud to launch the first Brazilian-built satellite, Chairman and Managing Director of NSIL, G Narayanan, was quoted as saying by PTI.

"This satellite would further strengthen the existing structure by providing remote sensing data to users for monitoring deforestation in the Amazon region and analysis of diversified agriculture across the Brazilian territory," an ISRO statement said.



## Congress leaders burn effigy of Modi over high fuel prices

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
AMANGAL

AMANGAL Youth Congress leaders staged a protest and burnt the effigy of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Amangal on Saturday. The protest was organised over the increasing petrol and diesel prices. Speaking at the occasion, the Youth Congress leaders said that the steepest fuel price hike will have cascading effects on other essential commodities and on people who are already suffering from the exhaustive policies of the Central government. The urged that the middle-

class families will face financial burden. They demanded the government to decrease the prices of petrol and diesel. "If the government fails to do so, the agitations and protests will be held," they said. Rapolu Anil, Krishna Nayak, Khaleel, Srisailam and several others participated in the protest.



## TRS govt ready to kill those questioning its rule: Uttam

The State Congress chief consoles the parents of advocates who were murdered recently in full public glare



TPCC chief Uttam Kumar Reddy consoling the parents of advocate Vaman Rao in Peddapally on Saturday

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
PEDDAPALLI

TELANGANA Pradesh Congress Committee chief Uttam Kumar Reddy consoled the parents of advocates Vaman Rao and Nagamani, who were murdered at Kalvacherla of Ramagiri mandal a few days ago, by visiting their home at Gunjapadugu village of Manthani mandal in the district on Saturday. Speaking on the occasion, the TPCC president alleged that under the leadership of Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao, a cruel ruling was going on in the State. The government is killing those who are questioning it, Uttam said. He added that when the High Court lawyers were murdered in the middle of the road in full public glare, the Chief Minister did not have time to speak about the murder and call for immediate probe for arrest of culprits. Why did he not respond to the twin murders? he questioned. When the two High Court

lawyers filed a petition in the court against the mafia which was going on in the Manthani region, the ruling TRS party leaders killed them, he alleged. Such kind of incidents did not take place even in the united Andhra Pradesh. But in the Telangana State, which was achieved after taking up several movements, people were witnessing the murders of those questioning the government and the TRS party leaders for their wrong deeds, the TPCC chief stated. To secure facts and to punish the real culprits severely, the State government must hand over the case to the Central Bureau of Investigation, he demanded. Manthani MLA D Sridhar Babu alleged that the people lost faith in the State government. Even after taking the issue to the notice of police on several occasions, there is no response from them, he said. Congress senior leaders Makkan Singh, Padi Koushik Reddy, Adluri Laxman Rao and others accompanied the State Congress chief.

## People realised TRS tomfoolery: BJP



BJP national vice-president DK Aruna and former MP Jitender Reddy addressing a press meet in Mahbubnagar on Saturday

MAHBUBNAGAR

THE leaders of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) expressed confidence that their candidate Ramchander Rao would win the graduate MLC elections from Mahbubnagar-Ranga Reddy-Hyderabad constituency. Addressing the media at the BJP district office on Saturday in Mahbubnagar, party national vice-president DK Aruna and former MP Jitender Reddy said that the graduates, employees and unemployed youth were fed up with the TRS attitude and were favoring the saffron party and teach a lesson to TRS for taking the unemployed for granted. "No force can stop the victory of BJP candidate. Before the formation of Telangana, youngsters in large numbers supported separate

State cause hoping that they would get jobs. But all their dreams were shattered the TRS. All these graduates have now realised that they are fooled by the TRS. Except the Chief Minister and his family, no one in this State is benefited. TRS claiming of providing 1.30 lakh jobs is an utter lie," said DK Aruna. Jitender Reddy slammed the TRS for its deceiving tactics. The government had promised to fill up 50,000 government posts, but till date they have not released any notifications for the same. TRS party was fooling the employees by delaying the PRC scales. He urged the graduates to give their valuable vote to BJP and teach a lesson to the TRS for ignoring people's issues.

# KTR warns lax party leaders

Asks the leaders to explain the graduates what the government has done during the last six years

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD

THE TRS working president KT Rama Rao on Saturday said that he would not spare those who did not work for the party in the elections. The TRS working president convened a meeting of the city MLAs, MLCs, corporators and ex-corporators at Telangana Bhavan for deciding strategy for the ensuing Council elections under Graduates quota. According to the sources, KTR issued stern warning to the party leaders for not showing keen interest in the campaign. "I will not keep quiet if you keep away from campaign by getting dissatisfied. No one will plead with you if you are dissatisfied with the high command. I am taking note of the absentees in this meeting. We will not keep quiet if you give excuses for working," said KTR in the meeting. He said that many aspire for the posts but posts are given based on the necessities and called up on the leaders to work with unity as the candidate's image was an added advantage for



TRS working president KT Rama Rao addressing a meeting of city MLAs, MLCs, corporators and ex-corporators at Telangana Bhavan on Saturday

the party. KTR asked the party leaders to explain the graduates what the government has done during the last six years and also expose the BJP on its failures especially on the fuel prices. There is a need to work with a strategy in this election. "The BJP right from galli to Delhi is indulging in spreading lies. They are propagating lies through Whatsapp Univer-

sity. We should tell the graduates what we have done and also ensure they do not fall prey to the lies of BJP," said KTR. The Congress party has history but not the future. These two parties are not in a position to question the TRS candidate. The BJP candidate has done nothing for the graduates or the State during the last six years. The advocate

Ramchander Rao has also talked lies. "The BJP has no moral right to seek votes in Telangana. The Centre has not given a single rupee additional to what Telangana is entitled to get. This should be taken to the people," he added. He said government employees and people were with TRS. He said that 1.30 lakh jobs were given by the TRS government.

## Govt slaps memos on GHMC officials for neglect of toilets

Even the newly constructed public toilets remain unhygienic

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD

GOVERNMENT on Saturday issued memos to the deputy commissioners of Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation for non-maintenance of the public toilets in the city as most of them were unhygienic and dirty. The Corporation has been flooded with complaints of filthy public toilets at different parts in the city. Even the new ones are not in operational condition and are unhygienic. The urinals lack facilities and the foul smell emanating from it is causing inconvenience to the passer-by. Harish Daga, an activist said that over 60 percent of the public toilets in Hyderabad are not functional. "Most of them were in worst condition," he added. K Sai Charan, resident of Madhapur echoed the same. "A few them which are functioning are locked. several toilets in Madhapur and

- Over 60 percent of the public toilets in Hyderabad are not functional
- Assigned private agency claims lack of funds

Banjara Hills are lugubrious," said Charan. The GHMC handed over the maintenance of the public toilets to a private agency who claims that they are unable to maintain the toilets as the government did not release funds. Reacting on this, the Municipal Administration and Urban Development (MA&UD) department issued memos to all the deputy commissioners of GHMC and asking them to make a personal inspection of public toilets and submit the report to the Additional Commissioner of Sanitation GHMC.

## Film producer complains of illegal constructions in Banjara Hills

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD

POPULAR screenwriter, producer and director Kona Venkat on Saturday alleged that many illegal constructions were coming up in Banjara Hills, Hyderabad. Following which he sought action from Municipal Administration Minister KT Rama Rao. To bring to the notice of authorities over the mushrooming illegal constructions at Sayyed Nagar, Road no 12, Banjara Hills Kona Venkat on twitter wrote, "Lot of illegal constructions are coming up in Sayyed Nagar, Road no 12, Banjara Hills.. No sewerage, No sanitation, No roads.. but multi storied constructions in these slums will lead to major problems in future.. Please look into this," said Venkat tagging Minister KTR and the GHMC commissioner.

## 4 girls from SW institutions find place in Hyd women's cricket team

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD

FOUR girls from Telangana who overcame odds of poverty in their lives found place in Hyderabad women's cricket team. The two girls are from Social Welfare Residential Institutions Anjali and Nikitha and other two Parvati and Anitha are from Tribal Welfare Residential Educational institution. The young girls were picked up to play for the senior women cricket team under 18 years category. Cricket academies launched by social and tribal welfare residential educational institutions proved to be game changers for these girls. Parvathi, the 13-year-old tribal girl who hails from Koudipalli mandal in Medak is a daughter of the farm labourers,



she said "I am glad and proud for being selected in the women's cricket team." "Whatever I am today is because of the cricket intensive coaching camp being run by social and tribal welfare residential educational institutions. I never imagined that I would get selected to the Hyderabad women cricket team at this young age. I want to

represent the Indian women cricket team internationally," said B Anjali from Khammam district. Anitha, another tribal girl from Hanamapalli thanda of Mahabubnagar district extending thanks to the government of Telangana for launching cricket academies said that cricket was her passion and accredited the government for encouraging poor children to shine in sports. Social Welfare Educational Institutions Secretary RS Praveen Kumar congratulated the girls and acknowledged the Hyderabad Cricket Association for their support.

## 1 killed, another injured as car hits traffic signal pole

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VANASTHALIPURAM

ONE person was killed and another injured as their car hit a traffic pole early in the morning on Saturday in Vanasthalipuram. The victims were identified as Gautham and Sandeep. According to the police, two men were traveling from Sagar road to Ibrahimpatnam. Both of them consumed alcohol before travelling and Sandeep was driving the car. As they reached Vanasthalipuram, their car lost control and hit the traffic signal pole first, then the car collided into the divider and reached the other side of the road. In this accident, Sandeep died on the spot and Gautham escaped with injuries. Later the police arrested Gautham. The Vanasthalipuram police registered the case and started the investigation.

## Prod to civic chiefs on 100 pc tax collection

Officials asked to complete tax collection before March 31

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD

THE State government on Saturday issued a strong warning against the municipal commissioners for failing to achieve 100 per cent tax collections. The government asked them to complete the 100 per cent tax collection by March 31 and in case they fail to do so they would face serious action. The government had issued a circular on January 28 asking the Municipal Commissioners in the urban local bodies to collect 100 per cent taxes in their respective areas. However, with tax collection in most of the municipalities below 50 per cent, the government issued a warning to the commissioners. The Director of Municipal Administration (DMA) N Satyanarayana in a circular said, "Despite timely instructions to achieve 100 per cent tax collection,



the collection drive is going on slowly in Urban local bodies (ULB). The municipal commissioners are directed to give top priority to the collection of taxes and non-taxes and are asked achieve 100 per cent collections." According to the officials in DMA, in order to complete the tar-

get of collection of tax the commissioners have been asked to take up tax redressal and collection melas on every Monday, Wednesday, Sunday and even on the public holidays till the end of this financial year. The municipal commissioners have been asked to achieve the target of 100 per cent collections by the end

- DMA fumes over slow tax collection
- Tax can be paid through Whatsapp

of the financial year 2020-21 by March 31 without fail. The directorate of municipal administration had recently brought out the facility to pay property tax via Whatsapp by earmarking special number +91 90002 53342 with a QR code, which has to be scanned by the users. There are estimated 20 lakh assessments in all the ULBs in the State. The regional directors of Warangal and Hyderabad regions are asked to review the details every day. Any deviation from these instructions and non-performance in collection of property tax and non-taxes would be viewed seriously, the director said.

## Arms holders told to deposit weapons with dealers

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD

THE City Police Commissioner Anjani Kumar on Saturday asked all arms licence holders from the city to deposit their weapons with official weapon dealers and convey the information about the deposit of their arms to the nearby police stations. In a statement, he said that they had taken the decision by keeping in view of the upcoming Graduate MLC elections on March 14. He said that they had taken the decision to ensure law and order in the district ahead of the elections. The CP also said the weapons can be claimed on March 24 after the completion of the elections. He warned that they would initiate action against those who did not comply with their orders.



IN CASE OF CEASEFIRE VIOLATIONS BY PAK

# Army to exercise ‘maximum restraint’

KUPWARA

DAYS after the ceasefire agreement between India and Pakistan on the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir, the Army on Saturday said it will exercise maximum restraint in case of any violation of the understanding by the other side.

Welcoming the agreement arrived at between the Director Generals of Military Operations (DGMOs) of the two countries, a top Army officer said the decision was significant as it would bring relief to the people living near the LoC. “We will not retaliate as long as it is possible and we hope that the Pakistani side will also uphold the agreement,” General Officer Commanding (GoC), 28 Infantry Division, Major General V M B Krishnan told reporters in Kupwara, about 100 km north of Srinagar, when asked about the directions for the Army in case Pakistan violated the ceasefire agreement.



The 28 Infantry Division covers the Tangdhar, Keran, Machil (in Kupwara district) and Gurez (in Bandipora) sectors along the LoC. “We welcome the ceasefire

agreement between India and Pakistan. We hope it ushers in an era of peace, security and development to the villages close to the LoC,” Maj. Gen. Krishnan

said. He also expressed hope that the infiltration from across the LoC is “shut down” by Pakistan.

The GoC said the reiteration of the ceasefire agreement is a significant decision as it will bring a lot of relief to the people of about 300 villages located very close to the LoC. “It will now enable these people to go about their daily lives.... It is important for us to have peace and security in our region so that development can take place,” he said.

Saying if peace and tranquillity prevail along the LoC, it will help build mutual trust and confidence between the two neighbouring countries, the GoC asserted that the ceasefire agreement is the first step towards that. “(But) we have a fair amount of distance to cover. I hope terrorism gets absolutely diminished and eliminated in the next couple of years. So we have to take all these steps for many things to happen in Jammu and Kashmir,” he said.

Maj. Gen. Krishnan said the LoC has been tranquil for the last two days as there has been no violation and “it is very quiet”. However, he said the Army continues to receive inputs about the presence of militants at some terror launchpads across the LoC. “We are on high alert and fully prepared to foil any infiltration attempt,” he added.

Asked about the possible impact of the agreement on infiltration attempts from across the border, the GoC said when there are no ceasefire violations, “it does enable us to handle the situation very well”. However, infiltration attempts are very much possible, especially given the rugged terrain of the area, he added. The Army officer said while drones were spotted in the airspace on the Indian side of the LoC, there have been no instances of weapons-dropping. “We have shot at them and sent them back,” he added. (PTI)

## DIVINE MOMENTS



Jagannath Rath Yatra organised by Neredmet Sankirthan Rath Yatra Committee on the occasion of Magha Purnima at Hyderabad on Saturday  
Photo: Srinivas Setty

## Retired from RS, not politics, will continue my fight for JK statehood: Azad

JAMMU

ASSERTING that he had retired only from Rajya Sabha and not politics, senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad Saturday expressed a resolve to continue his fight for the restoration of Jammu and Kashmir’s statehood and its residents’ special rights over jobs and land.

The former chief minister also stressed the importance of unity among the residents of the Union Territory to fight the threats from China and Pakistan and said “we need to stand with our forces against the enemies”. Ghulam Nabi Azad retired from the Upper House on February 15. “I have retired from Rajya Sabha but not from politics. This is not for the first time that I retired from parliament. Till my last breath, I will continue my services for the nation and will continue my fight for the rights of people,” Azad told a ‘Shanti Sammelan’ organised by the Gandhi Global family here.

He was joined by senior party leaders including Kapil Sibal, Manish Tewari, former Haryana chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda, Raj Babbar and Anand Sharma. In an apparent reference to the August 5, 2019 development when the Centre revoked J&K’s special status and split it into two Union Territories, he said, “We have lost our identity but we will not give up and continue our fight for the restoration of the statehood within and outside parliament.” “We want representatives of the people of all the three regions of erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir - Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh - to form the government. Leh supported the UT status but Kargil is against it. Every party in

Jammu - from BJP to RSS and National Conference to PDP and Panthers Party wants statehood back,” he said.

“It is the voice of the people and I challenge anyone to come out with a statement that they do not want the restoration of statehood to J&K,” he said. He also said he will continue his fight for the locals’ rights over land and jobs. “Jammu and Leh face the immediate threat if outsiders start settling in J&K and Ladakh. We are not against the people coming from outside to get jobs here, but in Jammu and Kashmir, resources are limited as we do not have any big industry here,” Azad said. In politics, he said the fight continues to ensure that the people get their rights.

“Jammu and Kashmir shares its border with China and Pakistan and the enemy is very active unlike any other part of the country. We had many wars in the past but the rift has not ended till date. It is our responsibility that we maintain harmony, peace, love and fight the enemy together,” he said, adding it is possible when “we are united and did not fall prey to those who are doing the politics of division”. He said every party has a right to come to the power but doing the politics of religion is not good for the country. “You need to take everyone along as was done by Congress in the past. The Congress could not have achieved freedom for the country, had it not welcomed everyone from every region, religion and every community including educated people, farmers, traders and labourers, irrespective of their caste and creed,” he said. (PTI)

## BJP targets Kejriwal government on pollution issue

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

DELHI Pradesh BJP President Aadesh Gupta on Saturday held a press conference and targeted the Aam Aadmi Party. Questioning the Kejriwal government on the issue of pollution, he said that according to the Green Peace report, 54,000 people died due to pollution in Delhi. Due to air pollution, Delhiites are getting lung disease, are suffering from cancer, heart disease, every sixth child is getting sick.

Aadesh Gupta said that the Delhi government has always claimed that they are serious about solving pollution problem, but the reality is something else. To solve the problem of pollution, the Green Budget was presented, which said that 24 steps should be taken. There was talk of buying electric buses, setting up anti-smog towers, planting 60 million plants. None of the promises were fulfilled. In the last four years, Rs 883 crore was collected from the people in the form of green cess. Out of this, only 1.16 percent was spent.

They used to talk about pollution from Parali in Delhi, now Parali is not burning, yet there is pollu-

tion, the reason for this should be given. The government bought decomposers worth just Rs 40 thousand to make manure from the straw. After the report of Green Peace, the government has formed only one committee. Delhiites have to bear the brunt of the government’s negligence. Non-smokers are also suffering from lung cancer.

Aadesh Gupta said that the government should tell, what other steps are going to be taken for pollution including Odd even Method. The government is not working in a scientific way to solve the problem of pollution. Other agencies, including the municipal corporation, need to work together, but the government is not doing so. To prevent pollution of dust, the condition of roads has to be improved, the government is not focusing on improving the condition of roads. Despite expressing concern about the High Court and the NGT, no steps were taken to improve the condition of air pollution.

He said that no steps were also taken to clean the Yamuna. Most STP plants are not functioning properly, forcing people to drink contaminated water.

## FRUITY FERVOUR



A woman dressed as a bunch of grapes participates in Purim on Friday in the Crown Heights neighbourhood of New York. The Jewish holiday of Purim commemorates the Jews’ salvation from genocide in ancient Persia, as recounted in the Book of Esther

## Solar heated tent developed for Army personnel

SRINAGAR

INNOVATOR and educationist Sonam Wangchuk, the real life Phunsukh Wangdu of Bollywood blockbuster ‘3 Idiots’, has developed an eco-friendly solar heated tent that Army personnel can use in extremely cold places like Siachen and Galwan valley in the Ladakh region. Wangchuk, who has many environment friendly innovations to his name, said the solar heated military tent, besides saving on use of fossil fuel and its ill effects on environment, increases the safety of the military personnel.

“This tent uses the solar en-

ergy trapped during day time to keep the soldiers’ sleeping chamber warm during night. Since there is no use of fossil fuel, it saves on money and also is emission free,” he said. The innovator said the temperature inside the sleeping chamber of the military tent can be increased or decreased by corresponding increase or decrease in insulation layers. “The sleep-

time when outside temperature was minus 14 degrees Celsius. The number of layers can be reduced for warmer places,” he added. Wangchuk said the temperature inside the tent should not be too cozy as the soldiers have to be ready to fight the enemy in the open where temperature can be as low as minus 30 degrees Celsius in places like Galwan valley.

# Vaccine not okay for pregnant women, say gynaecologists



HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI

COVID-19 has taken a global toll, with its impact visible everywhere on the map of the world. Scientists have burned the midnight oil to find a cure for this virus of human destruction. Amongst the race for a cure, India has managed to produce indigenous vaccines. India has started to vaccinate the frontline health workers who have stood as a wall in the fight against Covid.

Vaccination drive has started but questions remain unanswered about the efficacy of the vaccine being given to different segments of society. The biggest doubt that floats around is related to women who are pregnant or are expecting pregnancy. Medical researchers have come up with the fact that the vaccine containing inactivated virus can be given to women during the due course of pregnancy. However, vaccines with live viruses aren’t safe for pregnant women. On the other hand, men should think of reproducing

up to a few weeks after taking the vaccine or not?

The Hans India interacted with the renowned gynaecologist (MD) Dr. Vaishali Sharma from AIIMS Delhi, DSAGE (Germany) to discuss the doubts related to the problems faced during pregnancy. She shared her point of view with The Hans India. She says ‘Right now Covid vaccination is going on in full speed for healthcare workers. Smooth and accurate governance has made it possible for all of us to overcome the peak of pandemic with such low percentage of casualties. Gradually it will be extended to other frontline workers as well’.

She said, ‘We have two vaccines available right now Covaxin and Covishield. Both are effective and safe. Almost whole healthcare sector has been vaccinated and hardly there is any major side effect. Our colleagues engaged in laboratories dealing with blood tests have also communicated that both the vaccines are inducing good immune response thereby decreasing susceptibil-

ity of the individual to Covid. As it is an inactive virus so it can be given in pregnant state just like other vaccines like tetanus, rabies etc. Its advisable to administer in all pregnant women who are at high risk like diabetics, hypertensives, close contacts of covid patients etc’

One being asked about the whether men or women should think of reproducing to which she said, ‘There is no recommendation yet stating regarding avoidance of reproduction in men or women after vaccination.’

Further The Hans India interacted with the another MD of Gynaecology Department, Dr Smitha Moorthy from Sanjeevani Hospital, to get a deep insight on the above issues. Upon asked whether men should not think of reproduction after taking the vaccine, She replies that this is an incorrect supposition. There is no evidence showing relation between fertility and vaccine.

Further she shares her brief take on safety of the vaccines containing inactivated virus for pregnant women. She says that ‘As of today the vaccine is not recommended for pregnant women unless they fall in the high risk category. This because the vaccines are new and their effects on pregnancy have yet been fully studied. Since none of the vaccines have any live components chances of the mother or baby getting COVID after vaccination is very minimal. But as of now we do not have sufficient data to advise that pregnant or lactating women be given the COVID vaccine’.

Following the detailed discussion with two of the renowned gynaecologists we can consider the vaccines to be safe as of now, but still studies are going on. Moreover the vaccines should be avoided until and unless the pregnant woman is falling under high risk category.





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# TTD approves ₹2,937 cr budget

- Steep fall in hundi and other receipts due to pandemic
- Interest on bank deposits and human hair sale increase
- Sale of prasadam fetches Rs 375 cr, Kalyanakatta (sale of human hair) Rs 131 cr in 2020-21

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
TIRUPATI

TTD trust board meet presided over by chairman Y V Subba Reddy here on Saturday approved Rs 2,937.82 crore budget for 2021-2022 which is Rs 372.07 crore less than the previous 2020-2021 actual budget which was pegged at Rs 3,309.89 crore. The major receipts in the budget estimates include kanuka (hundi offering) Rs 1,110 crore, interest on deposits Rs 533.10 crore, sale of prasadam Rs 375 crore, Kalyanakatta (sale of human hair) Rs 131 crore and special entrance and beginning break Rs 210 crore for the year 2021-2022.

A glance at the budget for 2021-22 indicates the temple administration's financial position nearing to its normal position with almost all major receipts estimated to increase, including the hundi offerings, sale of prasadam, accommodation, arjitha sevas, special entrance ticket sale compared to the pandemic year 2020-21.



TTD Chairman Y V Subba Reddy chairs the Trust Board meeting at Annamayya Bhavan at Tirumala on Saturday

Notably, the special entrance Rs 300 tickets and break tickets estimated to fetch Rs 210 crore as against the previous year's Rs 147 crore due to TTD focusing on sale of online special entry tickets which is much more than the offline free Sarva Darshan tokens issued daily now for darshan of Lord Venkateswara.

However, the interest (bank) receipts decreased to Rs 533 crore in the present budget as against Rs 738 crore in the previous 2020-21. The revised estimates for 2020-21 clearly indicated that there is steep fall in various receipts obviously due to the pandemic which hit hard the nation did not spare the TTD administering the world famous Sri Venkateswar temple at Tirumala.

This includes the hundi offerings (Kanukas) which came down

to Rs 602 crore as against the estimate of Rs 1,351 crore, sale of prasadam which was Rs 170 crore as against the estimate of Rs 400 crore, sale of darshan tickets Rs 147 crore as against estimated Rs 302 crore.

However, in 2020-21, the sale of human hair fetched Rs 125 crore more than the estimated Rs 106 crore and the interest receipts have also increased to Rs 738.18 crore while the estimate was Rs 706 crore.

Except these two i.e. interests and Kalyanakatta income, all other receipts fell down due to the shrine remaining closed for 80 days due to the nationwide lockdown enforced following the flare up of Covid pandemic in the country.

The utilisation of funds (expenditure) in the budget proposed in-

clude human resource payments Rs 1,308 crore, engineering capital works Rs 385 crore, Garuda Varadhi works taken up by Municipal Corporation of Tirupati (MCT) Rs 50 crore, engineering maintenance works Rs 180 crore, Hindu Dharma Prachara Parishad and other projects for propagation of Sanathana Dharma Rs 109.55 crore and corpus and other investments Rs 150 crore.

The allocation to Dharma Pracharam increased from Rs 87.55 crore to Rs 109.55 crore while the contribution to state government too increased from Rs 2.25 crore to Rs 50 crore. Grants to other institutions including TTD and universities increased to Rs 170 crore and Health, sanitation and facility management also to Rs 170 crore in the budget 2021-22.

# HEPB to coordinate Central, State institutions

- The first meeting of the Higher Education Planning Board held at IIT Tirupati
- It will help exchange knowledge among various institutions
- 10 months internship programme for degree students to begin soon, says Education Minister A Suresh

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
TIRUPATI

IN a bid to boost the higher education standards, the state government has constituted AP State Higher Education Planning Board (HEPB). The first meeting of the board was held at IIT, Tirupati on Saturday which was attended by minister for education Audimulapu Suresh, AP State Council of Higher Education (APSCHE) chairman Prof K Hemachandra Reddy, IIT Tirupati director Prof K Satyanarayana and others.

Addressing the media before the meeting, the minister said that it was observed that a coordination was lacking between central universities and institutes functioning in the state and state universities. In order to bridge this gap, Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy mooted the idea of setting up of a planning board which will facilitate the exchange of resources, ideas, faculty, research activities etc., between central and state institutes and universities.

This was part of the reforms introduced by the government in higher education and it will help the state and students as well by increasing the higher education standards through the exchange



Education Minister Audimulapu Suresh addressing the media at IIT in Tirupati on Saturday

of knowledge. All the participants in the meeting will discuss the modalities of the required coordination and give their suggestions and ideas, he said.

The minister said that this Higher Education Planning Board will meet at least twice a year to take stock of things. In the first meeting, Vice-Chancellors or directors from 37 universities and institutes of both central and state governments in the state have been taking part.

He added that 10 months internship programme will be implemented for degree students soon. Degree college admissions were held by following the rule of reservation which will be implemented to Intermediate education also from next academic year. Skill university will be coming up in Tirupati and skill development centres will be set up in every parliamentary constituency.

The beneficiaries of Amma Vodi can opt for a laptop in one year and get a latest higher configuration laptop. This will be useful for them in taking online classes and for other purposes.

The government is planning to provide uninterrupted network connectivity for the benefit of students, he said.

Later, during the meeting of the planning board special chief secretary for Higher Education Satish Chandra said that the planning board objective was to foster qualitative and inclusive growth of higher education in the state.

The chairman of APSCHE Prof K Hemachandra Reddy said that the main functions of the board are to suggest the ways to promote institutional research projects, credits transfer, share the best practices in the higher education system and develop the ecosystem of harmonious relationships among the state and central institutions.

IIT Tirupati director Prof Satyanarayana had given a brief outline on the progress of the Institute in terms of academic and infrastructure during the last six years. Following this session on Promotion of Institutional cooperation and enhancing the quality standards of Higher Education in the light of NEP 2020 was conducted.

- Spl Dy Collector, land acquisition, Vizag, is posted as EO of Simhachalam temple
- E Sadhana is posted as Special Deputy Collector, Amaravati Metropolitan Region development Authority

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
AMARAVATI

THE state government issued orders transferring and posting 21 deputy collectors on Saturday. As per the orders, M V Suryakala, deputy collector

working as special deputy collector, land acquisition, National Highway, Visakhapatnam, is transferred and posted as executive officer, Sri Varaha-lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Devasthanam, Simhachalam.

N Vijayakumar, special deputy collector (LA) Valogonda project, is posted as special deputy collector, Telugu Ganga project, Nellore. J Siva Srinivasu, assistant secretary, chief commissioner of land administration, is posted as joint collector

(Asara and welfare) Nellore. D Kodandarami Reddy waiting for posting is posted as forest settlement officer, Guntur.

A Sree Rama Chandra Murthy, waiting for posting, is posted in AP vigilance commission. K Adaiiah, waiting for posting, is posted as special deputy collector, Machilipatnam Urban Development Authority. G V Subba Reddy, special deputy collector, K R R C Prakasam district, is posted as executive officer Sri Venkateswara Swamy temple, Dwaraka Tirumala.

A B V S B Srinivas is posted as special deputy collector KRRC East Godavari district. M Srinivasulu is posted as deputy collector, legal cell, Tirupati.

A Mahalakshmi Devi posted as assistant secretary, chief commissioner of land administration. E Sadhana, posted as special deputy collector, Amaravati Metropolitan Region development Authority. D Ramu Naik is posted as special deputy collector, GNSS Unit 3 Muddanur, Kadapa district. B Chinna Obulesu is posted as DRO, Nellore district. K Hemalata is posed as Spl deputy collector, land acquisition, NH, Visakhapatnam. T Bapireddy is posted as JC (Asara and welfare) Nellore district.

K Krishnaveni is posted as JC (A&W) Prakasam district. G V Satyavani is posted as project director, ICDS, East Godavari district. K M Barta Rosemond is posted as project director, ICDS, Nellore district. K S Bhagya Rekha is posed as assistant secretary chief commissioner of land administration office Vijayawada. K Dinesh Kumar is posted as CEO, AP-NRT Society, on deputation.

## 21 Deputy Collectors shuffled

## Jagan govt knows about VSP sale, alleges TDP

- Party national spokesperson says YSRC MP Vijayasai held discussions with Union Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on steel plant



K Pattabhi Ram

- Reminds that CM met POSCO officials in 2019 on the plant and Pradhan said in Feb last year that an agreement was signed with POSCO for privatisation
- Accuses ruling party of deliberately hiding details of VSP privatisation threat from people as it leaders have personal benefits in the deal

### VISAKHAPATNAM

TDP national spokesperson Kommareddy Pattabhi Ram on Saturday alleged that the Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy government is escaping from its responsibility in the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP) issue.

Pattabhi claimed that Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy held a meeting with the representatives of South Korean steel giant Posco in 2019 itself and posed for photographs.

"On his part, YSRC MP V Vijayasai Reddy held discussions with Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan on the VSP issue," he alleged.

Pattabhi visited the port city on Saturday and met with the people protesting the privatisation of the steel plant and claimed that there was no way for the ruling YSRC leaders to wash their hands of the privatisation plan.

"The CM and his ministers were terrified to accept responsibility for the steel plant sale after seeing the rising agitation and raging sentiment of the Andhra people," claimed the TDP spokesperson.

According to Pattabhi, Union petroleum minister Dharmendra Pradhan clearly stated in February 2020 that an agreement was signed with POSCO for privatisation.

"Standing committee on steel released its report in December, 2019 itself. The YSRC government hid all these details from the AP public in order to deceive them," he claimed.

The TDP leader claimed that the Parliamentary standing committee on industry also gave a report in March, 2020 but YSRC MP Avinash Reddy despite being a member of that committee did not allegedly raise his voice against VSP privatisation plan.

He lambasted Vijayasai Reddy for allegedly telling lies that he had no knowledge about the privatisation plan. Pattabhi claimed that it was shameful that the ruling party MPs were allegedly disowning responsibility over the sale of an industry which is a matter of pride to all Telugu people.

"The YSRC deliberately hid details of the VSP privatisation threat from the public as they had personal benefits in this. Jagan and Vijay Sai Reddy were hurting the state with their secret deals," he claimed.

He claimed that YSRC MPs have done historic injustice to the state with their alleged dubious role.

"It has become a routine for Jagan Reddy to destroy all the good work that Chandrababu Naidu has done," Pattabhi alleged.

## State reports 118 fresh Covid cases

### AMARAVATI

CORONAVIRUS cases seem to be taking an upward path again after a long slide in the state as 118 were added afresh on Saturday, the highest so far this month.

After 1.39 crore sample tests, at the rate of 2.60 lakh per million population and an overall positivity rate of 6.39 per cent, the cumulative COVID-19 cases climbed to 8,89,799, a health department bulletin said

It said 86 patients recovered and none died in the state in 24 hours

ending 9 am on Saturday.

The gross recoveries now stood at 8,81,963 and toll at 7,169, it said. The number of active cases rose to 667, an addition of 32 in a day. Chittoor district once again topped the state with 33 fresh cases, its highest figure this month. Consequently, its active caseload climbed back to 110 from 80.

Visakhapatnam and East Godavari districts added 14 new cases each and Guntur 13 while eight reported less than 10 each, according to the bulletin. Vizianagaram did not report any new case in a day.

## Cong 'getting weaker'

Continued from P1

The G23 leaders met in Jammu for an event titled 'Shanti Sammelan' (peace conference). The event was organised by former Rajya Sabha MP Ghulam Nabi Azad, who retired recently from Parliament, and saw attendance of leaders like Kapil Sibal, Anand Sharma, Bhupinder Singh Hooda, Raj Babbar, Manish Tewari, and Vivek Tankha. Last year, this group of 23 senior Congress leaders wrote a strongly worded letter to party president Sonia Gandhi, raising questions over the manner in which the party is being led. In the letter, the leaders sought a complete overhaul of the Congress leadership at all

levels and immediate election to the post of party president.

The letter leaked out to the media and resulted in a major controversy within the Congress party. The rift was also later reflected in a meeting of the Congress Working Group (CWG), the party's highest decision-making body. Addressing the gathering, former Union minister and senior Congress leader Anand Sharma said the "Congress has weakened" in the last decade. "Our voice is for the betterment of the party."

It should be strengthened everywhere once again. The new generation should connect (to party). We have seen good

## Don't lower guard: Centre

Continued from P1

States were advised to undertake vaccination on priority in districts reporting higher cases and monitor distinct strain and clustering of cases for early hotspot identification and control. The States have also been asked to improve the overall testing in districts reporting a reduction in testing, and increase RT-PCR tests in districts having high antigen testing. The states and UT were asked to refocus on surveillance

and stringent containment in selected districts reporting reduced tests/high positivity and increased cases. They have also been asked to focus on clinical management in districts reporting higher deaths and promote Covid-appropriate behaviour to ensure effective citizen communication to not let complacency set in, especially in light of vaccination drive entering the next phase, and enforcing stringent social distancing measures.

days of Congress. We do not want to see it weakening as we become older," Anand Sharma said.

Speaking at the event, Kapil Sibal said the leaders who have gathered in Jammu were "saddened" after realising that Ghulam Nabi Azad is "being freed from Parliament" by the Congress party.

Ghulam Nabi Azad was the Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha before his retirement. In his address, Ghulam Nabi Azad said more Congress leaders wanted to attend the event, "but I told them that people would start speculating" and asked them to come next time. He said his retirement from the Rajya Sabha does not mean he is retiring from politics too. "I have retired from Parliament several times. I have bounced back several times," he said.

## Vax drive from tomorrow

Continued from P1

Usernames and passwords will be provided to the private facilities to facilitate the effective use of CoWIN 2.0 mobile app. In addition, mapping of private facilities with the nearest cold chain points should be done to ensure seamless flow of vaccines. The government Covid-19 vaccination centres will offer free vaccination for all beneficiaries. The simplified system of certifying people with 20 comorbidities within the 45-59 years age group will be used. Eligible beneficiaries above the age of 54 can upload a certificate signed by a medical practitioner on CoWIN2.0 while self-registering or a hard copy can be carried by the beneficiary to the centre.

The Health ministry on Friday had said beneficiaries would be

able to self-register in advance by downloading the Co-WIN 2.0 portal and through other IT applications such as Aarogya Setu, which will show the government and private hospitals serving as Covid-19 vaccination centres (CVCs) with date and time of the available schedules. The beneficiary would be able to choose the CVC of his/her choice and book an appointment for vaccination, the ministry said. There will be facility of on-site registration so that eligible beneficiaries can walk into identified vaccination centres, get themselves registered and inoculated. "Eligible beneficiaries would be able to register themselves on the Co-WIN platform from March 1 itself," R S Sharma, Chairman of Empowered Group on Covid-19 Vaccine Administration had said.



# Privatisation of banks not without its risks

INDIAN banking sector was earlier in private hands. However, during the 1970's, the Indian government was of the opinion that banks favor the rich and that the poor must also be given access to cheap credit. With this view, several banks were nationalised. With Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's announcement of bank privatisation, all eyes are on public sector banks. The past history of private sector banks tells the failure. Before 1969, all banks, except the SBI, were in the private sector. Between 1947 and 1969, 559 banks failed.

The government is in the process of merging 13 banks into five banks. Merger of banks is not a simple exercise as there are several factors and each bank has a character of its own. Public sector banks are created out of public money. These entities are therefore duty bound to extend all types of services to customers across categories. No doubt, merger of one weak bank with strong one or merger of two weak banks is said to be the faster and less costly way to improve profitability. Managing the merged



entity by the management teams drawn from two different banks is also a difficult task improving the quality of management is yet another challenge for banks.

There is every danger of merger derailing the steady im-

provement in the health of Indian banking system that has taken place consequent to banking sector reforms. Our former RBI governor Raghuram Rajan held that privatisation is not a panacea for the ills

of the banking sector unless accompanied by reforms in banking regulation. People today believe in public sector banks and do not prefer to deposit their savings in private sector Banks. PSBs usually work on

social welfare while the motive of private sector banks is generation of profit.

Privatisation of PSUs would push the country back into the capitalism of the 19th century with all its social evils such as inequality of income and wealth, mass unemployment and exploitation of natural resources. Today, PSBs act as an instrument for social justice as they execute many welfare policies like financial inclusion, farm loan waiver etc.

One needs to ponder over the questions viz Will government not face difficulty in providing low-cost financial services to rural and poor sections of society? Will Private sector banks be able to share the government's social responsibilities? Will private banks be able to extend all types of services to customers across categories which is today the root purpose of PSBs? Will Bank privatization, without strengthening regulatory controls and improving governance, will be able to prevent fraud or curtail undue exposure to risk?

Vinod C Dixit, Ahmedabad

## 'Make in India' and trade deals with China

AT the outset, relationship with China has never been smooth at any given time due to big brotherly attitude adopted by China while dealing with India and border skirmishes occurring frequently leading to face-off and war-like situation every time. Though every time, it ended in a truce beset with tension and uncertainties, there was no concrete and permanent solution with the result trade between the two nations took a nose-dive. Knowing that the attitude of China has always been aggressive displaying no change as far as relations with India was concerned with the result economy suffered.

While the border clashes pushed the relations between China and India to a new low, India's dependence for imports of heavy machinery and other items from the west at a higher cost when it could be sourced from China at a lesser cost not only hampered trade activities but slowly led to a slump in economic growth. This caused a serious concern to look on for an alternative course to revive the economy after the pandemic inflicted a serious blow. The world including India blaming china and holding responsible for the spread of the virus, relations with china soured.

As if this is not enough, China rubbing salt on the wounds by allowing its troops to intrude into Indian borders on the Pangong lake frontier only made matters worse as relations soured further. While the wrong-doings by china saw India ban goods of Chinese make into

India, unfortunately trade deficit widened. However, realising the mistake that thaw in relationship and not rising tension is the best option to resolve the outstanding issues plaguing the two nations, china and India deciding to have talks to end the stalemate in order to resume trade like earlier was a positive move in the present circumstances. This thus makes it clear that both cannot ignore trade activities for too long.

Hailing the diplomatic initiative taken to diffuse tension and nar-



row down the differences for resumption of trade, the two Asian giants affirmed that both nations cannot afford to do away

with other by exhibiting cold war hostility. In short, India been the largest trading partner with two-way trade touching nearly \$80 billion last year, the latest talks between the nations ending in china agreeing to withdraw troops from Pangong border is in fact a win-win situation for both. Because, as a sequel, India opening up trade and investment by easing investment restrictions for Chinese companies in India with a rider that the FDI by Chinese firms will be vetted in certain vital areas like telecom and defence before its approval is a step in the right direction. Now that business with China is expected to limp back to normalcy, India need to relax ban of Chinese-origin apps while at the same time encourage indigenous manufacturers so that we achieve self-reliance sooner.

KR Srinivasan, Secunderabad

## Indian democracy undergoes sweeping changes

IN recent times many writers have expressed their opinions in printed media on how slowly our well laid democratic systems are taking new shape in all spheres. None can abruptly deny these factual happenings. We observed that in local body elections in Andhra Pradesh were stuffed with corruption, skirmishes, vandalism, hooliganism, liquor distribution, etc. These incidents unfortunately are not uncommon from panchayat to parliament elections.

Is it called a democracy or klepto-democracy? The changing guards of the nation with mighty power are not able to handle this hard pressing ever dilating and despicable disaster. Protection of sovereignty is the primary activity of any nation and it should never slip into the hands of others as government is a trust as the community is the ultimate sovereign. Constitutional amendment term "secular" is also side tracked in many fold as casteism plays a predominant role in elections, education, employment, promotions, etc., thereby merit is bypassed to the utter chagrin of others.

We have resolved to constitute India into sovereign, socialist, secular and democratic republic and any subversion tantamounts to treacherous activity. Former President of India left a question to debate. That is "we have failed the constitution or constitution has failed us". So far the three pillars of our nation did not touch this issue as far as this writer knows. All union governments squatted im-



movably on the decades old demand for thirty percent reservations in people's representative houses but cries for it on women forums repeatedly.

Another vital skeptical question that strikes to mind is about majority votes in the elections. For example, suppose five parties contested. Votes polled are roughly sixty percent. Maximum votes polled to the winning party are twenty percent and balance percent is shared by the remaining four parties. Here the party polled twenty percent comes to power. It means eighty percent people rejected this party. What is the logic here to call it a people's mandate? Number of new political parties also spoil the spirit of democratic values and norms. Political defections from one party to another are on the cards only for power and pelf as it is not a secret. Founding new parties with a view to set right obstreperous values is only for self interest. Self aggrandisement by every leader is the order of the day. All the new parties have faded out within short periods. Can we not adopt a two or three party system like in United Kingdom and United States of America which are also verdant democracies.

In the changing scenario of privatisation move of one hundred

public sector units by the present ruling union government, raises strong opposition. The business of government is solely meant for establishing a welfare state. It is always better that some institutions should be under the administrative control of the government. It is axiomatic that the business of business is business alone for private entrepreneurs leaving behind public suffering by fixing the cost of products at their whims. How then it could be advantageous to the commoners?

Socialism is at stake as rich become richer and poor poorer. The so called political activists are capable of defining in their own fashion. In view of certain foregoings that have been witnessed in silent mode after assumption that Indian polity looks like a cluster of aristocracy, monarchy, and oligarchy. Ramsay Muir, a political thinker said "Socialism is a chameleon like creed. It changes its colour according to its environment". Another thinker Rapport said "If I am asked whether I am a socialist myself, I cannot but frankly reply - I do not know" People cannot fight longer time with the government. Karl Marx maxim "when superstructure of any society - social, legal, political institutions fail to adjust the rapid changes in the system of production and exchange, a crisis in the society is inevitable". Management Science also stresses that nothing should be static and welcome for all dynamic changes.

Dr NSR Murthy, Secunderabad

### PAST AND PRESENT

## Watching movie in touring talkies



DR VENUGOPALA  
RAO KAKI

WITH the lifting of the lockdown in these times of coronavirus, cinema theatres have reopened in the country to the delight of movie-buffs. Crowds begin gathering at the theatres with new enthusiasm, fresh vigour and bubbling vivacity to watch movies and derive the audiovisual pleasure on big silver screens which had been unattainable to them for many months. Youth are awfully excited to be in theatres to grab the sumptuous, celluloid feast by watching their favourite actors' movies. For me, when I behold the young flocking at theatres, the saga of honeyed reminiscences of movie-watching in the bygone era of my boyhood days keeps inundating my mind.

Unlike the people watching in mega theatres and multi-complexes nowadays, we, the children, living in a village in the 60s would watch films in what was called "Touring Hall". This "Touring Hall" was a huge shed covered with asbestos sheets, nestled in the midst of green fields on a sprawling ground, away from residential areas and screen only two shows- evening-show at 6 pm and night show at 10 pm with just three classes- tarpaulin-covered floor, gallery-class of benches and luxury-class of chairs. We would prefer to watch evening-shows in the company of our friends in the gallery-class.

It was indeed an exhilarating, memorable experience for me to watch movies with a group of my chums in the touring hall. While tramping through the green fields in summer evenings with cool breezes caressing our bodies, we would be watching birds warbling from their cosy perches on tree-branches, chasing the flocks of cranes stalking on the banks of fields, gazing at the pale moon slowly brightening up and stars twinkling in the darkening sky, talking vivaciously, cracking jokes and laughing boisterously and enjoying a lot our walks to the touring hall.

The evening-show in the

touring hall would begin with the ringing of the third bell. The folks loitering outside, hanging about at the pan shop and the canteen would rush into the hall. We would buy tickets at the little cabin behind the projector-room, get into the hall and occupy the large bench with our eyes riveted on the curtain of the screen. When the curtain was raising, we, the children become very much excited with our curiosity at its peak. When the movie starts and the show is going on, we were all lost into it, savouring the action, dialogues, songs and comedy in the movie.

But to our dismay, it was not an uninterrupted and continuous show and it usually had two or three breaks as in the projector-room, the film-reels had to be changed during the time of breaks. Of course, the show did have an usual intermission and the folks would relax, having cool drinks and soda at the pan-shop and snacks like pakoras at the canteen and children would munch biscuits. When the bell was rung, ending the intermission, people would get into the hall and occupy their seats to resume watching the show.

During the show, many a time, a crescendo rises from the floor class in the form of excited screams, ringing whistles, thunderous claps and boisterous laughs when a valiant fight between the hero and the villain takes place. Though elderly people were irked at such noisy disturbances from the groundlings, we, the children, would enjoy such a scenario in the touring hall. By the time, the evening-show was over, it was past 9 P.M. and we would be back on our way to our homes, talking about the movie. But this time, we would not stroll through fields, for it would be risky with reptiles like serpents moving about at nights in the fields. So we would choose pucca roads to reach our homes. Whenever I look back at my boyhood-days of watching movies in a touring hall, I invariably turn nostalgic, recapturing those moments of the relished and cherished boyish fun and joys.

## Poll schedule in Bengal

COMPARATIVELY, the West Bengal schedule in eight phases looks definitely stretched even assuming that the CEC might have take all inputs pertaining to security, violence etc. But then it is imprudent if EC is not allowed to do its duty. Look at AP Panchayat elections which created hue and cry with series of petitions in favour and against by the Election Commissioner on one hand and the Government on the other before HC and SC made it mandatory to hold the elections. Now that the results are out in ruling party's favour, it looks like 'all is well that ends well'.

D Nagarjuna, Hyderabad

## Great move

IT is really heart-warming gesture on the part of the two Army Chiefs of India and Pakistan, to hold an olive branch and to announce strict observance of ceasefire, without any violations. (Guns not to boom on LOC, 26 Feb) Certainly this ceasefire agreement is right step in right direction, in the given situation of hostilities, cross border terrorism and peace in J&K. After all we were brothers before Partition and we can by choice remain brother countries even today by forgetting the past and embracing peace.

PH Hema Sagar,  
Secunderabad

# Appalling behaviour of TV channel participants

IT was a pleasure for me to wait for the "Spotlight" that has been transmitted on various current issues by News Service Division, All India Radio for 15 minutes between 9-15 PM and 9-30 PM every day. Though it was only audio, the decorum of that discussion was appreciable. The expert would give a nice presentation about the topic of the spotlight. The advent of television and its user-friendliness has made radio, a memory for us.

Owing the technology explosion in the field of television has given scope for the sprouting of many channels that have brought competition among them. To compete with other channels and to grab the top spot in TRP ratings the TV news channels have started to focus on sensational and on current issues. For this, they have ignored the ethics of journalism and trying to beating around the bush.

Recently a shocking incident took place during a debate on a television channel in which a participant slapped the other with his slipper. Of course, he is not aware of the proverb "He who strikes the first blow has lost the argument". This has reduced the honour of the television debates and has become a cause for the displeasure of the viewership. The electronic media in our country is now literally testing the patience of the people with discussions. These discussions have lost their credibility and their decorum because the panelists are losing their control over



words and virtually coming to blows. It is noticeable the TV channels have become sympathisers of political outfits and to reflect their ideology they will select the issues to be discussed. Journalism is a sacred profession that will bestow its efforts for the dissemination of information through public media concerning factual ongoing events of public concern.

However, today it is a search for a needle in a haystack to find such journalism. It is noticeable instead of dissemination of information the journalism is now blackmailing and enhancing their empires. The TV channels have forgotten their social responsibility and accountability to make the people more rational and expressive in their

thought. The anchors that are coordinating the debate are deliberately ignoring the ethics of journalism such as impartiality, objectivity, balance, bias, privacy, and the public interest. This has brought down the quality of Indian TV news debates and hitting new lows for a few years. The anchors also have forgotten their concrete role to make people aware of the fo-



cused issues instead they are encouraging the cockfights and raising the adrenal levels of the panellists and the viewership.

Further, the anchors are unnecessarily making noisy interruptions and belittling the views of the panellists in a very biased manner. The channel management is also picking such types of anchors to host their debates for their ratings. Of course, they are well aware of the remark of Robert Quillen "Discussion is an exchange of knowledge; an argument an exchange of ignorance".

It is an appalling thing that in our country the ethical debacle of the fourth estate will surely promote corruption, nepotism, and oppression on weaker section's voice. Further, it will also be a threat to the democratic spirit of the country. It is very paining to think even after seven decades of independence freedom of opinion, exchange of views are not on the right track. The technology explosion has failed to bring transparency in the dissemination of information for the public interest instead; it has promoted the erosion of ethics.

This situation would not help for the expression of public opinion on certain issues of public interest which is an essential thing in democracy and realise the remark of Sir Winston Churchill "some people's idea of free speech is that they are free to say what they like, but if anyone says anything back, that is an outrage". Isn't it?

E Gajendra Nath Reddy, Badvel



# CRICKET TECHNOLOGY COULD END UP IN A MESS

YAJURVINDRA SINGH

INNOVATIONS and improvements through progressive and modern thinking are essential for the world to move forward. Technology has in the last two decades brought about a sea of change in every area of our lives. Communication, transmission and digital and virtual interaction has revolutionised the way we approach and analyse our thought process and action.

Sport has gained enormously from it, not only for the sportsmen but also for the millions of fans and well wishers following it. Cricket took its time to open its doors to using technology, as the halo of being a gentleman's game valued itself as being a competitive but sporting encounter between two teams. The word 'cricket' was spoken about on many occasions, whether political, legal or casual to emphasise 'honesty' and 'integrity'. Gradually the greed of human beings came to fore, with 'winning at all cost' becoming the criteria of success. Any means to achieve victory became the focal point and aim of a cricket side.

Host countries first took advantage of the playing conditions and surface and cricket wickets were made for them to get the famous words 'home conditions' into play. The next step was aimed at the two wise men who controlled the game, the umpires. Cricket matches from school tournaments right all the way up to the international level gave rise to biased decisions and this too became 'home conditions'. The introduction of neutral umpires for international cricket matches was a breath of fresh air for the cricketers. There were errors and mistakes quite understandably on several occasions but in the end the cricketers took it in their stride as being unfortunate victims.

The first of the algorithms that was introduced solely because of the limited overs one-day format was the Duckworth and Lewis calculations that were put into place by the International Cricket Council (ICC). This was to calculate a run chase or a winner if the match was interrupted for rain or any other unforeseen condition. Even today

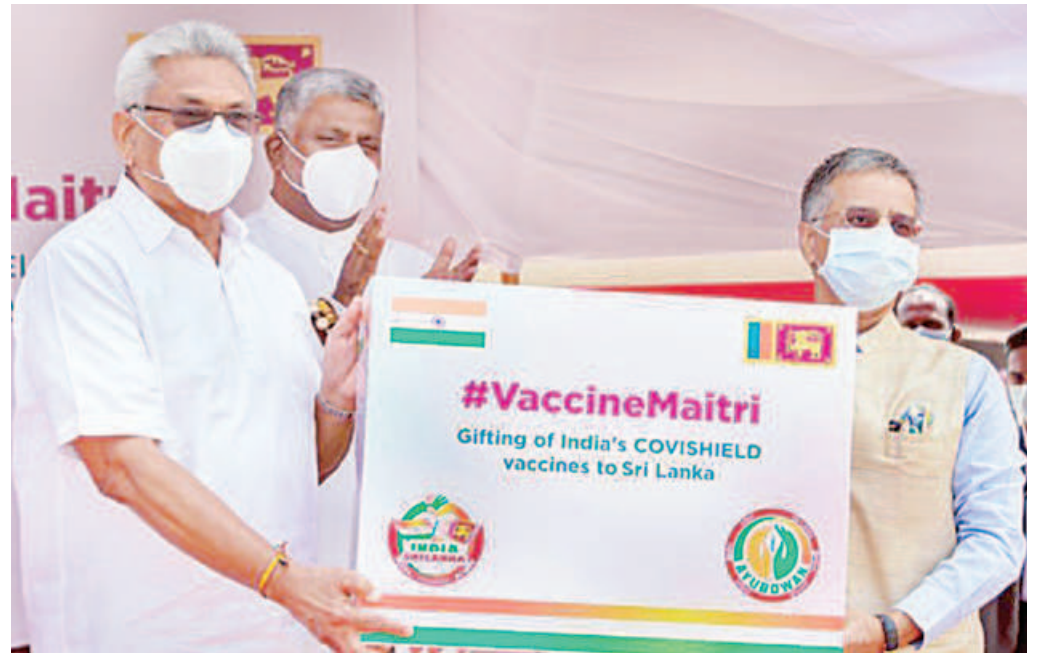
after three decades of existence, the D&L method is not convincingly understood. Predicting the outcome or forecasting a situation as to how a cricket match will unfold is the uncertainty that makes cricket an unpredictable game. Replicating a cricket match through data permutations and combinations is quite impossible. Limited overs cricket required a result and so adapting a make-believe scenario was accepted as 'this is how it will be' by the ICC running the sport. The umpires were the next in line to be targeted, not as victims but as someone who needed to be assisted for not just controlling the game but also in their workload of decision making. The live beaming of cricket matches aided by the numerous cameras and microphones made life quite unpleasant for the umpires. Every decision of theirs was thoroughly scrutinised by millions watching the game and errors that were taken as part and parcel of the game became a topic of unfair criticism. Cricket thought leaders, in order to protect the two supreme judges of the match out in the middle, therefore introduced the now in existence Decision Review System (DRS). It shows through television replays, a technology that tracks the path of the ball and predicts what it would have done. Microphones were brought in to detect small sounds made as the ball hit the bat or pad and infra-red imaging to detect temperature changes as well. Unable to do so in the middle, a third umpire is utilised who sits in the comfort of a cabin to review and decide the umpire's call. The introduction of technology in creating an unbiased and fair platform is definitely wonderful and progressive. Unfortunately, similar to the D&L, the behaviour of the bounce, movement and path of the ball, even if it is

is difficult to fathom. This, therefore, creates an atmosphere of doubt and unfairness in the mind of the cricketer involved. The umpire's call has brought about a further confusion, as even if the ball is hitting the stump, the decision will depend entirely on the way the umpire has adjudicated it.

Spinners have gained enormously from this rule. A straight ball hitting a well stretched batsman, playing a forward defensive shot, getting hit on the pad leads the bowler to a victorious dance. How can anyone be sure that at a distance of seven feet and over for the ball to travel, it would hit the stumps and not change its path. The inventors of these modern technologies have done, one gathers, several tests and trials to come to the conclusion, but the atmospheric conditions and bounce can alter quite significantly not only in every country, but at every venue as well. The immediate solution to this would be to give an out decision to any ball that is hitting the stumps regardless of the umpire's call.

Late cricket legend Tony Greig, one recalls, did an on-ground presentation on the way a catch can be misrepresented, when reviewed. He held a cricket ball in one hand and rested it on the turf with his fingers under the ball. The image that came forth was that the ball was touching the ground, even though he had it well entrenched in his fingers. He felt the camera angle could create this uncertainty. One wonders if this imaging has been improved as he was certain this would lead to issues in years to come. It's a thought definitely to ponder over. One feels teams and support staff are over evaluating and analysing through technological data to enable them to construct their game plan. Batsmen are getting confused with their technique and bowlers with the way in which they deliver. This all looks brilliant when it works, but cricket is a sport which needs intuitive and instinctive reactions. New technology, however, needs to be introduced; a proper study should be done before it is implemented. Cricketers playing the game need to be consulted or else they will always feel short changed. Technology that could become a game changer for the better may end up into a mess.

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



## VACCINE DIPLOMACY

# Need to prepare for another potential variant

KAVIN RAMESH PILLAI

GIVEN the unprecedented times of increased militarisation and polarising politics, we are witnessing a rise in informal socio-political blocs again. This has led to the rise in new variants of diplomacy. However, coming into 2021, one remarkable variant caught the world's attention, a variant centred around the objective of tackling the Covid19 Pandemic – Vaccine Diplomacy.

As we come to the penultimate stage of this pandemic, companies and governments have found themselves in a rut due to strain in budgeting and availability of the various vaccines being manufactured. Due to such concerns, wealthy nations of the West and the Middle East looked to gain premium and immediate access to the first few batches of vaccines developed by Pfizer-BioNTech, AstraZeneca-Oxford, Serum Institute of India and Sinopharm. So, as a pivotal hub for vaccine production and pharmaceutical innovation, this was an enticing opportunity for India to further bolster her ties and broaden her horizons in this multi-polar world. And much to India's credit, we did take this opportunity.

In spite of the massive competition from foreign companies and nations, India has shipped a total of 22.9 million doses of 'Made in India' vaccines to over 20 nations worldwide, with 70 more nations lined up. This initiative was appropriately named "Vaccine Maitri" by the Indian government. The Secretary General of United Nations Antonio Guterres and the Secretary of State of the newly formed US

Govt Antony Blinken were two notable officials who highlighted India's role in democratising the global vaccination programme by providing generic access to both developed and developing nations alike.

"Democratising" and "Generic Access" being two keywords here as various small nations found this vaccine race exclusive and difficult to partake in as their small sizes and lack of resources would get them placed lower and lower on the priority list by vaccine-producing pharmaceutical companies and vaccine-providing nations due to the lack of profitability and diplomatic significance, respectively. Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit of the Caribbean nation of Dominica, admitted that his small nation of just 72,000 people, did not see any chances of getting vaccines immediately until India stepped in to help.

India also bolstered its 'Neighbourhood First' policy by helping fellow SAARC nations with vaccine production and logistics. This is right after India took initiative to establish a SAARC COVID-19 fund with the help of all member nations. This can bring some positivity and energy to an otherwise lethargic and disjointed SAARC community.

So, with this development observed, it begs the question - what other objective-based variants of diplomacy could potentially arise? I believe there will come about a variant of diplomacy that's solely focused on tackling the inevitable and ongoing threat of climate change by harnessing green energy and the concept of sustainable development. To put this in practice

would mean that nations with an established or upcoming model of sustainable development can set an example for other developed nations to follow while helping cash strapped developing nations get up to speed with their usage of green energy and efficiency in their waste management.

This will boost diplomatic relations between nations of the world which in turn would help us tackle climate change as one united earth. India has the potential to help kickstart or supplement this possible diplomatic phenomenon surrounding green energy and climate change. So, to prepare for this gargantuan initiative, we need to upgrade our waste management systems while bolstering our green energy infrastructure as they are integral to establishing a healthy and ambitious Circular Economy.

Once we establish an efficient and replenishable economy, we can show the world how to make that much needed leap in the field of sustainable development. We have a good foundation to back our ambition given India's innovative leadership within the International Solar Alliance.

So, having learnt from the struggle and conflict during this pandemic and the vaccine race, we must lay the groundwork to establish a fair and humanitarian path forward so that we do not struggle in another environmental or medical crisis in the foreseeable future.

(The author is pursuing BA (Hons) in History and International Relations at IILM University, Gurugram)

# India must play pro-active role on Indus Waters Treaty

VISHNU MAKHIJANI

THE Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) brokered between India and Pakistan by the World Bank in 1960 has weathered three wars in 1965, 1971 and 1999 -- as also the September 2016 attack by four heavily armed terrorists that resulted in the death of 19 soldiers and the four attackers and was "the deadliest attack on security forces in Kashmir in two decades".

The IWT will continue to "chug along" and the "best option for India, which the current government is following after mulling the option of abrogation, is to optimise/maximise the provisions of the Treaty," Uttam Kumar Sinha, one of India's leading commentators on trans-boundary water issues, told IANS in an interview on his new book, "Indus Basin Uninterrupted — A History of Territory & Politics from Alexander to Nehru" (Penguin Vintage).

"There is no advantage for India to abrogate the Treaty. Water will continue to flow irrespective unless structures are constructed on the rivers that store the water and that will take several decades," he adds.

"Technically, the IWT has no exit clause, so there is no question of 'renegotiations'. However, Article XII (3) and (4) of the Treaty provide for modification of treaty provisions BUT through a 'duly ratified treaty' which will replace the present one with the condition that cannot be abrogated unilaterally.

"Politically this is difficult to achieve. Pakistan knows very



well that the Treaty of 1960 is as good as it can get and any modified treaty will only harm its interest. It will continue to make noises (both domestically and internationally) about India's hegemonic motives to keep the anti-India feeling alive," Sinha maintains, adding that the Treaty and its provisions "not only gives Pakistan the water it requires but on account of being a lower riparian vis-a-vis India, it builds a global sympathy as a victim of India's hydro-aggression".

At the same time, India needs to take corrective measures, he

said.

"On the eastern rivers much of the waters in non-monsoon period (about 0.58 MAF) flow freely into Pakistan. This has to be arrested and for that the three projects Ujh (storage of 0.82 MAF) and Shahpurkandi Dam (0.012 MAF) and second Ravi Vyas Link Project have been put into fast track.

"On the western rivers the 'permissible storage capacity' as per the Treaty provisions has not been paid serious attention in India. This again has to be seriously corrected," Sinha writes. Noting that the current gov-

ernment "has put many projects on the Chenab river like the Bursar and Gypsa on fast track," he contends that "many more projects would be required to fulfil the provision of 2.7 MAF of storage water on the western rivers".

"But most importantly, India has to build widespread awareness about Pakistan's strategy to stall or delay multi-purpose projects among the people of Jammu and Kashmir and harness the displeasure of the local political leadership about the provisions of IWT. At the end of the day water is equally about perception," Sinha explains.

The framers of the Treaty had foreseen that differences and disputes will emerge, he says, adding that "the beauty of the Treaty lies in the 'Settlement mechanism' within the Treaty (vide Article IX and attendant Annexures F and G) in three different ways."

"Resolution of any differences through (i) mutual consultations in the Permanent Indus Water Commission established under the Treaty; (ii) through a Neutral Expert acceptable to both or appointed by the World Bank in case of disagreement, and (iii) resolution of any 'dis-

**The Treaty and its provisions not only give Pakistan the water it requires but on account of being a lower riparian vis-a-vis India, they build a global sympathy as a victim of India's hydro-aggression**

pute' by a Court of Arbitration," Sinha writes, accusing Pakistan of using "these provisions on numerous occasions to obstruct many projects being planned by India, well within the treaty provisions". Beginning with "Ageing of India's History, the 353-page book, in five parts, with an easy narration and rich archival material, brings alive a meandering 5,000-year journey of peace, conflict and commerce on the Indus basin, exploring "Diplomacy and Commerce on the Indus", "Colonisation, Canals and Contestation", "Partition of Land and Rivers" and finally, "The Making of the Indus Waters Treaty".

Along the way, from Alexander's campaign to Mohammad-bin-Qasim crossing the Indus and laying the foundation of Muslim rule in India; from the foreign invades and their 'loot and scoop' to the Mughal rulers' perspective on hydrology and water use; from the British 'great game' on the Indus basin to the bitter and bloody Partition; and finally, as a historical pause, the signing of the IWT, this book is a spectrum of spec-

tacular events, turning points, and of personalities and characters and their actions that were full of marvel.

As the author notes in the Preface, "it is a frightening acknowledgement that the Indus basin, with its richness and impetuosity, can be so all-pervasive, defining history, ordering territories, attracting invaders and in many senses, determining the way of life and the politics around it. Much, of course is known of this vast basin, yet much is unknown. It is time, perhaps, as we mark sixty years of the Indus Water Treaty, 'to talk of many things' as the Walrus said to the Carptner in Lewis Carroll's "Through a Looking Glass" and this the book does in abundant measure.

After a brief stint in the print media and doctoral degree from Jawaharlal Nehru University, he joined the Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses (now renamed the Manohar Parrikar IDSA) where he heads the non-territorial security centre and is the Managing Editor of "Strategic Analysis" the institute's flagship journal.



## Citroen opens showroom in Hyderabad

HANS BUSINESS  
HYDERABAD

FRENCH automaker Citroen launched its 'La Maison Citroen' phygital showroom in Hyderabad.

This phygital (physical and digital) showroom is well integrated with Citroen India's AnyTimeAnyWhereAnyDeviceAnyContent(ATAWADA C) experience with high definition 360 degree 3D configurator.

The pre-bookings for the new Citroen C5 Aircross SUV will begin from March 1 at an advance payment of Rs 50,000.

A full digital ecosystem will link seamlessly the digital experience of customers and will enrich the journey at the showroom with ATAWADAC.

As part of the 360 degree comfort strategy for India, it will offer a range of services to build trust with consumers with unmatched comfort, never experienced before. These services will include attractive finance and leasing services through Citroen Finance and insurance and 30 minute guaranteed trade-in facility.

"Citroen is all about comfort and digital innovation, and through this La Maison Citroen phygital showrooms, we are confident that we will be able to bring a revolution in the way an Indian car consumer looks at his car purchasing journey," said Joel Verany, vice president, Sales and Network, Citroen India.

"We are excited to innovate and launch La Maison Citroen phygital showroom in Hyderabad phygital showroom. The customers can book on online from our website and can have a physical appearance at our showroom. Citroen will give good comfort to customers and will enrich the journey with never before experience," said M Suresh Reddy, Managing Director, Citroen Hyderabad.

# Digital payments catch momentum

Companies now realised how important it is to quickly digitise processes to save cost and be efficient

K RAJANI KANTH

*HOW has been the transformation journey of Zaggie, from being a gift cards provider to a digital payments, cashbacks and analytics company?*

Zaggie was born to fulfil the growing need for digital rewards. We first came up with employee benefits, which were earlier given to employees as paper coupons, and then we slowly expanded to employee reimbursements on the same platform for rewards for employees. With time, we ventured into expense management for entire businesses to take care of business expenses such as petty cash and utility bills. Today, we are a payments company working in the areas of financial tech, HR tech and bank tech. The most amazing part of HR tech is that it deals with people and mapping AI to HR has been one of the most challenging tasks we had. HR tech space has been waiting to be disrupted and rise above the basic payroll, L&D, appraisals to a fundamentally altering level of making a difference to human resources. The only goal that kept us going was to automate every mundane task of financial management. We aimed at bridging the gap between banks and businesses to provide easy access to capital and ensure smooth running of the business. At present, we are working closely with over 10,000 merchants, more than 4,500 businesses and corporate entities and approximately 4.5 million users.

*What are the trends that you see in the digital payments space? And, what is the role that Zaggie is expected to play?*

As per a report by RedSeer Consulting, digital payments in India are expected to grow over three-fold to Rs 7,092 trillion by 2025 on account of government policies around financial inclusion and growing digitisation of merchants. The current 160 million unique mobile payment users will multiply by 5 times to reach nearly 800 million by 2025. Digital payment

Zaggie Prepaid Ocean Services Private Limited, a financial technologies company, founded in 2011 by Raj N, a serial entrepreneur and an active angel investor, the industry-agnostic B2B firm makes use of deep tech and artificial intelligence (AI) to offer platform solutions to firms for employee reimbursement, expense management, rewards and recognition. In an exclusive interaction, Zaggie's Founder and Chairman **Raj N** shares with **Bizz Buzz** his views on the digital payments scenario in India, and his company's growth plans.



Since the digital adoption will be the new mantra for most of the companies, we are looking at 100 per cent growth in business in the next 9 to 12 months. We have been on a winning spree despite the economy being shaken up with the current Covid-19 situation

trends are surging rapidly with giants entering this sector and offering cash backs and rewards to attract customers to use their platforms. Since the digital adoption will be the new mantra for most of the companies, we are looking at 100 per cent growth in business in the next 9 to 12 months. We have bagged more than 100 new contracts in the last six months and have been on a winning spree despite the economy being shaken up with the current Covid-19 situation.

*How has Zaggie fared during the Covid-19 lockdown period and the factors that contributed to it?*

The Covid-19 pandemic brought the economy to its knees. Fintech companies have always been working towards providing innovative and state-of-the-art technological support to SMEs, corporates and banks in lieu of the age-old conventional banking services. With digitisation being established as the new normal, more and more people turned towards virtual transactions. Since we are in the realm of digitisation, we witnessed rapid growth ever since the beginning of the lockdown. Once the lockdown was announced we had immedi-

ately set up the virtual card platform for the end-users. Zaggie has witnessed a growth of 600 per cent with more than 7 lakh individuals using virtual cards during the lockdown. We bagged many new clients even during the pandemic, which has resulted in a gross turnover of approximately Rs 7,000 crore.

*At what stage is Zaggie's plan to enter the neo-banking space and any timeline for its foray?*

At Zaggie, we are aggressively and relentlessly working towards launching our SME neo-banking platform. We want to create a platform for businesses to easily access financial services from different financial service providers. To avoid the hassle of different accounts,

having cheques signed by authorities, going through RTGS, we thought this process should be automated through a platform to quickly flake in and move the funds to ensure that the cheque gets cleared without having to go through the process manually.

We will soon be launching our neo-banking platform named ZIKZUK, an SME neo-bank in the first week of April with 'Founders Card' as its first product. Founders Card will be a business credit card for founders with best-in-class credit line, founder-centric rewards and benefits and AI-generated business reports. Another product is the 'Business Finance Manager' (BFM), which is a financial operating system for SME owners to manage their cash flows and working capital, and make data-driven business decisions. This open banking platform will help corporates for all transactions where all of it will be self-automated and will give a performance, balance sheet in a single rack.

*What are Zaggie's organic and inorganic growth plans?*

There has been tremendous amount of organic expansion across categories like channel in-

centive programme, expense management, employee rewards and engagement and prepaid cards. Along with that inorganically we have acquired a couple of companies till now. We are still looking at companies, which have a very good product and have seen some traction, or companies that will help us in the distribution or the marketing side. We are also looking at companies which are based in the Middle East, the US and Canada and are complimentary to us for our inorganic acquisition. Overall, we are sure to acquire at least a couple of companies, if not more, between 2021 and 2022.

*What is the vision and mission of Zaggie?*

Our vision is to become a global digital bank, and mission is to build state-of-the-art financial solutions workflow and products, which would help automate and empower businesses to increase efficiency, accuracy, transparency and productivity and which would eventually help us to achieve the goal of becoming a useful global digital bank.

*What is the top line and bottom-line of Zaggie currently and any projections for this year?*

We have been growing exponentially and have been winning new client contracts in spite of the sales teams and clients working from home because companies have now realised how important it is to quickly digitise processes to save cost and be efficient.

We have doubled the turnover and revenues as compared to last year. The company had a gross turnover value (GTV) of Rs 1,800 crore in FY 2018-19. Currently, the GTV for 2020-21 is Rs 10,000 crore till January 31, 2021, and we hope to close the year with Rs 12,000 crore. The adoption rate for corporates and SMEs opting for our expense management solutions has also increased to 90 per cent as opposed to 60 per cent before the Covid-19 pandemic. We expect our net revenues to touch Rs 200 crore register PAT of Rs 20 crore in 2020-2021.

## Reliance launches new JioPhone offer



HANS BUSINESS  
HYDERABAD

RELiance on Friday announced a new offer that bundles JioPhone device and two years of unlimited services for Rs 1,999, as it pledged to accelerate market transition towards '2G-mukt Bharat' with its affordable services.

The new offer keeps affordability at the core, making the JioPhone and its services accessible to the 300 million feature phone users, who are trapped in the 2G era, the company said announcing the 'New JioPhone 2021 offer'.

Speaking on this occasion Akash Ambani, Director, Reliance Jio, said, "There are still 300 million subscribers in India who remain 'trapped' in the 2G era, unable to access basic features of the internet, at a time, when the world stands at the cusp of a 5G revolution."

"Since the last four years Jio has democratized internet and passed on the benefits of technology to every Indian. Technology no longer remains a privilege of a select few. The New JioPhone 2021 offer is another step in that direction. At Jio, we have and will continue to take bold steps to eradicate this digital divide", he added. For new users, the offer packs-in JioPhone device with 2 years of unlimited voice calls as well as data (2 GB high speed Data every month) for Rs 1,999. The JioPhone device with 1 year unlimited services would be available for Rs 1,499. The company claimed that for similar services, customers using other networks shell out '2.5X more'. This latest offer will be available from March 1, across Reliance Retail and Jio retailers.

# RENEWABLE ENERGY LASTING SOLUTION TO OIL-PRICE CRISIS

SUSHMA RAMACHANDRAN

AS petroleum products prices soar to record levels, it would be a good time to pause and examine the overall energy scenario for the country. The immediate concern is over-high prices of petrol and diesel that are bound to have an inflationary impact on the economy. The reason for the inordinately high retail rates is not just the hardening of world oil prices, though that is an important factor. The main cause is the spurt in levies on oil products by the central and State governments, as both are desperately trying to mobilise resources at a time when revenue collections have fallen drastically due to the pandemic.

These short-term issues need to be viewed in a larger perspective. By imposing heavy excise duties on petrol and diesel right now, the government may be able to raise more revenues but it will have adverse side-effects. Most importantly, there will be a cascading effect on prices. Inflationary pressures on the economy will be inevitable. In addition, it will put a greater burden on the poorest segment of society at a time when the economy is just getting into revival mode.

A study by the Reserve Bank of India has found that every 10 dollar per barrel rise in oil prices can push inflation higher by 20 to 30 basis points. Currently, prices of the benchmark Brent crude are ruling at around 67 dollars as against an average of about 40 dollars per barrel over the past year. This situation is worsened by the imposition of steep excise duties on oil products as has been done during the past year.

As far as the wider energy outlook is concerned, it is

Immediate concern is over-high prices of petrol and diesel that are bound to have inflationary impact on economy



clear that hydrocarbons like oil, gas and coal have a disproportionately high share of the consumption basket. As much as 87 per cent of total fuel consumption comprises these products. Coal accounts for the highest consumption of about 45 per cent followed by oil and gas with 37 per cent. In the case of coal, the country has large coal reserves but as regards oil and gas, there is heavy dependence on imports. In fact, over 80 per cent of total oil consumption comes from imported crude.

The result is the country pays a heavy price in foreign exchange for buying nearly its entire requirement of oil from abroad. The oil bill shoots up when international prices rise and falls when there is a softening trend. The total cost of imports this year will be much lower than previously owing to a crash in prices last year in April and May. As against about 102 billion dollars in 2019-20, oil imports are likely to cost only about 50

Hydel, solar, wind and bio-mass energy sources need to be given even more importance, given the volatility of the market situation in crude oil and gas. Currently, about 35 per cent of the country's installed power generating capacity comes from renewable sources

billion dollars in 2020-21 owing to the collapse in prices in 2020. The outlook for the next fiscal, on the other hand, is not so bright. Given this heavy dependence on imports, the government has two options to ensure energy security in the long run. The first is to increase domestic oil production which used to provide up to 70 per cent of the country's needs at one time in the mid 1980s. This was

especially so when the Bombay High oilfields were in their heyday. Unfortunately these are aging fields now and even other onshore and offshore oilfields are not yielding as much oil as previously. Successive governments have tried to lure international oil majors here to carry out oil exploration and production but have met with limited success. One of the reasons initially was the lack of sufficient incentives to invest in this highly risky capital intensive sector. Later when better terms and conditions were offered, world prices were not high enough to justify the cost of launching new exploration ventures.

The other option is to take a long-term perspective and give higher priority to renewable energy sources. Hydel, solar, wind and bio-mass energy sources need to be given even more importance given the volatility of the market situation in crude oil and gas. Currently about 35 per cent of the country's installed power

generating capacity comes from renewable sources.

This needs to be expanded in the long run as the adverse environmental impact of hydrocarbon based fuels remains a concern. It has to be conceded that this government has given a big boost to alternative energy sources. In fact, it has been promoting the development and production of electric vehicles much to the dismay of the entire automobile industry which sees this as a threat to its future.

Considerable progress has also been made in the area of solar energy with India now becoming the fifth largest solar energy producer. Tariffs have been reduced to make solar energy much more competitive though it will take a while for it to displace traditional fuel sources. It so far accounts for only about 4 per cent of total power generation in the country and thus needs to be ramped up much more rapidly.

The issue of oil prices therefore is not just a short-term problem. The immediate crisis, of course, needs to be quickly resolved by cutting excise duties that had been raised over the past year on petrol and diesel as a way of mopping up extra resources. Unless this is done, inflation which had reached manageable level of 4.06 per cent in January this year, is bound to spurt and dilute the impact of the economic recovery process. In the long run, however, the government needs to give greater incentives for development of renewable energy sources that will enable the country to reduce its dependence on imported oil and gas.

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## HANS BIZ QUIZ

### Women Entrepreneurs in Science & Healthcare

1. National Science Day is celebrated on February 28 to commemorate the discovery of the Raman Effect by Sir Chandrasekhara Venkata Raman. Many Women entrepreneurs were recognised and honoured for their groundbreaking work in science & healthcare. A gold medalist in microbiology from Bangalore University and a former Scientific Associate in the R&D division of Biocon-promoted Genbios. Whom are we talking about?  
a) Savitha G. Ananth b) Anu Sridharan  
c) Anuradha Acharya d) Srilatha Krishnan

2. Nina Tandon is a tissue engineering researcher, an adjunct professor of electrical engineering at Cooper Union in New York. The MIT and Columbia alumnus and Fulbright Scholar developed an electronic nose to sniff out lung cancer. Identify her company?  
a) Passageways b) Nostril-care  
c) EpiBone d) E-nostrils

3. Sinead O'Sullivan, an Irish aerospace engineer, developed technology that integrates drone and satellite data using artificial intelligence. Her technology would take spacecraft and future humans to Mars. Identify her company?  
a) Astroscale  
b) Fusion Space Technologies  
c) Paragon Space Development Corporation  
d) SpaceFab

4. Romita Ghosh battled and pulled through blood cancer at the age of 13. Romita made inroads into India's healthcare sector now. Which of the companies started by her is not a healthcare venture?  
a) Admirus b) iHealHealthTech  
c) MedSamaan d) D'lights

5. Egyptian-born Rana el Kallouby is trailblazing to bring emotion to digital technology by enabling cameras in smartphones and computers to read human expressions. Identify the Massachusetts-based company started by Rana el Kallouby?  
a) Affectiva b) Able Human Motion  
c) Abilltech Medical d) Abundant Health

6. Prof Jane Farrar was on a mission to research the genetics of an inherited form of blindness called retinitis pigmentosa. Farrar successfully co-founded a gene therapy venture. Which company took over Genable Technologies founded by Farrar?  
a) X-Cor Therapeutics  
b) Signum Surgical  
c) Parasymp Health  
d) Spark Therapeutics

7. The global medical tourism market size is valued at \$50 billion. Suman Sayani, a psychologist, has been playing a pioneering role in medical tourism and contributes to India's \$3 billion medical tourism sector. Which Healthcare company is founded by her?  
a) Sayani Healthcare  
b) Ivaan Health Services Pvt Ltd, India  
c) Destination Healthcare India Pvt Ltd  
d) All of the above

8. Dr Emmeline Hill is an Irish horse geneticist credited with discovering a gene for speed in horses that helps horses in athletic performance. The gene developed by her led to developing a speed gene test to match horses with courses and inform breeding and training decisions. Which company was co-founded by Dr. Hill along with horse trainer Jim Bolger in 2009?  
a) Gene-Stallions b) Cardinal Health  
c) Equinome d) Medtronic

9. Cortechs, the company behind the wearable tech, uses brainwave-sensing technology and gameplay to improve attention in children diagnosed with ADHD. Which Irish researcher in neuroscience and neuropathology founded Cortechs?  
a) Aine Behan b) Agnes Clerke  
c) Prof Iseult Lynch d) Erwin Schrodinger

10. Beats Medical, a smartphone app designed to support those who have Parkinson's. Which physiotherapist launched startup Beats Medical when she was just 22?  
a) Kiara Nirghin  
b) Ciara Clancy  
c) Katherine Johnson  
d) Marcia Barbosa

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

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





VIJAY HAZARE TROPHY

Mumbai continue dominant show, beat Rajasthan by 67 runs

JAIPUR

SKIPPER Shreyas Iyer's fluent 116 and an impressive show by India speedster Shardul Thakur powered Mumbai to a 67-run win over Rajasthan in an Elite Group D game of the Vijay Hazare Trophy here on Saturday.



This was Mumbai's fourth successive win, having earlier defeated Delhi, Maharashtra and Puducherry.

Opting to bat at the KL Saini stadium, Mumbai rode on Iyer's 103-ball knock to post a competitive 317/7. The elegant right-handed batsman led from the front before his bowlers bundled out the opposition for 250 with Thakur (4/50) doing the bulk of the damage.

Mumbai openers -- young Yashasvi Jaiswal (38) and Prithvi Shaw (36) -- gave the domestic giants a strong start, adding 71 for the first wicket.

But Rajasthan pegged back Mumbai by removing both the openers in quick succession as they slipped to 83/2.

Iyer anchored the innings before toying with the Rajasthan attack, scoring his second century of the tournament with the help of 11 fours and three sixes.

For Rajasthan, left-arm spinner Shubham Sharma (3/59) did the bulk of the damage. Chasing 318, Rajasthan lost opener Yash Kothari (2) and skipper Ashok Menaria (20) early and were struggling at 32/2. It was an uphill task for Rajasthan and they were eventually bowled out for 250.

BRIEF SCORES

Group D

Mumbai 317/7 (Shreyas Iyer 116, Yashasvi Jaiswal 38; Shubham Sharma 3/59, Abhimanyu Lamba 2/66) beat Rajasthan 250 (Mahipal Lomror 76, M Singh 40; Shardul Thakur 4/50; Dhawal Kulkarni 3/26) by 67 runs.

At Sawai Mansingh Stadium: Maharashtra 328/7 (Azim Kazi 91, Kedar Jadhav 86; Lalit Yadav 3/69, Pradeep Sangwan 2/61) lost to Delhi 330/7 (Shikhar Dhawan 153, Dhruv Shorey; Satyajeeet Bachhav 3/68) by three wickets.

At Jaipuria Vidhyalaya ground: Puducherry 227/9 (Sheldon Jackson 104, Sagar Trivedi 51; Rishi Dhawan 4/44, Pankaj Jaswal 2/23) beat Himachal 123 (Abhimanyu Rana 27; Sagar Udeshi 4/35, Kannan Vignesh 3/30) by 104 runs.

Group E

At Eden Gardens: Saurashtra 388/7; 50 overs (Prerak Mankad 174, Vishvaraj Jadeja 50; Jaskaran Singh 4/60) b Chandigarh 326/7 (Ankit Kaushik 54, Manan Vohra 50, Gautam Gambhir 40 not out) by 62 runs.

At JU Second Campus, Saltlake: Services 287/5; 50 overs (Rajat Paliwal 78 not out, Shivam Tiwari 74) b Haryana 175; 43.3 overs (Jayant Yadav 59) by 112 runs.

At 22 Yards Academy: Bengal 368/4; 50 overs (Abhimanyu Easwaran 99, Anustup Majumdar 92 not out, Ritwik Roy Chowdhury 55, Shahbaz Ahmed 48 not out, Kaif Ahmed 42) b Jammu & Kashmir 286; 45.3 overs (Abid Mushtaq 68, Parvez Rasool 50; Arnab Nandi 4/46) by 82 runs.

Plate Group

Arunachal Pradesh 150 in 50 overs (Vipin Dhaka 37, Akhilesh Sahani 45, Chengkam Sangma 3/21) lost to Meghalaya 157 for two in 28.5 overs (Rohit Shah 70 not out, Yogesh Tiwari 28, DB Ravi Teja 32 not out) by eight wickets.

Nagaland 257 for nine in 50 overs (Sedezhalie Rupero 28, R. Jonathan 46, Shrikant Mundhe 52, Hem Chetri 82 not out) beat Manipur 240 for nine in 50 overs (Narsingh Yadav 62, Nitesh Sedai 50, M Longlonyamba 45, K Priyotij Singh 32, Stuart Binny 3/32) by 17 runs.

Mizoram 117 in 38.3 overs (Taruwar Kohli 62, KB Pawan 28; Dikshanshu Negi 6/21) lost to Uttarakhand 118 for two in 10.5 overs (Kamal Singh 40 not out, Kunal Chandel 58) by eight wickets.

Sikkim 245 all out in 50 overs (Nilesh Lamichaney 36, Robin Bist 120, Varun Sood 50; Pritam Das 5/34) lost to Assam 249 for six in 47.5 overs (Ashish Thapa 43, Denish Das 53, Saahil Jain 61 not out) by four wickets. (PTI)

Do or die tie for Hyd vs Goa  
Marquez-coached side require a win while Goa need draw



FATORDA



HYDERABAD FC and FC Goa will fight it out for the final playoff berth in the Hero Indian Super League when they face off in a decisive game for both sides at the Fatorda Stadium here on Sunday.

After 19 games, these 90 minutes will decide the fate of both clubs who have stayed in the reckoning all season. Hyderabad require a win to make the next stage, while Goa are in pole position and need just a point to reach the final four.

Hyderabad would need to go all out against Goa as they need nothing less than three points to remain in the competition. Coach Manuel Marquez was expecting favours from NorthEast United FC but his expectations were dashed when they beat Kerala Blasters with ease.

"It would have been better if NorthEast had lost both games. Now the only thing we can do is to congratulate not only ATKMB and Mumbai City FC, but NorthEast too for their fantastic season," quipped Marquez.

"I think the mood has been good from the first day and it's like a knockout clash as the team which wins will continue in this competition. More or less, it is like a final. It will be a tough game," he said.

Hyderabad will be on the back foot as Goa just need

a draw to progress and the coach felt that was a disadvantage in this tie. "Of course, it's just mathematics. At the end of the season, the best teams will be in the top four and other teams will be in 5,6,7 positions," Marquez said.

However, coach Juan Ferrando stated that his team won't play for just a point. "Every game you have pressure. The mentality of this club is to get three points every game. Of course tomorrow we need three points, it's because the mentality of this club is high," he said.

Goa have been one of the most feared sides in the competition and their attacking prowess has earned them crucial points. However, their defensive abilities

are questionable with the club conceding 23 goals. The Gaurs are on a 12-match unbeaten run and scoring isn't a problem for Ferrando's side. Goa have made a habit of scoring late in games and have grabbed crucial points this way. And Ferrando hopes to carry on with the same plan.

"We want to play in attack (mode) because we need to win. We have the same plan. If we are winning 1-0, our mentality will be to get the second goal.

"If they score against us, we go to get the goal to make it 1-1 and then go to score the second. I am happy and with this mentality, it's possible to improve this team," Ferrando said. (PTI)

TODAY'S MATCHES

FC Goa vs Hyderabad FC  
at Fatorda Stadium 5pm

Mumbai City FC vs ATK Mohun Bagan  
at GMC Stadium Bambolim 7.30pm

RESULT

Odisha FC beat SC East Bengal  
6-5

ISL STANDINGS

CLUB	M	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
ATK Mohun Bagan	19	12	4	3	28	13	15	40
Mumbai City FC	19	11	4	4	33	18	15	37
NorthEast United FC	20	8	9	3	31	25	6	33
FC Goa	19	7	9	3	31	23	8	30
Hyderabad FC	19	6	10	3	27	19	8	28
Jamshedpur FC	20	7	6	7	21	22	-1	27
Bengaluru FC	20	5	7	8	26	28	-2	22
Chennaiyin FC	20	3	11	6	17	23	-6	20
SC East Bengal	20	3	8	9	22	33	-11	17
Kerala Blasters FC	20	3	8	9	23	36	-13	17
Odisha FC	20	2	6	12	25	44	-19	12

From being mocked & doubted, Bumrah's 'action' takes him far

KHURRAM HABIB  
AHMEDABAD

WHEN Jasprit Bumrah started troubling young batsmen with pace generated by his quick arm action and short run-up at his school's cricket academy, a few other pace-bowling trainees approached their coach, mocking and doubting his action.

"They said he was throwing the ball and doubted his action. I, too, was surprised with the amount of pace he was getting with such a short run-up. I realised he was getting speed from his shoulder, which was strong," recalls Kishore Trivedi, who was running the Royal Cricket Academy (RCA) at Nirman High School.

Bumrah's mother was initially a teacher at this school and had graduated to become the vice-principal.

"His action was unusual but I said 'this is not throwing'. I told them 'you feel that way because his front arm is like that [extending]'," Trivedi recollects.

Trivedi, whose son Siddharth was by then a seasoned Ranji Trophy player, had another issue to contend with.

"His mother called me. She said if he doesn't study, what will he do? She had one kid, was a single parent, so I could understand her worries. I said, 'your kid has talent. If he can come to my camp regularly, I will be able to do something for him'. He wasn't focusing on studies, so his mother was getting worried, asking what will he do, if he doesn't improve. So, I said if I work with him for two years then he will be able to get to play for the state," he said.

Trivedi did not tamper with his action, though a fellow trainee says there was a slight modification done. "I told him to play seriously. I would send him with the RCA team to tournaments. He started to come into limelight thanks to his speed. I told him to go for selections. I told him to not change the action. 'This is your natural action. Don't change it. This is your weapon,' I said," added Trivedi, who recommended him everywhere.

Till then, Bumrah had not played any age-group cricket for state, including the under-16s. Part of the reason was because his mother wasn't completely convinced. But Trivedi impressed upon her that her son could go far with his talent.

Bumrah's fellow trainee Kewal Gandhi, however, wasn't that lucky. Gandhi, who runs a healthcare firm here at Changodar industrial area, which makes surgical goods like plaster,

Fast bowler released from India Test squad on his request: BCCI

AHMEDABAD: Fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah has been released from the Indian team on his request, the Indian cricket board announced on Saturday.

"Bumrah made a request to BCCI [Board of Control for Cricket in India] to be released from India's squad ahead of the fourth Test owing to personal reasons. Accordingly, the fast bowler has been released and he will not be available for selection for the fourth Test [against England]," said a BCCI statement.

The fourth Test begins here on March 4.

"There will be no addition to India's squad for the final Test," the BCCI said. The BCCI, however, did not mention the reason for Bumrah's release.

On a Motera pitch that assisted spinners, Bumrah was asked to bowl only six overs in the first innings of third Test and he didn't take any wicket. In the second innings, neither he nor Ishant Sharma, the other fast bowler, bowled a single over. India won the match by 10 wickets, and now lead the four-Test match series 2-1. **Squad for 4th Test:** Virat Kohli (captain), Rohit Sharma, Mayank Agarwal, Shubman Gill, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane (vice-captain), KL Rahul, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant and Wriddhiman Saha (wicket-keepers), R Ashwin, Kuldeep Yadav, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Ishant Sharma, Mohammed Siraj, Umesh Yadav

crepe bandage etc, had joined Trivedi's academy with Bumrah right after the two had completed their 10th.

"Even in early days, he would bowl at 135 kmph. His action was doubtful. But sir backed him to the hilt and pushed him ahead. He became known for pace. His mother, who was the only earning member, was worried about his future. But sir sought some time to groom him," said Gandhi, who trained with Bumrah for three years after which his father asked him to leave cricket and focus on studies. Gandhi was also a medium-pacer.

"He would get to meet all the top people, train at Motera thanks to (Kishore) sir's backing and support," adds Gandhi, who is not in touch with Bumrah for about five years i.e., since he made his India debut.

Bumrah appeared at under-19 selection trials



where the youngster was met with opposition again.

Anil Patel, the current joint secretary of the Gujarat Cricket Association (GCA), was secretary of the Ahmedabad district body - the Central Board of Cricket Ahmedabad -- and had seen him bowling in city's M.G. Science College and asked him to come for trials.

"I was told by a friend of his that he was not that serious about cricket. But I asked him to come anyway," said Patel

There was opposition from a couple of selectors because of his action, says Patel, referring to the five-man panel.

"A couple of them were doubting his action. So I told district selection panel chairman Harshad Shah that if you don't want to include him in the main squad of 15, then keep him in the reserves. He will be with the team," recalls Patel.

After the district won the first three matches, Patel pressed on trying the reserves.

"It would have been unfair and out of way to play Bumrah alone from the reserves since he wasn't in the original squad. So I asked them, why not play all the reserves since we have already done well in three games and qualified," he said.

"So all three reserve players played in that fourth three-day game. Bumrah got seven wickets in the match and there was no looking back."

In early 2013, Hitesh Majumdar, a former Gujarat player and later coach, first saw him in the T20 Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy from where he was picked by Mumbai Indians and played in the 2013 IPL. (GANS)

Germany thrash India 5-0 in first women's hockey match

DUSSELDORF: World No.3 Germany side thrashed world No.9 Indian women's hockey team 5-0 in the first match of the four-match series here on Saturday. Pia Maertens (10th minute, 14th), Lena Micheel (20th), Pauline Heinz (28th) and Lisa Altenburg (41th) found the back of the net for the hosts. The Indian team got off to a great start early in the first quarter by earning a penalty corner only in the second minute. However, the German defensive line stepped up and saved India's shot at the goal. Thereafter, the hosts upped their ante. They got into great positions and created multiple goal-scoring opportunities. The next match will be played on Sunday. (IANS)

West Indies recall Gayle, Edwards for series vs Lanka

ST JOHN'S (ANTIGUA): Swashbuckling batsman Chris Gayle and experienced fast bowler Fidel Edwards have been named in the West Indies T20I squad to play against Sri Lanka, marking their return to the international stage. Off-spinner Kevin Sinclair earns his first West Indies selection and left-arm spinner Akeal Hosein gets his first T20I call-up as the Cricket West Indies (CWI) selection panel named the West Indies squads for the CG Insurance T20 International Series and CG Insurance One-Day International Series. The T20I matches will be played under floodlights on March 3, 5 and 7.

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