



Attacker wounds 13 in US shooting, escapes

AUSTIN: Someone opened fire in a busy entertainment district in downtown Austin early Saturday, wounding 13 people, including two critically, before getting away, authorities said. Investigators were looking into what sparked the shooting and weren't able to get a detailed description of the shooter, but they believe it was a man, Police Chief Joseph Chacon said at a 4 a.m. news conference. He said investigators were examining surveillance video and other evidence, and he asked anyone with information about the shooting to contact the police.

Row over Digvijay's comment on Art 370 revocation

BHOPAL: A row erupted on Saturday over Congress leader Digvijay Singh's purported comments in an audio chat on social media that his party will have a "relook" at Article 370 revocation and Jammu and Kashmir's lost statehood if it returns to power, with the BJP accusing him of speaking "the language of Pakistan" and spewing venom against India. Singh's remarks to a person, who the BJP said was a journalist of Pakistani origin, were seized by its leaders to unleash a torrent of criticism against the opposition party and demand statements from Congress president Sonia Gandhi and her son Rahul Gandhi on the issue.



A man prays for respite from coronavirus, at a 'Corona Mata' temple set up under a neem tree, at a village in Pratapgarh district on Friday

Covid-induced online buying habit a boost to meat sellers



FreshToHome, through its online platform, delivers meat, fish, chicken and other such products at doorstep, says its co-founder



Firefighters attempt to douse a blaze in a showroom at Lajpat Nagar's Central Market area, in New Delhi on Saturday

5 SHOWROOMS GUTTED IN LAJPAT NAGAR FIRE

NEW DELHI

FIVE showrooms were damaged in a fire that broke out in a market area here on Saturday morning, officials said, adding no injuries were reported. The incident took place in south Delhi's Lajpat Nagar Central Market area, they said. According to the fire department, a call about

the blaze was received around 10.20 am, following which 16 fire tenders were rushed to the spot. "When fire tenders reached the spot, four showrooms were on fire and later (the blaze) spread to the fifth shop. It must have started early morning in one of the shops and then spread to the rest," Delhi Fire Service Director Atul Garg said,

adding its origin and cause were unknown. He said the firemen were able to prevent the blaze from spreading further with a timely response to the call. "Our firemen showed great presence of mind and saved the fire from spreading to the residential areas behind the showrooms," Garg said the operation to douse the blaze began from

a lane between the rear gates of the showrooms to residential quarters. A total of 30 fire tenders and over 100 firefighters were on the spot to bring the fire under control, he said. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal tweeted: "I am constantly monitoring the situation and in constant touch with the fire department officials."

Chances of 3rd wave very real

Delhi CM announces steps to increase oxygen supply

NEW DELHI

THE chances of a third wave of the coronavirus pandemic hitting India are "very real", Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Saturday, adding that the country needed to be prepared for it.

Kejriwal recalled the grave oxygen crisis that Delhi saw during the second wave of Covid-19 and provided details of his government's efforts to ensure



adequate supply of the life-saving gas.

"Delhi is not an industrial state, it does not produce oxygen on its own," Kejri-

wal said during a press briefing. "Usually Delhi's hospitals require a small quantity of oxygen, which comes from outside. But during the Covid-19 crisis, Delhi's oxygen requirement shot up. We needed 700 metric tonnes per day amid the crisis, as against 150 metric tonnes in normal times. We did not have the production capacity or storage tankers at that time," he added.

Continued on Page 4

Saudi bars foreigners from Haj

To allow only 60,000 vaccinated residents for pilgrimage

RIYADH

SAUDI Arabia on Saturday announced that it will allow only 60,000 vaccinated residents of the kingdom to perform the annual haj. The Haj Ministry said this year's pilgrimage would be "open for nationals and residents of the kingdom, limited to 60,000 pilgrims", according to the official Saudi Press Agency.

The pilgrimage, scheduled to be held at the end of July, would be limited to those who have been vaccinated and are below 65 years of age with no chronic illnesses, it said.



It will be the second year in a row that the kingdom hosts a downscaled haj amid the coronavirus pandemic. "The decision (was made) to guarantee the safety of haj amid uncertainty over the coronavirus," the kingdom's Health Minister Tawfiq al-Rabiah said in a televised

press conference. "Despite the availability of vaccine, there is uncertainty over the virus and some countries still record high numbers of Covid cases, the other challenge is the different variants of the virus, hence came the decision to restrict haj," al-Rabiah said.

Continued on Page 4

Wider alliance of anti-BJP parties necessary: NCP

MUMBAI: A day after election strategist Prashant Kishor met NCP chief Sharad Pawar, a spokesperson of the party on Saturday said there is a need to have a "wider alliance" of political parties against the ruling BJP ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. Kishor met Pawar at the latter's residence in Mumbai on Friday. The meeting, which lasted around three hours, sparked speculation in political circles. However, what transpired during the meeting could not be known. NCP leader and Maharashtra minister Nawab Malik said, "There is a need to form a wider alliance of political parties against the BJP ahead of the next general elections. NCP president Sharad Pawar had himself spoken about the need to have a national alliance of all parties to take on the BJP and had said he would try to bring together all such forces." Political strategist Prashant Kishor is well-versed with the data and statistics...During their three-hour long deliberations, this surely has come up for consideration," he said. Last month, Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut had stressed the need to have an alliance of opposition parties at the national level and said that he had discussed the issue with Sharad Pawar.



No exemption for mainstream media from new IT rules

NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has refused to grant an exemption to the digital news content of mainstream television channels and print media from the ambit of the new IT Rules, 2021 and asked all the digital news publishers and the OTT platforms to comply with the new rules without any misapprehensions.

Asserting that the rationale for bringing the websites of the organisations under the ambit of the law is well-reasoned, the ministry said, making an exception of the nature proposed "will be discriminatory to the digital news publishers who do not have a traditional TV/print platform." The order dated June 10 provides clarification

All mainstream media, including print and electronic, will have to comply with the provisions of IT Rules, 2021 with immediate effect without exemption as the government has refused to exempt them from the ambit of the new digital media rules

tion to digital news publishers, publishers of online curated content or OTT platforms, and associations of digital media publishers who had requested the government for an exemption under the new rules, highlighting that they are already "sufficiently regulated."

Continued on Page 4

'Choksi a fugitive from justice'

CBI files affidavit in Dominican court

NEW DELHI: Mehul

Choksi is a fugitive from justice, the chief conspirator and main beneficiary of the Punjab National Bank (PNB) scam, and is yet to join investigations despite repeated summons, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has said in its affidavit filed in Dominican's High Court of justice. The agency called Choksi's 'gratuitous offer' of being interviewed at the place of his choice outside India meaningless, citing large evidence, oral and documentary, with which he needs to be confronted.

The affidavit accuses Choksi of misleading courts in Dominica by claiming there are no proceedings against him in India. He is fully aware of the proceedings in India and has even appointed lawyers there, according to the CBI affidavit. The affidavit, filed by deputy inspector general Sharda Raut, explains the procedures of investigations and criminal trials in India. It says Choksi, according to the Criminal Procedure Code, cannot be tried in absentia.

Continued on Page 4

PIO Megha wins Pulitzer for exposing China detention camps

NEW YORK

MEGHA Rajagopalan, an Indian-origin journalist, along with two contributors, has won the Pulitzer Prize for innovative investigative reports that exposed a vast infrastructure of prisons and mass internment camps secretly built by China for detaining hundreds of thousands of Muslims in its restive Xinjiang region.

Megha Rajagopalan from BuzzFeed News is among two Indian-origin journalists who won the US's top journalism award on Friday.

Tampa Bay Times' Neil Bedi won for local reporting. Neil Bedi along with Kathleen Mc-

Grory has been awarded the prize for the series exposing a Sheriff's Office initiative that used computer modelling to identify people believed to be future crime suspects. About 1,000 people were monitored under the programme, including children.

Neil Bedi is an investigative reporter for the Tampa Bay Times.

"What Kathleen and Neil unearthed in Pasco County has had a profound impact on the community," said Mark Katches, Times executive editor. "This is what the best investigative journalism can do and why it is so essential."

Megha Rajagopalan's Xin-



jiang series won the Pulitzer Prize in the International Reporting category.

Megha Rajagopalan's Xinjiang series won the Pulitzer Prize in the International Reporting category. Minutes after she won, she said she wasn't even watching the ceremony live because she wasn't expecting to win. She only found out when she received a call!

In 2017, not long after China began to detain thousands of Muslims in Xinjiang, Megha Ra-

jagopalan was the first to visit an internment camp - at a time when China denied that such places existed, BuzzFeed News said. "In response, the government tried to silence her, revoking her visa and ejecting her from the country," BuzzFeed News wrote in its entry for the prize.

"It would go on to cut off access to the entire region for most Westerners and stymie journalists. The release of basic facts about detainees slowed to a trickle."

Working from London, and refusing to be silenced, Megha Rajagopalan partnered with two contributors, Allison Killing, a licensed architect who spe-

cialises in forensic analysis of architecture and satellite images of buildings, and Christo Buschek, a programmer who builds tools tailored for data journalists.

"The blazing Xinjiang stories shine desperately needed light on one of the worst human rights abuses of our time," said Mark Schoofs, editor-in-chief of BuzzFeed News.

Minutes after she won, Megha Rajagopalan told BuzzFeed News she wasn't even watching the ceremony live because she wasn't expecting to win. She only found out when Schoofs called to congratulate her on the victory.

Continued on Page 4

Import vaccine to address shortage issue, TS urges Centre

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

THE State government has demanded the Centre to import corona vaccine and supply to the States on a fast pace in the wake of reports stating that the third wave of corona pandemic might hit the country anytime this year. At 44th GST council meeting conducted by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman through video conference on Saturday, Minister T Harish Rao poured out woes of State in addressing the issue of vaccine shortage in Telangana, which was due to very low vaccine production in the country. He said that people were worried about the delay in vaccination in view of severe shortage of shots. Earlier, the Union government had announced the supply of required vaccine doses to all States under the free vaccination programme. Harish asserted that proper planning and equitable distribution of vaccines to all States keep-



Finance Minister T Harish Rao, along with Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar and others, attending the GST council meeting held virtually on Saturday

- ▶ Finance Minister Harish Rao thanks Union government for slash in tax on corona medicines and other equipment
- ▶ Calls for the enhancement of Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management limit to 5 per cent for additional borrowing
- ▶ Says proper planning and equitable distribution of vaccines to all States keeping in mind the prevailing serious conditions was very necessary

ing in mind the prevailing serious conditions in the country was very necessary. He supported reducing the GST on medicines and medical equipment used in treating corona, including oxymetres and ventilators, as recommended by the Group of Ministers in the Council meeting.

As the Telangana State incurred huge revenue loss in the second wave of corona pandemic, Harish also demanded the enhancement of FRBM (Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management) limit to 5 per cent for additional borrowing. In May alone, the State incurred a loss of

Rs 4,100 crore due to lockdown. "Like other States, Telangana also plunged into financial crisis and it required some financial sops to overcome the crisis," he said, adding that the increase of FRBM would help to revive the economic activity and also generate employment.

TRS hits back at Eatala for slinging mud at KCR

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

THE Telangana Rashtra Samithi leaders hit back at Eatala Rajender for levelling allegations against party supremo and Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao stating that the former minister was under frustration and to avoid his mistakes, he was targeting the TRS chief. Addressing a press conference along with MP Banda Prakash, Tourism Minister V Srinivas Goud said that the comments of Eatala on KCR were objectionable. He said if there was bad blood between him and the Chief Minister, why would he get a Minister's post. "KCR gave him the post of floor leader in the Assembly ignoring Harish Rao. Eatala should introspect who he was before joining TRS and after joining the TRS. He should spell out what mistake KCR had done," sought Srinivas Goud. The TRS leader questioned Rajender's decision to join the Bharatiya Janata Party. "Why are you (Eatala) joining a party which you do not like? You were un-

Party leaders ask how could the former minister join the BJP when he himself predicted that the saffron party would be decimated in Telangana?

happy with KCR for not consulting Varavara Rao after he was jailed, but joining the party which ensured he was jailed. This election is between the party which takes up development and the parties which oppose the development," said Srinivas Goud. He further alleged that BJP never supported the development of Telangana. Why was Eatala joining BJP when he predicted that the saffron party would be decimated in Telangana? he asked. Goud asked the former minister whether he would decrease the fuel prices after joining BJP or bring national project status to Kaleshwaram.

Shadnagar cops conduct blood donation camp

Over 170 persons donate blood on the day

HANS NEWS SERVICE
SHADNAGAR

A blood donation camp was organised on Saturday by the Shadnagar police at the Kings Palace Function Hall in Shadnagar. The blood donation camp was inaugurated by Shadnagar CI Naveen Kumar. Srinuanna Yuvasena members and about 170 persons donated blood on the day. Speaking on the occasion, CI Naveen Kumar said that blood donation was the greatest of all donations as the lives of others could be saved. He said thalassemia patients, cancer patients, women during deliveries and accident victims need blood. Unfortunately, there is a myth that if they donate blood, their immunity is compromised, which is not true, he said. As per Government of India guidelines, an individual can donate blood after 14 days of either receipt of Covid-19 vaccine or testing RT-PCR negative, he said. He later urged people in districts to come forward and donate blood. SI Suresh Kumar, Traffic SI Raghu Kumar, Srinuanna Yuvasena members, journalist Bhaskar, Savalla Raju, Srinivas, Shiva, Vishnu and others were present.

Errabelli calls on CJI NV Ramana

Thanks the CJI for increase in number of judges in Telangana HC

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

PANCHAYAT Raj and Rural Development Minister Errabelli Dayakar Rao on Saturday called on Chief Justice of India Justice NV Ramana here. Errabelli met the CJI at Raj Bhavan and presented a bouquet on the occasion. He thanked the CJI for taking a call to increase the number of judges in Telangana High Court from 28 to 42. With this step, the pending cases would be addressed at a faster pace, he hoped. The Minister later invited the CJI to make a visit to the Warangal city. The Minister also discussed briefly with the CJI various development and welfare schemes being implemented in the State. Similarly, Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee chief and MP N Uttam Kumar Reddy and Congress leader Mallu Ravi met the CJI. The CJI has arrived in the city



State Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Minister Errabelli Dayakar Rao making a courtesy call on the Chief Justice of India Justice N V Ramana at Raj Bhavan on Saturday

on Friday and will stay at Raj Bhavan here for three days. On Friday, Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan and Chief Minister K Chan-

drashekar Rao accorded a warm welcome to the CJI on his maiden visit to the State after taking oath as the Chief Justice of India.

Delay in paddy procurement irks farmers

HANS NEWS SERVICE
RANGAREDDY

FARMERS in Shadnagar constituency staged a protest and held a rasta roko at Shadnagar agricultural market on Saturday. Farmers during the protest expressed concern that the warehouse for storing grains at Shadnagar Agricultural Market was not vacant. Speaking on the occasion, the farmers said that they have been waiting to sell the paddy for the last one week, but the authorities were not concerned. They said the paddy placed at the procurement centre was not lifted by the officials and it got soaked in rainwater and got damaged. "There has been no response from officials to our repeated pleas. We came onto the road as our patience had dried up and we were forced to bring our problems to the notice of officials this way," irate farmers said. They later demanded action by officials to buy the harvested grain.

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

THE Maulana Azad National Urdu University (Manuu) has started online admission process for regular mode PhD, post-graduate, undergraduate and diploma/certificate programmes offered at Hyderabad main campus, satellite campuses (at Lucknow & Srinagar), Colleges of Teacher Education (CTEs) and Polytechnics. The only central university providing higher education through Urdu medium is offering admissions into 23 PhD, 21 PG and 8 undergraduate programmes in the schools of languages, education, arts & social sciences, technology, mass communication & journalism, commerce & business management

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

MUNICIPAL Administration Minister KT Rama Rao on Saturday said that the proposed Manair River Front would be the best tourist attraction in Telangana. The Minister along with Tourism Minister V Srinivas Goud and BC Welfare Minister Gangula Kamalakar reviewed the Manair River Development programme pro-

Minister KT Rama Rao instructs the officials to choose best designs and complete the works to make the Manair River Front the best tourist attraction in the State

Sabitha lays stone for works worth ₹4 cr in Maheshwaram

HANS NEWS SERVICE
MAHESHWARAM

EDUCATION Minister Sabitha Indra Reddy laid the foundation stone on Saturday for various development works paving the way for the development of Maheshwaram constituency. The Minister laid the stone for the works to be undertaken at a cost of Rs 4.43 crore. She also instructed the officials to upgrade five elementary schools in Mahesh-

waram constituency to primary schools. Speaking on the occasion, Sabitha said that integrated markets have been granted in Badanepet and Meerpeta corporations, Jalpally and Tukuguda municipalities with a grant of Rs 4.5 crore. She added that 1,000 Gurukul schools for SC, ST, BC and Minority communities would be established and free books and education would be provided. The Minister also said that Chief

Minister K Chandrashekar Rao was working to change the face of public schools by allocating Rs 4,000 crore in the budget. Later, she thanked a donor who developed the Jalpally government school by spending Rs 3 crore. Mayor Parijata Narasimha Reddy, Deputy Mayor Ibrahim Shekhar, Municipal chairman Madhu, vice-chairman Bhavani Venkat Reddy, corporators, councillors, party leaders and officials were present.

Now engg, BBA, BCA candidates can pursue B Ed

HANS NEWS SERVICE|
HYDERABAD

THE State government has issued orders amending the EDCET rules, allowing the BBA, BCA passed also to pursue B Ed course. Candidates who passed B Tech and graduation with oriental languages are also eligible for admission to B Ed course. Education Secretary Sandeep Kumar Sultania has issued a GO on Friday incorporating these changes. Hitherto, candidates who passed the conventional courses like BA, BSc and B Com were eligible for admission into B Ed course. Now graduates with engineering, BBA, BCA and vocational languages like Telugu, Hindi, Urdu, Marathi, Arabic and Sanskrit are also eligible for admission into B Ed course.

Call to end child labour

HANS NEWS SERVICE
WARANGAL

All children have the right to safe and equitable access to education, Chief Whip D Vinay Bhaskar said, releasing the child awareness posters on the occasion of 'World Day Against Child Labour' here on Saturday. The programme was organised by the District Child Labour Eradication Organisation. The theme for the year is 'Act Now: End Child Labour'. "State Government is committed to protect the rights of children. The onus is on people to complement the efforts of the government," he said. Vinay said that the need of the hour is to eradicate the malady of child labour. It's unfortunate that a lot of children hailing from rural areas were becom-

ing child labour due to their economic situation, illiteracy and other reasons, he said. Unlike in the past, the State Government has come up with several welfare schemes to uplift the distressed sections, he added. Empowering poor is the only solution to eradicate child labour, he said, hailing the efforts of the government. Recalling that the United Nations body that regulates the world of work, the International Labour Organization (ILO), launched the World Day Against Child Labour in 2002, the Chief Whip hoped that the initiative would ensure kids a normal childhood in getting adequate education and proper healthcare. On the occasion, he assured of providing a special vehicle for Childline-1098 to rescue child labourers.

New tenancy law in the offing: Pros and cons

DR HC UPADHYAY

Recently, the Union cabinet has approved the draft Model Tenancy Act, 2020 (MTA) prepared by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. The MTA has the objective of balancing the interests and rights of landlords and tenants and to create an efficient and transparent system for dealing with all aspects of renting, residential and commercial (except industrial) premises. The government expects that State tenancy laws based on the MTA will benefit both the landlords and tenants. The draft bill also aims at speedy disposal of tenancy disputes. Among the salient features of the bill, important are: compulsory registration of written agreement between the landlord and the tenant with the designated authority, limit of security deposit payable by the tenant to a maximum of 2 months rent in case of residential premises and 6 months in case of non-residential premises, prohibition of withholding essential supplies or services on the premises occupied by the tenant and exemplary fines for not honouring the terms of the rental agreement. Touted as a substitute to the country's archaic laws and an engine to the target of 'housing for all by 2022', the new bill despite having balancing features may not really be of much help to provide succor to the helpless tenants. In fact, the gap between the



availability of homes and shelter-seekers is very wide which ultimately creates 'the sailor's market'. The only viable alternative is to encourage housing activity by the public sector. After all, even the private housing sector heavily leans over the public money to complete housing ventures. It is unfortunate that since Independence, despite making tall claims about poverty alleviation by providing food, clothing and shelter to people, the successive governments have done a precious little. In the 50's and 60's, the housing problem which was confined only to the big cities like Mumbai, New Delhi, Kolkata and Chennai has percolated down to even the smaller cities and towns. With the rapid industrialisation and growth of trade, the employment avenues have definitely increased manifold. Most of the employment opportunities are available in the big cities and

towns which results into large scale migration of people from rural areas to urban areas. In other words, the housing problem has the roots in non-availability of ample houses, and giving tonnes of money to private developers to address this problem is certainly not a proper solution. In a situation like this, it is always the haves who will have the upper hand. It is one thing to provide a sound mechanism to regulate the rental activity and for the dispute redressal, but the million dollar question is: How efficiently the Model Tenancy Law would be enforced by the respective governments. As it is, most of the States have the authorities to search for the vacant houses and allot the same to public servants. But, the ground realities are hopelessly disappointing. Indeed, the gospel truth is all laws are good; but only their implementation is defective. Italian marines case comes closer to the end Considering the fact that the republic of Italy has deposited a sum of Rs 10 crore towards compensation, the Supreme Court is likely to pass appropriate order on the application filed by the Central government to quash the criminal proceedings pending in India against two Italian Marines, Massimiliano Latorre and Salvatore Grigone in connection with the sea firing incident near Kerala

Coast resulting in the death of two Indian fishermen in 2012. A division bench of Justice Indira Benerjee and Justice MR Shah adjourned the matter to June 15 for orders. The Italian marines case had generated much uproar, particularly because of its political contours. The amicable settlement and amount of compensation notwithstanding one must admit that India as a sovereign nation has had to eat the humble pie in the entire episode. Rajasthan HV on live-in relationship A single bench of Justice Pankaj Bhandari of Rajasthan High Court has recently held that a live-in relationship between a married and unmarried person is not permissible under law. Refusing to grant protection of life and liberty to the petitioners, the court observed that the petitioner No.2 (man) was already married. Hence, relying on the Apex court verdict in D Velusami vs D Patchaiah (2010) 10 SCC 469, the petition was dismissed. However, there seems to be a legal dichotomy in this matter. On June 7, the Punjab and Haryana High Court directed SSP, Faridkot to look into the grievance of an already married woman and an unmarried man living together in a live-in relationship and seeking protection of life and liberty against private parties.

Further, there are several other similar cases also where the High Courts have taken different views and it will be in the righteousness that the Apex court sets right the issues. J&K HC on reopening of a case By an order dated June 4, a single judge bench comprising Justice Sanjay Dhar of Jammu and Kashmir High Court held in Ajit Chopra vs Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and others has held that once a case has been closed by the superior authority, it was not permissible to the subordinate office to reopen it. Terming the courts adopted by respondent No 3 in the said case as not only amounting to abuse of process of law but also smacking of in subordination, the court held that the action of reopening the case by respondent No 3 was not sustainable in law and as such, the same deserves to be quashed. The court also granted liberty to the relevant authorities of the police department "to take appropriate disciplinary action against the respondent No 3 for having acted in a manner which smacks of in subordination. New CJ for Allahabad HC The acting Chief Justice of Allahabad High Court, Justice Sanjay Yadav, has been appointed as the Chief Justice of the same court by a Presidential Order dated June 10.

Truth does not concern PM, propaganda does: Priyanka Gandhi

NEW DELHI

IN another direct attack on the Prime Minister, Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Saturday alleged that Prime Minister attempted to hide the truth and shirk responsibility.

She said in her series "Jimmedar Kaun" (Who is responsible), "Good governance in a crisis is about confronting the truth, seizing responsibility, and taking action. Unfortunately, the Modi government did none of these. Instead, from the beginning of the pandemic, it made every attempt to hide the truth and to shirk responsibility".

She alleged that the Prime Minister simply retreated and waited for the worst to pass. "The Prime Minister of India has behaved like a coward. He has let our country down. The whole world has witnessed his incompetence at governance. His vast capacity for vanity has been exposed. Indians do not come first for him. Politics does. Truth does not concern him, propaganda does," she said.

She further said, as a consequence, when the second wave hit the country with unprece-



ented force, the government lapsed into a state of inaction. This inaction enabled the virus to spread with far greater ferocity and cause untold suffering.

She quoted Hindi poet Nirala to show the tragic situation, "The waters of the river Ganga were filled with corpses. There was no wood left in crematoriums to cremate the dead. In the blink of an eye, my family had vanished from before me."

These lines were written by the celebrated poet Nirala in his novel 'Kulli Bhaat', in which he describes the grim scenes that

unfolded during the Spanish Flu epidemic one hundred years ago. They are eerily prescient, even more so now because we live in modern times, when such scenes of collective turmoil caused by an abdication of governance ought to be a thing of the past.

"So, how did we end up witnessing scenes of desolation that belonged in another century? Why were the people of India abandoned by their government, and left to fend for themselves? Why were dead bodies floating down the Ganga, day after day, while the whole world watched aghast?"

She said, if only the Prime Minister had acted upon the countless warnings he had been given by experts from India and around the world and had listened to the recommendations of his own 'Empowered Group', or even to the Parliamentary Committee on Health, the country would not have faced the horrendous shortage of beds, oxygen and medicines that we did. Had he cared about those who looked towards him for leadership, he would not have reduced the number of dedicated Covid beds between the first and the second wave, she said. "He would have ordered the tankers required to transport oxygen and prepared for the diversion of industrial oxygen to hospitals. He would not have exported millions of doses of life-saving drugs without ensuring provisions for Indian lives first," she said further.

Priyanka Gandhi said, families would not have been put through the trauma of desperately searching for help for their loved ones. We would not have lost so many precious souls just because the Prime Minister had not planned and prepared for what was to come. (IANS)

Yogi to launch mega irrigation projects to benefit 40L farmers

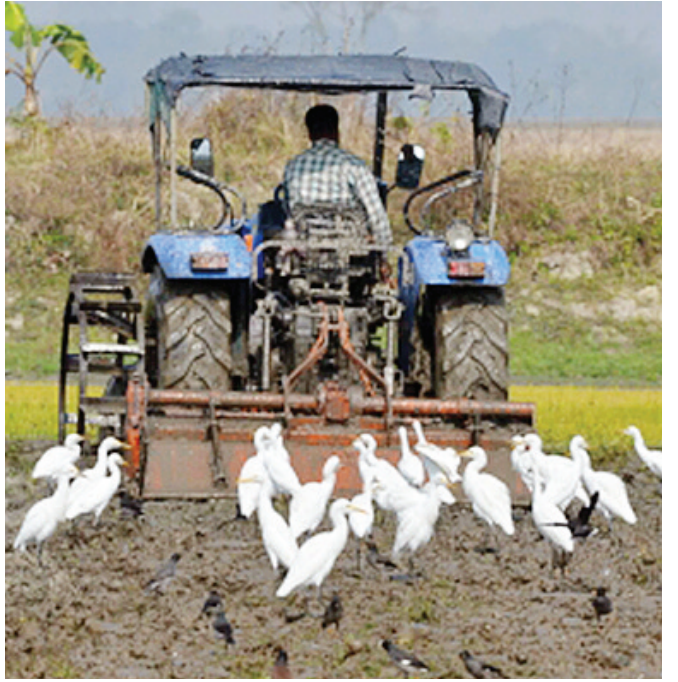
LUCKNOW

THE UP government has decided to irrigate 16.49 lakh hectares of additional land from the irrigation projects till next year so that agriculture does not suffer due to lack of water. About 40.56 lakh farmers are likely to be benefited by this.

The UP government claims to be working for small and marginal farmers and the new irrigation projects are said to supply water to those areas where very little agriculture takes place due to lack of water.

The water for these irrigation projects will be sourced from Saryu Canal, Umraha, Ratauli, Lakheri, Bhavani, Masgaon, Chilli, Barwar Lake and Babina. Although the farmers of all regions (Purvanchal, Western Uttar Pradesh and Bundelkhand) will be benefited by these irrigation projects, but the farmers of Bundelkhand will get the maximum benefit. Such projects are also necessary for Bundelkhand, which is often hit by drought due to relatively less rainfall. Bundelkhand is the focus area of the Yogi government.

Chief Engineer of the Irriga-



gation Department A.K. Singh said that as a matter of priority, the government completed the Rasin Dam Project (Chitrakoot) and Bandai Dam Project (Lalitpur) between March 1, 2020 and March 31, 2021. These will irrigate additional land of 2,290 and 3,025 hectares in the respective districts. Electricity is also being generated from a 2.50 MW ca-

capacity solar plant at the top of Jakhlaun Pump Canal (Lalitpur).

In the coming days, projects like Chilli, Kulpahar and Shahzad of Bundelkhand will become a model for the state. These are being connected to the sprinkler system. This will result in more irrigation with less water and the yield will also increase. (IANS)



719 doctors died in 2nd wave, Bihar records highest deaths

NEW DELHI

AS many as 719 doctors have died during the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, according to the latest report by the Indian Medical Association (IMA) with Bihar reporting the highest number of 111 doctors dying in the line of duty.

The second wave of coronavirus pandemic across the country is not over yet. This is the reason doctors are losing their lives every day while saving the lives of Covid-infected patients.

According to the IMA, a total of 1,467 doctors have died so far since the start of the coronavirus

pandemic. As many as 748 doctors had lost their lives during the first wave of the pandemic.

Delhi is the only state after Bihar where more deaths of doctors have been reported. According to official figures, 109 doctors have died in Delhi, 79 in Uttar Pradesh, 43 in Rajasthan, 39 in Jharkhand and 35 in Andhra Pradesh.

However, there are some states where only a few doctors have lost their lives such as one in Puducherry, two in Tripura, two in Uttarakhand, two in Goa, while three doctors in Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab have died due to infections dur-

ing the second wave.

According to the information provided by the IMA, most of the doctors between 30 to 55 years have lost their lives during the second wave of Covid-19, including resident doctors and doctors working as interns. Apart from these doctors, some pregnant women doctors have also lost their lives in the line of duty.

The coronavirus pandemic curve also seems to be flattening across the country, as 84,332 new Covid-19 cases were reported in the last 24 hours and 4,002 infected persons lost their lives due to the virus, according to the union health ministry data. (IANS)

5 children drown in Bihar's Saharsa

SAHARSA (BIHAR)

A pall of gloom descended on Bihar's Saharsa district on Saturday morning after five children died due to drowning in the Basti area of the district.

The children had gone to take bath in a pond when they slipped into deep water and drowned. All the children were aged between 8 and 14 years.

A police officer said that five children had gone to a nearby pond to take bath. While taking bath, one of them slipped into deep water and started drowning. The others too went into deep water in order to save him, but unfortunately all of them drowned.

Sadar police station in-charge Sanjeev Kumar told IANS that the deceased have been identified as Golu, Arif, Israfil, Mohammad Gulab and Abu Bakr.

He said the police reached the spot after getting information about the incident. With the help of local people, all the bodies have been fished out of the pond and sent for post-mortem. (IANS)

Guinness record holder on a mission to make India hale & hearty

GURUGRAM

AT a time when the Covid-induced lockdowns are weighing heavily on health and fitness activities, as people are staying indoors to keep the pandemic at bay, M.A. Murtoza, who had created a Guinness Record two years ago, is on a mission to make India as fit as a flea.

Murtoza, 42, made the country proud by setting the Guinness World Record for most full-contact knee strikes in one hour (team) -- 55,475 -- on July 14, 2019 in Gurugram.

The Guinness record holder is also a fitness trainer and is battling for his 'Fit India' mission. He has been working relentlessly on it for over a decade now.

In the fitness training world, Murtoza has earned his achievements in a very short period of time.

"My aim behind attempting the world record was to make the society aware about the importance of health and fitness in today's hectic life. Fit India is not just a mission. It's my passion to encourage people to adopt a healthy and fit lifestyle," he said.

The fitness freak is presently working with a Manesar-based firm, and after his job hours, he starts working on his passion by providing fitness training to the students, youth and others. He trains students and youth on



martial arts, self-defence, physical and mental health.

Along with training and physical fitness, Murtoza's research on physical fitness has also been published in some journals, including the International Journal of Engineering Science and Computing (IJESC) and International Journal of Innovation in Engineering Research & Management (IJIERM), among others.

He has also lent a helping hand to the society to cope up with the Covid-hit challenges.

"Exercise is a must during the pandemic or even at normal

times. Doing daily physical exercise is a way to tackle health problems such as high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, joint pain and other ailments and lifestyle disorders. It's never too late to start your fitness journey. Age is just a number when it comes to fitness," said Murtoza.

"In today's scenerio, people need fitness inspiration and proper guidance, and I am happy to be contributing to it. I feel that every citizen needs to adopt the concept of fit India, which is the key to hale and hearty society," he added. (IANS)

SAD joins hands with BSP for Punjab polls

CHANDIGARH

THE Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) on Saturday formed an alliance to contest the 2022 Punjab Assembly elections together.

An announcement in this regard was made jointly by SAD President Sukhbir Singh Badal and BSP national General Secretary Satish Chandra Mishra here.

Mishra, while disclosing that BSP supremo Mayawati has approved the alliance, said that both the parties would strive to form the next government in Punjab under the leadership of Sukhbir Badal.

The BSP General Secretary appealed to the Dalits and disadvantaged sections of the society to support the alliance wholeheartedly.

Mishra also visited five-time Chief Minister and SAD patron Parkash Singh Badal along with BSP Punjab coordinator Randhir Singh Beniwal and Punjab BSP chief Jasbir Singh Garhi.

Speaking on the occasion, Sukhbir Badal announced that the BSP would contest 20 out of the 117 seats under its alliance with the SAD, including eight seats in the Doaba region, seven in Malwa and five in Majha region.



The seats are -- Kartarpur, Jalandhar West, Jalandhar North, Phagwara, Nawanshahr, Hoshiarpur City, Tanda, Dasuya, Chamkaur Sahib, Bassi Pathana, Mehal Kalan, Ludhiana North, Sujampur, Boha, Pathankot, Anandpur Sahib, Mohali, Amritsar North, Amritsar Central and Payal.

Sukhbir Badal said a coordination committee of leaders from both the parties would be formed soon to ensure seamless working in all the constituencies.

Terming the alliance as historic, the SAD chief said it is not just limited to the 2022 Assembly elections, but would continue in future also.

He said the both the SAD and the BSP have the same ideology and have always worked for the

welfare of the farmers, poor and 'khet mazdoors' (field labourers).

"The Congress has not initiated a single welfare scheme for the weaker sections and it is responsible for closing down schemes like the SC scholarship scheme," he said.

Sukhbir Badal further said that it is because of these factors that there is a demand from the grassroots workers of both the SAD and the BSP to form a common front.

He also thanked BSP President Mayawati for her clear decision to join forces with the SAD to uproot the Congress from Punjab.

Sukhbir Badal told the media that the new alliance would stick to the core philosophy of Parkash Singh Badal to maintain

peace and communal harmony.

"We will also ensure the welfare of the disadvantaged sections of society and farmers, besides working to develop trade and industry to bring the state's economy back on track," he said.

The senior politician also spoke about how SAD has always taken all sections of society along while in governance.

He said Parkash Singh Badal always developed places of worship of all religions and had developed the Bhagwan Valmiki temple in Amritsar, besides starting a Rs 200 crore project to develop the Guru Ravidas memorial at Khuralgarh, which was stopped by the Congress government.

Mishra, while terming the development as a red letter day for Punjab, said, "The BSP has chosen to align with the strongest party in Punjab."

He said both parties have come together after 25 years, adding the last time when they had contested an election jointly, they had swept 11 out of 13 seats in the Lok Sabha elections of 1996.

He also said that Mayawati wanted to come and announce the alliance herself, but was not able to make it due to the Covid restrictions.

Mishra further claimed that the Congress government in Punjab is discriminating against Dalits by not releasing funds reserved for Scheduled Castes, deleting lakhs of old-age pension cards, not filling SC and OBC vacancies, not releasing SC scholarship fee to students and not implementing the 'Shagun' scheme and the 'houses for houseless' scheme.

He also said the BSP would fight hand in hand with SAD to ensure that the three 'anti-farmer' agricultural laws are not implemented, and praised former Union minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal for the bold stand taken by her by resigning from the Cabinet in support of the farmers.

He also criticised the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) for praising the contentious farm laws and for going back on its stand due to pressure from the farmers.

The BSP has a considerable hold over the 31 per cent Dalit votes in the state. The concentration of these votes is mainly on 23 seats in the Doaba region.

Earlier, the BJP used to contest 23 seats in Punjab in alliance with the SAD. The Akali Dal-BJP alliance had come to power in 2007 before being ousted by the Congress in 2017. (IANS)

Doc dances to woo Kerala tribal's to take Covid vax

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

THE Attapadi areas where a sizeable tribal population lives in Palakkad district has been unwilling to get vaccinated against Covid-19, so a doctor went out of the way to encourage them -- he decided to dance and woo them to get the inoculation done.

Arun attached to the Agali health centre along with his staff have been trying their best to get the tribals convinced about the need for vaccination.

"Initially the tribals in the vil-

lage were unwilling and then I decided along with my staff to dance, soon, the tribals also joined which included elderly women. As we danced we told them the need and urgency of getting vaccinated and they agreed," said Arun. In the hamlet they tested and vaccinated 25 tribals and found out that four of them were Covid positive.

Incidentally Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan had promised special vaccination camps to be organised in tribal hamlets and the camps have been started. (IANS)



As majority is in sight, YSRCP govt shelves Council abolition

SURYA DESIRAJU
AMARAVATI

WITH the prospects of a majority in the 58-member Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council looking bright, the Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy government appears to be in no mood to press the Centre for its abolition, in what seems to be a virtual reversal of its stand.

In his meeting with Union home minister Amit Shah in New Delhi on Thursday, Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy raised several long-pending issues of the state but did not press for the Council's abolition, official sources here said.

The YSRC government had earlier considered spending Rs 60 crore annually on the Council an "unnecessary burden" on the exchequer.

"The resolution is with them (the Centre). We have to see. If it (abolition) happens, okaywe are ready for that," Jagan's key aide and government advisor Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy has said.

He indicated that if the abolition does not happen, the government was prepared for that too and the upper house would continue to function as usual.

The AP Legislative Assembly had on January 27, 2020, passed a statutory resolution, unanimously requesting the Centre that the Council be abolished after the Chief Minister said their decision was "only in view of the people's needs and government's responsibilities".

His government's earlier view was that the members of the Legislative Council were "not representing the requirements and ambitions of the state".

In accordance with Article 169 (1) of the Constitution, Parliament has to enact an enabling legislation to abolish the Legislative Council.

"Annually, we are spending Rs 60 crore on running the Council, which is of no use. We are seeking to abolish the Council to protect peoples interests. It is not mandatory to have the Council, which is our own creation, and it is only for our convenience," Jagan had said.



- The ruling party will have 34 members in the 58-member House while the opposition TDP's number will dwindle to 15, as seven of its members will demit office on June 18
- The Jagan govt got the Assembly pass a resolution on Jan 27, 2020, requesting the Centre that the Council be abolished following a humiliation in the Council where two key Bills were not passed due to TDP majority
- Though the State govt has not spelled out clearly, it appears that it will not press for abolition

At that time, the ruling YSRCP had only nine members in the Council and the opposition TDP held the majority.

The government faced humiliation in January last year when it failed to get two crucial Bills the AP Decentralisation and Inclusive Development of All Regions Bill, 2020 and the APCRDA (Repeal) Bill passed by Council as they were referred to a select committee at the insistence of the TDP.

Two other Bills that the YSRCP saw as prestigious also faced hurdles in the upper house of the state legislature.

"We need to seriously think whether we need to have such a House which appears to be functioning with only political motives. Only six out of 28 states in the country now have a Legislative Council. It is not mandatory to have the Council," Jagan had then said in the Assembly.

Subsequently, on a couple of occasions last year, he was said to have raised the Council abolition issue with the Union home minister but nothing happened. Now, the scenario has, however, changed.

The YSRCP's strength in the Council increased to 16 now. It is poised to win three more seats under

the MLAs quota, elections for which were postponed due to Covid-19 second wave.

As it has made a clean sweep of all urban and rural local bodies in the recent elections, the YSRC will also comfortably win 11 Council seats from the Local Authorities Constituencies, elections for which have to be held shortly.

Besides, it is about to nominate four more members in the vacancies caused due to retirement of the incumbents.

Very soon, the ruling party will be 34-member strong in the 58-member House while, at the same time, the opposition TDP's number will dwindle to 15, as seven of its legislators will demit office on June 18.

One of its MLCs had already switched over to the BJP upon his suspension from the TDP.

In the next couple of years, the YSRC's strength will only swell as no other party is in a position to win any seat in the Council.

"Having the Council in place is politically crucial for us as Jagan promised MLC posts to several leaders. It was a very major political gamble he had taken (last year) but now the tide has turned in his favour," a Minister observed. **PN**

Jagananna Pacha Thoranam to get priority in MGNREGS works

- Every work under it should be beneficial to farmers
- 100-day pilot project on water conservation in Punganur will be taken up, says Panchayat Raj Minister Ramachandra Reddy
- States that the CM intends to raise plantations to improve green cover to 33% in the state and horticulture plantation has to be taken up in one lakh acre during the current fiscal

HANS NEWS SERVICE
TIRUPATI

PANCHAYAT Raj Minister Peddiredi Ramachandra Reddy underlined that Jagananna Pacha Thoranam is on the priority list of the Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy which has to be given importance in MGNREGS (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme) 2021-22 works. Chittoor district should stand by example in the implementation of the programme, he added.

The minister was reviewing



Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Minister Peddiredi Ramachandra Reddy reviews implementation of Jagananna Pacha Thoranam at RDO office in Tirupati on Saturday

the implementation of Jagananna Pacha Thoranam (JPT) in Tirupati on Saturday with the collector M Hari Narayanan, MGNREGA director China Thathaiah, state council member Viswanath and other officials.

The minister made it clear that every work taken up under MGNREGA should be beneficial to farmers. As per 2021-22 plan saplings are to be planted alongside the 26,000 km national, state and panchayat raj highways in the state and they should be conserved.

The farmers should be en-

trusted with the task of conserving them for three years. He said that the Chief Minister intended to raise plantations to improve green cover to 33 per cent in the state.

Accordingly, horticulture plantation has to be taken up in one lakh acres during the current fiscal in which Chittoor district share should be 15,000 acres. The district should also complete 2,000 km avenue plantation, 2,000 acre bund plantation, 7 lakh in railway lands, floriculture in 1,000 areas among others.

The minister asked the officials to involve all stakeholders and line departments in this task and entrust watch and ward and watering of plants to gram panchayats. A 100-days pilot project on water conservation in Punganur constituency has to be implemented so that it can be extended to other areas later.

MGNREGS state director China Thathaiah explained the JPT programme through a powerpoint presentation. DWMA PD Chandrasekhar, ZP CEO Prabhakar Reddy and other officials took part in the meeting.

Naidu urges State govt to prepare for Covid 3rd wave

- Takes part in a webinar along with experts and Covid frontline warriors on 'Ways to ensure overall wellbeing of society' organised by NTR Trust
- Lauds Sonu Sood for inspiring corona services to patients

AMARAVATI

TDP national president and former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Saturday expressed concern over the extent of suffering and devastation that the first and second waves of coronavirus had caused in the lives of the people cutting across all sections of society.

Chandrababu Naidu stressed the need for the government, voluntary organisations and individual frontline champions to make advance preparation to overcome the threat of a prospective 3rd wave of the pandemic. The people were now in a pathetic situation that they would not be able to face any further destruction after having undergone great pain and suffering in the first two waves.

The TDP chief participated in a webinar along with experts



and Covid frontline warriors on the topic 'Ways to ensure overall wellbeing of society' organised as part of the '#We-mustalk' initiative of the NTR Memorial Trust. Noted actor, humanitarian and Covid frontline activist Sonu Sood also took part in the online discussion which centred on the coronavirus challenges and solutions.

Naidu lauded the efforts of Sonu Sood to reach out to the distressed migrant workers whose lives were ridden with crisis during the pandemic. The actor provided a tractor to a poor family in Madanapalle. Sonu Sood had stood as the best example and an icon by giving an immediate response when the people were in need. Help-

ing others was in his good nature. The Covid frontline champions should share their experiences in order to extend these services to more sections of the people, he said.

The former chief minister said the NTR Memorial Trust has been actively extending oxygen, telemedicine, food supply and other services to the needy patients.

Sonu Sood recalled and lauded Chandrababu Naidu's outstanding contributions that gave a facelift to united Andhra Pradesh during his term as the chief minister. Hyderabad looked very beautiful and well-maintained and the city witnessed rapid progress thanks to Naidu's efforts to strengthen the IT sector, he added.

TDP decries betrayal of Dalits by YSRCP in nominated posts

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

TDP MLAs Anagani Satya Prasad and Dola Bala Veeranjanya Swamy on Saturday strongly criticised Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy for making huge promises to the Dalits during elections and 'totally ignoring and sidelining' them after coming to power.

Satya Prasad and Swamy asked whether it was not a breach of trust on the part of the Chief Minister to betray the same Dalits with whose votes he could win the 2019 elections with a massive majority. The Jagan Reddy 2-year rule not only cheated the Dalits but also launched non-stop attacks on the weaker sections, they said. In a statement here, the TDP MLAs said that the Chief Minister has lost all principles going by how he has been giving all lucrative posts only to his caste. "Is it not a bitter truth that over 800 nominated posts

- Party MLAs Satya Prasad and Bala Veeranjanya Swamy allege that Jagan who came to power with the crucial support of Dalits, has been completely ignoring and sidelining them
- Say the CM is giving all lucrative posts only to his own caste
- Accuse the Jagan govt bringing his own caste man as Panchayat Raj Engineer-in-Chief only to divert NREGS funds released by the Centre from time to time

were given to Jagan Reddy's own caste? On the other hand, the Chief Minister is brazen and bold enough to say on the floor of the Assembly itself that the Dalits were not fit for high end posts like the Advisors," they said. The TDP leaders ex-

pressed concern that the Jagan regime has started cheating the SC, STs even in the appointments and promotions of the regular posts too.

The Dalit employees were not being given promotions that were due to them only with an ulterior motive to help the Chief Minister's own caste people. Can the YSRCP leaders disclose how many top nominated posts were given to the SC, ST, BCs in the past two years, they questioned.

The TDP MLAs said that Jagan Reddy brought his own caste man as panchayat raj Engineer-in-Chief only to divert the funds of NREGS that would be released by the Centre from time to time. In all this open violation of the Dalit rights, panchayat raj minister Peddiredi Ramachandra Reddy was playing a key role from the beginning. At least now, the SC, STs should realise and fight back against the atrocities of the Jagan Reddy regime, they said.

No exemption for mainstream media from new IT rules

Continued from P1

"Since the code of ethics requires such digital platforms to follow the existing norms/content regulations, which are in vogue for the traditional print and TV media, there is no additional regulatory burden for such entities," the ministry stated. "Accordingly, the request for exempting the digital news content of such organisations from the ambit of digital media rules 2021 cannot be acceded to."

The ministry also took note of the fact that traditional TV and print media are already registered with the government either under the Press and Registration Books Act or the Uplinking and Downlinking Guidelines of 2011, and added, that they can request the same self-regulatory bodies to serve as the Level II of the self-regulatory mechanism. But, before that, they need to ensure consistency with the Digital Media Rules, 2021, it added. The In-

formation Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules 2021 that came into effect on May 26 recommend a three-tier mechanism for the regulation of all online media. Under the rules, the digital publishers are required to take urgent steps for appointing a grievance officer, if not done, and place all relevant details in the public domain. "They also need to constitute self-regulatory bodies through mutual consultation so that the grievances are addressed at the level of publishers or the self-regulating bodies themselves," the ministry said. More than 500 publishers have already submitted their details in the requisite format, it added. The News Broadcasters Association (NBA) which had earlier sought exemption from the new IT rules, issued a statement on Friday stating that all current and prospective members have fully complied with the requirements of new rules.

PIO Megha wins Pulitzer for exposing China detention camps

Continued from P1

"I'm in complete shock, I did not expect this," Megha Rajagopalan said over the phone from London.

She said she was deeply grateful to the teams of people who worked with her on this including her collaborators, Killing and Buschek, her editor Alex Campbell, BuzzFeed News' public relations team, and the organisations that funded their work, including the Pulitzer Center.

Megha Rajagopalan also acknowledged the courage of the sources who spoke to them despite the risk and threat of retaliation against them and their families. "I'm so grateful they stood up and were willing to talk to us," she said. "It takes so much unbelievable courage to do that."

Chances of 3rd wave very real

Continued from P1

The Delhi Chief Minister announced that 22 plants had been set up at nine hospitals in the city to generate more than 17 metric tonnes of oxygen per day. They began functioning on Saturday. Kejriwal said that six oxygen plants set up by the Centre in

Delhi had also begun operating. The Delhi government was planning to set up 17 more plants by July, he added. The Chief Minister said: "This was the second wave for the country, but fourth for Delhi. But we were able to rein it in with sacrifices of health workers and citizens."

Saudi bars foreigners from Haj

Continued from P1

The minister said only approved Covid vaccines from Pfizer, AstraZeneca, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson will be valid for the haj. There were reports in May that a plan was being considered to bar overseas pilgrims from performing Haj, a once in a lifetime duty for every able-bodied Muslim who

can afford it. Before the pandemic enforced social distancing globally, some 2.5 million pilgrims used to visit the holiest sites of Islam in Mecca and Medina for the week-long haj, and the lesser, year-round umrah pilgrimage, which altogether earned the kingdom about \$12 billion a year, according to official data.

'Choksi a fugitive from justice'

Continued from P1

It is only after an accused is produced in court or appears in court that charges can be framed for a trial to begin.

Raut flew to Dominica on May 28 along with other officers in a special jet with documents to back India attempts for Choksi's deportation from Dominica. Choksi went missing

from Antigua and Barbuda, where he is a citizen, on May 23. He was found in Dominica the next day and has since been charged with illegal entry into the Caribbean country.

Choksi's lawyers, Vijay Agarwal, Wayne Marsh, and his wife, Priti Choksi, have alleged he was abducted and taken to Dominica.

Mohana Rao posted as treasuries Addl Director

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA



N Mohana Rao, presently working as Pay and Accounts officer in the office of the Pay and Accounts officer, has been posted as additional director, treasuries and accounts department, finance department. Principal secretary, Government of Andhra Pradesh, Shamsher Singh Rawat on Friday issued orders in this regard. Further, Mohana Rao is kept in full additional charge to the post of director, treasuries and accounts, Ibrahimpatnam till further orders will be issued.

6 extra counters to allot rooms opened at Tirumala

HANS NEWS SERVICE
TIRUMALA

TTD additional EO A V Dharma Reddy on Saturday declared open the additional counters set up in six locations in Tirumala for registration for allotment of accommodation on the holy hills. Hitherto the registration for allotment of rooms to devotees was located at Central Reception Office (CRO) resulting in congestion and causing much delay. Additional EO took part in the puja held to mark the inauguration of the newly-set up counters in six different places on the hills decentralising the accommodation process much to the convenience of the devotees. Speaking to media later, Dharma Reddy said

from Saturday onwards six more counters have been opened in Tirumala for easy allocation of accommodations to devotees. All arrangements are completed at all six locations where the devotees have to first register their names for rooms and wait for SMS confirmation. After receiving SMS, the pilgrims have to proceed towards Sub-enquiry offices (mentioned in the message) for payment of tariff and collection of room keys. Apart from CRO, counters have become operational at six more locations in Tirumala, including one counter at GNC tollgate near luggage Centre, two counters each at Balaji bus station, at Kausthubham rest house, Ram Bhagicha rest house, MBC besides the CRO.

A CONTINUING SAGA OF IDEOLOGICAL INFIDELITY

Jitin Prasada's desertion from Congress to BJP and Mukul Roy's ghar wapsi or homecoming, a euphemism for defection from BJP to TMC smack and stink of political opportunism at its worst. Both these self-seeking and self-serving politicians are marginal players without any mass base of their own to make any difference to the political fortunes of the parties they joined. They have shown themselves to be men without ideological fidelity. For them self-promotion is the name of the game. They profess public service for self-advancement!

One fails to understand how it becomes possible for a young sophisticated politician like Jitin Prasada who understands that secularism is antithetical to Hindutva represented by the BJP to join the Hindutva-oriented saffron party. Maybe, he has been a supporter of Hindutva at heart.

There could be many more Jitin Prasadas in the Congress, but certainly not to the extent of deserving the communal tag. The Gandhis cannot be faulted for their loyalists and aides jumping ship. Jitin Prasada is a lightweight to be placed as a counterweight to Yogi Adityanath, widely perceived to favour Thakur domination in UP politics, though he, as the party's new Brahmin face may fit in with the caste equations in the state.

Mukul Roy's return to TMC has nothing to do with principles and everything to do with the lure of power. It may be a setback to BJP in Bengal. Perhaps this loss in Bengal cancels out the gain in UP.

But clearly it came about as a result of the lower and higher positions in which he and Suwendu Adhikari held within BJP. It would not have materialized if the TMC had not returned to power. Mukul Roy claimed that he was back where he belonged – the TMC family.

But then by contributing to BJP's growth in Bengal before wisdom dawned on him, Mukul Roy did all the damage that he could. We have difficulty in accepting that dumping BJP makes Mukul Roy a saint.

Defectors are without moral fibre; they are political chameleons (no disrespect intended for those beautiful fauna that adds to the kaleidoscope of nature) who deserve no place in the political sphere as they are a shame to democracy.

— G.David Milton,
Maruthancondi,
Kanyakumari-Dt



II

As the recent assembly polls in five states throwing surprises also made it abundantly clear that Modi and BJP is dispensable provided opposition is organised and take its fight unitedly in the assembly polls due early next year. As already fresh rumblings within BJP Bengal unit and Congress started with Jitin Prasada, an important congress face from UP switching loyalty to BJP and Mukul Roy who joined BJP in 2017 to save himself from Narada scam returning to TMC is a clear revelation that in politics, there are no permanent friends or enemies and that self-interest above all matters most.

Even as infighting in Congress party in Rajasthan and Punjab on the centre-stage, there is likelihood of splits and defections in the coming days and months due to the grand old party's waning influence over its rank and file. Obviously, the entry of Rahul and Priyanka could neither change the electoral fortunes of the party nor able to give the much-needed fillip to rejuvenate and enthrone party workers to change the fortunes which it badly needs to survive in the choppy waters of politics.

In the constantly changing political scenario, the trouble with congress party is that it lacks foresight and capacity for readjustment which the changing situation demands due to division in the party between old guards and youth power. With one group vociferously supporting Rahul Gandhi blindly even when his leadership was disfavoured by the electorate repeatedly. Even Priyanka Gandhi Vadra appointed as General Secretary not able to make any impact on the party had only increased the woes of the party and dented



its

image further. Thus with no clarity of thought in the party, congress only remains a non-starter. As a result the party cutting a sorry figure at every poll leaves none in doubt that 'cocktail approach' adopted by the party is the cause for its repeated failings. Similarly, BJP riding on one-man Modi's popularity is at present appears far from being confident to take on regional parties which have grown stronger over the years are posing a formidable challenge to BJP.

There is not an iota of doubt that second wave of covid battered the economy taking away many lives and livelihoods has raised doubts about centre's capability about governance but at the same time, one cannot say that non-BJP ruled states were paragons of governance. However, opposition blaming the Centre for all the ills the nation facing in these troubled times, Modi mellowing down by reversing the vaccine policy need to take more proactive measures quickly in order to soothe the tempers of the electorates before the five states including UP, the decisive state go to polls next year and the nation for Lok Sabha polls in 2024.

The fact that more and more leaders likely to come out of the

party and rejoin another for one reason or the other is not ruled out. in the final analysis, the fact that Thus as the truth has come into the open that congress in the present avatar cannot take on BJP, the latest meet of political strategist Prashant Kishor meeting NCP supremo Sharad Pawar fueling speculations that a new front comprising of non-BJP regional parties will be best bet to counter BJP's influence in future hustings after seeing congress on a sticky wicket and continuing to shrinking will not only put BJP on the backfoot but compel it to change its stance on national political strategy in order to be in the reckoning, otherwise it may find extremely difficult to counter the might of regional parties both in assembly and Lok Sabha polls.

— K R Srinivasan,
Secunderabad

III

Rats always desert a sinking ship. Pre-Bengal elections, barring Didi and her nephew, a bunch of rats joined the Ganges Party. Now that the Ganges party has been literally pushed into the Ganges, the rats are trying to get back to terra firma and go back. Does Didi have a large heart? Is she going to be playing the role of Ma and getting her wayward children back into her fold?

Or is she going to be a dictator and punish the errant wayward children and leave them neither in the Ghats nor the Ganges! Remains to be seen. It should be interesting.

Meantime, in another state, another Rat has left God's gift to India Party and joined the Ganges Party, in the largest state of the Country. Will more rats move from Congress?

— Gundu K Maniam,
Coimbatore

One view, many opinions

DR VENUGOPALA RAO KAKI

I was at the famous Salarjung museum in Hyderabad on a Sunday in November in 2018. It was my third visit to this great museum that ever casts an irresistible spell over my psyche with its wonderful repositories of well-preserved, amazing artistic things and artefacts of the Nizam era. Every time I visited the Salarjung museum, I would find something new and unique in this treasure-palace of marvelous beauty that invariably offers me immense pleasure and a memorable experience. This time too to attain the same kind of pleasant experience, I stepped into this eminent glorious museum. But what I encountered was absolutely different from my previous experiences.

Ambling along from one room to another room in the many-roomed museum, I was gazing at the artistic treasures and wondering at each one. While I was strolling along in the room where there was innumerable, wonderful paintings, depicting sceneries of nature, rural landscape, birds and animals, men and women, I saw a middle-aged couple standing before a huge painting of "a beautiful damsel". I was also standing before the same painting, gazing at it in great admiration for its spellbinding beauty. All of a sudden, I noticed the couple conversing



about the painting, curiosity piqued, I lent an ear to their conversation.

"What a nasty painting it is", the wife burst out, looking at the painting. "What.... nasty? Where is the nastiness in this painting?" mumbled the husband, bewildered and shocked. "See the woman with no clothes on her body in the painting. Is it not so nasty and vulgar?" retorted the wife. "You looked at the nakedness of the woman, not the beauty of this marvelous painting", muttered the husband, attempting to enlighten his spouse about the painting. "Where is the beauty in the obscenity of this painting?", argued the wife, refusing to be enlightened.

Dumb-found, still in a terrible shock, the husband stood looking at her. "It is shameful, standing further here and staring at this nasty painting. Let's move on quickly and look at other paintings", uttered the wife with a countenance con-

torted. Maybe, realising the futility of his efforts to convince and enlighten his wife about the artistic beauty of the painting, the poor husband strolled away from the painting of his admiration and of his spouse's hatred.

Maybe, the husband was a well-educated man with good artistic taste and his spouse was a semi-educated woman sans artistic proclivity. What I understood from this experience is that to appreciate a work of art, man needs a vision that is absolutely different from what he sees things around him. True artistic vision penetrates through the work of art beyond its surface and captures its artistic soul for the enjoyment of artistic work such as the painting. In the absence of such artistic vision, we can hardly derive pleasure from the work of art. After all, "A thing of beauty is a joy forever" as sung by the celebrated English romantic poet, John Keats.

Pollution is an eternal pandemic today

The Editorial aptly brought out the approaching environmental disaster that is already in the making, due to fast levels of pollution that seas are enduring, proving in terms of declining catch; and contributing to the sea erosion in many parts of the world. The seas have become virtual dumping grounds of raw human waste and untreated sewage. A stage has come that the sea cannot take any more, and has begun to regurgitate the accumulated toxic waste and pollutants that are effectively killing the flora and fauna of the sea - which is vital for a healthy marine life, unpolluted beaches and healthy ecology.

The fishermen are netting more junk in the catch by way of empty water bottles, discarded napkins and other city waste that are being recklessly thrown into the sea. The shores are littered with similar stuff, and NGOs and self-help groups are feverishly engaged in clearing the debris washed ashore that is ending up to the tune of several truck loads in one go. But, is this the way to tackle the mindless pollution that seas are being



subject to, without a definite and long term plan to tackle the menace which is staring at our face as the time is fast running out to tighten our belts to think in terms of more practical and long term measures in avoiding this practice in right earnest.

The government of Kerala announced the other day, the routine, yearly ban on trawling for fifty two days, that will almost run well into the month of July, preventing mechanised boats from fishing in deep seas since the monsoon time is regarded to be the breeding season for fish and other marine life; which may otherwise cause irreparable damage to the sea wealth that are in regular demand. Several such measures, di-

rectly or indirectly helped preserve ocean wealth, to some extent from over-exploitation.

Turkey's experience of sea coughing up of the phlegm on shores is the story with other countries too, that is less publicised, and people living in such areas have come to put up with, stoically. India has succeeded to a great extent in cleaning the river Ganga, which is now more suitable for a dip and bath, in Kashi and Allahabad. This became possible by preventing city - slaughter - tannery waste entering the river in several cities in UP and Bihar.

It is up to the entire world devising measures in ensuring the long term protection of seas, otherwise it will prove a big folly and global disaster waiting in the wings for the humanity owing to the wrong and improper utilisation of the natural wealth.

— S Lakshmi, Hyderabad

M SOMASEKHAR PRASAD

EVERY crisis, big or small, teaches us some lessons. The crisis of the Covid pandemic is no exception. It caught us, the entire world unawares. Soon it has acquired gargantuan proportions, causing huge loss of life, wealth and many more things. Again, a crisis is like an occasion. Every occasion, good, or bad, spurs our imagination, the imagination in turn sows ideas and thoughts in us and when ideas and thoughts become experiences, they often take the shape of literature.

The Covid pandemic is a crisis, an occasion, an idea, an experience and as such it has spurred some of us to write poetry on and about it. And sometimes such poetry or literature turns out to be prophetic.

As I have said earlier here, the pandemic has deprived us of many things. We have lost our people near and dear, we have lost jobs, business, income, time and many pleasures like meeting friends and relatives, eating out, family outings, travel so on and so forth. Losing has become a norm, almost a habit with us. We have in a sense become insensitive to losing, have mastered the sense of loss as an art!

Elisabeth Bishop, renowned American poet, has captured this universal sense of loss in her poem, "One Art". The opening lines of the poem say it all pithily: "The art of losing isn't hard to master;

So many things seem filled with the intent

To be lost that their loss is not a disaster."

Here is the twist. Though this autobiographical poem was written in 1970s, it reflects our com-

A poetic take on the dreaded pandemic

mon sense of loss during these Covid times. The pandemic has terrorised all of us, both the young and the aged and even children are touched and traumatised.

Indulekha, a Seventh Standard student from Hyderabad, has conveyed all her sense of loss and isolation using simple words in the following lines;

"We, who always chat and dine in groups,

Now prefer to stay away,
And with a mask on our mouths
Sit at home straight away.

Nobody is going to school anymore,

No child playing in the park.
Nobody's opening the door."

'Save The Children' invited 15 children from 15 different countries and asked them to write a poem each about their experiences during the lockdown period. All their poems echoed their feelings and impressions about the Covid pandemic.

"What the last evening will be like" by Edward Hirsch is yet another poem which captures our universal sense of loss and loneliness;

"No one else is around to drink with you,

From the watery fog, shadowy depths.

You're alone with the whirling cosmos.

Goodbye, love, far away in a warm place.

Night is endless, silence, infinite."

May 12th all over the world is celebrated as a National Limerick



Day. A 'Limerick' is a five-line humorous poem with an "aabba" rhyme scheme. On that day I made a shy attempt at expressing my thoughts about the pandemic in five limericks which underscore the hidden pain in all of us. (It may be noticed here that the lines in the first two Limericks begin with the letters in the words - COVID VIRUS).

Cases pile up at hospitals
Order failed, falls as petals
Varied forms you have to appear
In people near and dear
Death at hand stands in the portals.

Variants are your arms
In our nose, on palms
Ride our lives for thrill
Unmasked people you kill
Singe on pyres all our dreams!

We have no magic wand
To send you back to your land
Nor a portion in our lab
A trick in a hat to grab

You to put down bound

You love our lungs and throats
Force us wear all kinds of coats
We catch you in swabs
Put to test in labs
Kill you one day, say our brats

We have great bribe takers,
Power deal makers,
Crafty leaders and shiny lakes
Saints, quacks, and fabled snakes
But you outwit all those charmers.

WHERE SCIENCE ENDS,
GOD TAKES OVER!

Euphoria from pandemic holocaust is still far away as corona virus is ruling the roost inspite of emerging varieties of vaccines and spree of inoculations are being administered. Governments are constantly monitoring to decimate the dragon's devil from our midst. But it is quite miffing that our fellow human beings are faulting to uphold main criteria of physical distance despite inces-

sant appeals right from Prime Minister down to lowest health worker. The diagrams drawn in square or round circles before malls are just two-three feet distance only. In general vendors and customers never follow any protocol which was seen in fish sale shops during mrigasira karthe. Every individual speaks high morals and ethics but many join together they spend their time in unnecessary frettings and fumings. Vivekananda's says "that which is selfish is immoral and that which is unselfish is moral". We are not as we preach. As Karl Marx also said "all social relations are economic relations". It is an undeniable fact.

It is heart rending to observe clamorous scenes of small children for their parents who were bitten to death by vicious virus. It leaves a ray of pleasure that these orphans will be taken care of by governments for their future lives. Another mind wrenching misdeeds being heinously committed

by house owners are deserting the covid dead and disallowing covid affected persons into their dwelling places. It is less to speak or not to comment corporate and private medical leaches that squeeze until last pie of pestilent patients and finally wrap them with white clothes.

We, the Indians still repose our faith on our Gods, the ultimate hope for His granting serendipity. Sri Venkateswara Bhakti Channel is conducting ever since this 'karkasa' (corona) malevolent evil erupted on the globe to perturb our peaceful life, parayanams on Bhagavad Gita Sundara Kanda from Ramayanam, important chapters from Mahabharatam by chanting hymns and elucidating them in soft and perspicuous dialect for better understanding by listeners. We should trust on Him that our perspicacious prayers and chaplets to the Almighty will rescue us from this enoid. Belief on God starts where science ends.

— N.Ramalakshmi,
Secunderabad

A SEE-SAW BATTLE WITH
THE PANDEMIC IS ON

The second wave had created a huge impact because of Covid fatigue and doing away with the norms of the virus. Of late, the state of Telangana is fortunate to have a downward surge in the number of Covid cases with a TPR of 1.42. It brought a sigh of relief to the State Government and health care centers with a rise in the number of recoveries and a flat curve in number of active cases. No sooner did the effect of second

wave flattened, the government, instead of bragging about their achievement in combating corona virus, should figure out plans of action for either maintaining the flattened curve for an extended period of time or complete eradication of the virus from the State.

Virus, being mutant in nature, leaves no scope for its complete extermination. Therefore, domiciles of the State should follow the fundamental precautions of wearing a mask (preferably double), cleaning hands with a sanitizer, fumigate houses, work places with sodium hypochlorite solution at regular intervals, maintain social distance, and adhere to the High Court presurized State lockdown imposed by the State in a phased manner. The success mantra for combating this virus is the maintenance of a strict regime in the personal hygiene by all the individuals and their timely vaccination.

The government has to end politicising vaccines. Bearing all the shortcomings of the Centre's failure in handling the second wave in its mind, each State government should stand for the safety, health and welfare of its people. It needs to procure vaccines from the manufacturers and plan its re-order for both the shots especially in the rural areas. The vaccination programme has to be given utmost importance in every State and Union territory.

I would like to conclude by stating that if the above measures are followed and there is a dominant government intervention in the vaccination drive, individual states/union territories along with the Country as a whole, can successfully prevent its third wave completely or mitigate the risk of its spread to a greater extent.

— Madhulika N, Hyderabad

Smooth-talking AI assistants all set to dazzle you soon

They will understand your emotions, who you are and what you want



Suresh Reddy

Once took my foreign client to a local handicraft store in Hyderabad. The sales guy charmed my guest into buying a Kashmiri carpet, which was expensive and unwieldy. To this day, I am not sure if the buyer ever opened that rolled-up package lying in his storage. That's the power of a smooth-talking carpet salesman who appealed to the client's buying instincts. One can never imagine this happening when a chat-bot greets you as you visit an e-commerce site. There is indeed something to be said about the shopping experience in the physical world lacking online.

All that is about to change as the next wave of voice assistants will hit the market. The endeavour is to have smooth-talking AI assistants that can do the following:

1. Understand emotion

Assistants could leverage technology to understand how we feel when we speak to them and offer help or tailor responses to be sympathetic.

2. Understand who you are

They will use the latest technologies to 'understand' us better and use this information to modulate the way they speak to us.

3. Understand what you want

The system will be proficient in doing things in the real world in response to human speech. An example would be saying 'good morning', and your assistant ordering you your favourite breakfast to arrive at work, providing you with a morning briefing, and letting you know that your Uber to work will be outside soon.

4. Get anything done for you

Most of these modern assistants will go far beyond simple question and answer and assist on a lot of other things. Voice assistants are expected to improve in many other ways. A new area within AI called computational creativity is forging away algorithms that can tell jokes, paint artwork and even write music. The idea is to have intelligent bots show emotions and seem like they can think on their own.

In the future, there may not even be a specific smart speaker like Amazon's Alexa. Still, in a few years, we will reach a place where devices like microwave ovens, televisions and refrigerators will be able to understand our voice instructions and talk back to us. If you apply these more ingenious ways to business situations, one



can easily imagine a personal shopper bot help in greeting and guiding your customers. They will feel their visit is acknowledged. It leads them to move further and start browsing.

Conversational commerce is e-commerce enabled by everyday AI solutions like chatbots and voice assistants. It stimulates the in-store experience provided by sales assistants, allowing businesses to minimize cart abandonment and boost sales conversion rates. Voice-enabled assistants have come to stay in our world. However, we are still dabbling with the phase-1 of this technology with Siri from Apple, Alexa from Amazon, Google Assistant and Cortana from Microsoft. The next wave of these AI-enabled assistants is getting ready to come at you in ways and forms that will dazzle you with their slick moves.

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

Covid-induced online buying habit a boost to meat sellers

FreshToHome, through its online platform, delivers meat, fish, chicken and other such products at doorstep, says its co-founder

DEBASIS MOHAPATRA

This pandemic, all food-tech players have seen surge in demand. How has the overall business performed for 'FreshToHome' during this period? Also, have operations of the company get affected during the second wave of Covid-19?

The second wave has hit all of us hard with our families getting affected. However, business has been spectacular during this period. Customers' buying behaviour has changed due to the pandemic. Also, we don't see any change in this behaviour in the post pandemic period. Because in March-April 2020, we saw a surge in demand, which came down a bit after the first wave. But this came back to the previous level eventually. This year also, we see a small percentage of people dropping back. But, in general, our registration levels are above 90 per cent. So, the behaviour will continue. People were not used to buying fish and meat from online route. They were used to getting products that were caught in front of them. However, the issue of freshness has been answered from the kind of products that we deliver. The hygienic way in which the product (fish and meat) gets procured, processed, leads to customer delight.

How many transactions 'FreshToHome' is doing now? What's the run rate?

We are currently doing around two million orders per month. As far as volume is concerned, we are doing close to 50 tonne per day right now. Unlike the first wave, we are more prepared this time with regard to supply chain. In the first wave, many things had come to a halt. We have managed it pretty well this time.

'FreshToHome' has changed the traditional buying behaviour of consumers. Through its online platform, fish, chicken and other such products are delivered fresh at the doorstep, says its Co-founder Kadavil. 'FreshToHome' has changed the traditional buying behaviour of consumers. Through its online platform, fish, chicken and other such products are delivered fresh at doorstep. The pandemic has supplemented the growth trend with many buyers opting for this online platform. In an exclusive interview with Bizz Buzz, **Shan Kadavil**, co-founder and CEO, FreshToHome, said that the company has entered into new categories like dairy, fruits and vegetables and has seen the user base growing by two folds in last three months. It is very close to get breakeven with rising user base.



Shan Kadavil, co-founder & CEO, FreshToHome

Can you throw some light on the downward linkage as part of which the company is directly connected with fish growers, poultry and goatery?

We have around 1,500 to 2,000 vendors in our platform. We are making middlemen redundant. In this process, we are able to give more money to fishermen and farmers. We are giving around 20 per cent higher than the usual because we are able to cut a number of middlemen. At the end, we are able to serve better products to the consumers.

Have your expansion plans been on hold due to the pandemic? How many cities are you planning to expand as the second wave fades?

We are expanding quite rapidly. Our last expansion was in Hyderabad. Kolkata is the next city we are looking at. Right now, we are present in 10 cities and

we are looking to expand to 22 cities by end of this year. **What are your plans as far as new launches are concerned?** We are looking at new categories. Under this initiative, we are specialising in fruits. Currently, we are delivering milk, fruits, vegetables and other essentials. Around six lakh litre

milk per month is sold through this platform in Bangalore. This is the next scheme of things for us under which we intend to deliver all things fresh. We stick to our philosophy of not using any chemicals or preservatives. We are looking at launching a bunch of other categories like processed food. Currently, fruits, vegetables and dairy products are available in Bengaluru, Pune and Hyderabad and we will take it to other cities in the next phase.

The demand for our new products is also very high. The daily app (FTHdaily) has seen two-fold growth in last three months.

In vegetables, fruits and other such categories, competition is intense with many players operating in the space. How do you view this fact?

Our strength is supply chain, which is powered through tech-

nology. Every produce is maintained at 0- 4 degree centigrade and we deliver our products fresh to the end consumer. We want to take advantage of that strength which may not be the fact with other players. Also, our engagement with fishermen and farmers is also high, enabling us to deliver better quality products.

How technology is leveraged in enabling smooth operations at 'FreshToHome'?

We are primarily using technology in optimising how to source, where to source our products in the platform. We don't source directly and source through marketplace vendors. Data is intelligently used for effective trade to happen. Because of our predictive technology, we are able to reduce our waste to only 1.5 per cent from usual 15 per cent seen in this space. Similarly, our IoT (internet of things) is helping us to carry our produce through controlled technology.

What is the share of revenue coming from fish, chicken and meat?

Around 40 per cent of the revenue is coming from fish. Roughly around another 40 per cent is coming from chicken and the rest from other produces.

Are you breakeven now? What are your plans as far as entity-wise profitability is concerned?

We are breakeven now in Delhi and Bengaluru. Over a period of time as volume goes up, we will achieve this in other cities. Though we are entering into new categories, we are very close to be profitable entity-wise. We raised a large round (\$121 million in series C) last year. We have enough capital and we are not in a hurry to raise capital.

Understanding profit vis-à-vis profiteering

Profit is not necessarily unethical. But profiteering is problematic; Profiteering is about making unreasonable profits through indiscriminate use of unfair practices



Viiveck Verma

In today's capitalist world, several ethical concerns are raised over the very act of doing business. While some of them such as demands for fair wages and environment friendly methods are suitably required, aspersions are often cast on the fulcrum of any commercial action - the generation of profits. Profits are often painted as arising out of exploitative practices and an unequal system and designated as something necessarily bad. However, it must be understood that profit is absolutely essential for corporate functioning and is not necessarily unethical. It is instead, profiteering, or the deployment of unscrupulous and fraudulent ways to maximise profit which is dishonourable and problematic. A nuanced understanding of this dichotomy would need unpacking of both terms.

Profit, at its simplest definition arises from the difference between the incomes and expenditures of a business. It is indispensable for stimulating, sustaining and expanding the enterprise and enables greater dividends for all stakeholders involved. Profiteering, however, is about making unreasonable profits through an indiscriminate use of unfair practices, such as slashing remuneration of employees, degrading the quality of the product offered to the consumers, taking advantage of scarcity and so on. Let us examine what both phenomena mean in the everyday scheme of things and what they lead to.



To build greater social cohesion, we must inspire action towards making profits ethically and improving the general well-being of people at large, and steer it away from the bad profit harvested from the worst humankind has to offer

First of all, it is to be acknowledged that profits are necessary for the sustenance of all business endeavours. Large companies which ignore profits are bound to fail while small businesses compulsorily need to turn profits in to stay afloat, expand and secure financing. Profitability ensures the spread of business to more locations, the employment of more people and the promise of financing, increasing output and support and visibility for businesses, without which the survival or relevance of the enterprise is unlikely to hold. Profit, expansion and a robust presence in the market also creates value for consumers with more availability and better quality of services. Furthermore, the goal of the firm is not simply to increase profits but to provide specific goods and services to its clientele in a competitive marketplace. Profits - both made and reinvested only add to this venture.

Keeping in mind the absolute necessity of profits, they can ethically be made both in the short term and certainly, in the long term by

cost-cutting through a deft management of resources and a consolidation of organizational integrity. As Robert C McMurrian and Erika Matulich note in an article in Journal of Business & Economics Research, high standards of organizational ethics can contribute to profitability by reducing the cost of business transactions, building a foundation of trust

with stakeholders, contributing to an internal environment of successful teamwork, and maintaining social capital that is part of an organization's market-place image. For example, British Airways in the 1990s was going through inefficiency and losses; with a change in leadership and organisation structure, replacement of older planes and unprofitable routes, it emerged as a giant in the airline domain and holds tremendous visibility and prominence for customers.

Profiteering, on the other hand, as appropriately defined by The Encyclopaedia of World Problems and Human Potential is the pursuit of gain at public expense, which may be attained by cheating governments, overcharging consumers for goods and services and opportunistically taking advantages of unfavourable and uncontrolled situations to make money. An instance quoted in the same encyclopaedia notes how in the 1990's the pharmaceuticals industry in Canada, Germany and Norway took advantage of the

classification by Codex of certain foods as drugs. This classification prevented the sale of vitamins, minerals and other dietary supplements as food, and so allowed the drug companies to jack their prices up, gouging consumers.

Bad profit, generated through unethical means bodes badly for the society at large. In a rush for short-term profit maximisation, environment-friendly production, fair remuneration of workers, workplace safety, rights of employees and ethical management practices can all be discarded. For instance, as per data by the Labour Ministry of India, over 6,500 workers died at factories and mines in five years, a major share of which can be attributed to unsafe working conditions - a component which should have been taken care of by employers who profited off the labour of workers in high-risk environments. There should be stronger policy safeguards and legal regimes in the same regard to combat the problems of profiteering.

On the whole, if profit is linked to the promising and ambitious aspects of human agency, profiteering arises out of greed, rapacity and opportunism. To build greater social cohesion, we must inspire action towards making profits ethically and improving the general well-being of people at large, and steer it away from the bad profit harvested from the worst humankind has to offer. Profit, in tandem with correct socio-economic objectives can propel ideal realities for the world and a general move towards it can counter the menace of intemperate profit-making.

(The author is Founder, Upsurge Global, and Senior Advisor, Telangana State Innovation Council)

QUIZ NO. 176

HANS BIZ QUIZ

'World Elder Abuse Awareness Day'

1. 15 June was designated as "World Elder Abuse Awareness Day" by the United Nations. Globally, World Elder Abuse Awareness Day is aimed to encourage the world to pay greater attention to the well-being and adequate health care of older people. When is the International Day of Older Persons celebrated?

- a) 1 October b) 1 November
c) Second Sunday of October
d) Third Saturday of August

2. The World Health Organization defines elder abuse as: "a single act or repeated incidence or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person. 18% of people aged 60 years and older were subjected to some form of mistreatment. Which Organization initiated the WEAA Day?

- a) World Health Organization
b) Rotary International
c) International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse
d) International Committee of the Red Cross

3. Likelihood of abuse is more in a situation where others manage older persons' money and where the elderly depend on others for their daily needs. While Older people are affected by different types of abuse, the majority of victims are subjected to which among the below?

- a) Physical abuse b) Psychological abuse
c) Financial abuse d) Sexual abuse

4. Elder abuse is generally under-reported as older people often hesitate or are afraid to report cases of abuse to family, friends, or the authorities. Hence, prevalence rates are likely to be underestimated. 70 per cent of the abusers in India were educated up to the 12th standard. Identify the top five cities with maximum elder abuse as per HelpAge India's report?

- a) Pune, Guwahati, Hyderabad, Ghaziabad, Patna
b) Raipur, Jalandhar, Jamshedpur, Kochi, Bhubaneswar
c) Mangalore, Ahmedabad, Bhopal, Amritsar, Delhi
d) Bhilai, Gurgram, Salem, Surat, Dehradun

5. Globally, the number of elder abuse prevalence is projected to increase as many countries have rapidly aging populations whose needs may not be fully met due to resource constraints. Which among the below are the people responsible or predominantly the perpetrators of elder abuse?

- a) Sons and Daughters in law

- b) Medical Caregivers, Grandchildren
c) Domestic Helps, Home Attendant for Elderly
d) Sons-in-law, caretakers at Old Age Homes

6. Elder abuse is now recognized as a pervasive and escalating problem, urgently requiring the attention of policymakers, families, and health care professionals. Which of the below is the main reason for elder abuse?

- a) Abusers prefer to live independently and dislike the older people's way of living
b) Property related issues
c) Lack of resources to meet the needs of elders
d) All of the above

7. Elder abuse is a global problem that exists in both developing and developed countries. What are the Prevalence rates of elderly abuse in developed countries?

- a) 32% b) 21% c) 15% d) Up to 10%

8. Globally, the population aged 65 and over is growing faster than all other age groups. So when was World Elder Abuse Awareness Day first established?

- a) 2006 b) 2009 c) 2011 d) 2014

9. Elder abuse is a single or repeated act occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person. Which of the following is incorrect?

- a) One in six elders experience some form of abuse
b) Rates of elder abuse are high in nursing homes and care facilities
c) Rates of elder abuse have decreased during the Covid-19 pandemic
d) Elder abuse can lead to serious physical injuries and long-term psychological consequences

10. Elder abuse is a significant public health problem. Only 1 in 24 cases of elder abuse is reported. Which of the Socio-cultural factors may affect the risk of elder abuse?

- a) Older adults are depicted as frail, weak, dependent, and lack income and funds, and erosion of the bonds between generations of a family
b) migration of young couples, leaving older parents alone in societies where older people were traditionally cared for by their offspring
c) Systems of inheritance and land rights affecting the distribution of power and material goods within families
d) All of the above

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

KEY

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

French Open

Djokovic hands Nadal 3rd loss in 108 matches, enters final

PARIS

SPRINTING, sliding and stretching, anticipating each other's moves for four sets and more than four hours, Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal produced a masterpiece in the French Open semifinals. Djokovic, as it happens, is one of only two men in tennis history who knows what it takes to beat Nadal at Roland Garros.

And now Djokovic has done it twice — this time ending Nadal's bid for a 14th championship there and record-breaking 21st Grand Slam title overall by coming back to win their 58th career matchup 3-6, 6-3, 7-6 (4), 6-2 on Friday night.

"Just one of these nights and matches that you will remember forever," said the top-seeded Djokovic, who trailed 2-0 in the closing set before reeling off the last half-dozen games to reach his sixth final at the clay-court major tournament.

"Definitely the best match that I was part of ever in Roland Garros, for me, and (one of) the top-three matches that I ever played in my entire career — considering quality of tennis, playing my biggest rival on the court where he has had so much success and has been the dominant force in the last 15-plus years," Djokovic said, "and the atmosphere, which was completely electric."

It was Nadal's third loss in 108 matches at a tournament he won each of the last four years, including by beating Djokovic in the 2020 final. Nadal's first defeat at the French Open came against

Robin Soderling in 2009; the next against Djokovic in 2015.

"Each time you step on the court with him," Djokovic said, "you know that you have to kind of climb Mt. Everest to win against this guy here." And to think: There wasn't even a trophy at stake in this one. That will happen Sunday, when Djokovic, a 34-year-old from Serbia, faces Stefanos Tsitsipas, a 22-year-old from Greece.

The fifth-seeded Tsitsipas edged sixth-seeded Alexander Zverev 6-3, 6-3, 4-6, 4-6, 6-3 earlier on Friday to reach his first Grand Slam final. It's Djokovic's 29th as he seeks a second title at the French Open and 19th major championship overall to pull within one of the men's Slam mark shared by Nadal and Roger Federer.

Tsitsipas already had given away all of a two-set lead in his semifinal Friday when he double-faulted to trail love-40 in the opening game of the fifth. But Tsitsipas steeled himself to win five consecutive points, then broke to go up 3-1. "I'm someone who fights. I was not willing to give up yet. I think I did few things right that worked in my favor," said Tsitsipas, who entered the day 0-3 in major semifinals.

"It was a breath of fresh air, that first game," he said. "I felt revitalized." His semifinal offered a measure of drama. But in truth, Tsitsipas-Zverev was merely an opening act before the headlines.

Nadal and Djokovic really riled up the raucous crowd at Court Philippe Chatrier. Midway through the third set, Djokovic won a 23-stroke point with a forehand winner and windmilled his arms a half-dozen times, earning a standing ovation and chants of "No-vak! No-vak!"

On the very next point, Nadal produced a forehand winner and screamed, prompting

chants of "Ra-fa! Ra-fa!" and a wave in the stands. Nadal acknowledged fatigue might have been a factor during his poor play in the tiebreaker, including a double-fault and a flubbed volley.

"Mistakes can happen," the 35-year-old from Spain said. "But if you want to win, you can't make these mistakes." That set alone lasted 1 hour, 33 minutes, and an 11 p.m. nationwide curfew in place because of COVID-19 was approaching.

Djokovic's previous match had been delayed more than 20 minutes while the audience — limited to 5,000 people under coronavirus restrictions — was cleared out of the stadium, but an announcement was made Friday to let everyone know the government agreed to let them stay until the end of the match.

Earlier chants in French of "We won't leave!" were replaced by choruses of the national anthem and cheers of thanks for President Emmanuel Macron. Nadal noted afterward that playing in the cooler night air meant balls bounced lower, lessening the effect of his lefty forehand's heavy topspin.

"That's more favorable for him, the conditions," Nadal said. "By the way, doesn't matter. That's tennis. The player who (gets) used to the conditions better is the player who (deserves) to win. So no doubt, he deserved to win."

The intensity was palpable from the outset of the evening, and Nadal zoomed to a 5-0 lead, reminiscent of last year's final, which he won 6-0, 6-2, 7-5. That was only the fourth shutout set lost by Djokovic in 341 career Grand Slam matches up to that point — and the first in a major final.

There wouldn't be another Friday, because Djokovic made two key tactical adjustments — moving much further back than usual to return serve and deciding to focus on serving toward Nadal's backhand — and quickly made clear this would be a classic between two of the greatest ever at what they do.

They defended in ways rarely seen. (AP)

Serbia's Novak Djokovic (left) shakes hands with Spain's Rafael Nadal after their semifinal match of the French Open at the Roland Garros stadium late on Friday

'Can't compare myself to Messi, When I am sad, I watch his videos'

DOHA

LIONEL Messi's mesmerising runs on a football pitch can make a sad Sunil Chhetri happy, the talismanic India captain said on Saturday, and made it clear that comparing him with the Argentine virtuoso is akin to living in a "stupid cocoon".

The 36-year-old Chhetri has more than once brushed aside any comparison with Messi whom he has overtaken to be the second highest international goal-scorer among active players.

"There is a lot of talk, even in my family WhatsApp group, and I tell everyone the same thing. The truth is that there is absolutely no comparison between me and him. Along with everyone else in the world, I am also a huge fan (of Messi).

There is no comparison whatsoever," said the India team captain, who is preparing for the last FIFA World Cup 2022 and AFC Asian Cup 2023 qualifier engagement, against Afghanistan, on June 15.

"I am just happy that I get an opportunity to score for my country, and that is about it. When I see my name there, I feel proud for five seconds that I could do something for my country. I don't get into the stupid cocoon of comparing myself with all those great players. There are thousands of players who are better than me, and all of them are also fans of Lionel Messi. That's the gap," said Chhetri in an AIFF interview to mark his 16 years of international career.

On how he would greet Messi if he were to meet the Argentinian star, Chhetri said, "I'd say, 'Hi, I'm Sunil Chhetri, and I'm a big fan'. I will not trouble him. I'm a fan, but all the people I'm a fan of, I don't trouble them much. If I meet him, I'll be happy, if I don't, I'm still good. When I'm sad, I watch Messi's videos, and it makes me happy, so when I meet him, I'll tell him I'm a fan, give him a nice handshake, and that's about it."

Chhetri overtook Messi (72 goals) with his second goal -- and 74th overall -- in India's 2-0 win over Bangladesh in a World Cup qualifying round match on June 7 here.

It was on this day 16 years ago that Chhetri donned the India jersey for the first time, in a match against Pakistan in Quetta under then head coach Sukhwinder Singh.

Since then, he has gone on to play 117 matches for India, scoring 74 goals -- the second-most for an active international player. He is just three goals shy of the great Pele's tally.

"It has been a wonderful and amazing journey. To play for the

number of years for the national team, to represent the country the number of times I have, it's been outstanding. It is beyond a dream."

When Chhetri came to the scene in the national team, there were stalwarts like Bhaichung Bhutia, Renedy Singh and Mahesh Gawli. Now, at 36, he is the senior-most player and he sometimes feels lonely among the "kids".

"... (it feels like) just yesterday, that these two kids came in - Sandesh (Jhingan) and Gurpreet (Singh). And now those two are the main players here, that's how time flies.

"There are so many kids who are now calling them 'Sandesh bhai', 'Gurpreet bhai'. The gap is huge now. I don't have anyone even close to my age or era. But it's good to be around kids. They teach me a lot of stuff with their excitement and fearlessness. I try to grasp whatever I can from this lot."

Chhetri still takes advice from former captain Bhutia who has a huge influence on him. "Just two days back, I was having a chat with Bhaichung da. I was telling him how I miss the old camp, purely because now I don't hang out with anyone. I'm in my room only.

"I learnt a lot from him. He was relentless in the way he approached a game. His mentality was bulletproof. He was at it, every game. The first challenge, the first tackle was always Bhaichung da.

"The one to fight for lost causes was always Bhaichung da. And when as a senior you saw that our captain, the most senior guy was working so hard, it rubbed on us. There's nobody better than Bhaichung da."

Chhetri said his competitive spirit came mostly from his mother, a former Nepal international footballer, who would play with him many indoor and outdoor games during his childhood.

"I remember I always wanted to beat my mum, but till the time I was 13, I could not beat her. And she never wanted to lose either. I think the fact that I don't like losing, a big part of that comes from my mum.

"One day, I was complaining that I had nobody to play with, and my mum came to play with me in the heat of Delhi summer. There would be loo blowing outside. For the whole 10-15 days of summer vacation, I used to play foot tennis with my mum, and



Weightlifter Mirabai qualifies for Olympics

NEW DELHI

INDIA'S Mirabai Chanu, the 2017 world champion in weightlifting, has qualified for the Tokyo Olympic Games in women's 49 kg category, the International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) announced on Friday.

The 26-year-old from Manipur has qualified on the basis of her world ranking points. The Indian lifter is ranked second in the women's 49kg category with 4133,6172 points in her kitty.

China's Hou Zhihui is top-ranked in 49kg with 4926,4422 points.

As per rules of the IWF, top eight lifters in each of the 14 weight categories, including seven in the women's group, are eligible to compete in Tokyo Olympic Games.

Besides Mirabai and Hou, there are two more Asian lifters among top eight in women's 49 kg.

Indonesia's Aisah Windy Cantika is ranked fifth and Vietnam's Vuong Thi Huyen is seventh. Two European and two Pan American lifters fill the other four slots.

In men's 67 kg category, India's teenage weightlifter Jeremy Lalrinnunga is ranked 12th and failed to get continental berth for the Tokyo Olympics as it was allotted to Korean weightlifter Han Myeong-mok.

Top eight world-ranked athletes get automatic berths for Olympics. The IWF had set a May 31 deadline to achieve world ranking points.

Italy start Euro campaign with 3-0 win over Turkey

ROME

ITALY scored their biggest win in European football championship with a 3-0 win over Turkey in the tournament opener.

The Euro 2020, which was postponed last year due to Covid-19 pandemic, is being played in 11 venues.

The Italians, who have won the title only once before -- in 1968 -- and finished runners-up twice, endured a goalless first half as they lacked finishing touches.

Turkish goalkeeper Ugurcan Cakir parried a powerful header from Giorgio Chiellini as the teams went into break with scores at 0-0.

However, eight minutes after restart, Italy found the net through an own goal.

Forward Domenico Berardi hammered in a low cross which deflected off Turkish centre-back Merih Demiral's body and went into the net.

Then striker Ciro Immobile pounced on a loose ball and fired it past goalkeeper Ugurcan in the 66th minute to make it 2-0.

Lorenzo Insigne scored Italy's third goal in the 79th minute as Turkey proved no match for the Italians in the second half.

This was the Azzurri's 28th unbeaten match (23 wins and five draws), their streak going back to September 2018.

"We showed patience in the first half. Turkey are a strong side. We tried to tire them out, moving the ball left and right and trying to spread them," said forward Immobile.

"Unfortunately, we struggled to break their wall. After the goal they had to open up some space, so that's when our quality emerged. I want to thank my mother for giving me the sense of how to be in the right place at the right time." (ANS)

KT residency

KAPIL PROPERTIES

"A premium Co-Living Space"

PROPERTY MULTIPLIER
WITHOUT ADDITIONAL INVESTMENT

KT Residency approved by ITRI RERA | Approved No. PO2400001598

SAFE

Earn extra sft*

AFFORDABLE

9% to 11% Returns

NO MAINTENANCE

Assured rental income for 20years

+91 95337 76694

www.ktresidency.com | sales@kapilproperties.com

Printed and Published by K. Hanumanta Rao, on behalf of Hyderabad Media House Pvt. Limited, Flat.No.609, 6th Floor, Kirti Shikhar Building, Plot.No.11, Dist.Center, Janakpuri, New Delhi- 110058. and Printed at M/s. Marutinandan Printers & Publishers, A-15, Bara Bagh, G.T Karnal Road, Industrial Area, New Delhi - 110033. Editor: V Ramu Sarma. RNI No: DELENG/2017/74095