

Crowd at Chandpole Bazar amid rise in the Covid-19 cases, in Jaipur on Saturday

India working to reduce carbon footprint by 35%: PM

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said India is trying to reduce its carbon footprint by 30-35 per cent and working to double its oil refining capacity in the next 5 years. He stressed on Gujarat's solar power movement and said that the energy sector can provide growth and jobs alike. He was virtually addressing the 8th Convocation of Pandit Deendayal Petroleum University in Gandhinagar.

Farmers agree to lift rail blockade

CHANDIGARH: Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Saturday succeeded in breaking the imbroglio over the suspension of train services in the state, with the farmer unions acceding to his appeal and announcing complete lifting of the rail blockade from November 23 to pave the way for resumption of both goods and passenger train services after two months. Soon after the announcement, the Chief Minister urged the Central government to reciprocate by restoring all train services in the state, and also to hold further talks with the farmer representatives to resolve the crisis over the farm laws.



Will crush Pak terror with strong action, says India

Centre lodges strong protest with Islamabad

NEW DELHI INDIA on Saturday slammed Pakistan for cross-border terrorism, warning that it will take every possible action to safeguard its national security. In a reaction to the November 19 terror attack planned by the globally banned Pakistani terror outfit, Jaish-e-Mohammad, the government summoned the High Commissioner of Pakistan and conveyed its message to him in New Delhi. Lodging a strong protest at the terror attack, which was foiled by the alert Indian security forces, the ministry of external affairs demanded that Pakistan must desist from its policy of supporting terrorists and terror groups operating from its territory and dismantle the terror infrastructure operated by terrorist outfits to launch at-

tacks in other countries. The ministry reiterated India's long-standing demand that Pakistan fulfil its international obligations and bilateral commitments to not allow any territory under its control to be used for terrorism against India in any manner. In an official statement issued by the ministry of external affairs, the government said that it is "firmly and resolutely committed to take all necessary measures to safeguard its national security in the fight against terrorism." A major terror attack was



foiled by Indian security forces in Nagrota, Jammu and Kashmir on November 19. Initial reports indicate the attackers to be members of Pakistan based Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), a terrorist organisation proscribed by the United Nations and several countries. The huge cache of arms, ammunition and explosive material indicate detailed planning for a major attack to destabilise the peace and security in the UT of Jammu and Kashmir, in particular, to derail the ongoing democratic exercise of conduct of local District Development Council elections. The government expressed its serious concerns at continued terror attacks by JeM against India. JeM has been part of several attacks in India in the past, including the Pulwama attack in February, 2019.

'Jaish ultras got suicide attack orders from Masood brother'

NEW DELHI THE four terrorists who were gunned by security forces during an encounter in Jammu & Kashmir's Nagrota earlier this week were tasked by the Pakistani spy agency ISI to carry out a Pulwama-like suicide attack and the mission was headed by the brother of Jaish-e-Muhammed chief Masood Azhar, according to government sources. Sources revealed that Azhar's brother Abdul Rauf Ashgar had hand-picked four terrorists from the outfit's Shakargarh camp in Pakistan near the Indian border to carry out a "major terror attack". Another top terrorist, Qazi Tarar, had helped plan the attack. On Thursday morning, the four terrorists were gunned down by security forces in Jammu's Nagrota region. Continued on Page 4



Delhi wakes up to yet another cold morning

PURNA SINGH NEW DELHI The national capital recorded a minimum temperature of 8.5 degrees Celsius on Saturday, a day after the city witnessed its coldest November morning in 14 years. The minimum temperature was four notches below the normal, according to India Meteorological Department (IMD) data. Kuldeep Srivastava, head of the IMD's regional forecasting centre, said the minimum temperature was likely to increase Monday onwards under the influence of a fresh western disturbance. At 7.5 degrees Celsius, Delhi on Friday recorded its lowest minimum temperature in the month of November since November 29, 2006, when the city recorded a low of 7.3 degrees Celsius. For the plains, the IMD declares a cold wave when the minimum temperature is 10 degrees Celsius or below and is 4.5 notches less than normal for two consecutive days. "However, for a small area like Delhi, a cold wave can be declared if the criteria is fulfilled even for a day," Srivastava said. Delhi had



blowing from snow-laden western Himalayas have led to a dip in the mercury, and a similar situation will continue till Saturday. A fresh western disturbance is approaching northwest India on November 23. It is likely to increase the minimum temperature by a few notches, he said. The minimum temperature this month, barring on November 16, has remained 2-3 degrees below the normal in the absence of a cloud cover, according to IMD officials. Clouds trap some of the outgoing infrared radiation and radiate it back downward, warming the ground.

33 trainee IAS officers test positive for Covid

DEHRADUN AS many as 33 trainee IAS officers in Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA) in Mussoorie have tested positive for Covid-19 on Saturday. Following this, the academy was sealed for two days. LBSNAA director Sanjeev Chopra said, "A total of 33 OTs (Officer



Trainees) tested Covid-19 positive on Friday. All of them were shifted to the Covid-19 care centre within the campus. Testing of the remaining OTs is being conducted." There are 428 officers getting training under the

95th foundation course on the campus that started on October 13. The trainees include those who have joined the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Foreign Service (IFS), Indian Police Service (IPS), and Indian Forest Service (IFS), among other central services to take a 15-week foundation course before joining their respective departments across the country. The trainees found infected have been quarantined and 150 people have been examined while the remaining staff is also being investigated. "...Food and other necessities are being delivered to the OTs in their hostels by staff who have been equipped adequately in protective gear," tweeted LBSNAA from its official Twitter account.

Covin App to track Covid vaccine roll-out Covin App, developed by the Union government, is going to be a key part of Covid vaccine rollout plan. The vaccine's procurement, distribution, circulation, storage and dose schedules will be found in the Covin App. The application will also notify the first set of vaccine recipients when their shots have been scheduled to be taken.

AFTER AISHWARYA SUICIDE... LSR College announces fee cuts, hostel relaxation

PURNA SINGH NEW DELHI FOLLOWING the suicide of a student allegedly over financial constraints, the Lady Sri Ram College has announced a reduction in fee for a few courses, setting up a committee to provide laptops and allowed some second-year students to reside in hostels. LSR College Students' Union had earlier submitted a 12-point memorandum to the principal after the suicide of Aishwarya Reddy (19), a second-year student of the college due to financial hardships, college authorities announced that they had accepted some demands, including



reducing the fee for courses, setting up a committee to provide laptops to students, and allowing some second-year students to reside in hostels. A document titled "response to the demands met by students", uploaded on the college website, read, "Given the fact that students are not able to avail certain facilities of the college due to being off-

campus, the College has removed such charges from the fees this year. This has led to a substantial reduction in the fees... In addition, it is possible to pay the fee in instalments." A revised fee notice states that the annual fee for all courses for second- and third-year students will now be Rs 7,970. LSR Students' Union general secretary Unnimaya said the fee ranged from Rs 12,000 to Rs 26,000 depending on the course. Continued on Page 4

ADVERSE EVENT DURING PHASE 1 TRIALS

Covaxin trials not halted

NEW DELHI A 35-year-old healthy male adult, who received a shot of Bharat Biotech's Covaxin vaccine candidate against Covid-19, developed serious side-effects and was hospitalised for a week in Nagpur, according to reports. Bharat Biotech Chairman and Managing Director Dr Krishna Ella has verified that the adverse event took place and it was duly reported to the CDSCO. "We can't give every ad-

► Bharat Biotech says illness not related
 ► Now Covaxin in phase 3 trials



verse reaction to the press," he said at a webinar event where questions were

asked about this. On July 15 during the phase 1 trials of Covaxin, a health volunteer was hospitalised with viral pneumonia and spent a week in hospital. But it is clear that there was no halt in trials even briefly when this adverse event was reported. In a statement, Bharat Biotech said "the adverse event was not related to the

vaccine and as required by the clinical trial guidelines, there was due reporting to the regulatory authorities. The adverse event during phase I clinical trials during August 2020 was reported to the CDSCO-DCGI, within 24 hours of its occurrence and confirmation". The company also said it was investigated thoroughly and determined that the illness was not vaccine-related one. Continued on Page 4

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Satyavathi Rathod is in a huddle with the TRS Chilka Nagar Division leaders in Hyderabad on Saturday



Minister for Panchayat Raj Errabelli Dayakar Rao campaigning for TRS nominee at Meerpet Division in Hyderabad on Saturday

Leaders jump into poll campaign

HANS NEWS SERVICE
WARANGAL

WITH prestige at stake in the outcome of Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) elections, almost all the prominent leaders, MPs, legislators and other people's representatives irrespective of the party lines from erstwhile Warangal district descended on the capital to campaign for their parties.

As soon as the State Election Commission has announced the elections to the GHMC, the ruling TRS leadership summoned its leaders including both the Ministers – Errabelli Dayakar Rao and Satyavathi Rathod, and

Government Chief Whip D Vinay Bhaskar, and three MPs – Pasunuri Dayakar, Banda Prakash and Maloth Kavitha, nine MLAs and seven MLCs and entrusted with the duty of bolstering the campaign division-wise. This apart, the chairpersons of various corporations were also told to campaign in the GHMC elections.

Satyavathi Rathod, who was to look after Chilka Nagar Division, has in fact one among the 10 star campaigners appointed by the TRS leadership. On the other hand, Errabelli is already spearheading the TRS campaign in Meerpet Division. Vinay Bhaskar, who is in-charge of Allwyn

Colony Division has also started campaigning for the TRS candidate. Warangal District Congress Committee President Naini Rajender Reddy and All India Mahila Congress General Secretary and Mulugu MLA Danasari Anasuya alias Seethakka were among others, who left for Hyderabad to support their party candidates.

The BJP leaders, who are on cloud 9 ever since they won Dubbaka Assembly by-poll wrestling from the TRS have also landed in Hyderabad. Senior leaders Gujjula Premender Reddy, Revuri Prakash Reddy, Thakkallapally Rajeshwar Rao, Kondeti Sridhar, Rao Padma, Marthineni Dharma

Rao, Ch Keerthi Reddy, Enugula Rakesh Reddy and others were also making their presence felt in the GHMC campaign.

Meanwhile, the political activity surrounding the Warangal-Khammam-Nalgonda Graduates Constituency seat has suddenly taken a plunge with announcement of elections to the GHMC.

Telangana Jana Samithi President Prof Kodandaram, sitting MLC of the TRS Palla Rajeshwar Reddy, Left Parties candidate Jayasradhi Reddy, Teenmar Mallanna and Yuva Telangana nominee Rani Rudrama Reddy, who are in the fray for the seat have now kept their focus on the outcome of the GHMC polls.

Solve missing women cases fast: SP Ranganath

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NALGONDA

DISTRICT SP AV Ranganath informed that special teams were constituted to probe the missing cases in the district as per the instructions of Director General of Police.

On Saturday, he participated in a district police officers' meeting to review station-wise missing cases. Addressing the officials, he said to pay special focus on missing minor girls and women. Stating that 17 missing cases were reported in the district so far in this year, the SP informed that there are 75 pending missing cases in different police stations across the district. He advised police officials to take up in-depth inves-



SP Ranganath addressing the police officers at a review meeting on missing cases at DPO office in Nalgonda on Saturday

tigation to track the missing persons at the earliest.

Additional SP Satish

Choudari, CIs of various police stations have participated in the meeting.

Man held for misbehaving with minor daughter

HANS NEWS SERVICE
MOTHKUR (YADADRI)

A MAN, who tried to abuse his minor daughter, was landed behind the bars. This incident took place in Mothkur municipal limits district on Saturday.

According to sources, mother of the minor girl on Saturday lodged a complaint against her husband Buddapalli Lakshma-

iah that he misbehaved with their daughter while serving food on Friday night. He also threatened the girl not to reveal the matter to anyone, she stated.

B Lakshmaiah is an auto driver. The police arrested him on misbehavior and filed a case under protection of Children from Sexual Offense Act (POSCO).

Tiger kills ox, villagers in panic

HANS NEWS SERVICE
KOTHAGUDEM

AN ox was killed in a tiger attack, creating panic among the residents of Paturu village of Allapalli Gundala mandal in the district. The villagers said that they have noticed a tiger moving around the village and it killed an ox on Friday night. After receiving information from locals, the forest officials went to the spot and examined pug marks and started searching in the forest area.

District Forest Officer Laxman Ranjit Naik confirmed that the pug marks were of tiger only and their staff also noticed tiger moment in Kothagudem and Mahabubabad districts forest area two days ago. Stating that search teams were deployed to catch the tiger moment, he told the villagers not to come out during night times and not to go out alone. The villagers were worried, saying that it was first time to see tiger moment in their area and they have no pucca houses and have go out for livelihood.

Give nutritious food to orphans: Collector

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NIZAMABAD

DISTRICT Collector C Narayana Reddy directed the women and child welfare department officials to provide nutritious food and help orphans to grow up with mental and physical health, after inspecting Shishugruha and Balasadan here on Saturday. He enquired the children's health.

Stating that immune system will be weak in children, the Collector directed the officials to conduct regular health check-ups with a paediatrician

keeping in view of Covid-19. He told them to work not as employees but as the family members of the orphans. Narayana Reddy directed them to provide nutritious food to the children and asked them to inform him immediately if they need anything. The officials were told to submit proposals for repairs to Balasadan building. Since there is more space in the Balasadan, the Collector told the officials to admit orphan children if they found any in the district.

Later, the Collector distributed fruits to the children and spent a few hours with them.

‘Summary revision of electoral rolls must be accurate’

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NIZAMABAD

DISTRICT Collector C Narayana Reddy said that special summary revision of electoral rolls must be done for the success of the democratic process and this duty should be done without negligence.

On Saturday, he inspected the two-day special voter registration process at Nizamabad Shankar Bhavan and Chaitanya Public School centres as per the directions of the Central Election Commission. He inquired the Booth Level Officer (BLOs) about which forms they need most, they replied that they need Form 6A for new voter registration, to change the name and to remove names of deceased persons from the voter list. He told the staff concerned to cross



District Collector C Narayana Reddy inspecting special voter registration centres at Chaitanya Public School in Nizamabad on Saturday

check the details collected for any errors in the voters list.

The Collector asked the staff to register the details of the deceased, people migrated permanently and newcomers in the voters' list and to complete the

relevant forms. It is specifically suggested that all details be entered in the register. Booth level officials and staff were strictly told to be available at the respective polling stations from 8 am onwards on Sunday (November 22).

Chowdarguda SI suspended

HANS NEWS SERVICE
SHADNAGAR

CYBERABAD Commissioner of Police VC Sajjanar has suspended Chowdarguda Sub-Inspector under Shadnagar circle. As per the suspension orders released by the Police Commissioner on Saturday, Chowdarguda SI Krishna had committed some irregularities with regard to the seized vehicles when he was working as SI at Shadnagar. It is learnt that Krishna had exchanged the vehicles seized in an accident with other vehicles and resorted to illegal acts by misusing his powers. The Police Commissioner ordered an enquiry into the allegations of exchanging vehicles levelled against the SI and based on the enquiry report, he issued suspension orders against the SI with immediate effect.

2,800 quintals cotton burnt in fire accident

HANS NEWS SERVICE
SURYAPET

IN a major fire accident at Sri Santoshimata Cotton Ginning Mill in Thirumalagiri mandal of the district on Saturday, about 2,800 quintals of cotton stock was burnt to ashes. The ginning mill owner said he incurred a loss of about Rs 1.5 crore in the mishap.

Fire fighters rushed to the spot and put out the blaze.

It's learnt that sparks came from the tractor while importing cotton from it, which triggered fire.

Drunk man climbs tower in Bhadrachalam

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BHADRACHALAM

THE police rescued a person, who climbed a cell tower and threatened to jump from there.

According to police, one K Vijaya Kumar, native of Kodavatancha village of Regonda mandal in Warangal district was living in Bhadrachalam town for the last 10 years. Due to family disputes, his wife Meenakshi left him.

On Saturday, he climbed a cell tower in a drunk condition, in front of Andhra Bank in the town. After receiving information, police rushed to the spot and gave counselling to him through mike and brought him down.

Police said that he took the step due to financial problems. Police shifted him to the police station.

HC advocates inspect chemical companies

HANS NEWS SERVICE
CHOUTUPPAL (YADADRI-BHONGIR)

FOLLOWING a complaint lodged by a farmer in the High Court that their crops were being ruined by chemical companies around their village, a team of High Court lawyers visited sev-

eral chemical companies in Dharmoji Gudem village of Choutuppal mandal in the district on Saturday.

Advocate Kolli Satyanarayana said that a report on the extent of loss to the farmers by the chemical companies will be prepared and the same will be submitted to the Pollution Control

Board to take necessary action on the companies that are violating the pollution norms.

The advocates said that they found out that the groundwater was polluted after checking the fields and land in the village and after finding facts, notices would be sent to the respective companies.



Commissioner of Police P Pramod Kumar inspecting the seized ganja packets at Warangal Police Commissionerate on Saturday

Interstate ganja gang held

HANS NEWS SERVICE
WARANGAL

THE Task Force and Kakatiya University (KU) police on Saturday arrested four of a five-member interstate gang involved in peddling. The police seized 200 kgs of ganja worth around Rs 20 lakh, a lorry and a car from them.

Speaking to media persons here, the Commissioner of Police P Pramod Kumar said that the main accused Pawar Ganapathi of Somya Thanda in Sangareddy district has been engaged in cultivating ganja since 2005 to make easy money. Ganapathi who used

to cultivate ganja in his own land exported the produce to various places in Karnataka and Maharashtra. Although Ganapathi was arrested and jailed several times, he has been continuing the ganja trade, the police said. In all, Ganapathi is involved in eight cases in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra.

He befriended with Dugyala Vinay Kumar of Thimmapur in Mulugu mandal and Md. Hakim, a lorry owner, in 2018. Against this backdrop, the gang purchased 200 kgs of ganja at Dharakonda and packed them

100 packets each weighing 2 kgs. The gang who brought the ganja through a car transferred 50 packets into Hakim's lorry at Thimmapur.

On reliable information, the police who waylaid at the outer ring road near Bheemaram intercepted the car and the lorry, and arrested Ganapathi, Vinay Kumar, Ranjith and Ghouse Khan of Somya Thanda. The police launched a search for Md Hakim.

The Commissioner commended Task Force Inspectors Nandiram Naik, Madhu and Ramakrishna for nabbing the gang.

NTPC launches 2nd phase Miyawaki plantation

HANS NEWS SERVICE
RAMAGUNDAM

RIDING on its success of Phase-I Miyawaki Plantation, NTPC-Ramagundam has launched phase-II Miyawaki Method Plantation on Saturday at its Oxidation Pond area covering 6044.5 sqmt area by planting around 10,684 plants of 61 varieties of species in the presence of P Raghuvver, IFS, VC&MD-TSFDCL (PCCF); MJ Akbar, IFS, CCF-Warangal and Sunil Kumar, CGM, NTPC-Ramagundam & Telangana.

Expressing his satisfaction on the growth of phase-I, P Raghuvver termed the initiative a 'model' for others to follow. He appreciated NTPC's efforts under CSR for social development and environment protection. Echoing similar view, MJ Akbar, who has been closely monitoring the progress of Phase-I, complimented NTPC management for its proactive initiative and added that



Second phase Miyawaki beds ready for plantation at Oxidation Pond area of NTPC Ramagundam

the growth coupled with flowers and fruits in ten months is a boost for urban foresting. Sharing his view, Sunil Kumar thanked State Forest Development Corporation Limited (TSFDCL) and forest

department for their support and reiterated NTPC's efforts in enriching environment. He also mentioned NTPC's continuous support for Telangana Ku Haritha Haram initiative.

After selection of the location based on soil quality, water availability and secured boundary wall, 24 sectors developed with each bed digging upto 0.60 mtrs depth followed by filling with various layers of rice husk, farmyard manure, cocopeat and Jeevamrutham.

PK Laad, GM (TS); AK Samaiyar (O&M); Prasenjit Pal, GM (Project); Mohan Reddy T, GM (FQA); SK Patel, GM (Civil Construction); DFO M Ravi Prasad; office bearers of unions and associations and senior officials from NTPC, forest department and TSFDCL planted saplings.

NTPC-Ramagundam/Telangana had launched Pilot Miyawaki Project on January 23 this year at its Oxidation Pond area covering over 1618 sqmt area by planting 3,350 trees with 53 varieties of species. Within 10 months, the pilot Miyawaki project developed into a dense forest with 100% survival and set an ideal example of urban foresting.

Farmer crushed to death under DCM tyres

HANS NEWS SERVICE
MAHBUBNAGAR

A cotton farmer from Kodgal village of Jadcherla mandal was crushed to death after coming under a DCM tyres near a cotton mill in Vemula Narava village of Keshampet mandal on Saturday.

Going into the details, the cotton farmer, Balaiah, resident of Kodgal, had taken his produce to sell it at a cotton mill in Veluma Narva village. As there was a huge line of vehicles with cotton loads standing near the mill, Balaiah slept near the DCM tyres.

After some time, the DCM driver, unaware of the farmer sleeping near the vehicle, reversed the vehicle, crushed the farmer under the tyre. Balaiah died on the spot in sleep.

Keshampet police rushed to the spot and took the DCM driver into the custody and booked a case of negligent driving against him. They shifted the body to Shandnagar hospital for postmortem.

Twitter will give US President account to Joe Biden on Jan 20

WASHINGTON

AT a time when US President Donald Trump continues to assert that he won the recent US election, Twitter has said that it will move the ownership of the @POTUS account to President-elect Joe Biden when he is sworn in on Inauguration Day.

An official spokesperson for Twitter in a statement to The Verge said, "Twitter is actively preparing to support the transition of White House institutional Twitter accounts on January 20, 2021, as we did for the presidential transition in 2017, this process is being done in close

consultation with the National Archives and Records Administration. Other presidential accounts, including @whitehouse, @VP, and @FLOTUS, will also change ownership and will go to the office bearers in the new US administration.

Twitter is saying that it will transfer the US President account to Biden even if President Donald Trump doesn't concede elections. So far, Trump has refused to agree that he has lost and continues to tweet that he actually won the US election.

At the same, Donald Trump will continue to control his personal Twitter account @realDonaldTrump.



Donald Trump, after Biden's swearing in. Although, the personal account will lose the special protection it gets due to Trump's status as a world leader which means his account will be subjected to the same rules that apply on the majority of the users on the platform.

In the wake of Trump's tweets denying the stated results of the US election, there have been calls that his Twitter account should be suspended for spreading fake news. However, Twitter has so far refrained from taking any such action. Instead, it has labelled the misleading tweets made from Trump's account as

"disputed".

The former US President Barack Obama is the most followed person on twitter with over 125 million followers. Canadian singer Justin Bieber is the second most followed person with 113 million followers and the American pop artist Katy Perry with 109 million followers is the third most followed person on the microblogging site.

Donald Trump is currently the 6th most followed person with 89 million followers and the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is the 15th most followed person on Twitter with over 63 million followers.

Punjab farmers agree to lift rail blockade after 2 months

CHANDIGARH

PUNJAB Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Saturday succeeded in breaking the imbroglio over the suspension of train services in the state, with the farmer unions acceding to his appeal and announcing complete lifting of the rail blockade from November 23 to pave the way for resumption of both goods and passenger train services after two months.

Soon after the announcement, the Chief Minister urged the Central government to reciprocate by restoring all train services in the state, and also to hold further talks with the farmer representatives to resolve the crisis over the farm laws. The decision to lift the rail blockade was announced by Bharti Kissan Union (Rajewal) President Balbir Singh Rajewal at a meeting of representatives of the Kisan Unions with the Chief Minister here to resolve the imbroglio over the rail blockade imposed by the farmers in protest against the Centre's laws.

Rajewal, however, warned of resumption of blockade if the Central government fails to hold talks with the farmers' representatives in the next 15 days to address their concerns on the agricultural laws. The farmer leaders urged all po-



litical parties in Punjab to get together to support them in their fight against the Central agricultural legislations instead of politicizing the issue, which was of grave concern to the state.

Thanking the farmer unions for accepting his request, the Chief Minister assured the farmer leaders that he would meet the Prime Minister and the Union Home Minister soon to press for their demands.

"Let us together put pressure on the Centre to see our point of view and understand how these (central farm) laws would ruin Punjab," he said, asserting that he was with the farmers in their fight.

"We all have farmer blood in our veins," he quipped.

Amarinder Singh also promised the farmer representatives that he will look into their other demands, including those relating to sugarcane price hike and clearance of dues, as well as withdrawal of first information reports registered in stubble burning cases.

He said he would hold talks with them on these issues within the next one week, and will also set up a committee of officers to discuss the matter.

Welcoming the farmer organisations' decision to lift their rail blockade, State Congress president Sunil Jakhar exhorted all par-

ties to work together in the interest of the farmers and the state.

"We will not allow Punjab to burn, we will not allow the BJP to divide us on rural-urban or religious lines," he declared.

In his appeal earlier, the Chief Minister said his government would not interfere in their peaceful agitation, which was their democratic right and which had forced the Centre to rethink on its stand on the farm laws.

Terminating the fight against the central legislations a partnership between the state government and the farmers, he said, "We have to protect Punjab's interests together."

46,232 new Covid-19 cases in India

NEW DELHI

INDIA'S COVID-19 caseload rose to 90,50,597 with 46,232 infections being reported in a day, while the death toll climbed to 1,32,726 with 564 new fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed.

The total coronavirus cases mounted to 90,50,597 with 46,232 infections being reported in a day, while the death toll climbed to 1,32,726 with 564 new fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed.

The number of active cases remained below five lakh for the eleventh consecutive day. There are 4,39,747 active cases of coronavirus infection in the country as on date, which comprises 4.86 per cent of the total caseload, as per the data.

The total recoveries have surged to 84,78,124 pushing the national recovery rate to 93.67 per cent, while the COVID-19 case fatality rate stands at 1.47 per cent.

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

It went past 50 lakh on September 16, 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11 and crossed 80 lakh on October 29.



NCB searches comedian Bharti's house, recovers cannabis

MUMBAI

THE NCB on Saturday conducted a search at the residence of comedian Bharti Singh and her husband Harsh here and recovered small quantity of cannabis from the place, an official said.

The search was conducted as part of the ongoing probe by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) into alleged drug use in the entertainment industry, he said.

"A team led by NCB's zonal director Sameer Wankhede carried out a search at Bharti Singh's residence at Lokhandwala Complex in Andheri based on specific information. A small quantity of cannabis was recovered from her place," the official said.

"Singh's name had cropped up during the interrogation of

a drug peddler," he said.

The agency is also carrying out searches at two other locations in the metropolis, the official added.

Bharti Singh has appeared in many comedy and reality shows on TV. She has also hosted a few such shows.

The NCB has been probing the alleged drug use in Bollywood after the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput in June on the basis of WhatsApp chats involving drugs.

The central agency had earlier arrested Rajput's girlfriend, actress Rhea Chakraborty, her brother Showik, some employees of the late filmmaker and a few others under various sections of the NDPS Act.

Rhea Chakraborty and some other accused are currently out on bail.

UP doc murdered at home

AGRA

Nisha Singhal, A 38-year-old dentist, was murdered at her home in Agra city of Uttar Pradesh by a man who entered the home on the pretext of recharging the set-top box.

The man attacked Singhal using a knife and slit her throat while her two children were in the next room. Her children — the elder of whom is eight years old and the younger one is four — were also attacked by the man with a knife but managed to escape.

Dr Singhal's husband who is a surgeon was on duty at the hospital at the time of attack.



Hours after the incident, police identified the attacker as Shubham Pathak using CCTV footage and arrested him.

According to media reports, Pathak intended to rob the home and stayed inside the house for over an hour after murdering Dr Singhal.

The police have also recovered a bag full of cash and jewellery from the accused.

'AIADMK alliance with BJP to continue'

CHENNAI

PUTTING speculations to rest, AIADMK's Co-ordinator and Tamil Nadu Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam on Saturday said the alliance with BJP would continue. He was speaking at the function where Union Home Minister Amit Shah dedicated a water reservoir for Chennai's needs and also laid the foundation for various infrastructure projects in the state.

Showering praise on Shah as the youngest Home Minister of the country, Panneerselvam also declared that the alliance with BJP will continue in the upcoming elections.

Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu is slated next year.

Panneerselvam said the AIADMK will win the polls for the third time.

'Not allowed to canvass,' Farooq writes to poll panel

SRINAGAR

PEOPLES Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) President and former Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah in a letter to the state election commissioner KK Sharma on Saturday alleged that ahead of the District Development Council (DDC) elections the candidates of the PAGD are being whisked away to secure locations and not being allowed to canvass. "I am taking the liberty of writing to you about the upcoming DDC elections. A strange and a unique feature has come to the fore. Candidates put up by the PAGD are immediately whisked away to "secure locations" in the name of security and confined to those 'secure locations'. They are not allowed to canvass,



they are completely out of touch with those from whom they are supposed to seek votes," the letter reads. "Our parties have been in power in the past and have had the opportunity to head and run the government. We are aware of the challenges posed in the realm of security in a

place beset by violence. These challenges are not new but have been painfully persisting for the last three decades. But the government had structures in place which ensured security for all contestants irrespective of the ideology they espoused or the parties they represented."

The letter further says that the current state of affairs in the realm of security is blatantly oriented towards providing security to a select few and confining others.

"This comes across more as an attempt to interfere in the democratic process than any real concern for the well-being of the contestants. Security cannot and should not be used as a tool or an excuse to interfere in democratic processes," the letter reads.

AIIMS accepts mistake, admits NEET rank holder after Alphons' intervention

NEW DELHI

THE All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi has finally admitted NEET topper Farheen KS, who was earlier denied admission by the institute.

Despite securing an all-India NEET rank of 66 this year, Farheen was denied admission at AIIMS, after which she had approached former tourism minister and BJP MP KJ Alphons to help her out, according to Outlook report. Earlier this week, Alphons wrote a letter to the Union health minister Harsh Vardhan and highlighted Farheen's plight and accused AIIMS of not following due procedure in granting admissions. "Harsh Vardhan ji is a nice person and sincere minister so he took the matter seriously. He immediately called a meeting with AIIMS officials and they admitted their mistake," Alphons told Outlook.

"It is unfortunate that a minister had to intervene for a rank holder who should have got admission through the laid down process," Alphons added.

However, the BJP MP has claimed that there are many more such cases, where deserving candidates have been wrongly deprived of admission despite



emerging as top rank holders.

"I am told that AIIMS Delhi has denied admission to some other candidates as well on illegal grounds. I demand an appellate authority as a redressal mechanism in a prestigious institute like AIIMS so that students can raise their concerns and have their issues resolved," Alphons said.

Farheen had applied for admission in AIIMS on November 5 and she received an allotment letter on November 6 to appear for counselling on November 11. The prospectus didn't say to submit her non-creamy layer OBC certificate on November 5. It said that such a certificate should be produced

during seat allocation.

She had produced all the certificates laid down in the prospectus on the date of counselling before the concerned officials. However, the officials told her that she should have submitted her OBC non-creamy layer certificate by November 5 and since she didn't do that her admission was cancelled.

AIIMS officials allegedly also put undue pressure on Farheen to write a letter to the director of the institute and accept a false claim that her OBC certificate was invalid. Alphons suggests that the prospectus should have all the rules mentioned clearly so that it doesn't cause any ambiguity.

'Implement law against love jihad in Bihar'

PATNA

UNION Minister Giriraj Singh on Saturday advocated the implementation of a law against love jihad in Bihar. Singh said: "It would be a great initiative if Bihar government introduces a law against love jihad. I appeal to CM Nitish Kumar to do the same."

He said that love jihad has nothing to do with communalism. If a law will be implemented in Bihar it will help maintain social harmony.

"Love jihad is not only affecting the Hindu community but it is also affecting minority communities in our country. In Kerala, Christians are in large numbers and they are also worried and raised concerns over it. A statement of Syro-Malabar church pointed out that Christian girls are also being targeted and assaulted," Singh said. Earlier, Rameshwar Sharma, a BJP legislator from Madhya Pradesh, also advocated such a law. He had termed love jihad a conspiracy by the ISIS and Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence.

7 of family charred to death in Guj accident

GANDHINAGAR

SEVEN members of a family were charred to death in a road accident near Surendranagar at around 3 a.m. on Saturday when a dumper truck hit their Echo vehicle. The accident caused a fire in the vehicle, in which all the seven persons trapped inside perished, according to police.

Tripura man shot dead in police firing

AGARTALA

ONE man was killed and 5 others injured on Saturday when police fired on an agitating mob, who went berserk while observing a shutdown during a protest that had been on for the past six days in northern Tripura to oppose the government's decision to rehabilitate thousands of tribal refugees.

These refugees had fled to adjoining Mizoram 23 years ago following ethnic strife in the state.

Police said that 45-years-old Srikanta Das was shot dead and five others seriously injured when police had to open fire on the agitating mob that subsequently attacked the security forces at Panisagar in North Tripura district.

"Huge contingent of security forces including Tripura State Rifles troopers led by senior police officials were mobilised in Panisagar and Kanchanpur sub-divisions (in North Tripura District) to deal with the explosive situation," a police official told IANS on condition of anonymity.

Normal life has been crippled in northern Tripura's Kanchanpur sub-division for the sixth day on Saturday with tensions running high. The situation remained explosive as the Joint Movement Committee called shutdown for an indefinite period to protest the Tripura and Central governments' decision to rehabilitate around 35,000 Reang tribal refugees, who had fled to adjoining Mizoram in October 1997 following the ethnic conflict.

The agitations since Thursday extended in the nearby sub-divisions and districts as the state administrations did not take any steps to quell the situations and hold any talks with the protesters.

Works on 4 fishing harbours to commence after Dec 15

- CM lays foundation stones for four fishing harbours, 25 aqua hubs marking World Fisheries Day
- Says he was moved by the plight of fisherfolk who narrated their woes to him during his 3,648 km padayatra
- The four harbours are to be constructed at an estimated cost of Rs 1,510 cr at Juvvaladinne (Nellore district), Uppada (East Godavari), Nizampatnam (Guntur), and Machilipatnam (Krishna)

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

CHIEF Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy virtually laid foundation stone to four fishing harbours and 25 aqua hubs coinciding with World Fisheries Day and said the construction work will begin from December 15 after the bidding process is complete.

In the first phase, four harbours are to be constructed at an estimated cost of Rs 1,510 crore at Juvvaladinne in Nellore district, Uppada in East Godavari, Nizampatnam in Guntur, and Machilipatnam in Krishna district along with 25 aqua hubs.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister said during the 3,648 km padayatra, the fishing community had narrated their woes and he was a witness to the dire conditions. Despite having the second-longest coastline of 974 km, due to lack of facilities there was migration of fishermen to other states and sometimes they were caught in international waters and were jailed in other countries.



Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy laying foundation stones for 4 fishing harbours and 25 aqua hubs in virtual mode from his camp office in Tadepalli on Saturday

Moved by their plight besides Navaratnalu, Matsyakara Bharosa was launched and steps are being taken to develop fishing harbours and aqua hubs to provide employment and marketing facilities to aqua products. To boost the aqua culture in State and better the lives of fishermen, the State government proposed to develop eight fishing harbours, aqua hubs and infrastructure facilities for marketing of aqua products at Janata bazars at a cost of Rs 3,500 crore.

The state government would develop an aqua hub in each constituency, where ever required with an outlay of Rs 225 crore. Four fishing harbours and 25 aqua hubs were taken up in the first phase.

The Chief Minister stated that the government enhanced the Matsyakara Bharosa from Rs 4,000 to Rs 10,000 and directly credited Rs 102 crore into the accounts of 1.02 lakh fishermen in 2019 to compensate the annual fishing ban period.

Extending support to them during the Covid, Rs 110 crore

was disbursed in May 2020, six months before the actual date-line, benefiting 1.10 lakh fishermen. The government had increased the fuel subsidy from Rs 6 to Rs 9 per litre which can be redeemed instantly at 87 recognised petrol bunks and also provided power at Rs 1.50 per unit and the total subsidy of Rs 720 crore is borne by the government. In case of accidental death, the state has enhanced the gratia from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 10 lakh to support the bereaved family in the hard times. He asserted that the previous government completely neglected the welfare of fishermen and aquaculture in the state.

The Chief Minister said that the lives of aqua farmers will be completely changed in the coming one year. In order to create more opportunities for the fishermen, three more ports would be undertaken at Machilipatnam, Ramayapatnam, and Bhavanapadu with an expenditure of Rs 10,000 crore.

He said the state government has recruited 794 people as fish-

eries assistants in Village Secretariats to assist fishermen and aqua farmers.

AP Fish Feed Act and Aquaculture Development Authority have been formed to have quality aqua products which are free of fertilisers and chemicals. For the first time the state has set up 35 aqua labs with a cost of Rs 50 crore to check the quality of aqua products.

Earlier, for any testing aqua farmers from Krishna district used to go all the way to Kakinada due to lack of lab facilities, and such instances were seen during padayatra, he said.

AP Fisheries University would be set up in West Godavari district to give expert training in aquaculture. The work would begin in a couple of months, he said.

Ministers S Appala Raju, Botsa Satyanarayana, Agri Mission Vice Chairman MVS Nagi Reddy, Fisheries Department Special Chief Secretary Poonam Malkondaiah, Commissioner Kannababu and other officials were among those who attended the event.

TIRUPATI BY-POLL

TDP leaders not sure on Panabaka contest



Panabaka Lakshmi

- There has been no response from Panabaka Lakshmi's camp so far to the announcement of TDP chief that she will again contest as party nominee in Tirupati Lok Sabha constituency where she lost in 2019
- Party leaders in the district are expressing suspicions that she will not contest the bypoll given her silence
- TDP will have a tough task ahead as it has won none of the 7 Assembly segments that are part of the LS constituency

P V PRASAD
NELLORE

EVEN though the TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu had announced Panabaka Lakshmi as the candidate for Tirupati Lok Sabha reserved constituency, there has been little enthusiasm in her camp as it has not yet recovered the impact of defeat in 2019. Of the seven Assembly segments under the LS constituency, the TDP could not bag any one in Assembly elections.

Sarvepalli, Gudur, Sullurpet, and Venkatagiri Assembly segments in Nellore district and Srikalahasti, Tirupati, and Satyavedu in Chittoor district fall under Tirupati Parliamentary constituency. YSRCP candidates won in all these segments last year, though it got small margins in Tirupati and Sarvepalli seats. Amongst them, Gudur, Sullurpet, and Satyavedu are reserved for the SCs.

“Even though the party had announced the name of the candidate a couple of days ago, there has been no response either from the candidate or from the cadres. Panabaka family, in fact, had

with the Tirupati constituency, sailed to victory easily owing to YSRCP wave across the state. He was a staunch TDP leader and follower of former Minister Nallapureddy Srinivasulu Reddy and the TDP founder N T Rama Rao.

He represented the Gudur Assembly constituency for four times, i.e. between 1985-1989, 1994-1999, 1999-2004 and 2009-2014 and served as education minister in N Chandrababu Naidu's government during 1996 and 1998. He shifted his loyalty to the YSRCP in 2019 and was fielded from Tirupati LS seat.

Panabaka Lakshmi, who served as MP from Nellore Lok Sabha constituency between 1996-98, 1998-99, and 2004-09, from the Congress. Subsequently, she shifted to the Bapatla LS constituency and won the polls in 2009 there. She joined TDP just before the elections in 2019 and contested for Tirupati constituency where she had was defeated with a margin of around 2.28 lakh votes. Now, she has to face the YSRCP's strong candidate Dr Gurumoorthy, who is a native of the constituency.

Cong to focus failures of rivals

TIRUPATI

CONGRESS in its election campaign for Tirupati Lok Sabha byelection would focus on the failures of the two regional parties YSRCP and TDP in fulfilling the aspirations of the people in achieving the promises made in the AP Reorganisation Act and the betrayal of the communal BJP with regard to Special Category Status (SCS) to the state, said Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president S Sailajanath.

Speaking to media after the party preparatory meeting for the ensuing byelection here on Saturday, Sailajanath said that YSRCP which made SCS as its main issue in the election conveniently forgotten to force the Centre to accord it which was the party oft-repeated slogan after it came to power. Further, the attacks on Dalits, weaker section and poor increased manifold in the state but the YSRCP remained silent, he said. The ruling party also failed to see the Centre implement the package for backward areas development and also to fulfill the major development initiatives like Dugarajapatnam port, Mannavaram project, he said asserting that Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy did nothing so far to Tirupati development. Same is the case with TDP, he said, attacking former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu who despite being from he district failed to develop Tirupati during his five year tenure.

AP logs 1,160 new infections

AMARAVATI

STATE reported 1,160 new coronavirus cases, taking the caseload to 8,61,092 in the 24 hours ending 9 am on Saturday.

The overall Covid-19 positivity rate stood at 9 per cent and so far 95.43 lakh sample tests have been conducted. The latest bulletin said 1,765 patients had recovered and another seven succumbed.

The active cases fell below the 15,000 mark to 14,770 with overall recoveries crossing 8,39,395 and deaths 6,927, it said.

The five current hotspot districts East Godavari, West Godavari, Krishna, Chittoor and Guntur reported less than 200 fresh cases each while the balance eight added less than 100 each in 24 hours.

₹85 L looted from SBI branch

HANS NEWS SERVICE
GUNTUR

IN a major heist, burglars decamped with Rs 85-lakh from the State Bank of India, Nadikudi branch, in the district in the early hours of Saturday. According to Gurazala Rural Circle Inspector Umesh, the burglars broke into the bank by cutting the lock and iron grills from the backside using gas cutters. They snapped Closed Circuit camera connections and broke iron safe and decamped with the cash kept in two boxes, which were shifted from the Macherla branch to Nadikudi branch.

The robbers sprayed chilli powder at the scene of offence to prevent sniffer dogs scenting their trail. The police officials suspect that the theft took place between 1.35 am to 2.45 am. It is believed



that two persons wearing masks and hand gloves committed the robbery.

Guntur rural SP Vishal Gunni rushed to the spot along with police officials and enquired about the theft. He examined bank surroundings. CLUES team collected evidence at the scene of crime. Police set up five special teams to trace the identity of the culprits. Speaking to media, Vishal

Gunni said, “We suspect the robbery was committed by professionals because they sprayed chilli powder at the place of offence to avoid being tracked by sniffer dogs. They wore masks and hand gloves.”

The SP urge the locals to furnish any information about the robbery or suspicious movement of strangers to police for which they would be rewarded.

LSR College announces fee cuts, hostel relaxation

Continued from P1

“While the fee has been revised, it is not transparent under which heads the charges have been waived off. The college authorities should clarify that,” she said.

LSR also decided that “keeping in mind the exceptional circumstances of the Covid pandemic, and for one year only”, current second years “who lived in the hostel, upon fresh appli-

cation” and “on the basis of need”, will be allowed to stay in the hostel “after the hostel commitments to incoming first years and the current third years, who already are in the hostel, have been met”. “When the pandemic recedes and the situation normalises and hostel seats are once again 288 in number, the college would look into accommodating some more students of the second and third year in the hostel,

on the basis of need, during their remaining years of study,” the document read.

The college also said it would be removing a sentence which says a student “will not participate in any activity seeking to prolong my/her tenure at the hostel” from the hostel registration form, as it has been “misquoted as preventing students from participating in all protest”.

'Jaish ultras got suicide attack orders from Masood brother'

Continued from P1

A huge cache of arms and ammunition along with several incriminating pieces of evidence, with origins in Pakistan, were recovered.

According to the sources, the terrorists had received suicide attack training in Pakistan and underwent specific drills to use available firepower and inflict maximum damage to Indian positions in the Kashmir valley. The Jaish terrorists used a network of nullahs in the riverine border area to sneak into the Indian territory in the Samba sector and were picked up in a truck near Jatwal, 6km from

Samba towards Kathua in Jammu. After infiltrating into India, the terrorists were in constant touch with the Ashgar and Muhammad Asgar Khan Kashmiri, who is the operational commander of the Jaish in Kashmir.

An encounter ensued after the truck in which the four men were hiding was intercepted by the security forces at the Ban toll plaza at 4.45 am. According to sources, the terrorists were raising slogans like Allah-u-Akbar, Islam Zindabad, Pakistan Zindabad and Jaish zindabad when they were asked to surrender.

Covaxin trials not halted

Continued from P1

On the contrary, on September 10, the Serum Institute of India (SII), which was conducting the India trials for the coronavirus vaccine being developed by Oxford University, paused it after an adverse event was reported in the UK. The instruction was from the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI). The drug regulator, however, issued a showcase notice to SII after trials of the AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine were halted in the UK and a handful of other countries.

Covaxin, India's indigenous vaccine by Bharat Biotech, is being developed in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and National Institute of Virology (NIV). Currently the vaccine candidate is in Phase III trials stage.

Pushpa Yagam performed at Tirumala

- The ritual is performed on the occasion of Shravana nakshatra, the birth star of Lord Venkateswara during auspicious Karthikam Masam

TIRUMALA

THE colourful religious festival of flowers 'Pushpa Yagam' was organised at Srivari temple on Saturday on the occasion of Shravana nakshatra, the birth star of Lord Venkateswara during the auspicious month of Karthika.

Earlier, in the morning, after the second Archana and second bell, Naivedyam, Snapana Tirumanjanam was performed at Kalyana Mandapam. The special Abhisekam was performed to utsava idols (processional deities) with milk, curd, honey, sandal, turmeric and scented perfumed waters amidst chanting of the hymns from scriptures.

Later, Additional EO A V Dharma Reddy attended the puja performed to baskets of flowers at garden department office.



Temple DyEO Harindranath, Garden wing Chief Sri Srinivasulu, VGO Sri Bali Reddy, temple Peishkar Jagan Mohanacharyulu, AVSO Veera Babu and others participated.

Speaking to the media on this occasion, Dharma Reddy said inscriptions say that the festival was celebrated in Srivari temple since the 15th century to usher in greenery and prosperity in the country. The legends also say that Pushpa Yagam is generally conducted on the seventh day after Dwajavarohanam of Brahmothsavam festival. He said

TTD resumed Pushpa Yagam mahotsavam in 1980, on November 14.

The flowers were carried to Srivari temple in a colourful procession from the garden department office by TTD officials, staff and Srivari Sevaks (volunteers) to the shrine for the performance of the religious ceremony.

In the afternoon, Pushpa Yagam

is performed in which the priests offered flowers of various hues. In all seven tons of 14 varieties of traditional and cut flowers like rose, jasmine, kanakambaram and six other varieties of scented leaves offered. Later in the evening, Sri Malayappa blessed devotees on Mada streets after Sahasra Deepalankara seva.

A BATTLE ROYALE FOR BALDIA

Though GHMC elections are no referendum on KCR govt but nonetheless is a litmus test for the TRS party. BJP's larger than life shadow is looming large over this elections . BJP which has humbled TRS in Dubbaka is also pulling all stops to make their presence felt. It's a water testing elections for both TRS and BJP much before the actual battle cry starts.

TRS's inking pact with MIM for seat sharing by no means was a vote cutter for BJP in any case but may consolidate win against BJP's candidates. Muslims as such are not going to vote for BJP per se. BJP may try to polarise voters on religious lines and fence sitters with development and growth plank. GMHC elections are very vital for both the parties because it has potential to set the course of wind to flow in the times to come.

Immediately after Dubbaka debacle, KCR govt which was very well within its right to postpone elections to February had caught BJP by surprise. Timely elections could have two possibilities that it has denied BJP extra time for preparations and TRS had worked out strategies to cover the gaping holes well before the polls were announced. KCR is a shrewd politician who knows



Protection is a must during polls

It is learnt that second wave may strike major cities in the country including Hyderabad in due course. Unfortunately the SEC announced GHMC elections during difficult period and all political parties are gathering in mass to canvas for their candidates though there is restriction on assembling of public.

Many families are suffering with the pandemic and some families completely ruined with Covid 19.

Our CM also warned that if due care is not taken by the public what ever efforts put during lockdown may go waste. The SEC should look into the matter and special instructions may be given for banning of public meetings, mass gathering in localities and strict wearing of mask in visiting of houses. Regular sanitisation may be undertaken to protect one and all.

M Surender Kumar,
Secunderabad

that timing is the most important factor.

When the whole world was expecting him to postpone, he surprised everyone by announcing it thus denying main rival BJP a tactical advantage for war readiness. BJP is all charged to send strong signals of their presence in otherwise virgin waters of Telangana and wish to prove that their victory in Dubbaka was no fluke. They are going to put their best into this elections which is actually good for the polity.

A healthy and strong opposition party may push the ruling party to some quality work for the common good of masses. People can expect better gov-

ernance and response to their issues. TRS shall have to shed ambivalence and complacency in their own best interests.

It's the voter who shall have last laugh in this election and should vote consciously and prudently by disregarding any other consideration other than what and who is good for their city. Choosing the best is the only way to help themselves.

BJP is no David and TRS is no Goliath as of now but if TRS continue to ignore the interests of common people who had waited six decades to realise their dreams, may force BJP to assume the role of David through their discretion and discriminatory powers.

BJP's advent and rise in Telangana may have given fragmented opposition parties a reason to realign and re-energise its cadre.

TRS which had developed signs of inertia, power misuse and apathy towards burning issues concerning general masses will have to reinvent itself to take on the BJP whose recent successes in by-elections have emboldened them to widen the chinks in TRS party. Challenge for KCR is nothing new but to save party and shake cadre from complacency is monumental.

Ashok Goswami,
Mumbai

PAST & PRESENT

The great struggle for a government job



DR N RATHAN
PRASAD REDDY

RCT Cross Roads in Hyderabad is considered as the Ayodhya of Group 2 services aspirants. It is full of coaching institutes housed in cramped multistoried buildings, book stalls teeming with many young aspirants and roadside paper and magazine vendors. One can see tired aspirants rejuvenating themselves at roadside tea stalls that serve multiple varieties of beverages ranging from ginger tea to plain milk.

Though the ambience doesn't look suited for studies with a lot of traffic and consequent pollution, the thousands of students aspiring for various state and central civil services bring it a look of an educational hub with their mere presence. Small groups of three to five people discussing about national and international issues of importance can be seen on the narrow lanes of this famous area from dawn to dusk. However, this bustling place is also witness to many travails of poor and middle class youth aspiring for a government job.

I landed in this area in the winter of 2015 with a hope of becoming a civil servant. My search for a nice accommodation made me realise that the journey isn't going to be a walk in the park. Decent rooms were exorbitantly pricey while low cost rooms were incredibly shabby. It took me seven days and the assistance of three friends to find a suitable accommodation. Finally, I settled down in a luxury room of 12x6 feet that sheltered two other people along with me!!

Food was another source of worry as the hostels mostly served sub-standard food. Sambar looked as if dal had accidentally fallen into rasam and one had to conduct a combing operation to find chicken pieces in a cup of chicken curry. I could see the sad plight of thousands of young aspirants queuing up before rupees 5/meal vehicle with steel plates in their hands and under a furious sun.

Chikkadpally central li-

brary was the nerve centre of the area. Thousands of students would sit in rows under the shade of trees, deeply immersed in preparation, oblivious to the heat and dust around them. They would chain their study chairs to the trees when they went to their hostel rooms. Fortunately, the coaching centre I enrolled in provided me a free study hall and I was spared of the hardships of my less fortunate brethren. I used to study till 2 A.M or sometimes till dawn when disturbance from traffic snarls and co-competitors would be less and sleep during the day.

After a year of my preparation the notification for group 2 services was released in the year 2015. The exam was conducted in the following year. So far so good. The actual cinema started after the exam was over. Some aspirants knocked the doors of Hon'ble High Court over some key mistakes and the usage of whitener by some candidates. Some said that the exam would be re-conducted while some others opined that the exam would be cancelled altogether.

It was very anxious wait for all those who took the exam even as the case moved from a single judge bench to a division bench. The case dragged on for almost three years before a division bench of the high court cleared the commission of all charges. The good news from the court itself made me feel as if I had actually landed in a job. Interviews were held in 2019 August and finally I got selected as a Group 2 Officer on October 24, 2019!

Cut to the present, I am a highly relieved man after one year of announcement of results, having bagged a government job and an opportunity to serve the society. Every groups or civil services aspirant undergoes more or less the same experiences, whether in New Delhi or Hyderabad. I fervently hope that all the successful candidates remember their struggles and serve the society with the same fighting spirit with which they cleared this prestigious exam.

Congress is comatose, no hope in sight yet

The drubbing of Congress party in the recent Bihar assembly polls and bypolls held in various states sends a warning signal to the party to change its style of functioning to be in the political arena as a national alternative to BJP or else it is as good as dead. In this context, Congress stalwart Kapil Sibal fed-up with stereotype statements coming from party after every poll loss in the last six years that "we need to introspect the failings and take measures to improve poll prospects in future" has rightly come out that affirmative action within a time-frame is the need of the hour to salvage the party's fortunes in future hustings because time for introspection under the present circumstances is over and an attempt towards this end will only be a futile exercise.

Instead of taking the remarks positively and take steps for corrective action, senior congress leader Salman Khurshid attacking Kapil Sibal was not only improper but totally unjustified. Obviously, from the day, G-23 shot a letter to Sonia Gandhi expressing anguish in not following democratic process, the writing on the wall was clear that the party is on the verge of division. The abysmal performance in the recent polls goes to prove that fortunes of Congress is dwindling across the country at a faster pace due to directionless and lacklustre leadership resulting in erosion of its base in every state. When this been so, brushing under the carpet statements of Kapil Sibal and other stalwarts about party's functioning affirms the fact that party is deliberately stalling not to elect a non-Gandhi at the helm. Further, when the grand old party is at crossroads, it is unfortunate that coterie close to the Gandhi family is unwilling to adopt democratic process or showing interest to recog-

nise the talent to rejuvenate the party at every level. In short, what is shocking is that CWC, decision making body of the party do not want to see reason given by the top brass in their letter even when the party's base across the country has plummeted to a new low signalling the end sooner or later.

Notwithstanding the fact, people have lost reposing faith in congress because the party has not only lost its sheen under the present leadership but is also not anymore the kind of force it used to be once. Despite the downward spiral, the party's silence to enforce changes in order to bring a turnaround tells the tragic tale that it does want to change.

Now even after the party is bashed inside and out after the implosion, the infighting going on with party's leader in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury firing a salvo at the party's trusted lieutenant Kapil Sibal asking him to leave the party if not happy is a clear indication that the party is neither interested to embrace democratic processes nor make efforts to end rumblings which is growing louder by the day. In other words, time has come to seriously introspect the failings and set it right instead of targeting top brass who are not only critical of party's functioning but wanted to see the party change for the better in order to stay in the race.

K R Srinivasan, Secunderabad



Will KCR outwit the Opposition once again?

The unexpected debacle of TRS party in recent Dubbaka polls, sent warning bells to the ruling party for the sudden announcement of Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation Elections (GHMC) elections.

It is pertinent to recall some recent past facts for the rise of Telangana Rashtra Samiti in elections arena. The party formed in April 2001 with a sole objective to carve out separate Telangana state from Andhra Pradesh. Many eminent leaders of the region, irrespective of political affiliations strived for this cause, including senior leaders like former Union Minister Jaipal Reddy, Jana Reddy, MPs Madhu Yashki, Ponnamp Prabhakar, Ananda Bhaskar (Congress), even BJP leaders like Venkaiah Naidu, B Dattatreya, Kishan Reddy. At last, new State was formed in June 2014. Late Jaipal Reddy rightly stated at that time; while every leader and grassroot worker contributed for Telangana cause, it is only K Chandrashekhara Rao, who hijacked its entire

credit, leaving others at bay.

KCR and his party succeeded in forming his first government much to the dismay of Congress, which in fact, played a pivotal role as ruling party at Centre to pass the legislation in Parliament for the formation of Telangana State. Since last six years, many promises were made by TRS, keeping abreast the sentiments of Telangana voters and ensured to win several local and municipal polls including GHMC since then. Make believe world was shown to rural and urban masses by TRS Chief with magnificent promises like free double bed rooms, Rytu Bandhu Pathakam, free ration distribution, free education to needy etc.

Many of these schemes yet not seen the light of the day, some are discontinued due to lack of funds in exchequer. All these freebies naturally burdened the new State with debts of Rs 2.29 lac crores till 2019-20, while Telangana had a debt of just Rs 79.88 crores in 2013-14. Still, our CM boasts that Telangana is a richest State! Scant attention was paid to the development projects while mission Bhagirathi and other irrigation projects left sub-standard quality causing huge budgetary expenses. Opposition leaders day in day out alleging, huge State funds went into drains! But the rul-

ing party leader neither cared to check the same nor serious of their statements. Reason, TRS with absolute majority in House, is comfortable in saddle. Out of 28 Congress MLAs elected in last Assembly polls, TRS ensured to woo 12 members to its fold, increasing to 103, thus reducing Opposition to non-entire on the floor.

Engineering of opposition party Members at MPYC, ZPTC of local bodies was also systematically carried out. The party men with the 'blessings' of their leader ensured to sent his daughter Kavitha, hitherto lost in Lok Sabha polls, to recently concluded State Council from Nizamabad. Decks cleared gradually, so as to groom the young Minister and CM's son as successor of the supreme leader; while party reigns already entrusted to him. Now, being a shrewd politician, KCR realised the fast changing undercurrent at grass root level.

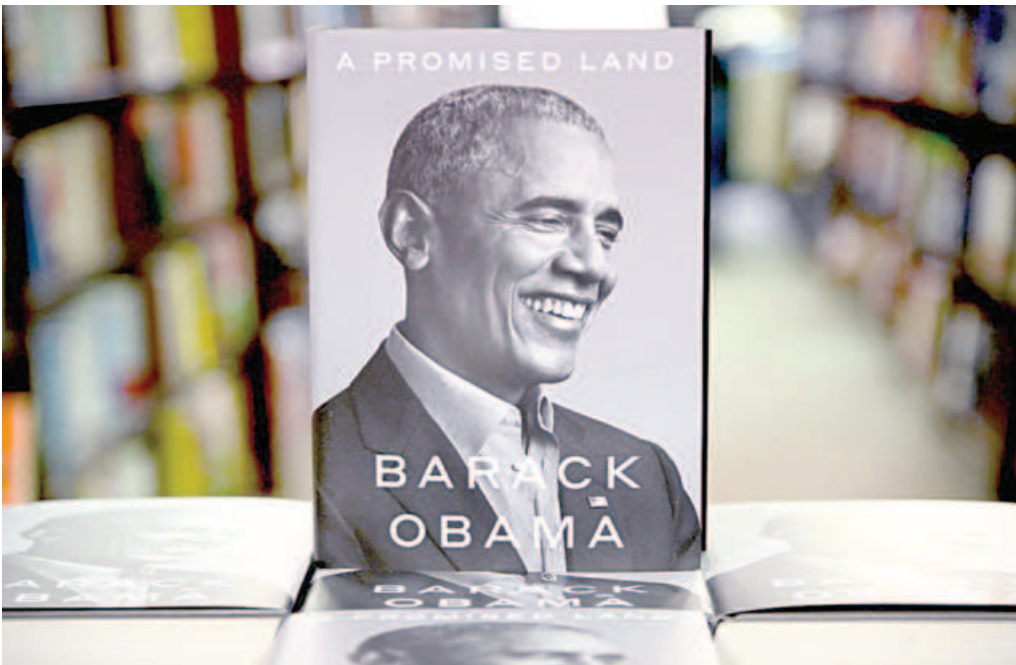
If left unnoticed, this may give an upper hand for opposition to stabilise. Hence the sudden call of elections in Baldia. Though illiterate, electorate too are equally shrewd, may not require much time to turn the table to the surprise of their masters. There are many precedents for this. Perhaps, GHMC polls may have several surprises in its store!

Govardhan R Jilla,
Mumbai

Barack Obama impresses Indians with his new book

"A memoir is an invitation into another person's privacy"-These words of Isabel Allende are so right and reveals to the readership about the person and his journey of life a mixture of delight and dismay. In his newly released memoir, "A Promising land", former US president Barack Obama made some interesting comments on Indian mythology, Mahatma Gandhi, on contemporary political leaders and their attitudes. These comments have grabbed the attention of Indian media and created commotion in political circles.

We are well aware that Barack Obama had his fascination towards India and he himself disclosed that he would always carry Hanuman statuette in the pocket to get inspiration whenever he feels discouraged. Of late, he made it clear that in his 902 pages book "A promising land" Though he had never been to India before his presidential visit in 2010, he had his fascination with India because in his partly spent childhood in Indonesia he grew by listening epic Hindu tales of Ramayana and Mahabharata. Of course, he also revealed that Pakistan and Indian college friends, Dal and keema making and Bollywood movies are also in the row. This view of Barry (Pet name of Barack Obama)



makes every lover of Ramayana and Mahabharata proud that they have chiselled and supplied a great leader to the world.

His book "A promising land" starts very promisingly with two excellent quotes one from an African American spiritual "O fly and never tire, Fly and never tire, Fly and never tire, There's a great camp-meeting in the promising land and the other was from

Robert Frost's "Kitty Hawk" - "Don't discount our powers; We have made a pass; At the infinite. This book contains 902 pages, 7 parts, and twenty-seven chapters.

In the preface, Obama has opened his heart without any hesitancy for his shortfalls as president and about this unplanned writing that has resulted in two volumes in which one has hit the markets on Tuesday. In this book,

he wrote about his journey of life precisely and recollected his various types of experiences since 2008 as a person and as a US president. Further, he also stated that parents and teachers should have to play a bigger role in transforming the generation "Y". He invited the young through this book to work for a better world with hard work, determination, with a large dose of imagination.

In this book, he made some attention-grabbing comments about India and its political tribe that has created ripples in a calm stream. He has shown his high respect towards India for its multiplicity in culture and its uniqueness of togetherness. He adored Gandhi and his non-violence that has won over brits in the independence movement of India, his determination for the well-being of dispossessed and marginalized groups. He has expressed his displeasure too on Gandhi's efforts on caste system eradication and division of Pakistan based on religion.

His views about Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh has reflected his keen observation and judging of his contemporaries. He called Dr Singh as scrupulously honest and icon for Indian economic reforms and expressed his displeasure over the inept handling of the 2011 November attacks in Mumbai that could symbolize him as anti-Muslim. He opined this has strengthened the opposition party BJP. The media as well as all the political outfits decently imbibed these words because it was a balanced statement.

He also made an interesting comment on Rahul a scion of the Nehru-Gandhi family that instead to have an attitude and passion to master the subject he is only having an eagerness to impress the teacher. Obama wrote that Rahul is a nervous and an ununiformed personality. These comments about Rahul has become viral on social media and gave scope to his opponents have termed it as "International humiliation". Some of his party men also hailed it as an "Apt" remark behind the curtains. At the same time, he praised his mother Sonia Gandhi's beauty as "We are told of the handsomeness of men Charlie Crist and Rahm

ident Obama have hit the world particularly India before his book hit the stores across the world.

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Emanuel but not the beauty of women except for one or two instances, as in the case of Sonia Gandhi. He also described that Sonia Gandhi as shrewd with forceful intelligence, dressed in a traditional sari, with dark probing eyes and quiet, regal presence. He also commented on her choice of Dr. Singh as premier with a weak political background that cannot pose any threat to her son's political prospects.

These comments mirror the ability of Obama and his comprehension of the happenings in the outside world. It is noticeable that in his first volume of "A Promising Land" he hasn't he didn't mention present prime minister Modi's name; this has been noticed and tweeted by an MP of Congress Shashi Tharoor and he interpreted in his style. Yes, the fans of Modi have to wait for Obama's views on Modi. Of course, who knows the second volume of "A Promising Land" may find promising remarks about Modi? This suspense could be continued until the second volume hits the stores. So wait for the right time to happen. Is it not correct "Timing is everything; if it meant to happen, It will, at the right time for the right reasons".

E Gajendra Nath Reddy,
Badvel

DEARTH OF DATA

Not much known about infections originating in hospitals

SANJAY BHATTACHARYA

HEALTHCARE-associated infections (HAIs) are acquired by patients during their stay in a hospital or other healthcare facilities such as nursing homes, outpatient clinics or health centres. Such infections are an important cause of morbidity, mortality, prolongation of hospital stay and increased healthcare expenditure. These also result in increased rate of intensive-care unit (ICU) admissions, increased re-hospitalisation rates, and sometimes catastrophic healthcare expenditure. HAIs can affect any age group, including newborn babies.

HAIs are not a single-disease entity and include a wide variety of infections. Some of the common ones include catheter-associated urinary tract infection (CAUTI), ventilator-associated pneumonia (VAP) and central line-associated bloodstream infection (CLABSI). These three infection types are also classified within device-associated infections.

However, there are many other types of HAIs such as surgical site infection, hospital-acquired pneumonia and transfusion-transmitted infection. Many infections which are generally acquired in the community or outside healthcare facilities may also be acquired by patients within hospitals because of transmission of infectious agents from other patients, staff or visitors. Such infections can include tuberculosis, chickenpox, influenza, food borne and waterborne infections such as typhoid.

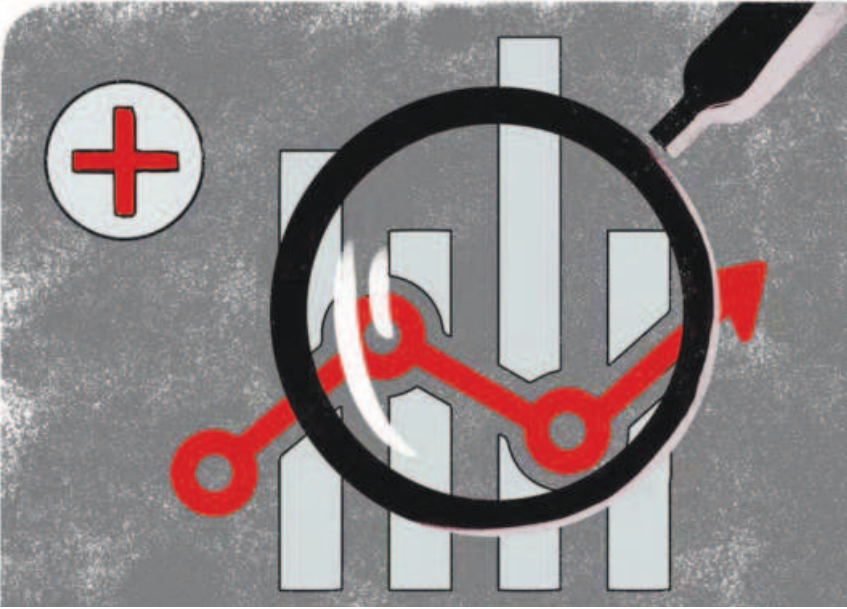
Unclean hospitals

The problem of HAIs is not unique to India or other low or middle income countries and affects all countries globally including the developed, the powerful and industrialised economies. It is now a global menace, especially in an era when there is overcrowding in hospitals, extensive use of medical devices, widespread use of broad spectrum antibiotics, and inadequate sanitation or hygiene in healthcare facilities. Many HAIs are caused by superbugs or multi drug resistant organisms. This makes the treatment more difficult and more expensive.

We have heard about superbugs with New Delhi metallo-beta-lactamase 1 (NDM-1) gene. But NDM-1 is not the only antibiotic resistance gene and there are many others. There are Gram positive bacteria such as Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus and Gram negative group of bacteria such as E coli, Klebsiella, Pseudomonas and Acinetobacter with resistance genes such as OXA48, IMP, VIM, KPC and OXA23. Bacteria are classified as Gram positive or negative on the basis of staining. Many of these superbugs may co-exist in the same patient, thus making treatment and infection prevention very difficult.

But not much is known about the prevalence of hospital infection in India. The most significant surveillance project of such infections is currently being undertaken by the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi, United States-based Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

The multicentric study is coordinated by AIIMS, New Delhi. The importance of this study is its large and varied reach in terms of inclusion of public and private sector hospitals, stringent attention to data



quality and quality assurance of processes which lead to data generation and many others. However, the final results of this study would be available only after a few years.

Then there is the international Nosocomial Infection Control Consortium, which is collecting HAI data globally as well as in India. Their latest report was published in February 2016 in the journal Infection Control and Hospital Epidemiology. This study included data from 0.23 million ICU patients and analysed information for 0.97 million bed-days.

It is important to understand the concept of bed days in this context. If there are 10 intensive care unit beds in a hospital, the total number of available bed days is 300 (30 days in a month multiplied by 10 beds per day) in a month and 3,650 in a year. This study estimated that the device-associated infection rates for adult and pediatric ICUs to be 5.1 central line-associated bloodstream infections/1,000 central line-days, 9.4 cases of ventilator-associated pneumonia /1,000 mechanical ventilator-days, and 2.1 catheter-associated urinary tract infections /1,000 urinary catheter-days.

This same study reported the following HAI rates from the multicentric pooled data of several neonatal ICUs: 36.2 central line-associated bloodstream infections /1,000 central line-days and 1.9 ventilator-associated pneumonia /1,000 mechanical ventilator-days.

The study reported that the extra length of stay in adult and pediatric ICUs was 9.5 days for central line-associated bloodstream infections, 9.1 days for ventilator-associated pneumonia and 10 days for catheter-associated urinary tract infections. The extra length of stay in Neonatal Intensive Care unit was about 15 days for central line-associated bloodstream infections and 39 days for ventilator-associated pneumonia.

This study also reported that HAIs may lead to deaths. The extra mortality (from all causes and not just due to HAIs) was about 16 per cent for central line-associated bloodstream infections, 23 per cent for ventilator-associated pneumonia, and seven per cent for catheter-associated urinary tract infections in adult and pediatric ICUs. The figures were about one per cent for central line-associated bloodstream infections and eight per cent for ventilator-

associated pneumonia in neonatal ICUs.

Having reliable, accurate, complete, continuous and relevant data about HAIs is extremely important for effective planning which translates into better diagnostic, treatment, prevention and control strategies. Without data, it is not possible to effectively plan for the need of laboratory or radiology-based diagnosis; it is not possible to plan for appropriate treatment protocols or keep adequate stock of necessary medicines or develop focused infection prevention and control interventions.

Since in a given hospital there may be many types of HAIs occurring simultaneously or during the same time period affecting various patient categories, it is extremely important that we understand the epidemiology of HAIs in a specific healthcare facility.

Epidemiological studies would tell us which type of infections are common, what are the specific agent-host-environmental factors that lead to HAIs, and what the outcome of existing management strategies are. Since resources are always limited even in the best of centres, knowledge of epidemiology help to prioritise so that we can focus our time, money and energy on certain HAI problems which are most damaging to the patient's well-being.

Data quest

In the case of antibiotic resistance, availability of data is important. Without reliable and accurate data, it is not possible to have short-term or long-term planning with regard to human resource requirement and use medical technologies required to effectively diagnose, treat or prevent HAIs. Data also helps us know incidence and prevalence of HAIs.

Incidence implies the number of new cases over a period of time (day, week or month), whereas prevalence denotes total number of new and old cases over similar time periods. If we have access to such data, we can also calculate the risks to patients for a given procedure such as chemotherapy, surgery and endoscopy. This enables doctors and specialists to counsel patients so that more informed decisions can be taken.

In India, reporting of HAIs is still voluntary and not mandatory for hospitals and other healthcare facilities in public or private sectors. Moreover, these infections are still not under the category of notifiable diseases. As a result, there are very few

mechanisms in place to track and monitor HAIs in India.

In the last one or two decades, some steps have been taken to increase awareness and get some data from the tertiary care hospitals. However, there are currently very few systems in place to monitor HAIs at the primary or secondary care levels.

There has been some major development with regard to HAI data collection within India in the last five years. These efforts have been led by ICMR and the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), New Delhi. Some of these efforts are supported by CDC. Besides going for accreditation to the National Accreditation Board for Hospitals and Healthcare Providers (NABH), hospitals are also required to submit HAI data to the monitors on a regular basis.

However, these efforts have mostly covered tertiary care hospitals in major cities. There is also a greater participation of private sector corporate hospitals within these monitoring systems.

In the future, we would have to include all public and private sector hospitals, district general hospitals and nursing homes within these HAI surveillance systems. There should also be adequate legislative support and regulatory supervision to ensure that HAIs reporting becomes mandatory for all hospitals and HAIs are included within the list of notifiable diseases.

At present, HAI data is reported voluntarily mostly as an academic exercise on an ad hoc basis in scientific journals within India. These ad hoc reports may lack scientific rigour, quality control scrutiny and may not report inconvenient truths for political, financial or social reasons.

It is very important that we get over this situation and put in place effective systems which collect data according to the best practice recommendations and takes appropriate actions at various levels as and when necessary for better patient safety. We can hope that within the next five years, structured, quality-assured and relevant HAI data would come into the public domain within India and be an important subject of our national agenda for better healthcare for all.

The concepts of Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) have been well known in developed countries for decades. In the case of India, though the theory behind IPC was known and understood decades ago, we lacked in practice and implementing IPC as a routine part of medical education, nursing education and healthcare culture. This has been a major problem and currently efforts are on to overcome this.

Unlike an individual medical or surgical procedure, IPC is something which cannot be done in isolation or as a solo effort. It is always a teamwork and support from the top level healthcare administrators is essential for resource provision or to ensure compliance.

The basic technology of IPC such as the Standard Precautions are neither difficult nor expensive. The real hurdle is in their implementation which requires long-term planning and vision with regard to education, sustained and regular training and administrative measures to ensure compliance. In a way IPC is another type of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.

(Courtesy: Down to Earth)



Rescued elephants celebrate decade of freedom at care centre

BRIJ KHANDELWAL

CELEBRATING a decade of freedom, elephant couple Maya and Bijli on Friday enjoyed a grand feast at the Elephant Conservation and Care Centre in Farah on Agra-Mathura district borders.

The two spent many hard years in shackles till they were freed by the Wild Life SOS in cooperation with the Uttar Pradesh Forest Department in 2010.

A former circus trained elephant, Maya was forced to undergo a rigorous training schedule to learn entertaining tricks for the audience. On the other hand, her companion, 40-year-old Bijli, was used as a begging elephant in Uttar Pradesh.

A functionary of the Wild Life SOS said, "The life of a performing elephant is an oppressive one, where it is forced to perform unnatural tricks for people's amusement. The elephants are starved and brutally beaten into submission as part of their indoctrination process. Maya would spend hours practicing standing on two legs or to carry circus performers on her back at the whip of a stick or sharp bull-hook ('ankush'). When not performing, she would be restrained by tight ropes and spiked chains around her limbs with no access to food or even clean drinking water."

Years of overwork, abuse and neglect had not only left her with ailments such as swollen limbs, cracked toenails, and damaged footpads and cuticles with severe toenail abscesses, but she also suffered from psychological trauma. Shortly after her arrival at the Elephant Conservation and Care Centre (ECCC) in Mathura, Maya was introduced to an elephant named Phoolkali, and her presence has played a significant role in Maya's decade-long recovery journey.

Bijli, the other elephant, was forced to beg for alms while walking on the hot tarmac roads in Uttar Pradesh. On one such occasion, she was hit by a speeding vehicle and the accident left her with a permanently damaged hind leg. In

spite of having grave injuries, Bijli's cruel owner continued to exploit her and neglected her wounds.

The timely intervention of the Forest Department and Wildlife SOS paved the way for Bijli's freedom. With dedicated treatment to her damaged leg and overworked limbs, the injuries healed with time and her psychological healing was aided by the companionship of two elephants - Chanchal and Laxmi.

Today, under the constant care and treatment provided by the Wildlife SOS veterinarians and elephant care staff, both Maya and Bijli have been able to make remarkable progress. Maya now spends hours playing in her pool and going for long walks with her best friend Phoolkali. While, Bijli, whose name means lightning in Hindi, truly lives up to her name and is always keeping her companions and caregivers on their toes with her antics. On Maya and Bijli's 10th rescue anniversary, the Wildlife SOS team organised a lavish spread to mark the occasion. They were treated to a mouth-watering feast of bananas, watermelon, papayas and cucumber laced on a cake made of cooked pulses.

Kartick Satyanarayan, Co-founder and CEO of Wildlife SOS, said, "Maya and Bijli's story highlights the condition of nearly 2,500 elephants in India who are beaten, starved, and used for begging, performances and weddings, or for giving joy rides to tourists. As we celebrate their decade-long journey with us, it is reassuring to see that our efforts have made a positive difference to their lives and we will continue to help more such elephants in distress."

Bajju Raj M.V., Director-Conservation Projects, Wildlife SOS, said, "Captivity denies elephants the very basic necessities essential to their survival and well-being. It is a pleasure to see the difference that a few years of love and care can make to their lives. We are grateful to the Uttar Pradesh Forest Department for helping us provide Maya and Bijli with a second chance at a kinder, safer life."

Relish, rejoice and regale big cricket bonanza in Oz

YAJURVINDRA SINGH

THE glamour and excitement of the Indian Premier League (IPL) has been the ideal appetiser for millions of Indian cricket fans for the main course to follow. India's cricket tour to Australia will have three ODIs, three T20Is and, finally, a four-Test match series. The arduous itinerary will bring forth challenges not only on the physical fitness of each player but also on their mental strength.

The IPL has been a boon for the cricketers who were part of it. They will now be able to understand what it entails and how to manage the safety net bubble around them. Furthermore, it also gave the players an opportunity to get fit and match ready after the long isolation that they went through because of the severe pandemic lockdown.

However, the importance, seriousness, and the feeling of patriotism of playing for the country is far different for a cricketer than playing for a franchise-based team. Players from both sides realise the heavy burden and responsibility that comes with wearing their national colours. Therefore, being co-coined with their fellow countrymen as teammates and support staff is not as mentally

taxing and burdensome as one encounters playing for a franchise.

The jumbo Indian squad of around 30 players is unique in itself. However, this is not very different from the preparation camps that had become mandatory for an Indian team before embarking on a foreign cricket tour in the earlier days.

Having experienced a few of them during my career, one realised the benefits of it. The togetherness brought in friendship, camaraderie, respect and an opportunity to understand one's colleagues as well as initiate a feeling of team spirit. The vision and mission of the teams goals seem more clearly defined and understood better by each of the players on account of being in the bubble. This is where Ravi Shastri and his support staff will play a crucial role.

Being isolated and away from any disturbance that normally occurs on a tour, they will now have the complete attention of each of their players. The absence of social and mandatory functions should give them enough time to strategise and prepare. The Australian tour is a long drawn affair and to keep the Indian players mentally fit will be an important task not only for the coach and his col-



leagues but also for the players to keep each other alive and focused. After all not only will India need to retain the trophy, but they will also have to prove that they are the best cricket team in the world.

India start their tour on November 27 in Sydney with the ODI series. The Australian cricket team and their supporters are looking at this series as one of revenge. In 2018-19, the Indian team was not only victorious in the one-day series, but

also for the first time in their history conquered the Australians in a Test series on their soil.

Australia did feel the absence of two of their stalwarts in Steve Smith and David Warner back then. Now, with both back in the saddle they feel they have the firepower to beat India in their backyard. The white-ball cricket will be just a primary cursor to the important four-Test match series in December-January. The important stake to play for

is accumulating points for the first Test Championship, especially as India and Australia are at present the two teams at the top of the points table.

This is the 'Big Fight', as one would call it in boxing parlance. Both teams having a fiery pace attack, so plenty of short fearsome deliveries to view and excellent batters to see as to how they will negotiate them. This is what makes Test cricket exciting, as it differentiates between the 'men and the boys'.

The Australians have, as expected, begun their media-based strategy of using their press to strike at their opponents. This has been their ploy for many years and the interesting part of it is that their cricket correspondents, former players, and the senior present players all play their part to perfection. Their aim is to get the visiting team rattled and uncertain, but with Shastri at the helm, one feels these tactics may not be as effective as they may have been earlier.

The Indian team with K.L. Rahul and Shikhar Dhawan in prime form and with Virat Kohli, Prithvi Shaw, Shreyas Iyer, Manish Pandey and Shubman Gill in the reserves, the batting looks pretty strong and formidable. Unfortunately, for India, Hardik Pandya is still not match fit enough to bowl and so Ravindra Jadeja fits in as the only genuine all-rounder.

The One-day Internationals and T20Is should be very well fought series as both Australia and India will want to get the upper hand before the Test series. The challenge faced by India would be as to how they plan to nurse their match winning bowlers Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami. The good news for India is that Ishant

Sharma seems to be on the mend and he along with Bumrah and Shami form the trio on which India will rely on to get them on the winning trail.

The absence of Virat Kohli after the first Test match will be quite a psychological blow for India. Understandably, he needs to be with his wife when they have their first born. The return of Rohit Sharma will be a plus, but the rest of the Indian batters will need to take the responsibility on their shoulders.

The Border-Gavaskar Trophy has plenty to look forward to as it is a huge series for both teams this time around. There will be plenty of whispers and a fair bit of asides as well. This is what cricket encounters are about in the middle amongst professionals. The Australians play their cricket hard, very similar to the present Indian side. However, all words will be forgotten at the end. The IPL has been a major binding factor to create friendships and long lasting relationships, and cricketers have never been so united and together before.

One now looks forward to some seriously hard fought cricket to relish, rejoice, and regale.

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

Mukesh all praise for Modi's leadership

Mukesh Ambani, Chairman, Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) said on Saturday that the passionate and dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made the world sit up and take notice of the emergence of a new India.

Addressing the convocation ceremony of Pandit Deendayal Petroleum University (PDPU) virtually, Ambani who is also President, PDPU said, "His confidence and conviction have inspired and galvanised the entire nation. I am sure that the bold reforms introduced under his leadership will pave the way for India's swift recovery and rapid economic progress in the years to come."

"All of us know that PDPU itself is a product of Prime Minister Narendra bhai's 'Atmanirbhar' vision. It is a vision he cherished even when he was the Chief Minister of Gujarat to make India self-reliant in the areas of energy, energy education, research and innovation", Ambani said.

"By the middle of this century, the world will use twice as much energy as we use today. In the next two decades, India's own per-capita energy needs will be more than twice as much as today. Therefore, India is required to simultaneously pursue two goals: To become an economic superpower. To become a green and clean energy superpower," Ambani said.

Ambani added, "To achieve these twin goals, we need disruptive solutions in renewables, low carbon and carbon recycle technologies. We need breakthroughs in new energy sources such as green and blue hydrogen. We also need great innovations in energy storage, saving and utilization."

Addressing Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani, Ambani said, "Gujarat is a trail-blazer state. It has always shown the pioneer spirit. Today the entire world acknowledges that New Gujarat has paved the path for New India.



Within a couple of decades, India will be among the top 3 economies in the world. Growth will create unprecedented opportunities and possibilities for young and talented people

The visionary leadership of Shri Narendra Modi that Gujarat received is now available to the nation. I must compliment you and your team for making Vibrant Gujarat even more vibrant under the guidance of Shri Modi ji and Shri Amit Shah ji," Ambani added.

Ambani while addressing the students said, "The future is very bright for India, for you, and for all Indians. This, our ancient nation, has faced many adversities in the past. It has emerged stronger each time. This is because resilience is in the very DNA of Indian people and Indian culture. In the post-Covid era, I clearly foresee explosive and exponential growth in the Indian economy. Within a couple of decades, India will be among the Top 3 economies in the world. Growth will create unprecedented opportunities and possibilities for young and talented people like you," he added. (ANS)

'LVB-DBS BANK INDIA MERGER SCHEME UNFAIR'

What was the hurry for RBI to announce amalgamation with a foreign bank, ask shareholders

VENKATACHARI
JAGANNATHAN

Concerned citizens, shareholders and a major union in the banking sector are of the view that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) mooted amalgamation scheme for Lakshmi Vilas Bank (LVB) with DBS Bank India, a subsidiary of the DBS Bank, Singapore is fishy.

Several individual shareholders have also written to saying that RBI has let them down by giving LVB to DBS Bank India free.

"Everything pertaining to the RBI mooted LVB-DBS Bank India amalgamation scheme is fishy or even points to a scam. The surprise and sudden choice of DBS Bank India; the alacrity and the hush-hush manner in which the amalgamation scheme was drafted and the just three days' time for shareholders (including about 1 lakh individual shareholders) and others to send in their comments, the absence of proper valuation and other things," CH Venkatachalam, General Secretary, All India Bank Employees' Association (AIBEA), told IANS.

"What is RBI's interest in handing over LVB with a wide network of 563 branches and about 970 ATMs to DBS Bank India. What was the influence exercised and by whom," Venkatachalam wondered.

He also termed as farce, the three days' time given by RBI to shareholders and others to send in their objections and suggestions about the draft amalgamation scheme. On Tuesday, the RBI announced its decision to amalgamate the LVB with the DBS Bank India.

As per the draft amalgamation scheme, the RBI has said that on and from the appointed date, the entire amount of the paid-up share capital and reserves and surplus, including the balances in share/se-



The moot question is why not allow LVB to go in for liquidation and let Deposit Insurance Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) step in to provide liquidity support to meet the deposit withdrawals

curities premium account of the transferor bank (LVB), shall stand written off.

On and from the appointed date, the transferor bank shall cease to exist by operation of the scheme, and its shares or debentures listed in any stock exchange shall stand delisted without any further action from the transferor bank, transferee bank (DBS Bank India) or order from any authority.

"The moot question is why not allow LVB to go in for liquidation and let Deposit Insurance Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) step into provide liquidity support to meet the deposit withdrawals. Unless the pain is felt across all segments for the failure of the bank, such failures of banks are bound to recur," P.Ramanujam, a retired Deputy General Manager (DGM) of Dena Bank told IANS.

"The mere three days time given by RBI to send objections and suggestions seemed to me something fishy and forced me to pen down my suggestions and objections. In this deal, DBS Bank India stand to acquire LVB for a song," Ramanujam who is not a shareholder in LVB but as a concerned citizen has written to RBI.

According to him, RBI needs to keep an arm's length distance and be a facilitator for the parties (Transferor and Transferee) to arrive at an amicable solution, with-

out getting itself involved into it. The other options would be similar to Yes Bank model (asking government bank to invest in LVB) or public-private-partnership model can be explored to maximize the value, instead of a totally selective approach to DBS, Ramanujam said.

In his objection to the LVB-DBS Bank India amalgamation Ramanujam has told RBI: "While the Draft Scheme of amalgamation appear in title, the arrangement seems to be in the form of acquisition by the transferee bank from the transferor."

"While the amalgamation requires the approval of respective Boards, the acquisition does not require that. In the absence of actual provisions under which the proposed scheme is formulated is also not explicitly stated, leaving confusion on the applicability of respective clause under relevant statute i.e. Banking Regulation Act 1949, Sec 36AE. Power of Central Government to acquire undertakings of banking companies in certain cases or Sec 44A. Procedure for amalgamation of banking companies," Ramanujam said.

According to him, LVB's net worth as on 31.3.2020 was Rs1,230 crore and if it has to be written-off by November 2020 due to losses; it is not clear whether the advances have been written-off.

"In case of write-off of such huge

advances, the logical actions on staff accountability and the responsibility of each and every official involved should have been examined. By transferring the bank to a subsidiary of a foreign entity will only subvert the entire process of accountability. It may be noted that many large value advances have been made by the bank have slipped into NPA, which are approved by the higher officials including people at the board levels. "Thus, the haste in amalgamation and write-off of debts without proper accountability will only facilitate a smooth escape route for those who put the bank in difficulty. This would include board Level responsibility as well," Ramanujam said.

Urging the RBI not to get involved in valuation of assets of LVB, Ramanujam also said the draft amalgamation scheme classifies advances into two types: those considered good and readily realisable and those not readily realisable/bad or doubtful of recovery.

"Not readily realisable, bad, doubtful category are different categories and the realisable value needs to be ascertained, else, a large NPA may be valued at lowest value, whereas it can be realised at any time subsequently. This will be a windfall gain to the transferee (DBS Bank), that too at the cost of LVB," he emphasised.

According to Ramanujam, in spite of huge non-performing assets (NPA) for LVB, the CIBIL report indicates, no suits have been filed for loan recovery.

He said LVB is facing an existential crisis and the secrecy clause for the banking industry will not apply now and it is a fit case to declare the details of NPA in public domain without which the recoverability of the loans cannot be understood.

"This leads to a moot question, who is being shielded? The RBI as per media reports also alleged LVB

of serious governance issues and bad practices in the recent years, which has deteriorated the performance of the bank. So, why shield the defaulters and those involved in such lapses?" Ramanujam posed.

According to the former banker, all NPAs should be transferred to a Trust for recovery and LVB should have been sterilised to gain higher return on sale. The benefit on recovery of the NPAs should have been allocated to the LVB shareholders. Alternatively, it can also be securitised or recovered through recovery agents and other means.

These NPAs may not be actual loss and may prove to be a gold mine at future-point-of-time, which will go to DBS Bank India at zero cost, he said.

"Segregation of NPAs for recovery will facilitate initiating criminal action against the defaulters and also those accountable for lapses and for failed governance issues. With its sale, such stern action will not be feasible and we would encourage defaulters to take advantage and those accountable to go free of their responsibility," he added.

Meanwhile individual shareholders too have written to IANS against the amalgamation of LVB with DBS Bank India. "We the investors really feel betrayed by the RBI move of wiping out the shareholders money. Isn't it our duty and responsibility to protect the 94-year bank with a great outreach?" Krithika Nagarajan said in an email.

"We had faith that RBI will never let us down, even if there is trouble in the bank. On the top of everything, the bank is a 94 year pride of India which cannot be let loose to a foreign entity at the stake of shareholders. This is against our PM's propaganda of Atmanirbhar Bharath," said Jayanthi Nagarajan. (ANS)

Arming social sector in the market



1. Have a two-fold vision and goal structure

In my years of working in this space, I've found that India's social sector lacks a culture of vision creation and goal-alignment. An efficient corporate structure has a well-defined organizational vision and under it more specific regional/departmental goals. Take Company X, which manufactures and sells cars. The organisational vision is to sell the most cars. However, a regional manager for Territory Y understands that, under this overarching vision, their Regional Goal is to capture say 20 per cent of Territory Y's market share. This specific goal will vary for other regions, depending on their situation, all emanating from Company X's umbrella vision.

This goal alignment with the larger organisation is missing among NGO workforces. Rather, I find that employees tend to focus on what they can contribute at only the individual level. Few ask "What can I do for the Organisation's Vision?" Thus, the practices of vision-creation and goal-alignment would provide a solid framework for NGO operations in multiple regions and allow the organisation to function better when scaling.

2. Make recruitment scientific. Invest in market-value salaries, incentives, and skills development

There are exceptions, but the intersection between social sector jobs and well-paying jobs is slim. Much of the brilliant talent entering the job market is sucked up by commercial organisations willing to pay market salary even before they've graduated. On the other hand, NGOs put out JDs simply hoping someone will apply despite an offer that's 40 per cent of market salary. No wonder we rarely see NGOs at campus placements, if at all.

Leaders who reach a certain point in their career are more than willing to start their journey of creating social change but are unable to make the shift to the social sector due to the lifestyle changes it will entail because of lower remuneration. In this unfortunate beggars-can't-be-choosers scenario, social sector organisations are often forced to compromise on the skill-sets they require from applicants. This only serves to further the dearth

of skilled persons in the sector, consequently hampering the organisation's efficiency and growth. Thus, the first step is to have a codified system of identifying best-fit candidates for each role specifically, as well as for the organisation as a whole. The next step would be to begin compensating these skilled professionals with competitive salaries. The same goes for bonuses, which are practically non-existent among social sector organisations.

Corporate employees have many incentives to perform better, while NGO employees are unfairly expected to perform solely out of duty, the social good being fulfilment enough. How then can we expect an NGO to compete with corporates for skilled labour?

Of course, it is not all at the hands of internal company policy. As my article on the

newest FCRA Amendment explains, many external factors also contribute to how much NGOs can spend on overheads such as salaries and incentives. Notwithstanding these necessary changes in the law, the culture of NGOs to be frugal with their staff must also be re-evaluated.

And the investment can't stop at employment. NGOs also need to begin allocating a larger share of their budget to skills-development of existing staff. Especially for fields like management, employers encourage and often sponsor their employees to obtain certifications in skills beyond their degrees. This culture is near non-existent in the social sector, for a large part because the availability of courses for NGO management is only a fraction of that of business courses. Thus, the sector collectively must invest in not only producing such knowledge resources but also in disseminating them through their networks.

This slow but imperative process will deliver results manifold and save the NGOs resources in the long-run by delivering swiftness and efficiency through the now better-skilled workforce.

3. Delegate

Have you ever noticed how Indian NGOs are almost invariably woven around a single or handful of individ-

uals? Usually the founders, a select pair or two will have established and seen an NGO to its death. They govern all decisions, they approve all plans, and they have the veto.

The corporate space doesn't function this way. Often, the monetary weight of a decision determines in whose bucket it falls. Thus, only decisions involving a sizable chunk of the budget fall in the Founders' buckets, allowing a diverse set of sensibilities to be involved in determining where the organisation is headed. New ideas have scope and a monochrome path is avoided. India could benefit from the new creative youth taking more responsibility in charting our NGOs' paths.

4. Plan succession

It follows from the previous point that NGOs are often born and die under the same leadership. Of course, the corporate space also has its fair share of dynastic enterprises. But those entities and the social sector could take notes from companies with more dynamic leadership. A well-planned succession framework would go far in ensuring NGOs aren't stuck with the same ideas with which they began and instead learn to adapt to new circumstances and industry best practices.

It would be too simplistic to assume that these changes alone will propel the social sector right beside corporates in the market. There are innumerable legal and narrative hurdles to overcome before the social sector as a whole becomes a more powerful player in the economy. For example, a shift in the mindset of our working population is long overdue. NGO work is today seen as a "retirement career". Very many fresh graduates look for jobs looking to spend their youth making money in the corporate space and then contributing to causes they're passionate about only when they've saved enough. What the social sector needs is more youth who are willing to dedicate their primary energies to their cause rather than treating it as a secondary project.

These external factors aside, introspection is a good start for NGOs to kickstart the changes that the social sector so urgently needs. With this new co-Covid world order, development efforts could use a boost more than ever. It's time to update the social sector's arms, for social goodness' sake.

(The author is founder of Upsurge Global & Senior Advisor, Telangana State Innovation Cell)

HANS BIZ QUIZ

QUIZ NO.
148

'Economic Substance Regulation in the UAE'

1. In October 2019, the United Arab Emirates was removed from the European Union's blacklist by the Code of Conduct Group on Business Taxation following the introduction of Economic Substance Regulations in the UAE issued by the UAE Ministry of Finance. When did the UAE enact its Economic Substance Regulation?
a) 1 January 2020 b) 30 April 2020
c) 30 April 2019 d) 1 October 2020

2. The European Union initially blacklisted the UAE as a non-cooperative jurisdiction since UAE was perceived as facilitating offshore structures and attracting overseas profits that do not reflect real economic activity in the jurisdiction. When did the EU add the UAE to its blacklist?
a) December 2017 b) April 2015
c) January 2011 d) July 2007

3. To ensure that Emirati-based entities that operate in a set of sectors do not artificially attract profits that are not commensurate with the economic activity undertaken in the UAE. The New Guidance stipulates that ESR notifications and reports must be submitted within six and 12 months, calculated from the end of the company's financial year. When is the first deadline for submitting the ESR Reports?
a) 30 November 2020 b) 31 March 2021
c) 31 December 2020 d) 31 December 2021

4. The UAE's removal from the blacklist reflects the UAE's commitment to the OECD and the EU's international standards. The UAE joins the list of countries removed earlier from the EU's blacklist after introducing economic substance legislation. Which territories were removed from the EU's blacklist?
a) American Samoa, Anguilla, Samoa, US Virgin Islands
b) Bahrain, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Guernsey, Jersey
c) Fiji, Seychelles, Vanuatu, Trinidad and Tobago
d) Barbados, Guam, Palau, Panama

5. Removing the UAE from the EU's blacklist has many positive benefits for the UAE, including boosting international investors and financial institutions, international trade, and tax treaty negotiations. Which is incorrect concerning the ESR in the UAE?
a) ESR is another Indirect Tax
b) To determine that entities undertaking relevant activities have adequate economic substance
c) To supervise and monitor business entities

if they have adequate assets
a) To monitor and make sure the entities operating in the UAE have adequate resources and qualified management/directors

6. The Economic Substance Regulations prescribe mandatory levels of substance for onshore companies, branches, partnerships, all entities based in any of the UAE's Free Zones, and representatives that perform which business activities in UAE?
a) Fund administration, Intellectual property business
b) Banking, Insurance, Lease-finance businesses
c) Shipping, Distribution and service center businesses
d) All of the above

7. Penalties for non-compliance with Economic Substance Regulations in the UAE range up to?
a) 50,000 Dh to 200,000 Dh
b) 20,000 Dh to 50,000 Dh
c) 10,000 Dh to 25,000 Dh
d) 5,000 Dh to 10,000 Dh

8. All entities in the UAE that fall within the ESR scope are required to submit an economic substance notification to the UAE Ministry of Finance. Which of the below are considered non-exempt from the economic substance regime?
a) Investment funds, branches of foreign companies subject to tax outside of the UAE
b) Entities which are a tax resident outside of the UAE
c) Entities which are wholly owned by UAE residents carry out their activities in the UAE and not part of any MNC
d) Entities with 51% of UAE govt ownership

9. Which of the below introduced Economic Substance Regulation to combat harmful tax practices, unlawful avoidance, tax evasion?
a) The Directorate-General for Trade, EU
b) Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
c) European Commission
d) The European Free Trade Association

10. Economic Substance Regulation has been introduced in which category of countries?
a) Territories with low or no corporate taxes
b) Countries with high taxes
c) Territories that offer and attract investments from offshore companies
d) Countries with Free Trade Zones

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

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Best FIFA Awards to be held virtually on Dec 17

ZURICH

THE Best FIFA Football Awards ceremony organised by the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA), which was postponed from its September date due to the Covid-19 pandemic, will now be held on December 17 at a virtual event.

"This year, it has been clearer than ever that nothing is more important than health," FIFA said in a statement.

"The protagonists of the game have taken on greater responsibility, not just as players, but also as role models giving hope to communities everywhere and sharing messages of unity in the face of the ongoing public health crisis," the statement added.

There are prizes for the best men's and women's players, coaches, goalkeepers and best eleven. There will also be an award for fairplay, as well as one for the most beautiful goal. There will also be a best fan award. The winners are voted for by the national team captains and coaches, 200 journalists, as well as an online ballot of fans. The voting will run from November 25 to December 9.

"While in 2019, The Best FIFA Women's Goalkeeper and The Best Men's Goalkeeper were chosen by a dedicated panel, the outstanding figures between the sticks will also be crowned by players, coaches, journalists and fans this year," the statement added. (IANS)



LONDON

DANIIL Medvedev defeated tournament debutant Diego Schwartzman 6-3, 6-3 to set up a mouth-watering semi-final clash with Rafael Nadal in the ATP Finals at the O2 Arena here.

The win over Schwartzmann enabled him to complete 3-0 run in Group Tokyo 1970. It is a massive improvement from last year when he went winless. The Russian's match against Nadal will take place in the early hours of Sunday (India time).

"I was playing great in the two previous matches. I think it is always good to stay undefeated for the confidence. I wanted to win the match, so I am really happy that I have done it," said Medvedev after the match. "I was serving really well today, so that helped me a lot throughout all the match."

Daniil Medvedev of Russia serves to Diego Schwartzman of Argentina during their singles tennis match at the ATP World Finals tennis tournament at the O2 arena in London

Siraj declines BCCI offer to fly back home after father's death

NEW DELHI

INDIA fast bowler Mohammed Siraj, currently on tour of Australia with the Indian team, was given the option of flying back home by the Indian cricket board to be with his family after his father died on Friday. Siraj, however, decided to stay back in Australia.

"India fast bowler lost his father on Friday after a brief illness. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) had a discussion with Siraj and he was offered the option of flying back and be with his family in this hour of grief," the Board said in a statement.

"The fast bowler has decided to stay with the Indian contingent and continue performing his national duties. The BCCI shares his grief and will be supportive of Siraj in this extremely challenging phase," the statement added.



Earlier, BCCI president and former India captain Sourav Ganguly offered condolences on Twitter.

"May Mohammed Siraj have a lot of strength to overcome this loss..lots of good wishes for his success in this trip..tremendous character @bcci," he tweeted on Saturday. His Indian Premier League (IPL) franchise Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) too offered condolences.

"Our heartfelt prayers and condolences go out to Mohammed Siraj and his family, on the loss of his father. The entire RCB family is with you during this difficult time. Stay strong, Miyan," tweeted the official handle of RCB.

Siraj is part of India's Test squad and is in the Sydney quarantine hub. Although the 26-year-old has played in ODIs (1) and T20Is (3), this has been his maiden entry into the Test squad.

Siraj had been among the wickets in first-class cricket at home, leading his team Hyderabad's pace attack in Ranji Trophy and also featuring with wickets for India A.

He took an eight-wicket haul against Australia A in Bengaluru in 2018 to come into national contention. The haul, a record for India A, followed a few fifters and four-wicket hauls against South Africa A and West Indies A that year. He also performed against England Lions.

His bowling spell against Kolkata Knight Riders last month, when he bowled two maiden overs, and picked three wickets in the powerplay got him further accolades. (IANS)

NEW DELHI

THE hullabaloo over his hamstring was confusing as well as amusing for Rohit Sharma, who says he always knew that the injury was not that serious and he would be battle-ready for the tour of Australia.

India's white-ball vice-captain, in a detailed conversation with PTI, opened about the left hamstring injury during the IPL, which became a matter of intense speculation after he returned to action within days of being left out of the Australia tour earlier this month. He was subsequently added to the Test squad.

"I don't know what was going on, to be honest and what all were people talking about. But let me put this on record, I was constantly communicating with BCCI and Mumbai Indians," Rohit said. He hit a match-winning knock of 68 off 50 balls in the IPL final against Delhi Capitals, playing through pain. Rohit is currently doing strength and conditioning work at the National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru before heading to Australia.

"I told them (Mumbai Indians) that I can take the field since it is the shortest format and I will be able to manage the situation quite nicely. Once I made my mind clear, it was all about focussing on what I needed to do," he said.

"Hamstring is feeling absolutely fine. Just started the process of getting it nice and strong. Before I play the longer format, I absolutely needed to be clear in mind that there is no stone that is left unturned, that's probably the reason, I'm at the NCA," Rohit added.

For Rohit, the chatter on the outside regarding his injury and his subsequent participation in the IPL play-offs, didn't matter much. "So for me, it was not a concern what x, y or z was talking about like whether he would make it to Australia," he said.

"Once the injury happened, the next two days all I did was to figure out what I can do in the next 10 days - whether I will be able to play or not.

"Unless one goes to the ground, one won't know how the body is shaping up,

Hamstring getting better, keeping fingers crossed for Australia: Rohit

feels the five-time IPL champion captain.

"But every day, hamstring (degree of injury) was changing. The way it was responding was changing, so I was feeling quite confident that I could play and that is the communication that I had with MI at that point. I told them that I think I will be okay to play just before play-offs. If there is any discomfort, I won't be playing the play-offs."

All Rohit needed was three and half weeks to get ready for Tests and he fails to understand what the fuss was all about given that the series starts December 17. "Of course, there is still some work that needs to be done on my hamstring. That's why I didn't go to Australia for the white-ball leg as there are back-to-back games. Around 6 games in 11 days," he said about the limited overs leg beginning November 27.

"So I thought if I get to work on my body for 25 days, I can probably go and play the Test matches. So it was an easy decision for me and I don't know why it became so complicated for others," he wondered aloud. Rohit also spoke about his enduring relationship with his IPL franchise Mumbai Indians. The five-time champions, he said, were not created overnight.

"Yeah, we have a (Kieron) Pollard, a Hardik (Pandya), (Jasprit) Bumrah but has anybody thought why this team is successful?" he asked.

"Lot of people, I hear say that can he (Rohit) do it with other teams? Firstly, why shall I need to do it with other teams? There is a certain way this franchise wants to go and same direction I want to go as well, both as a player and leader," he explained.

"Did this team become good overnight? No. It's just that this franchise doesn't believe in chopping and changing. And every player, including Rohit Sharma, was available (2011) at auctions. Just that MI picked and believed in building a team."

He was extremely proud of MI getting New Zealand pacer Trent Boult on board, which worked wonders for them. Boult was released by Delhi Capitals before the players auction, a decision that they would probably regret given how effective he was this year. "Trent Boult was with Delhi last year and before that with Sunrisers. We

needed someone to provide wickets upfront and who could swing the ball," Rohit said.

"We strongly pursued him and got him from Capitals, something I am proud of." It was a tough year on all counts but Rohit said the franchise provided an environment that created memories of a lifetime while being locked in a bio-bubble due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"MI in a year where everything was uncertain, created a happy space for us. 80 days in a bio-bub-

ble never felt claustrophobic. Every little aspect was taken care of and the preparation started in June in a bio-secure environment with all net bowlers and Indian players," he said. Rohit also touched upon his IPL leadership and spoke about the freedom he gives his players by letting them evolve as individuals. He cited Suryakumar Yadav's composure while dealing with India rejection as an example.

"We were sitting in our team room and I could feel he was dejected. But I didn't go and speak to him. It was he who came up and said, 'Don't worry I will get over it and win the matches for MI'."

"And when he said that I also realised he is heading in right direction not only in terms of IPL but in his overall career. There are a lot of India games and his time will come. 'If you ask me, my philosophy is mind over matter and that's what works for me.'" (PTI)



New-look FC Goa eye overcome Bengaluru challenge

PANAJI

BENGALURU FC will face a new-look FC Goa side at the Fatorda Stadium in Margao on Sunday in the third match of the 2020-21 Indian Super League (ISL) season.

League winners Shield holders FC Goa find themselves in an unfamiliar position. While they have come to be associated with continuity and stability, Goa lost several key players, many of whom followed former coach Sergio Lobera to Mumbai City FC.

Despite that, they will be hoping to claim their maiden ISL trophy under new head coach Juan Ferrando after acquiring some experienced foreigners alongside promising Indian talent during the pre-season. The onus will be on the long-serving Edu Bedia to help the new arrivals settle fast.

Securing three points on Sunday won't be an easy task, though. They face a Bengaluru FC side, who have not only retained their core from last season but also further strengthened their squad. Bolstering the foreign contingent that includes the likes of Dimas Delgado and Erik Paartalu are Norwegian striker Kristian Opseth and Brazilian winger Cleiton Silva.



The statistics favour Carles Cuadrat's side. Since Bengaluru's entry into the ISL, Goa have won only once against them in seven meetings. Ferrando, though, is not dwelling on the past. "I know the history of Bengaluru FC against FC Goa," Ferrando said. "I know what happened in the last games. But this is a new team, a new chapter, a new moment of the season."

Cuatrat, who is yet to taste defeat against FC Goa as head coach, will be aiming to keep his record intact, with his side unbeaten in their last six games against the hosts. And he

knows his side is in for a tough fight.

"I don't know Juan Ferrando personally but I know all the Spanish coaches have a good formation and are very studious about opponents, tactics and strategy," the 52-year-old said. "I'm sure they will be working really hard to have a plan against us, so I'm expecting a very tactical game."

With Bengaluru conceding just 16 goals last season -- the least by any team -- and Goa scoring more than anyone, fans are in for an entertaining contest between two heavyweights. (IANS)

Gunneswaran enters Orlando Open semis

ORLANDO (USA)

INDIA'S Prajnesh Gunneswaran defeated Dmitri Popko of Kazakhstan in straight sets to enter the semi-finals of Orlando Open tennis.

The fourth-seeded player turned in a dominating 6-0, 6-3 performance, earning six breaks along the way against a weary sixth-seeded Popko, who had spent more than



four hours on court the day before between singles and doubles.

Gunneswaran will now face Christopher Eubanks of the United States in the last four.

The 31-year-old Indian smashed two aces against none by his Kazakh opponent.

Gunneswaran won 61% of the first-serve points and 58% of the second service points. He also saved 67% of the break points.

The world No. 137 was clearly the more dominant of the two in winning the service points (60% against 30%), return points (70% against 40%) as well as the total points (64% against 36%).

In the other semi-final, American Mitchell Krueger will face compatriot Brandon Nakashima, who is a teenager. (IANS)

1st women's football camp since lockdown from Tuesday

Mumbai: Thirty women footballers have been called up for a national camp that will start from Tuesday in Goa, the All India Football Federation (AIFF) said in a statement on Saturday. This is the first senior national women's camp after coronavirus-induced lockdown.

A detailed Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) has been prepared for the resumption of the team training. Prescribed by senior national team doctor Shervin Sheriff, the SOP mandates that incoming players and support staff must get a Covid test (RT-PCR) done from an Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) accredited laboratory three days before departure from their hometowns.

Women's team head coach Maymol Rocky has selected the players for the camp. (IANS)